

UNDERSTANDING
PRESS COVERAGE OF
CROSS-BORDER MIGRATION IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA SINCE 2000

DAVID A. McDONALD AND SEAN JACOBS

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PROF. JONATHAN CRUSH

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EDITORIAL NOTE

David A McDonald is Director of Development Studies,
Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, K7L 3N6.
Sean Jacobs has recently completed a PhD at the University of London.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Xenophobia is a distinctive and widespread phenomenon in South and Southern Africa. The print media, in particular, has been accused of exacerbating xenophobic attitudes. This paper discusses press coverage of cross-border migration in Southern Africa from 2000-2003, with a focus on xenophobia. The study revisits research conducted in South Africa by the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) in the 1990s to determine what, if any, changes have occurred in that country's press coverage of the issue. It also extends the investigation to three other SADC states (Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia). Empirical variations across the region serve to highlight that there is no single or universal explanation for xenophobic press coverage in Southern Africa. More importantly, the paper poses a series of hypotheses which attempt to explain why xenophobia does (or does not) exist in the region's press and how the problem may be addressed. The hope is that these hypotheses will help us better understand the causes of xenophobia in the South African press – and any trends away from xenophobic press coverage – to assist with ways of combating xenophobia in the future.

The study draws on a comprehensive electronic database of English-language newspaper clippings related to cross-border migration in Southern Africa at Queen's University. The time frame for the coverage is mid-2000 to early-2003. The countries included in the database are South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This paper covers South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia. This is the same database used earlier to assess xenophobia in the South African press in the 1990s and therefore provides sourcing consistency.

The results of the research in South Africa reaffirm previous findings of the press in that country. A large amount of newspaper coverage of migration issues remains anti-immigration and non-analytical. The coverage has, however, become highly polarized, with a sizeable portion of the articles now being pro-immigration in their orientation and/or analytical in their discussion of migration issues.

The survey reveals a continued perpetuation of negative stereotypes of (im)migrants in the South African press. Images of most migrants as "job stealers", "criminals" and "illegals" only serve to perpetuate ill-considered stereotypes of migrants and migration and continue to be used in reportage on these issues in the South African press. The source of these xenophobic comments is highly skewed, with the vast majority emanating from the wire services. For example, of the articles that used the term "job stealers" the South African Press Agency (SAPA) was by

far the worst offender, making up 38% of the articles that refer to migrants in this way.

The most obvious, and perhaps most likely, reason for the persistence of xenophobia in the South African press is the widespread existence of xenophobia in the country. In other words, media coverage simply reflects the reality on the ground in the country, either through journalists reproducing their own images and ideas of migrants and migration and/or by editors providing space for articles, letters and opinion pieces that they feel reflect public consensus on the issue. Whether the xenophobic press is merely a reflection of public sentiment or stems from xenophobia within the press itself is ultimately impossible to decide. What is clear is that there is a cycle of negative (mis)representation of cross-border migration in the English-language print media and it is likely that public opinion and journalistic opinion simply feed off of one another.

A second explanation for continued xenophobic press coverage can be found in the openly xenophobic attitudes of some South African political representatives and officials. Although the general tenor of official government policy on migration is changing and becoming more liberal, it is not uncommon to find reports of openly xenophobic statements by officials that pass unchallenged in the press. A third explanation for the persistence of xenophobic reporting can be traced to the heavy reliance on wire services which stream in extremely simplistic and xenophobic material. Superficial reporting on migration is exacerbated by the media's reliance on police reports. In addition, reporters do not tend to specialize in migration issues and their newspapers do not have a specialist reporter for this "beat." A fourth reason for the persistence of xenophobic reporting is the growth of a tabloid press in South Africa. Tabloids latch on to reactionary and sensational issues and attitudes, such as those that surround the presence of foreigners in the country, in order to sell newspapers.

Possible explanations for a decrease in xenophobia (or, more accurately, an increase in the polarization of coverage on migration) are equally complex. There are various possible reasons. The first relates to the fact that immigration is no longer a new – and therefore "unknown" – quantity in South Africa. The initial influx of migrants after the end of apartheid – particularly those from other parts of Africa – no doubt came as a shock to many South Africans steeped in isolationism and may have contributed to some of the original sensationalism on the topic in the press. But after a decade of cross-border activity, it could be argued that some newspapers and journalists have a better grasp of the issue and have perhaps overcome their own xenophobia. Second, there appears to be a growing professionalism on migration issues, at least in

some newspapers. Some editors have even stated their interest in creating an educated and dedicated staff on the matter. Real, lasting change may only come with the hiring/training of more reporters committed to proper coverage of the issue and/or the hiring of journalists from countries outside of South Africa. Third, big business has actively pushed for a more liberal immigration regime. This advocacy has extended to a media itself dominated by big business.

The impact of public debates on the need to improve media coverage on migration should not be underestimated. The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) initiated a series of sophisticated and comprehensive workshops for journalists in the late 1990s as part of its "Roll Back Xenophobia" campaign. Opinions differed amongst editors on the impact and effectiveness of this campaign. Another possible explanation for improved media coverage is a growing pan-African perspective in South Africa which has created new political, cultural and economic imperatives to be more positive about African integration. A final explanation for an increase in pro-immigration media coverage relates to the interests of South African business in ensuring easy access to skilled and unskilled labour from outside the country via a relatively open and liberal immigration regime. With the rise in xenophobia in South Africa in the 1990s there was a very real possibility of government introducing an overly-bureaucratic, closed immigration system.

The survey found that press coverage of migration-related issues in Zimbabwe is just as polarized as it is in South Africa, although for different reasons. Despite the relative freedom of the press in Botswana, newspapers in that country have produced, on average, the most xenophobic coverage of the countries surveyed. In Namibia, where xenophobia is high amongst the general population, it comes as little surprise that the media appears extremely xenophobic as well. Migrants and refugees are typically portrayed as "illegal", crime is associated with Angolans and Zimbabweans, and regular warnings of an "influx" of refugees from the conflict in Angola are repeated in sensational ways, often courtesy of government spokespeople.

Overall, the press in the countries surveyed remains uncomfortably xenophobic, suggesting a difficult, uphill battle for advocates of a more tolerant and migrant-friendly press. There are signs of a shifting, albeit polarized, approach to coverage of the issues – at least in South Africa – but xenophobic writing and editorializing in that country remains a concern as well.

Any shift away from anti-foreigner rhetoric should be met with relief. Xenophobia in the region has led to harassment, abuse and even death for non-citizens. But we cannot simply assume that pro-immigrant coverage in the press is going to improve the lives of migrants in the

region. Nor can it be assumed that pro-immigration press coverage is inherently a good thing. Pro-immigration news coverage and editorials can be politically and economically motivated in ways that do not necessarily lead to good journalism, resulting in problematic “facts” and analysis. These pro-immigration articles must therefore also be closely scrutinized for content, origin and intent. Only then can there be a truly balanced debate about migration and immigration in the region’s press.

INTRODUCTION

Media organizations, media enterprises and media workers – particularly public service broadcasters – have a moral and social obligation to make a positive contribution to the fight against racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance. – *Joint Statement on Racism and the Media by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the OAS Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, 2001.*

Xenophobia refers specifically to “a deep dislike of foreigners.”¹ This definition describes a discreet set of beliefs that can manifest themselves in the behaviours of governments, the general public and the media. This is certainly true in South and Southern Africa where xenophobia is a distinctive and widespread phenomenon and where the print media in particular has been accused of exacerbating xenophobic attitudes.²

A previous SAMP policy paper reviewed English-language press coverage in South Africa from 1994-1998 and argued that reportage and editorial comment on cross-border migration was largely anti-immigrant and unanalytical.³ Not all reportage was negative and superficial, but the overwhelming majority of newspaper articles, editorials and letters to the editor employed sensationalist, anti-immigrant language and uncritically reproduced problematic statistics and assumptions about cross-border migration in the region.

The purpose of the current paper is threefold. First, it is an update on the previous study to determine what, if any, changes have occurred in South Africa with respect to xenophobia in the press. Second, and more importantly, the paper poses a series of hypotheses that attempt to explain xenophobia in press coverage in South Africa and where we might expect to see trends developing in the future. The hope is that these hypotheses will help us better understand the causes of xenophobia in the South African press – and any trends away from xenophobic press coverage – to assist with ways of combating xenophobia in the future.

The third objective of the paper is to expand the analysis to other countries of the region – namely, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia. An analysis of these additional countries helps to expand our understanding of the regional aspects of xenophobia in the press and serves to place South Africa in regional perspective. Empirical variations across the region serve to highlight that there is no single or universal explanation for xenophobic press coverage in Southern Africa.

Xenophobia in the media has been documented in many parts of the world, in many different languages and in many different mediums. The situation in Europe has been studied most closely but Canada and the United States have figured prominently as well.⁴ Surprisingly, few of these studies attempt to explain the causes of xenophobia in the press. For the most part they are descriptive in nature, providing a summary of the extent and character of xenophobia, typically followed by a plea for improvements in the way that migration is covered. The same shortcomings apply to the previous work on this subject in South Africa.⁵

A second problem with existing research is that it tends to conflate questions of racism and xenophobia. This blurring of concepts is understandable in the European and North American context where (im)migrants are predominantly “visible minorities”, but in Southern Africa xenophobia is directed towards all foreigners and emanates from all racial groups. Black Africans from other parts of the continent are most widely and adversely affected by xenophobia (and the darker the skin the worse the prejudice), but migrants from elsewhere are not immune.

The media is both a reflection of racism/xenophobia as well as an instigator. In other words, the media reflects reality (xenophobia exists, therefore it is not surprising that people in the media would represent these popular sentiments) but it can also distort what is actually going on. As Henry and Tator argue, the media does not always “objectively record and describe reality, nor do they neutrally report facts and stories...some media practitioners socially construct reality based on their professional and personal ideologies, corporate interests, and cultural norms and values.”⁶ This helps to explain why certain elements of the press in Southern Africa remain highly xenophobic while others are becoming less so.

The media is controlled largely by a corporate elite that shapes and reproduces ideologies in order to reinforce dominant class interests through the medium of the press.⁷ However, journalists and editors do provide “objective” news and opinion, and newspapers can and do print material that is in direct conflict with the interests of their owners or business more generally. Certainly this is true in the case of xenophobia in Southern Africa where newspapers print xenophobic rhetoric that is contrary to the interests of employers in terms of access to skilled and unskilled labour from outside the country concerned. These caveats aside, corporate interests and ideologies are critical to our understanding of xenophobia in the press in Southern Africa and are arguably the driving force behind a newly emerging pro-immigration trend in the print media (at least in South Africa).

The next section of this paper describes the research methodology in

more detail, and is followed by an overview of public attitudes to migrants and immigration in the region. The remainder of the paper provides studies of the countries investigated, with each study providing a description of the level of xenophobia in the print media and a set of hypotheses explaining the level of xenophobic material.

METHODOLOGY

The study draws on a comprehensive electronic database of English-language newspaper clippings related to cross-border migration in Southern Africa. The time frame for the coverage is mid-2000 to early-2003. The countries included in the database are South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This paper covers South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

The focus is on print media because of the existence of a large press database on cross-border migration at the Southern Africa Migration Project (SAMP).⁸ The collection stretches back to 1975 and comprises the most thorough compilation of English-language print media from the region on this topic. This is also the same database used earlier to assess xenophobia in the South African press in the 1990s and therefore provides sourcing consistency.⁹

One potential criticism of this textual approach is that millions of Southern Africans are functionally illiterate and do not read newspapers.¹⁰ Nonetheless, millions of others in the region do read papers (combined readership of dailies and weeklies in South Africa alone is close to 20 million people) and many others hear about newspaper coverage from family and community members.¹¹ The print media also remains an influential source of news for policy makers (arguably the most influential medium in the region) and impacts on other forms of media such as television and radio.¹²

In this respect, English-language newspapers dominate circulation and are undoubtedly the most influential print medium in the region. English is not the only print medium – there are important Afrikaans, Portuguese and African-language newspapers that help to shape public opinion in the region – but English is the lingua franca of Southern African political commentary. Also, many non-English newspapers in the region are owned by English-language conglomerates and/or they source from the same English-language wire services. With the advent of on-line newspapers the sphere of influence of the English-language press is only likely to grow in the future.¹³

For South Africa, there were a total of 950 articles in the database for the period under review (2000-2003). A random selection of every

sixth article resulted in a sample of 157 articles (approximately 16% of the total data set). The selected articles include news items, editorials, and letters to the editor.¹⁴ In Zimbabwe, for the same time period, there were a total of 155 articles, all of which were reviewed to ensure a sufficient sample size. Similarly for Botswana, all 140 articles from the database were included in the analysis. For Namibia there were less than 30 articles in the database which we felt was insufficient for the kind of statistical analysis applied to the other countries.

The leading newspapers and news agencies in the region were the most common sources for the articles reviewed, but some more obscure print media did appear as well (these have been collapsed into “other”). Because of the oligarchic nature of the media in Southern Africa (six large media companies dominate the South African press) articles sourced from the same group of companies were placed together. For example, items grouped under “The Independent” in the South African sample have come from different newspapers in that ownership group, such as *Cape Times*, *The Star*, *Saturday Star*, *Cape Argus/Weekend Argus*, *Sunday Independent*, *Pretoria News*, *Daily News*, *Business Report* and *Sunday Independent*. Beyond mere practical considerations, the recoding is in line with reality and reflects how media groups such as the Independent operate as a business unit. Far from having independent identities, the Independent group’s newspapers are organized regionally with these regional managers wielding as much, if not more, power than the individual newspaper editors. The Independent is also characterized by extreme synergy in content and editorial policy. Columns, opinion articles and news items are repeated in the various regional papers and are presented virtually unchanged. Significantly, *Business Report*, the central business news operation of the Independent, is included as a daily, undifferentiated supplement in all its regional papers. Table 1 provides a summary of the news sources reviewed for South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

To assess the xenophobic content of the data set we employed two techniques. The first was to assess the articles for their “depth of analysis” and for their “attitude towards immigration.” The intent here was to determine what proportion of the articles in the sample were pro- or anti-immigration and what proportion of the articles were analytical in their coverage of migration issues. To accomplish this, a pair of coordinates was assigned to each article depending on the qualitative characteristics it possessed. These coordinates were then recorded on two orthogonal scales which measured the different qualities of the papers surveyed, with the size of the circles representing the relative number of articles that fell into that set of coordinates (see Figures 1 through 4).

The vertical scale in these figures measures how “anti- or pro-

Table 1: Sources of News Items in Database		
Source of item	Number of items	Percent of total
South Africa		
Business Day	22	14.0
South African Press Agency (SAPA)	55	35.0
African Eye News	6	3.8
Dispatch Online	9	5.7
Mail & Guardian	8	5.1
Sunday Times	3	1.9
Independent Group	23	14.6
News 24	5	3.2
City Press	3	1.9
SABC News	12	7.6
Other	11	7.0
Total	157	100.0
Zimbabwe		
Daily News	13	8.4
Independent	15	9.7
Herald	24	15.5
Zimbabwe Standard	11	7.1
Financial Gazette	25	16.1
Sunday Mirror	9	5.8
Pan African News Agency (PANA)	2	1.3
Agence France Press (AFP)	33	21.3
Reuters	2	1.3
Chronicle	4	2.6
Associated Press (AP)	13	8.4
Other	4	2.6
Total	155	100.0
Botswana		
Botswana Daily News	18	12.9
Gazette	15	10.7
Mmegi / The Reporter	12	8.6
The Midweek Sun	1	0.7
Botswana Press Agency (BOPA)	86	61.4
Pan African News Agency (PANA)	6	4.3
Agence France Press (AFP)	2	1.4
Total	140	100.0

immigration” the articles are; -5 and +5 respectively denote “very anti-immigration” and “very pro-immigration” while zero (0) represents the neutral point. The horizontal scale measures the “depth of analysis” of the articles; that is, whether they are analytical or unanalytical in their reportage (-5 represents a “very unanalytical” article and a +5 represents a “very analytical” article). Superimposing the scales on each other produces a four-quadrant grid.

An “unanalytical” article would be one that uncritically reports facts and figures about immigration that are known to be controversial or problematic (e.g. the long-discredited figure of some nine million “illegal immigrants” living in South Africa which continues to be reproduced in the press).¹⁵ Articles which simply tell the reader that “X number of illegal immigrants were arrested at the weekend” or that “illegal immigrants cost the South African taxpayer X billion Rand per year,” without any critical interpretation of these “facts” or any attempt to contextualize these allegations within the broader debates on migration, would also be considered “unanalytical”, to varying degrees.

The definitions of “anti” and “pro” immigration (the vertical axis) were as follows. Pro-immigration articles advocate a free(r) movement of peoples across borders in South and Southern Africa and are generally sympathetic to the plight of migrants and refugees in the region. Anti-immigration articles, on the other hand, call for a decrease or complete shut-down of the number of migrants/refugees that should be allowed in and are largely antagonistic towards the presence of migrants/refugees in the country.

The second method of analysis employed was an assessment of the language and metaphors used in the articles and the kinds of associations made between migration and other social and economic developments (e.g. crime). This closer textual analysis provides a quantitative account of the percent of articles, which use a particular phrase or make particular accusations/associations about the role of migrants in the country. It also provides a chronological comparison for South Africa. This analysis has its biases and limitations. The selection of criteria and the subjectivity inherent in the ranking of articles is clearly open to dispute. But unlike other forms of prejudice – such as racism – xenophobia tends to be relatively easy to define and quantify in the Southern African press.

Henry and Tator point out that in the case of racism in the media, “the rhetoric of racism is illusive, racism finds it easy to hide itself.”¹⁶ Xenophobia in newspapers in the region is anything but, revealing itself in crude and often shocking ways.

This textual analysis was supplemented with in-depth interviews with editors from four major newspapers in South Africa: the *Mail &*

Guardian, *Beeld*, *Sunday Times* and *Business Day*. These editors were asked questions related to coverage of migration issues in their newspaper, whether they thought media influences public opinion and public policy on migration, and their own personal opinions and understandings of cross-border migration issues (budget restrictions did not allow for interviews with editors in other countries in the region).

These newspapers were chosen because of their importance within media and policy circles in South Africa. The *Mail & Guardian*, despite its small circulation (approximately 250,000 readers of its weekly publication), is arguably the most important paper for South African political elites. The *Mail & Guardian* is also an interesting case in ownership terms. Its majority British shareholders sold its shares to a Zimbabwean publisher in July 2002 and the paper sells well in Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia. The *Business Day* fulfills a similar function for South African business elites and has recently increased its coverage of continental business developments. The *Sunday Times* is the largest circulation newspaper in the country with some 3.5 million readers of its weekly edition.

Finally, to compensate for the otherwise Anglo-centric focus of the research, the editor of the large, Afrikaans-language newspaper *Beeld* was interviewed. Interestingly, similar trends emerge in his comments on xenophobia to those of the English-language editors.

XENOPHOBIA IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Extensive quantitative and qualitative research since 1995 has shown that public opinion in Southern Africa, with some important variations between countries, is deeply xenophobic.¹⁷ The “harshes” anti-immigrant sentiments are expressed by the citizens of South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, the “anti-foreign ‘trotika’.”¹⁸ Citizens of Swaziland, Mozambique and Zimbabwe “are considerably more relaxed about the presence of non-citizens in their countries” but negative attitudes persist in these countries as well, with calls for stiffer immigration laws and harsher border surveillance measures being commonplace.¹⁹ It is only in Lesotho that one finds a *laissez-faire* attitude to immigration, perhaps due to that country’s dependence on open borders with South Africa to sustain its economy.²⁰

Internationally, comparative studies have also shown these SADC states to be amongst the most xenophobic in the world. Table 2 provides a glimpse into SADC attitudes to immigration policy and compares these to countries in Europe, North America and Asia. In a world that is almost universally cautious about immigration, Southern Africans stand out as particularly hostile.

Table 2: Regional and International Attitudes Towards Immigration					
Country (date of survey)	Let anyone in who wants to enter (%)	Let people come as long as there are jobs (%)	Place strict limits on number of foreigners who can come here (%)	Prohibit people coming here from other countries (%)	Don't know (%)
South Africa (1995)	6	29	49	16	0
South Africa (1997)	6	17	45	25	7
South Africa (1999)	2	13	64	21	0
Namibia (2001)	3	4	83	10	0
Botswana (2001)	3	18	69	10	0
Zimbabwe (1997)	16	30	48	4	0
Zimbabwe (2001)	12	15	69	4	0
Southern Mozambique (1997)	12	61	23	2	0
Mozambique (2001)	7	32	57	4	0
Swaziland (2001)	11	21	65	3	0
Lesotho (1997)	61	23	12	3	1
Russia (1995)	6	48	28	18	2
Philippines (1995)	9	16	63	12	0
Peru (1995)	8	39	40	12	4
China (1995)	7	33	40	11	9
Argentina (1995)	8	49	31	9	3
USA (1995)	5	32	53	8	0
Finland (1995)	8	30	51	8	3
Chile (1995)	10	50	31	7	1
Japan (1995)	4	41	40	6	8
Nigeria (1995)	18	37	40	6	3
Spain (1995)	14	55	23	4	3
Australia (1995)	5	52	39	3	2
Sweden (1995)	8	32	55	1	3

Source: Crush and Pendleton (2004, 11)

These anti-immigrant attitudes cut across all major socio-economic and demographic categories. Young and old, black and white, educated or not, Southern Africans display an extraordinary consistency in their antagonism towards foreigners, particularly those from other countries in Africa and especially those deemed to be “illegal migrants.” Even refugees are viewed negatively on the whole (with many skeptical of their bone fide refugee status).

Another important feature of xenophobia in the region is that it exists despite relatively little direct contact with people from other countries. Representative surveys in South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Swaziland show that less than 10% of respondents have had a “great deal” of contact with people from other African countries (35% said they have had “some contact”, 11% said they have had “hardly any” contact, and a remarkable 43% said they have had “no contact at all”).²¹ Clearly, anti-immigrant sentiment in the region is not primarily a result of direct personal contact with foreigners but rather a product of (mis)information from secondary sources including the media.

RESEARCH RESULTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The results of the research in South Africa reaffirm previous findings of the print media in that country, which show that a large amount of newspaper coverage is anti-immigration and non-analytical. The coverage is, however, still highly polarized, with a sizeable portion of the articles being pro-immigration in their orientation and/or analytical in their discussion of migration issues. There is, in fact, an even sharper polarization of media coverage now than there was in the 1990s, with the data from 2000-2003 falling almost entirely into the bottom-left or top-right quadrants of the grid diagrams in Figures 1 and 2 (i.e. anti-immigrant and non-analytical, or pro-immigration and analytical). There are, however, more articles in the upper-right quadrant in this survey (Figure 2) than in the last (Figure 1), suggesting a shift towards more pro-immigration and analytical articles since the 1990s.

The survey also reveals a continued perpetuation of negative stereotypes of (im)migrants in the South African press. The character and significance of these negative references has been discussed at length elsewhere and will not be repeated here, except to say that images of migrants as “job stealers”, “criminals” and “illegals” only serve to perpetuate ill-considered stereotypes of migrants and migration and continue to be used in reportage on these issues in the South African press.²²

Figure 1: South African press coverage (1994-1998)

Attitude toward immigration

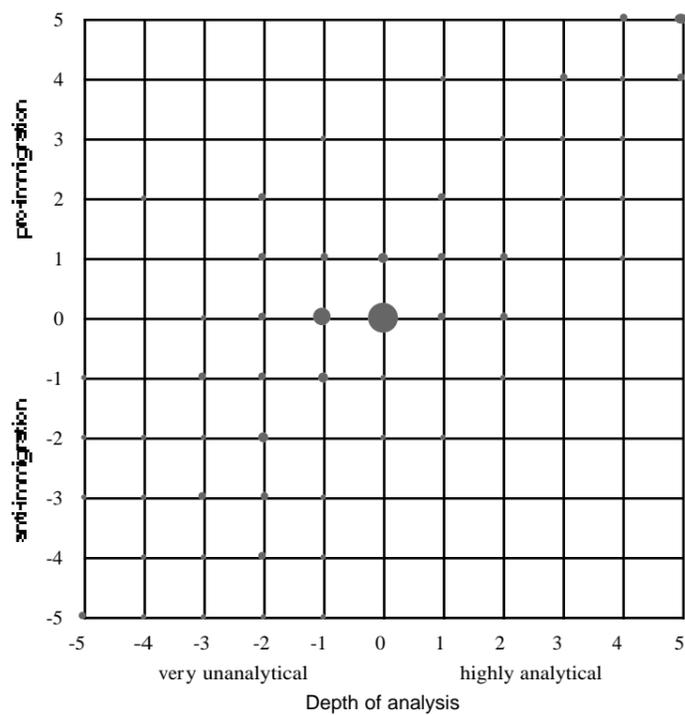
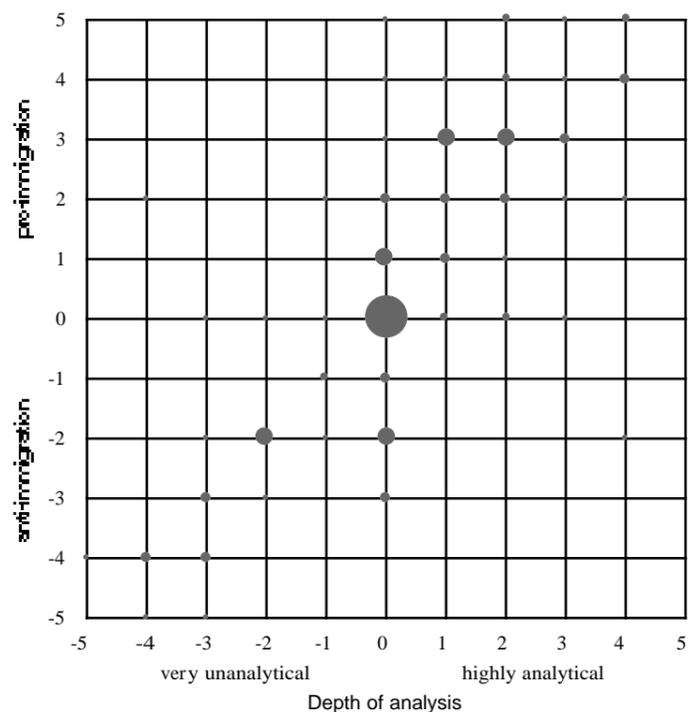


Table 3 outlines the frequency of negative references using nine indices, and provides data from both South African surveys (1994-1998 and 2000-2003) as well as that of Zimbabwe and Botswana. What is notable in the South African case is a decline since the last survey in the proportion of articles using negative references, with a drop in almost every category. This drop is countered, however, by the fact that more than half of the articles still used at least one negative reference (52%), only a slight decline from the 1994-1998 survey (56%). This cumulative effect of xenophobic rhetoric is perhaps the most revealing statistic of all.

The source of these xenophobic comments are highly skewed, however, with the vast majority emanating from the wire services. For example, of the articles that used the term “job stealers” the South African Press Agency (SAPA) was by far the worst offender, making up 38% of the articles that refer to migrants in this way.

Figure 2: South African press coverage (2000-2003)

Attitude toward immigration



EXPLAINING SOUTH AFRICAN COVERAGE

To explain this newspaper coverage, the analysis is broken into two categories: the first section poses reasons for continued xenophobia. The subsequent section puts forward hypotheses for why there appears to have been a partial decrease (and ongoing polarization) in xenophobic coverage in South Africa. In a sense these are two very different processes requiring two different sets of analyses, some of which appear contradictory at times. Nor is it possible to draw clear lines between the two types of coverage. Newspapers that are more likely to run pro-immigration and analytical articles will also print very negative, unanalytical articles – and vice versa.

The most obvious, and perhaps most likely, reason for the persistence of xenophobia in the South African press is the widespread existence of xenophobia itself. In other words, media coverage simply reflects the reality on the ground in the country, either through journalists reproducing their own images and ideas of migrants and migration and/or by

Table 3: Percent of Articles with Negative References to Migrants and Immigration				
Type of Negative Reference	Percent of Sample with the Negative Reference			
	South Africa (1994-1998)	South Africa (2000-2003)	Zimbabwe (2000-2003)	Botswana (2000-2003)
Makes reference to migrants as job-stealers and/or as a general burden to the country's economy	24%	5%	5%	24%
Associates migrants with crime	25	22	10	30
"Nationalizes" and/or "Africanizes" crime	11	12	12	26
Refers to non-citizens as "illegals"	38	20	9	34
Refers to non-citizens as "aliens"	24	5	0	1
Uses negative metaphors to describe migration into the country (e.g. floods, hordes, waves)	9	24	7	21
Presents negative images of other African countries	12	17	11	37
Uses inflated statistics on the number of (im)migrants in the country	17	3	n/a	n/a
Uses sensational headline(s)	26	10	16	38
Percent of articles that include at least one negative reference	56	52	19	45
N =	132	157	155	140

editors providing space for articles, letters and opinion pieces that they feel reflect public consensus on the issue.

Mondli Makanya, editor of the *Mail & Guardian* at the time of this research (now editor of the *Sunday Times*), argued in his interview that "media generally reflect social reality and relations within society. I would not blame the media for fanning xenophobia in any way".²³ Makanya also suggested that it was "difficult to cover stories about Nigerian migrants", of which there has been particularly negative reportage, and that editors and journalists "should not be politically correct about it...The fact is that a disproportionate number of people from that country, as opposed to migrants from elsewhere, say Congo or Senegal, are involved in crimes." According Makanya "it is unfortunate that the behavior of some nationals from that country specifically influences how they are covered, but it is also reality."²⁴

There was no consensus amongst the editors, however, on whether the press merely reflects public opinion or whether it might also create and perpetuate negative stereotypes. Peet Kruger, editor of *Beeld*, conceded that "it would not make sense to deny such an impact", but "I would not go so far as to say that it is done deliberately."²⁵ Another edi-

tor, who asked that certain comments remain anonymous, was more forthcoming on why particular nationalities are singled out for coverage related to crime, suggesting that the media plays an active role in fostering xenophobic attitudes amongst South Africans and not simply reflecting them:

A lot of the stories about Nigerians are about crime. As a result it is not surprising that South Africans generally believe that Nigerians are all criminals. And because a lot of stories about the continent and elsewhere are about war and famine, it informs the general perception [of other African countries] in South Africa. The same can be said about the way immigrants from Asia are covered. Stories of a Taiwanese immigrant who forced a domestic worker to have sex with a dog, or say, a Pakistani national running a sweatshop in Fordsburg [in Johannesburg], unfortunately colour people's perceptions of Taiwanese or Pakistani migrants as a group.²⁶

Whether the xenophobic press is merely a reflection of public sentiment or stems from xenophobia within the press itself is ultimately impossible to decide. What is clear is that there is a cycle of negative (mis)representation of cross-border migration in the print media and it is likely that public opinion and journalistic opinion simply feed off of one another.

A second explanation for continued xenophobic press coverage can be found in the openly xenophobic attitudes of some South African political representatives and officials. Although the general tenor of official government policy on migration is changing and becoming more liberal it is not uncommon to find reports of openly xenophobic statements by government officials that pass unchallenged in the press.²⁷

Most of this negativity is directed towards migrants from other African countries, while migrants from Europe and North America are treated much more positively, suggesting a certain degree of racism colouring a general anti-foreigner perspective. One editor accused the business press, in particular, of a subtle form of racism when they call for a more liberal migration regime. He suggested their zeal was aimed at white immigrants:

There is a subliminal thing running through South African newspapers, that when you are talking about attracting foreign skills you are talking about Europeans, white migrants. That is the subtext. So when you talk about a white mining chief facing deportation, then there is a campaign about anti-xenophobia. However, every day Africans are

deported from this country and a lot of those affected have skills, but their deportations are not reported with the same sort of zeal.

A third explanation for the persistence of xenophobic reporting can be traced to the heavy reliance on wire services which stream in extremely simplistic and xenophobic material. Economic reasons are largely behind this. Most newspapers have experienced extensive cut-backs in staff and journalists as owners insist on improved profits in the context of increased competition (since 1994, at least four new city-wide newspapers have been launched in South Africa and one new national daily), depressed advertising markets, rising costs of paper and distribution, and other cost factors. The result is the same tone and variety of news reportage across different media outlets. Peet Kruger further traces the superficial reporting on migration to the media's reliance on police reports, which are free for newspapers and which typically identify crime suspects by nationality.²⁸

The reliance on wire services and police reports also confirms comments made by the editors interviewed who agreed that reporters do not specialize in migration issues and that their newspapers do not have a specialist reporter for this "beat." *Business Day* and *Beeld*, for example, incorporate coverage of migration under "political news" if it involves legislation, or under "crime" if it involves an alleged wrong-doing (itself a telling source for the perpetuation of stereotypes).

According to Mathatha Tsedu, then-editor of the *Sunday Times*, migration "has not been an issue that has received much attention at our newspaper."²⁹ Mondli Makanya of the *Mail & Guardian* agreed, saying that migration is not taken seriously by the South African media: "I would not say it [migration] is up there with the most important issues for us. This is partly because there is no systematic way to cover it and I don't think any news organization does it any differently. I think it is a case of when a story comes up, you cover it, and immigration has not come up that much."³⁰ Peter Bruce, editor of *Business Day*, argued that "there is a wider story about immigration into South Africa and around Southern Africa which is interesting politically [and deserves our attention], but it does not necessarily directly affect the people who read the paper."³¹ The implication seems to be that there is no need to invest major resources on an in-house reporter when information can be sourced at relatively little cost from wire services and government agencies.

A fourth reason for the persistence of xenophobic reporting is the growth of a tabloid press in South Africa. Tabloids latch on to reactionary and sensational issues and attitudes that help to sell newspapers. The impact of these newspapers – also published in Afrikaans and Zulu

– is presently under-researched in South Africa, with no systematic analysis of their impact on politics in the country. The most important of these papers are the *Sowetan Sunday World* and *Daily Sun* (and its Sunday version, *Sunday Sun*) which are published in English, and the Zulu-language *Izoleswe* published from Durban by Independent Newspapers. A newcomer is NasPers/Media24's *Kaapse Son* which was launched in 2003 and aimed at a predominantly working-class coloured and white readership in the Western Cape. All of these newspapers, while setting as their mission to create a serious black "reader class", have thus far done nothing of the sort, instead peddling sex, sports and crime in the style of the UK tabloids, including very rightwing editorial positions and reporting on migration.³²

The *Daily Sun* owners were clear from the beginning that they would not cover "politics". *Daily Sun* publisher Deon du Plessis is on record as saying the paper has a "strictly non-political outlook."³³ The paper does not employ a political editor or have opinion editorials. This does not mean that these papers do not have a political position, however. These are commercial media which tend to play up to populist, right-wing sentiments in society to boost circulation or to engage in circulation wars. As the editors interviewed all noted, tabloids are prone to sensationalism. Two interviewees went so far as to say that the *Daily Sun* and *Sunday Sun* have developed socially conservative editorial stances.

The sample included only a handful of articles from these newspapers. Although all were xenophobic and simplistic in their coverage of migration, there is insufficient statistical data to make conclusive comments. However, review of the material available, general reading of this tabloid press, and the precedent of the international tabloid press suggest a strong link between the continued presence of negative, unanalytical coverage of migration in South Africa and the growth of this media since the late 1990s.

Possible explanations for a decrease in xenophobia (or, more accurately, an increase in the polarization of coverage on migration) are equally complex. There are five possible reasons. The first relates to the fact that immigration is no longer a new – and therefore "unknown" – quantity in South Africa. The initial influx of migrants after the end of apartheid – particularly those from other parts of Africa – no doubt came as a shock to many South Africans steeped in isolationism and may have contributed to some of the original sensationalism on the topic in the press. But after a decade of cross-border activity it could be argued that some newspapers and journalists have a better grasp of the issue and have perhaps overcome their own xenophobia. As Peter Bruce, editor of *Business Day*, put it: "People are less frightened about immigration [today]. It is not a new phenomenon anymore. White

South Africans used to say about Portuguese immigrants what they now say about Nigerians... Sooner or later, if we have a decent economy it absorbs these people and they become ordinary. They have kids, they go to school. They are like you and me."³⁴

There also appears to be a growing professionalism on migration issues, at least in some newspapers. Some editors have even stated their interest in creating an educated and dedicated staff on the matter. The editor of *Beeld*, for example, wants to increase coverage of migration issues: "We want to cover it more substantially, with better-trained people, who have time, and to cover it in-depth."³⁵ Makanya of the *Mail & Guardian* agreed, saying that the paper "needs a dedicated person" to cover migration and that the paper should "be at the forefront of educating people, in a very creative way, about the changes to society":

We are very open about campaigning for a range of issues that we feel strongly about, and I can't see any difference with immigration. We need to profile successes, major players or successful people, doing ordinary things like running business, working for corporations here. There has to be more of a focus on the communities, the enclaves where immigrants live. We also need to cover culture more. Introduce our readers to music. Not just when, say, Baaba Maal visits South Africa. And those things should not just be relegated to the "World" page.³⁶

The *Mail & Guardian* subsequently ran a series of articles collectively entitled "Melting Pot". The aim was "to look at South Africa as a place that looks very different from what it did 14 years ago", according to Makanya.³⁷

But it may be that real, lasting change will only come with the hiring/training of more reporters committed to proper coverage of the issue and/or the hiring of journalists from countries outside of South Africa. As Peter Bruce suggested, "Things will only change when a paper, say *The Star*, hires one of these Nigerians to its staff and he would write about his community in a completely different way."³⁸ In this regard, a number of South African newspapers have hired journalists from neighbouring countries.

It is also useful to note that the *Mail & Guardian* is owned by a Zimbabwean national and the *Sunday Times* has established bureaus in Lagos and Nairobi staffed by nationals from those countries. The short-lived national daily – *This Day* – owned and operated by a Nigerian press conglomerate, was launched after the research for this paper had been completed. For a brief period, the newspaper was the least xeno-

phobic of the major English-language newspapers in the country. A third possible explanation for improved coverage can be traced to changes in the South African government's position on migration. As official government policy moves towards a more liberal, "managerial" approach to migration, press coverage necessarily becomes more liberal in its attempts to reflect the main currents of migration debates. This is bolstered by the now dominant liberal discourse of human rights across virtually all public policy matters in South Africa and elites circles in general.³⁹

The newspaper editors interviewed all share this liberal vision of immigration. According to Mathatha Tsedu:

Migration is quite critical to our future as a country. If you look at a major city like Johannesburg, parts of the city has higher percentages of non-South Africans living there than locals, and they are becoming more entangled in the social issues of the city, of the nation. It will be important for us as a paper to stay on top of those developments and to make sure we help those people and the SA public to understand the dynamics of these changes.⁴⁰

Mondli Makanya agrees that South Africa "will get more immigration. People will come to South Africa. We are a working economy in a poor region and secondly, borders are breaking down. The main thing is how we manage it."⁴¹ Peet Kruger acknowledged that his newspaper does not have explicit guidelines to cover immigration, "but our general editorial policy is respect for human rights, including the rights of immigrants. From that perspective we will not promote stereotypes of a group of people just because of who they are."⁴²

The impact of public debates on the need to improve media coverage on migration should not be underestimated. The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) initiated a series of workshops for journalists in the late 1990s under the title "Roll Back Xenophobia." Mathatha Tsedu, then-chair of the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF), swears by its impact. Correspondence with one of the main organizers of the campaign suggests a sophisticated and comprehensive education and training programme.⁴³

Some editors questioned the effectiveness of such educational programmes. Mondli Makanya, for example, was skeptical of the methodology and wider impact of Roll Back Xenophobia:

I have participated in some Roll Back Xenophobia's workshops. I don't think it has any impact. It's arrogant, pompous and it comes from a pious perspective as to why xenophobia exists. I think most black South Africans

understand why black, working class South Africans feel the way they do. And RBX comes saying 'We should educate people about this thing'. People are not stupid. It's about economics. It's also about people in transition, about a class of people arriving below them, undercutting them and competing with them in a context where they must scramble, in high unemployment, where the state is absent.⁴⁴

Peter Bruce and Peet Kruger expressed similar views, making it difficult to say what the actual impact of the Roll Back Xenophobia campaign has been. Nevertheless, the mere existence of such a campaign, and the heightened awareness and sensitivity to the problems of xenophobia that have accompanied it, represent significant progress and may have contributed to the improvement in press coverage in the country.

Another possible explanation for improved media coverage is a growing pan-African perspective in South Africa (most notably via President Thabo Mbeki's "African Renaissance" campaign) which has created new political, cultural and economic imperatives to be more positive about African integration. The South African National Editors Forum actively supports the "African Renaissance" and South African newspapers have been broadly supportive of its objectives in their reportage and editorials.

Why have newspaper editors supported this pan-African ideal? One explanation is a genuine commitment to the principles of pan-Africanism. Another, not necessarily contradictory, explanation is the economic imperatives of newspaper owners and editors. Media groups in South Africa are becoming more multinational in scope and are keen to expand into the region and elsewhere in the continent (some have already done so in a significant way in Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe). It follows that if they are to be successful outside South Africa they cannot be running xenophobic articles about their new readers.

Most of the large, mainstream newspapers in South Africa have substantially increased their share of "African" news. The *Sunday Times* has not only established bureaus in Lagos and Nairobi but also brings out an "Africa" edition which is distributed in neighbouring Southern African states. The *Mail & Guardian* is keen to develop a Southern African "regional identity" as well, according to Makanya, and *News24*, the news division of NasPers, has established bureaus in Abidjan and Nairobi.

The business press predictably focuses on business developments outside South Africa. *Business Day* routinely allocates two or more pages to African news (and has recently brought out a magazine called "Business

Africa”). South African business and investor presence has increased notably on the continent since the end of apartheid, resulting in a thirst for news and analyses of legislative and economic developments in these countries.

A final explanation for an increase in pro-immigration media coverage relates to the interests of South African business in ensuring easy access to skilled and unskilled labour from outside the country via a relatively open and liberal immigration regime. With the rise in xenophobia in South Africa in the 1990s there was a very real possibility of government introducing an overly-bureaucratic, closed immigration system. Anti-immigrant comments from the then-Minister of Home Affairs and other senior government officials raised widespread concern in the business community about labour access. The mining industry was the first to raise the alarm, but the call for a more open immigration system was soon taken up by a variety of other sectors in the economy and by neoliberal think-tanks such as the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE).⁴⁵

Big business has arguably been the single most influential force in shaping a more liberalized migration regime in South Africa. Individually and collectively, it has made continuous and vigorous policy interventions on migration by way of formal submissions on policy development, the sponsoring of seminars and conferences, and private lobbying. Business is not entirely satisfied with the current legislative framework, especially when it comes to skilled personnel, but the threat of highly restrictive borders has largely been averted.

Why business leaders would also apply pressure to newspaper owners and editors to influence their coverage of immigration policy in this way is not difficult to imagine, although many editors may simply have adopted the same position of their own accord. Certainly there were many more articles, op-eds and editorials calling for a more business-friendly immigration policy in the period covered by this research (2000-2003) than there were in the previous study.⁴⁶

Peter Bruce of *Business Day* typifies this ideological link, insisting that a liberal immigration regime that addresses the needs of business is at the core of his paper's editorial policy:

If asked to articulate [our editorial policy], I would say that we need as liberal an immigration regime for South Africa as possible to allow companies to buy the skills they need from whoever and wherever they want them. We are very uncomfortable with the kinds of restrictions that the [current immigration laws] impose...Our constituency as a newspaper is skills absorbing businesses and as an editorial entity we are concerned with ensuring that in as much as

we address immigration policy, we address the problems of our constituency.⁴⁷

As a result, the bulk of stories on migration in *Business Day* and business-oriented supplements in newspapers such as the *Sunday Times* focus on the legislative process surrounding the adoption of a new immigration law, and attracting skilled migrants.⁴⁸

ZIMBABWE

Before discussing the research results in other SADC states it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the print media in the region, much of which is considerably less “free” than its counterpart in South Africa. Most observers are very negative about the state of the press in the region. A ranking by Reporters Without Borders of media around the world in 2002 gave relatively low “press freedom” scores to Southern African countries.⁴⁹ South Africa was the best in 26th place, followed by Namibia (31), Tanzania (62), Mozambique (70), Swaziland (89), Angola (83) and Republic of Congo (113). Zimbabwe, at 122th, is considered the most repressive of the SADC states surveyed. Botswana was not included in the study.

There have been some positive knock-on effects from increased press freedoms in post-apartheid South Africa, but newspapers in the rest of the region remain largely state-controlled or heavily dependent on the state, and are under constant pressure from government and ruling party representatives. In such a climate, self-censorship of journalists is not uncommon. Governments have also been known to withdraw advertisements from newspapers as punishment for being critical of their policies.⁵⁰

The Zimbabwean state enjoys an exclusive monopoly over broadcasting in that country (both television and radio) and has a substantial stake in the print media sector as well, including the Zimbabwe Inter-Africa News Agency (ZIANA) and the daily newspaper *The Herald*. In addition, the editors of the privately-owned *Sunday Mirror* have been generally supportive of ZANU-PF and of President Robert Mugabe. Nevertheless, Zimbabwe maintains one of the most vibrant print media markets outside South Africa, with independent newspapers offsetting some of the effects of state propaganda.⁵¹

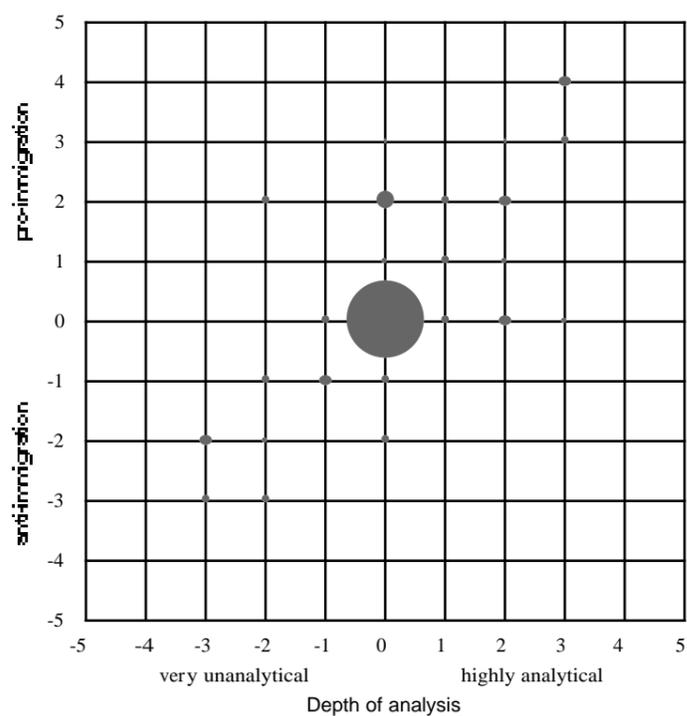
On the whole, print media coverage of migration-related issues in Zimbabwe is just as polarized as it is in South Africa, although for different reasons. As Figure 3 illustrates, most articles reviewed fall into the bottom-left or upper-right quadrants of the grid, revealing a strong pro- and anti-immigration split (although overall there are more pro-immi-

gration and analytical articles in the Zimbabwean sample than in the South African sample (i.e. more in the upper-right quadrant)).

Much of this pro/anti divide occurs between newspapers that are state-owned (*The Herald*, *Sunday Mail*) or state-supporting (*Zimbabwe Mirror*) on the one hand, and the independent press on the other. The former tend to take a negative and simplistic view of migration-related matters, often referring to opponents and critics of the government as “illegal immigrants” even when it involves their own journalistic colleagues.⁵² Foreign journalists in particular are ridiculed in the state media, and have been harassed, imprisoned, banned and summarily deported. In January 2001, for example, two foreign correspondents who had worked and lived in Zimbabwe for extended periods, Mercedes Sayagues, a freelancer, and Joseph Winter, the BBC correspondent, were branded “meddling foreigners.” Sayagues, who wrote for the South African *Mail & Guardian* was accused of being a UNITA supporter, while Winter was accused of being a South African spy. The coverage of these issues in the opposition press is the reverse in all respects.⁵³

Figure 3: Zimbabwe press coverage (2000-2003)

Attitude toward immigration



The same divide applies to the print media's attitudes towards immigration policy. Most opposition media favour relatively open migration policies and question the motives of the Zimbabwe Citizenship Act, while state media support government's ongoing efforts to revoke dual citizen rights.⁵⁴ Critics argue that the Citizenship Act was aimed mainly at the white minority in the country (many of whom also have British passports) and that the state is using the Act to remove individuals suspected of supporting the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).⁵⁵

Zimbabwe's deteriorating economic position and political instability also mean that migration reports in the media are much more focused on emigration. Stories are mainly about members of the white minority involved in commercial farms who are the main targets of the government's land reform programme, but they also discuss the exodus of (primarily black) political refugees and economic migrants. The state-owned and supporting media question the motives of those leaving, including their patriotism, while the independent press appears more accepting and supportive of the rationale behind the large-scale exodus.⁵⁶

These results confirm the conclusions of a series of studies by the independent Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) group which has accused the state-owned media of "using the same strategy as the government-controlled radio in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide, which actively stoked inter-ethnic violence."⁵⁷ Through its monopoly of broadcasting, state media have aired a constant deluge of news bulletins and commentaries in which Mugabe is praised, and the British government, the opposition MDC and "foreigners" are blamed for the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe. The same applies to its print media outlets.

How does one explain this divide between state-owned and state-supportive media on the one hand and the independent press on the other? The most probable explanation is that immigration has become a flash point for larger political and economic debates in the country and the print media have simply taken up sides accordingly. In this respect, migration debates in the press may have little to do with public attitudes towards migrants or levels of xenophobia in the press corps itself.

Having said that, there is less inflammatory and sensational language about immigration in the Zimbabwean press than there is in the South African press, particularly as it applies to migrants from other African countries. Only 5% of articles in Zimbabwe refer to migrants as "job stealers", only 10% refer to migrants as "criminals" and only 9% refer to migrants as "illegals." The cumulative total shows that only 19% of articles make at least one negative reference to migrants (see Table 3),

considerably lower than South Africa's 52%.

It may be that independent Zimbabwean journalists are less xenophobic than their South African counterparts, given the lower levels of xenophobia in the Zimbabwean population as a whole. It may also be that Zimbabwean journalists – at least those with the independent press – are more attuned to migration debates than their South African counterparts, having dealt with the issue since the early 1980s, soon after Zimbabwe's independence.

A final possibility may be that the independent press in Zimbabwe is disposed towards a more liberal immigration regime in the country, for the same reasons outlined above for the (neo)liberal press in South Africa. In other words, the independent press in Zimbabwe is broadly supportive of basic human rights and pan-African integration, as well as big business concerns about access to labour. Moreover, to the extent that the opposition MDC has also become increasingly neoliberal in its general political and economic orientation, it would follow that the opposition press would be more attuned to neoliberal, pro-immigration positions.⁵⁸

BOTSWANA

In Botswana the state also controls important elements of the print media. Government owns the only countrywide news agency, Botswana Press Agency (BOPA), which provides much of the copy for the state and independent print media and it owns the largest daily newspaper, the Botswana Daily News.⁵⁹ There is also legislation aimed at curbing press freedom. In 2000, the Media Institute of Southern Africa published a 62-page report of media-unfriendly laws and practices in the country. Much of the abuse involves informal harassment of the media or bullying of writers and editors by government officials.⁶⁰ The government has also been known to punish newspapers whose reporting or editorial comment displeases them by suspending advertising. Nevertheless, Botswana has an independent press which has managed to "earn credibility for its critical and investigative journalism over the years."⁶¹

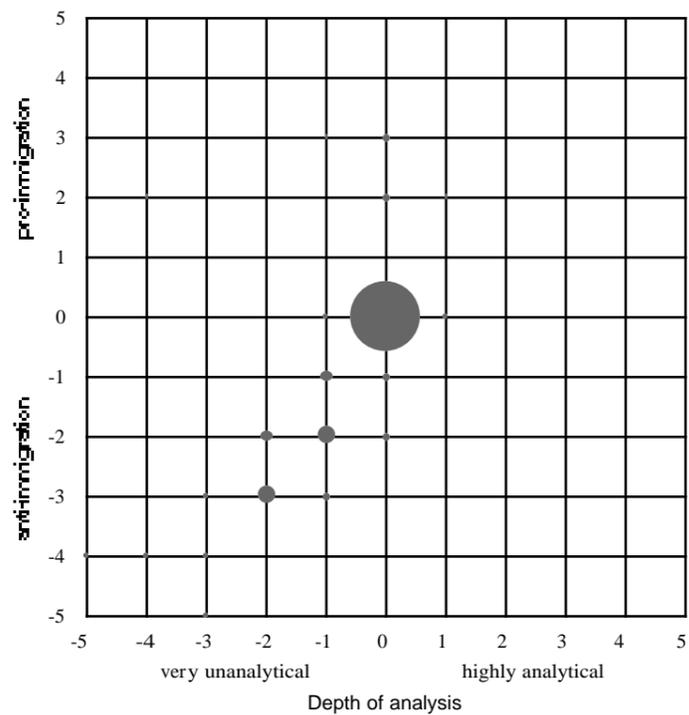
Another concern with media in the region is that skill levels tend to be quite low, characterized by "numerous misleading front page headlines, inaccurate reports usually retracted by an apology the next day, superficially researched articles and untruthful reports."⁶² In Botswana, for example, "the majority of Botswana journalists, government and private, are secondary school graduates, young and inexperienced, with no formal media training. Left alone with little mentoring or guidance, the young reporter has to find his or her own way... Even BOPA (Botswana

Press Agency) messengers and drivers have been pressed into service as reporters.”⁶³

Despite the relative freedom of the press in Botswana, newspapers in that country have produced, on average, the most xenophobic coverage of the three countries surveyed. As Figure 4 illustrates, the bulk of the 140 articles analyzed were anti-immigrant and unanalytical (i.e. most of the sample falls into the bottom-left quadrant of the grid). News items, editorials and letters to the editor were largely superficial, repeated the worst stereotypes of refugees and migrants and blamed immigrants for crime or for unfair competition in a scarce job market.

Figure 4: Botswana press coverage (2000-2003)

Attitude toward immigration



Close to one quarter of the articles made reference to migrants as “job stealers” (24%), almost a third (30%) referred to migrants as “criminals”, and 34% made reference to migrants as “illegals.” More than one third of reports make negative references to other African countries (37%) or used sensational language to describe migration (38%). In total, almost half (45%) of the articles in the Botswana sample had at least one negative reference to migration (see Table 3).

Where migrants were referred to as criminals, or mentioned in connection with an illegal activity, their country of origin was mentioned 26% of the time, serving to nationalize the alleged crime. A number of reports single out Namibians and South Africans.⁶⁴ Zimbabweans bear the brunt of this national targeting and are “the most likely victims of police harassment, public prejudice, stereotyping and debasement.”⁶⁵ *Mmegi*, for example, writes of an “influx” of “illegal immigrants” of which “over 90 percent of them [are] Zimbabweans.”⁶⁶

While the government-owned press and BOPA are generally guilty of these kinds of xenophobic sentiments, so too is the country’s independent press. A case in point is a report in the *Mmegi* on October 20, 2000, which editorializes on “the infiltration of [foreign] quacks and under-qualified practitioners in the country’s health system”. In another story in the same edition a reporter writes about a “Chinese racket” to ensure that “a lot of them were brought into this country.”⁶⁷

What are the reasons for this xenophobic coverage? Once again the explanations are complex, and once again they differ somewhat from the other countries surveyed. One reason that has been cited is the lack of training of journalists, creating situations where journalists fail to probe facts or question unsubstantiated statements, racist sentiments, or spurious claims.⁶⁸

The reliance on electronic and print news sources from South Africa may be a second explanation given the high levels of xenophobic rhetoric in that country’s press. According to Nyamnjoh “Botswana are literally at the mercy of the media and agenda setters of South Africa.”⁶⁹ Botswana is also dependent on other international wire services, illustrated by the high proportion of ‘ready to print’ news articles in the Botswana sample (e.g. Agence France Presse (AFP) and Reuters).

A final explanation for high levels of xenophobia may be the most simple of all: Botswana are highly xenophobic and the media is simply reflecting these attitudes and behaviours. Moreover, parliamentarians, members of the House of Chiefs, police and immigration spokespeople are regularly quoted making xenophobic remarks.⁷⁰ Anti-foreigner sentiments are often invoked in political campaign speeches.⁷¹ Uninterrupted one-party rule since independence in 1966, combined with weak civil society organizations, may also have resulted in an unhealthy reliance on sources emanating from the state.

Finally, anti-foreigner rhetoric may be linked to ongoing debates in the country about national identity. Nyamnjoh suggests that “the customary Tswana policy of inclusion is under pressure...in an era of accelerated flows of capital and migrants.”⁷² He argues that in the first years of independence there was a general consensus around the need to promote Tswana culture and language. The state media played a major role

in promoting and enforcing this trend. More recently, tensions over entitlements between the Tswana majority and minority groups such as BaKalanga (derided in the same way as Zimbabweans and equated with the latter because of their origin in northern Botswana) are commonplace. These debates are reflected in an increased media focus on minority grievances and questions of Tswana dominance within a heterogeneous society.⁷³ Interestingly, and in direct contrast to Zimbabwe, whites from Europe, North America and South Africa are generally not subjected to the same xenophobic treatment and rhetoric as blacks from other African countries or Asians (Indians and Chinese in particular).⁷⁴

What, then, explains the existence of the (albeit small) pro-immigration coverage in Botswana (the upper-right quadrant of Figure 4)? As small as it is, this pro-immigration coverage does exist and reflects the fact that not all journalists and editors in Botswana are poorly trained or xenophobic. Some no doubt pride themselves on the “customary Tswana tradition” of inclusion and reflect this in their writing (or by allowing others to write). Botswana has had a reputation in the past of being welcoming to immigrants and this tradition does still exist in places.⁷⁵

Finally, there is the possibility that some journalists, editors and newspaper owners in Botswana share the same interest as big business in ensuring a relatively open door migration regime (the same argument that has been made above in the cases of Zimbabwe and South Africa). There are large domestic and multinational firms operating in Botswana – including many large South African companies – that are just as likely to want guaranteed access to imported skilled labour in Botswana as they do elsewhere. That some journalists/editors should share this ideology – or that big business could persuade them to do so – is once again not hard to imagine.

NAMIBIA

In Namibia, where xenophobia is high amongst the general population it comes as little surprise that the media appears extremely xenophobic as well.⁷⁶ Migrants and refugees are typically portrayed as “illegal”, crime is associated with Angolans and Zimbabweans, and regular warnings of an “influx” of refugees from Angola are repeated in sensational ways, often courtesy of government spokespeople.⁷⁷ Disputes among refugees are often depicted as faction fighting between different “tribal” groups who bring their conflicts to Namibia. If not promoting tribalism, refugees are depicted as cunning and cheating. In one case, refugees are accused of starting fights in a refugee camp in order to have authorities repatriate them to a “first world” country.⁷⁸

There is also a tendency in Namibia to brand any opponent of the ruling party as a member or sympathizer of the former rebel movement (UNITA) or as aiding secessionist elements in the northern part of Namibia. The Minister of Home Affairs has even accused high court judges, when they make immigration rulings against his department, of being foreigners. Much of this rhetoric comes from state-owned media, which is increasingly seen as a propaganda machine for a ruling party which has itself become increasingly anti-foreign. In August, 2002, President Sam Nujoma declared himself head of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, at the same time as concerns were growing about authoritarianism in the government's approach to the media.

Nonetheless, there is an independent press in Namibia's media which has been critical of dominant ideas. The leading independent newspaper, *The Namibian*, rivals some of the best independent newspapers in the subcontinent, and its coverage of migration has sometimes differed from the public's and government's xenophobic stance.⁷⁹

CONCLUSION

Overall the press in Southern Africa is largely xenophobic, suggesting a difficult, uphill battle for advocates of a more tolerant and migrant-friendly print media. There are signs of a shifting, albeit polarized, approach to coverage of the issues – at least in South Africa – but xenophobic writing and editorializing in that country remains a concern as well.

Educational campaigns to address xenophobia in the press will need to take into account this complex (and shifting) terrain. There are no easy explanations for why the problem exists and no easy solutions. What is required is a multifaceted and highly contextualized approach that takes into account nuances of xenophobia within and across countries in the region.

At one level, any shift away from anti-foreigner rhetoric should be met with relief. Xenophobia in the region has led to harassment, abuse and even death for non-citizens. But we cannot simply assume that pro-immigrant coverage in the press is going to improve the lives of migrants in the region. As business seeks ways of reducing its costs through the intensified use of cheaper, more compliant foreign labour, there will be new human rights concerns that arise (as has already happened in the agricultural sector in certain parts of South Africa) and for which there is considerable international precedent (e.g. Mexican farm workers in California, Pakistani labourers in Saudi Arabia).⁸⁰

Nor can it be assumed that pro-immigration press coverage is inherently a good thing. Pro-immigration news coverage and editorials can

be politically and economically motivated in ways that do not necessarily lead to good journalism, resulting in problematic “facts” and analysis. These pro-immigration articles must therefore also be closely scrutinized for content, origin and intent. Only then can there be a truly balanced debate about xenophobia in the region’s press.

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- illiteracy rates for women are as high as 30%. Zimbabwe has the best literacy record in the region but illiteracy remains a problem in rural areas.
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