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Executive Summary Research Report on the Causes and Immediate Impact of Xenophobic Unrest in Gauteng

1. Introduction and Purpose

South Africa has in the past few weeks been engulfed in barbaric and embarrassing social unrest. Evidence of this has been the violence of locals towards foreigners and, in a minority of cases, other South Africans generally considered as borderline *kwerekweres*. Characteristics of this xenophobic violence have been murder, causing grievous bodily harm, looting, robbery and intimidation. The country and the world has explained away this social eruption as being caused by hatred of foreigners, with even some suggestions being made that South Africans are inherently xenophobic, and therefore victims of their disposition. This research was carried out during the social unrest to test the plausible hypothesis that South Africans are not different from anyone else in the world, and therefore that their behaviour is caused by circumstances beyond their control.

Accordingly, it is important to define what xenophobia is, before confirming that the recent aberrations come solely from the intensity of the South African xenophobia virus. **Xenophobia** is a fear or contempt of that which is foreign or unknown, especially of strangers or foreign people. It comes from the Greek words ξένος (*xenos*), meaning "foreigner," "stranger," and φόβος (*phobos*), meaning "fear." The term is typically used to describe a fear or dislike of foreigners or of people significantly different from oneself.

The study was conducted among a total sample of 2000 respondents in Gauteng province, 1000 of them directly sampled from hotspots of xenophobia, and another 1000 from a random sample of the residents of Gauteng not residing in areas where the attacks happened. The research was conducted by face to face interviews using the intercept methodology in the sampled areas. The affected hotspots in the sample included Germiston, Alexandra, Diepsloot, Atteridgeville, Mamelodi, Thokoza and Thembisa. Some of the affected foreigners were interviewed at police stations and churches where they were seeking temporary refuge. In all the affected areas 50% of the sample were South Africans, and the other 50% were foreigners.

2. Summary of Main Findings

2.1 Not Sustainable

Of the foreigners interviewed 19% had arrived in South Africa in the past 12 months, quite a substantial addition to an already large population. In the past month alone another 2% had been added to the population of foreigners intending to stay in South Africa (projecting a possible 25% plus annual growth rate). There is a glaring statistical anomaly that while the South African population growth rate is estimated at 2.4%, that of foreigners can be as high as 19% in the past 12 months. The situation is clearly unsustainable as the pressure brought to bear on resources is borne by the poorest of the poor in society. Discounting the abnormality of the Zimbabwean situation, at the current rate of foreigner entry into South Africa with the intention of settling, the population of foreigners could exceed that of indigenous South Africans within 45 years. If you realistically assume the pessimistic population of foreigners of 10 million, rather than the optimistic one of 6 million, that number could even be as low as 39 years. While acts of brutality must be condemned in the strongest terms it is quite clear that with porous border posts, the brunt of lack of effective immigration planning and controls is being shouldered by South Africans in townships and

informal settlements. This situation has been and remains a time bomb. A question has to be asked about the number of alternatives available to the local person where survival increasingly becomes that of the fittest. South Africa's Growth Domestic Product (GDP) per capita at about \$10600 has declined since 2005 from \$11100. It however remains so high that when compared to some of its neighbours, the incentive for settling in a democratic South Africa is so high that some form of immigration planning and controls are necessary. The per capita GDP for Zimbabwe is \$500, that of Mozambique and DRC \$900 and \$300, respectively, and that of Malawi \$800. With such disparities in place, not instituting any controls and not having any visa requirement, as is the case with Mozambique may be ill-advised if there are no contingency plans to deal with the number of people who would wish to settle illegally in South Africa in light of the opportunities offered and the attractive prospect of the 2010 soccer world cup.

2.2 Home Sweet Home

In the wake of the xenophobic attacks, 42% of the foreigners divulged that they wanted to leave the country over periods ranging from one month to over 12 months. Not all of them wanted to go back to their country. 6% wanted to go to another country, to pursue fresh opportunities. The majority considered South Africa to be their home and had no departure plans.

2.3 Immediate Causes of Xenophobic Attacks

Respondents were asked what in their opinion triggered the xenophobic confrontation. The top two causes related to job opportunities being taken by foreigners by selling themselves cheap and on the other hand committing serious crimes in South Africa. A third reason which is linked to the statistical evidence of the lack of planned immigration was that South Africans in the affected areas were getting literally suffocated by the uncontrollable number of foreigners with no apparent government plan to accommodate the needs of additional people.

Such a trend was leading to the dilution of South African culture, many foreigners sometimes being resented for taking the hand of South Africans in marriage. Foreigners also polluted the environment by almost indiscriminately selling an array of goods and services everywhere. Some of them left a trail of dirt in the places where they sold their goods. South Africans were irked by the fact that some of the goods sold included drugs, 'fong kong' and other wares acquired illegally. The prevailing culture of crime and moral decline was in some aspects attributed to the economic and cultural invasion by foreigners. The police and other government officials at such departments as home affairs, housing, among others were perceived to pathologically accept bribes from foreigners leading to the current cocktail of confusion and anarchy. Consequently, many foreigners could pass as locals and through bribes jump the queue for such facilities as housing that are meant for struggling South African citizens.

Zimbabweans, Mozambicans and other foreigners directly affected by the attacks were of the strong opinion that South Africans were jealous of their enterprising nature. They viewed South Africans as lazy and wanting a windfall of gifts to be delivered on their lap while foreigners used their creativity to make a living. This jealousy was believed to have developed into hatred. These foreigners were joined by the middle class South Africans who did not reside in the affected areas, some of whom cited ignorance and illiteracy as causes of xenophobia. Other criticisms leveled at xenophobic South Africans included greed, insecurity and hatred of blacks, while welcoming white foreigners. Some 4% of respondents thought that the unrest was a politically motivated plot to unsettle the country and blemish its international standing.

Reason for Xenophobic Attacks	2000
Foreigners accepting cheap labour \ taking all job opportunities	32%
Foreigners committing crime \ rape \ theft \ fraud in our country	31%
Uncontrollable number of foreigners	18%
Hatred \ jealousy \ most foreigners own businesses	16%
Foreigners own houses by corrupt means that are meant for South Africans	16%
South Africans too lazy to work \ Selective in terms of jobs	11%
Poverty \ Lack of jobs	11%
Foreigners are selling illegal products \ pirate products \ stuffs \ drugs	11%
Foreigners are diluting South African culture \ marrying South Africans	8%
Ignorance \ illiterate people	5%
SA government \ police accepting bribes from foreigners	5%
Inflation \ Cost of living	5%
South Africans are tribalists \ Hatred of blacks by other blacks	4%
South Africans are greedy \ selfish	4%
It is a political issue \ plot to unsettle South Africa	4%
South Africans are insecure \ threatened	4%

2.4 Immediate Impact of the Xenophobic Attacks

At least half of each of South Africans were left feeling negative and empty as a result of the social unrest. South Africans tended to see themselves largely as selfish and self-compromising, while the middle class saw lower pockets of the local population as acting in desperation. They concluded that foreigners were desperate, but also as prone to selfishness. Foreigners returned the favour by seeing South Africans as selfish and self-destructive. In all, the unrests embarrassed and annoyed all pockets equally there being no chance of winner. To that end, it is most unlikely that these events were premeditated. Rather it does seem quite clearly that the demographic considerations not apparent to government, and its susceptibility to underestimating the impact of corruption are beginning to take a toll. As in any society the poor are the most vulnerable, while the middle and upper classes will remain sufficiently insulated for some time.

3. Conclusion

South Africa is currently being hit by the consequences of lack of planning. Whether one is looking at prison capacity, electricity, public transportation, HIV/AIDS, xenophobia among other challenges facing the country today, all these point to the fruits of planning based on the most optimistic assumptions, where nothing could conceivably go wrong. Save for one or two departments, there does not seem to be any contingency planning for the worst case scenario. We assume that the South African population is 48 million people based on those that can be enumerated. It seems quite possible in fact that the population is 50 to 52 million people already, due to the sieve like borders and the number of unaccounted for illegal immigrants. If this is correct, as we are convinced it is, the country's per Capita GDP would fall from \$10600 to approximately \$9800.

This study has not been able to prove that South Africans hate other people more than is natural to be apprehensive of people different to yourself. Xenophobia is caused by the poor, jobless people who have a shortage of basic amenities being cocooned by an increasing cost of living in the face of cultural challenges and more people to compete for the same resources while nobody else in the country is taking note, or doing anything about the situation.