

LANDSCAPE OF FEAR

Crime, Corruption and Murder in the Greater Kruger Region

Julian Rademeyer

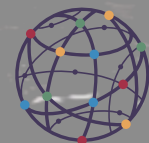
Director – East and Southern Africa

Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime

julian.rademeyer@globalinitiative.net



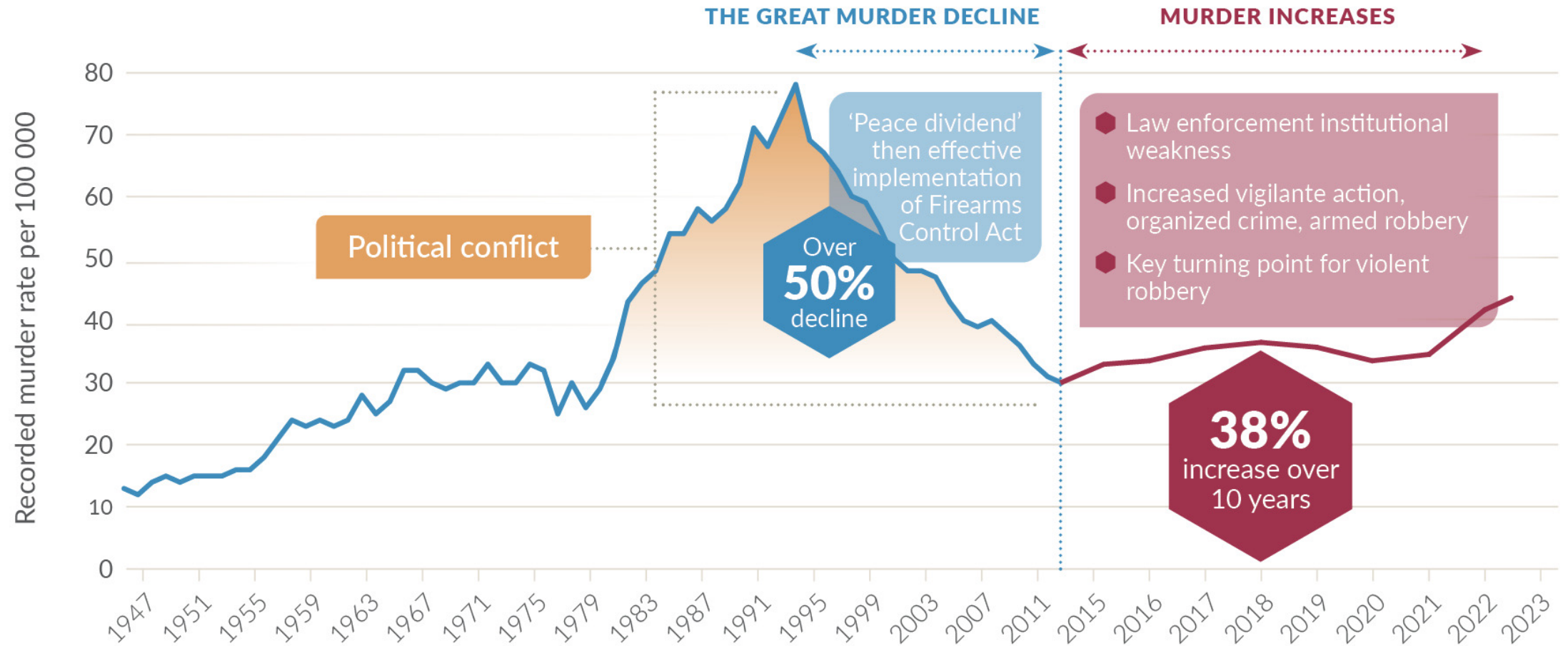
This project is funded
by the European Union



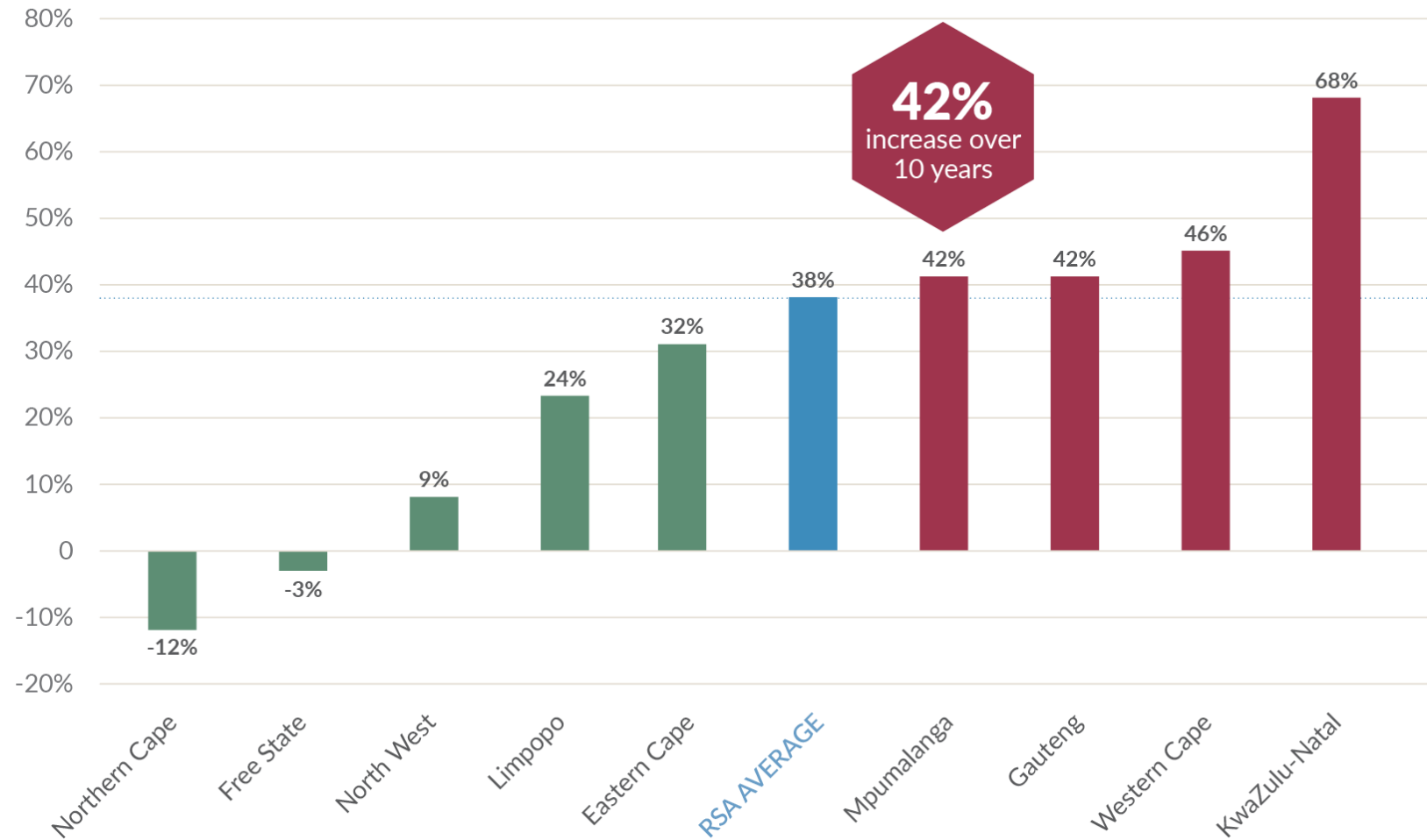
**GLOBAL
INITIATIVE**
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME



The long view

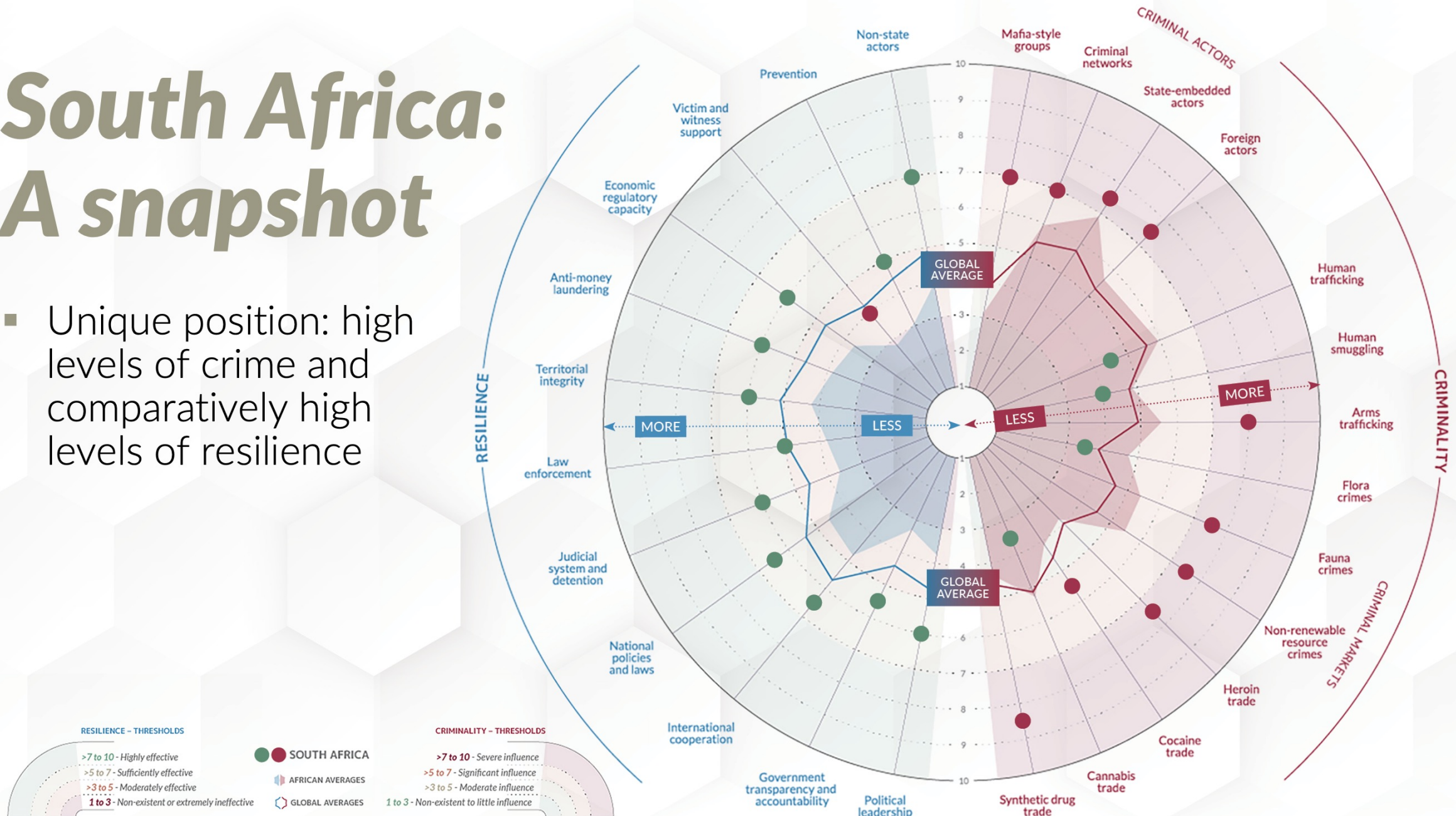


The murder rate per province, 2012-2022



South Africa: A snapshot

- Unique position: high levels of crime and comparatively high levels of resilience



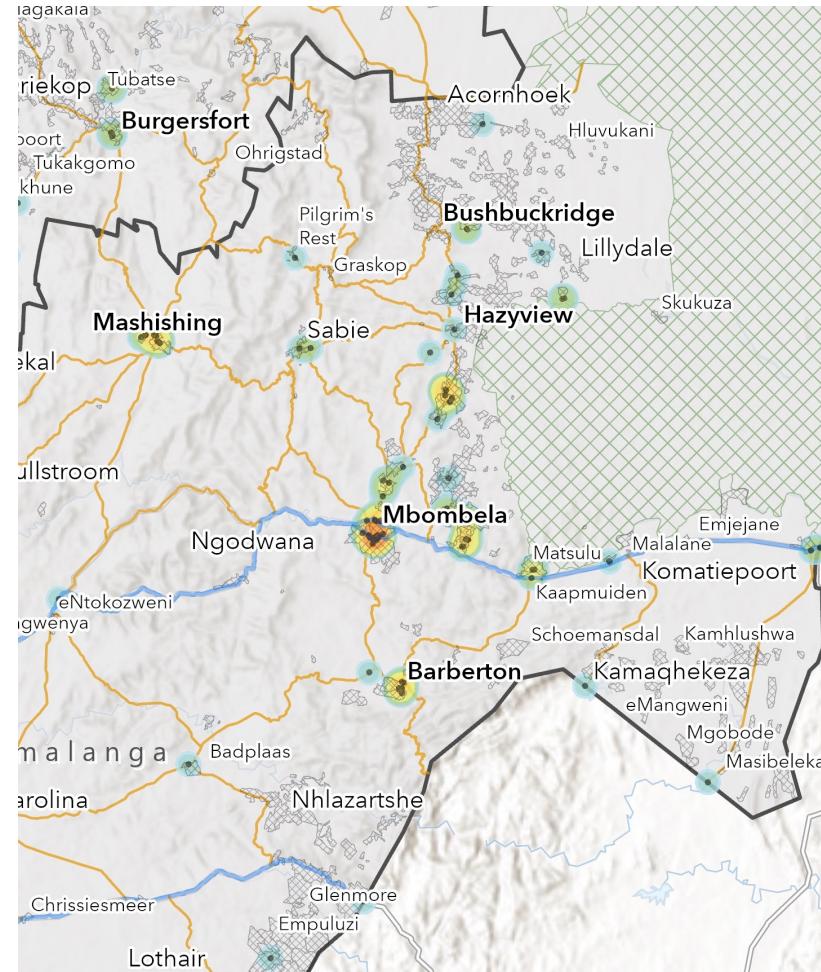
A CORROSIVE THREAT

- Kruger is not an insulated wildlife paradise. Its struggle mirrors SA's struggle against organized crime
- Exists in rapidly urbanizing landscape where criminal economies and violent local and transnational networks are embedded and evolving
- Deep-seated inequality, crime and corruption have a profound impact on the greater Kruger region and the people who live in it
- Organised crime poses an existential threat to communities along the western, southern and eastern boundaries of the park



ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF GOVERNANCE

- 2.9 million people live within 50km of Kruger's boundary fence (*StatsSA 2019)
- Average unemployment at 46.5% (Nationally – 43.1%)
- Kruger's aesthetic beauty has 'little relevance' to many living along its borders
- 2021WWF/USAID study – participants said they saw no benefits from conservation
- Described poverty, inequality, unemployment as drivers of crime
- Communities tarred as poachers, subject to heavy-handed anti-poaching operations.



MPUMALANGA

Public Protest

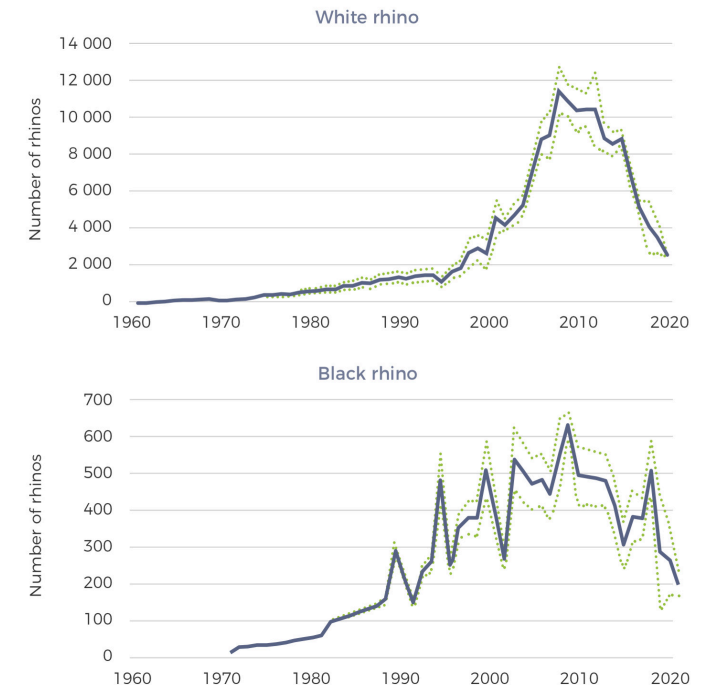
for the period
Sept 2020 to Sept 2022

Source: ISS CrimeHub

IMPACT ON KRUGER

- Between 2011 and 2020, Kruger's white rhino population fell 75%
- 15 years of low-level conflict, as long as wars of independence in Angola, and Mozambique, the bush war in Rhodesia and the Lebanese civil war
- The militarized strategy adopted in the park over the past decade has been largely unsuccessful
- Enormous psychological and physical impact
- There has been a severe breakdown in trust, staff cohesion and professionalism in the park.
- Corruption poses a greater threat than poaching
- Kruger staff exposed to criminal actors inside and outside the park
- Refreshing openness and a renewed drive to root out corruption and rebuild the park

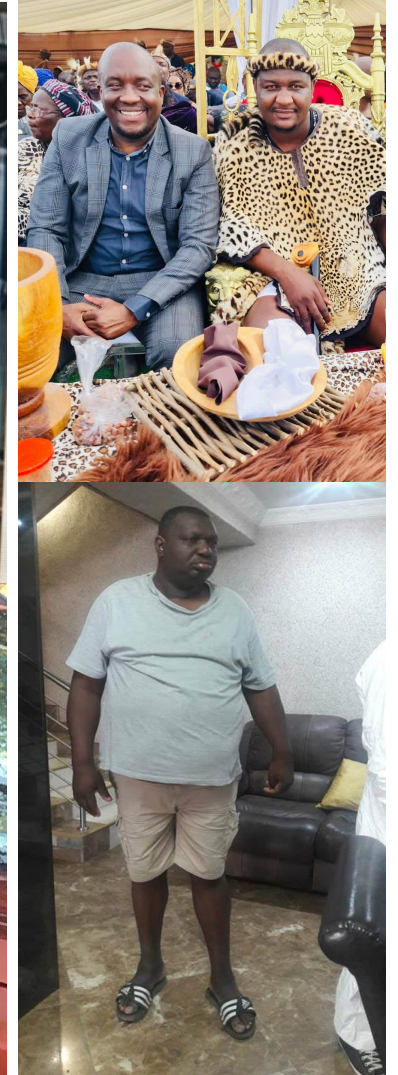
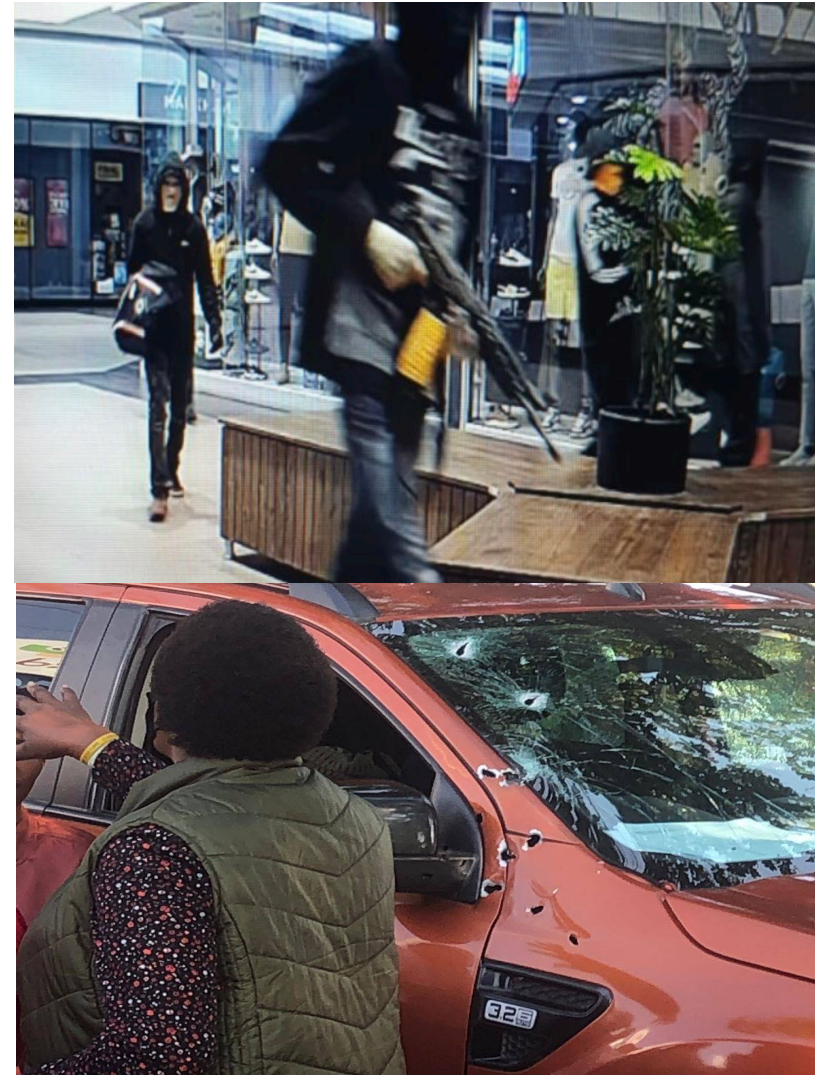
Chart 1: Population trends of white and black rhinos in Kruger since the first introduction of white rhino in 1961 and black rhino in 1971. The broken lines reflect 95% confidence intervals of estimates



Source: Ferreira et al, 2021, African Journal of Wildlife Research 51 (1) <https://doi.org/10.3957/056.051.0100>.

THE 'WILD EAST'

- Mpumalanga's violence and geographic position sets it apart
- Cash-in-transit heists, ATM bombings, kidnappings, hijackings, extortion, illegal mining, poaching
- Criminal syndicates with tentacles in a range of criminal markets
- Corruption a key enabler
- Province besieged by a litany of scandals and assassinations e.g. Muzi Manyathi , Anton Mzimba, Leroy Bruwer



RESPONSES

- Short-term reactive policing tactics must be replaced with long term strategy and targeted investigations
- Targeted investigations identifying high-level actors and the markets that cause the greatest harms
- Build critical financial investigations and intelligence functions in SAPS, but strategically in DPCI who have demonstrated ability to make inroads into OC
- Prosecutions of high-level actors
- Rebuild morale, professionalism, trust among staff and rangers
- Protections for whistleblowers, investigators and prosecutors



RESPONSES

- Long-term commitment from political leadership, SANParks and its board to address corruption transparently, fairly, swiftly and consistently
- Implement transparent and fair integrity management
- Rebuild professionalism, trust and motivation by embedding core values at leadership level and among staff
- Improve internal communications
- Strategic, targeted investigations and prosecutions of high-level actors , possible amnesties for low-level actors
- Create safe spaces and an independent whistleblowing mechanism

