

The Threat Environment – Possible Trigger Events for Anarchy in South Africa

By Roland de Vries – also in recognition to Roelof Hugo and my Community Safety Team concerning the identification of possible trigger events and risks, which could lead to anarchy in South Africa – 12 April 2024

Introduction

Let us think seriously about ongoing political turmoil and violent crime overwhelming South Africa and its dreadful consequences, as we build up to the next national election of May 2024!

Forewarned is forearmed, get your contingency plans in place well in time, in case of political shenanigans running askew – if you want peace prepare for the worst!

As the situation stands in South Africa today it is a tinderbox waiting for a trigger to explode into violence and destruction. Let us hold faith that this will not happen!

The South African State is failing and the risk of violent uprisings by long-suffering people is real. It is therefore necessary for communities to become self-reliant and take ownership of their own safety, as the state's law enforcement agencies are unable to guarantee neither their safety nor their well-being.

When will the next insurrection occur?

Current Reality

Ill-fated governance by the ANC for almost three decades and the outcomes of its national policy have caused an economic crisis in South Africa, the collapse of investment, poor economic growth, and the further deterioration in living standards. These mirror the chaotic state of governance and mismanagement in public administration and poor service delivery by the many district and local municipalities under ANC control. It seems that the ANC government does not have the ability – or perhaps the will - to escape from its self-inflicted wounds of corruption and mismanagement.

South Africa is hovering on the brink of a prolonged criminal surge by gangs and certain political organisations which could cause widespread further outbreaks of rebellion and anarchy like the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) insurrection in July-August 2021.

The ANC government and its security apparatus clearly do not possess the will or capability to protect its citizens adequately – and it follows that the less effective the state and private security organisations are in maintaining law and order, the greater the pressure will be on the broader community to protect itself from crime and terrorism.

Fortunately South Africa is endowed with wonderful people and has abundant fertile land and natural resources to ensure economic growth, development, and stability. Our people need to be supported and allowed to toil their soil!

The Underlying Threat Against South Africa

The underlying threat against South Africa – one which has become almost completely obscured by the current political in-fighting - is the looming possibility of an overthrow of law and order by criminals, which would include not just ordinary looting but also incitement to commit more deeds of wrong-doing and outright acts of terror. There are more than enough hands to do this ghastly work - not only ordinary lawbreakers motivated solely by greed, but also organised criminals and / or certain political groups, and individual destabilisers who are diligently pursuing their own extra-legal agendas.

It is also a fact that political and economic turmoil, and the consequent undermining of law and order can lead to escalating political and criminal conflict and even anarchy, if not managed or contained by the state. It can even degenerate into full-scale civil war with all the dreadful consequences we have seen among our neighbours and near-neighbours on this continent.

Anarchy Defined

Anarchy is a society being freely constituted without authorities or a governing body. It may also refer to a society or group of people that entirely rejects a set hierarchy - a state of lawlessness or political disorder due to the absence of governmental authority. On the other hand it is important to realise that the many peace-loving-law-abiding citizens in South Africa strive for peace and hold Faith for posterity.

Eighteen Possible Trigger Events for Anarchy (as Identified by Roelof Hugo and our Community Safety Team)

The July 2021 KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) insurrection was triggered by the jailing of Zuma. There is little doubt that it was instigated by political opponents of Ramaphosa who recognised an opportunity.

Considering the upcoming national election of 29 May 2024 it is difficult to determine what the trigger for the next uprising will be, due to the lack of a clear and up to date intelligence picture ... however it is certain that the instigation for large scale unrest could be done by any of a range of readily available criminals and /or revolutionary inclined political instigators.

Such criminals and political troublemakers referred to could grab opportunities presented by means of trigger events to insight further terror in our country. Eighteen Possible trigger events were identified in this regard – you could think of others:

(1) Political faction conflict, infighting and meaningless rhetoric. This includes extremist organisations fueling conflict; the negative effects of Operation Dudula and the possible outbreak of Xenophobia / Counter Xenophobia; and anti-lawlessness groups resorting to vigilantism.

- (2) Political assassinations of prominent political leaders, due to the culture of lawlessness and violence in the ANC and similar organisations and the current practice to continue with hard political intimidation and even assassinations.
- (3) The huge increase in serious crime – and the escalation thereof vertically (in intensity) and horizontally (geographically), such as were the case with the Senekal and Groblersdal incidents, where a single politically-inspired criminal incident had the potential to spark violence in an instant with a serious spill-over effect to other areas in our country.
- (4) The illegal expropriation of land by the government and land invasions by criminals (Zimbabwe style land grabs).
- (5) When numerous high profile ANC members are convicted of criminal charges (refer to the Zondo Commission State Capture Report and ongoing corruption, which is rife in governmental circles).
- (6) The jailing of prominent political leaders, as it happened with Zuma, which initiated the outbreak of the July-August 2021 insurrection.
- (7) Calls for and instigation of national shutdowns that turn into full-scale insurrection.
- (8) The financial collapse of the state and its inability to pay out social grants to impoverished citizens.
- (9) Heightened corruption in government circles and increased theft of state moneys, such as state pension funds.
- (10) Unemployment, poverty, hunger, living conditions and poor service delivery come to a point where the masses cannot tolerate it anymore.
- (11) Xenophobic attacks and counter Xenophobic attacks spill over into general anarchy (possible clashes between political parties).
- (12) The drastic increase in fuel / prices (shortages).
- (13) The total collapse of ESKOM (electricity supply).
- (14) The collapse of municipalities and its subsequent further reduction in basic service delivery (health, water, and sewerage).
- (15) The dramatic rise in ethnic conflict.
- (16) Increased acts of terrorism, such as gang warfare, town, farm and homestead attacks, hard intimidation, armed robberies, cash-in-transit heists (CIT) and the theft of arms and ammunition.
- (17) The conduct of certain political leaders and their resulting political outcries and calls for insurrection due to court cases, leading to their consequent arrest and detainment.
- (18) Collapse of the state due to ineffective governance.

Summary of Risks

Social unrest in South Africa sooner than later. Large scale uprising of the marginalised masses leading to violence, faction fighting, looting, killing and large-scale destruction of property.

Political instability. Political instability may result in an uprising as infighting among ANC factions and other political groupings spread. Acts of sabotage and terrorism may increase posing a serious threat to the stability of the country.

Economic instability. Increasingly high levels of violence, dissent, and dissatisfaction associated with labour unrest. Factors such as unemployment, poverty, inequality, and land reform may increase the risk.

The fragile nature of the South African State. Very little resilience is left in the South African state. Collapsing state institutions weakens the state's ability to respond to a crisis. A less serious incident may spiral out of control due to the state's inability to respond effectively and political factions may use the opportunity to escalate the situation to collapse the state.

Weak, ineffective criminal justice system. The National Director of Public Prosecutions, Adv. Shamila Battohi in October 2019 stated in the NPA's annual report that law enforcement in SA has all but collapsed. On 25 March 2022, she reported to Parliament that corruption in SA municipalities is overwhelming. In April 2022, she stated that law enforcement in SA is on life support. These statements from the NDPP paint a bleak picture of the criminal justice system in South Africa and open the way for criminals. It is clear from the July 2021 uprising in KZN that law enforcement is no deterrent to the masses and when triggered, they will resort to looting, violence, and destruction without any concern for the South African law and its law enforcement agencies.

Lack of capacity of law enforcement agencies to deal with large scale unrest. The July 2021 KZN uprising serves as a template for planning for the next wave of violent and destructive lawless activities. Few individual police station has the resources and skills to deal with large scale violence and destruction. Stations are reliant upon assistance from centralised specialist units which are themselves under-manned and under-equipped. The police leadership at this stage is unable to put contingency measures in place for the next wave of uprisings.

Socio-economic related challenges. Socio-economic related factors such as unemployment, poverty, inequality, lack of skills, underdevelopment, inadequate public services, crime, etc. serves to fuel the anger, desperation and hatred among the people. This requires just one trigger for them to go on a rampage.

High crime rate, which presents another form of state capture. The extremely high crime rate (also in government circles) impacts the country negatively on many levels. It creates a climate that is not conducive to investment thereby contributing to the deteriorating economy, it carries a huge cost of law enforcement efforts, and it results in losses to the business sector. A serious crime committed against a person or group of persons may result in violence e.g., the Senekal and Groblersdal incidents.

“Construction, Coal and other type Mafia” threats. A growing coercion by “mafia” style organised criminal groupings is sweeping across the country, crippling construction projects and small businesses with threats and bribes. A more recent modus operandi is the killing of ward councillors if their demands are not met. This threat may lead to businesses dis-investing and violence when businesses refuse to cooperate. It is real that the deplorable cadre deployment practice by the ANC government leads to the proliferation of mafia type conduct.

Militant communities and gang warfare (e.g., Cape Flats, Marikana and KZN). Communities under financial stress due to unemployment and poverty may resort to violence if their demands

to be included in economic development are not met. The outcomes may be violence, death, and destruction. Militant communities are in existence in KZN (e.g., the Indian–Moslem community of Phoenix) and may spread to other parts of the country. The latter considers the threat of organised crime and the proliferation of criminal gangs and juvenile gangs. Jihadi terrorist groups are on the rise in Africa and is a threat to the stability and security of several sub-Saharan countries.

Risk posed by Zimbabwe style land invasions. Even the Economic Freedom Front (EFF) warned in parliament that illegal expropriation of land will lead to civil war. Land invasions are actively encouraged by the BLF and the EFF. The risk of violence caused by land invasions is real.

Risk posed by xenophobic attacks and counter attacks. Xenophobic harassment and violence against African and Asian foreigners living in South Africa are ongoing and can become lethal at times. Foreigners are scapegoated and blamed for economic insecurity, crimes, and government failures to deliver services and have been targets of nationwide protests and shutdowns characterised by mob violence, looting, and torching of their businesses. Trucks driven by foreign drivers are often targeted (All Trucker Foundation). Operation Dudula is active and spreading around the country and is aimed at illegal immigrants living and working in South Africa. The recent killing of a Zimbabwe citizen in Diepsloot highlights the threat of violence. The danger for communities around the country is when these attacks start spilling over into the suburbs and other adjacent areas.

The Threat Posed by the Impoverished, Unemployed, Hungry, and Desperate Masses of South Africa – This is Serious

The various townships of South Africa are brewing pots of discontentment. This deplorable situation flows from dismal poverty and unemployment, which leads to hardship and hunger and even starvation in many parts of our country. This is due to underdevelopment, inequality (most unequal country in the world), a lack of services, and a lack of governance structures which results in self-help groups/criminal groups filling the gaps. It is estimated that nearly half of the adult population of South Africa lives in poverty. This leads to discontent with their economic prospects and unemployment of more than 35% continuously stoking the fires of discontentment – the outcomes are vicious crime and insurrection.

These poverty-stricken people mostly live in informal settlements. There is no social net that effectively supports people living in such informal dwelling places. Many informal settlements are underdeveloped with no formal governance structures and minimum services if any. These settlements turn into lawless communities as policing is inadequate, leading in turn to hard intimidation and / or vigilantism. Large sections of these communities' experience food insecurity daily – the result is poverty crime, proliferation of crime and insurrection.

The government's utter failure to protect the borders and enforce the country's immigration laws results in millions of undocumented foreigners crossing our borders and trying to earn a living in the country. They live in informal settlements. These foreigners do not receive government grants, and when they cannot secure an income, they often resort to crime, although government denies this. High crime rates are triggers for vigilantism from the rest of the community and

often results in the death of suspects. It is easy to manipulate these impoverished residents into violence as they have nothing to lose – the result is xenophobia and insurrection.

Threat Indications

Here are a few examples of indications of particular threat levels, to support proactive planning and the activation of contingency plans.

Please determine your own threat indications for your specific areas to initiate appropriate safety actions, which should be done well in time.

A THREAT INDICATIONS FOR APPROACHING POLITICAL UNREST AND VIOLENCE (LEVEL 1) – COLIGNY MAY 2017 RIOTING SCENARIO

- Noticeable unrest in local communities.
- Reporting of intimidation and people staying away from work.
- SAPS warnings of impending conflict situation.
- Application by local activist groups for holding of demonstrations.
- Delay of municipal and other services.
- Indications of escalating conflict in social media.
- Reporting of impending conflict by informants.
- High profile unmarked vehicles and buses approaching conflict areas.
- Media presence noticed at potential conflict areas.
- Warning by other organisations and community safety centres of impending conflict.
- Sporadic looting and arson, and illegal closure of roads.

B: THREAT INDICATIONS FOR APPROACHING POLITICAL UNREST AND VIOLENCE (LEVEL 2) – ANARCHY (e.g., KZN 2021)

- Sudden and organized increase in strikes affecting service delivery; with specific reference to transport, food, telecommunications, electricity, and water.
- Simultaneous and widespread protests, which are violent and illegal.
- Sudden and increasing influx and looting of residential areas and business centres.
- Taxi violence and sudden and increasing blockage of highways.
- Deliberate, organized destruction, arson, and damage to infrastructure.
- Organized obstruction and sabotage of telecommunications systems.
- Significant increase in provocative political statements, threats and hate speech (incitement).
- Sudden increase in racial conflict and incidents.
- Sharpening of high-profile political assassinations.
- Emerging unsafe conditions, requiring the announcement of widespread emergencies.
- Sudden increase in illegal entry / occupation of private property.

- Sudden increase in violent crime, which includes robberies of weapons, farm attacks, farm murders and money.
- Sudden withdrawal of high-profile political families abroad.
- Increased media interest and statements regarding the emerging conflict situation.
- Increase in military forces in neighbouring states.
- Deployment of army in conflict areas.
- Sporadic outbreak of xenophobic attacks and conflict nationwide..
- Increasing attacks on and exploitation of soft targets.
- Sudden and increasing violence and racial incidents in schools and other academic institutions.
- Visible revolutionary incitement and mobilization of inciting masses (for example, Article 25 ground meetings).
- Increasing statements by endangered minority groups to resort to violence and take the law into their own hands.
- Drastic increase in violent crime in general.
- Increasing and visible indecision of the government to act.
- Visible increase in the actions of veterans, who appear armed in uniform.
- Increasing inability of the state to pay off its debt.
- Drastic and visible weakening of the economy.
- Sudden government action to disarm civilians.
- Increasing reluctance on the part of the government to protect minority groups.
- Arrest of leading figures speaking out against unsafe conditions in the country.
- Increasing bomb threats and incidents.
- Obvious identification and victimization of persons forming part of endangered minority groups.
- Deliberate attacks on members of minority groups and extermination of families / groups.
- Sudden increase in perversion of justice and contempt of court orders.

C: THREAT INDICATIONS FOR APPROACHING POLITICAL UNREST AND VIOLENCE (LEVEL 3 AND 4) – ANARCHY (e.g., PROLONGED ANARCHY, GANG WARFARE, FACTION FIGHTING, XENOPHOBIA AND CIVIL WAR)

- Declaration of a state of emergency by the state.
- Announcement of widespread emergencies by the government.
- Deployment of the SANDF in conflict areas.

- Dramatic increase in strikes affecting service delivery; with specific reference to transport, food, telecommunications, electricity, and water.
- Escalation in intensity and geographical expansion of widespread protests, which are violent and illegal.
- Dramatic increase in the looting of residential areas and business centres.
- Dramatic increase in taxi violence, national shutdowns and blockage of highways.
- Heightened deliberate, organised destruction, arson, and damage to infrastructure.
- Increase in organised obstruction and sabotage of telecommunications systems.
- Blatant increase in provocative political statements, threats and hate speech (incitement).
- Dramatic increase in racial conflict and incidents.
- High-profile political assassinations continue unchecked.
- Dramatic increase in illegal entry / occupation of private property.
- Dramatic increase in violent crime, which includes robberies of weapons, farm attacks, farm murders and money.
- Withdrawal of high-profile political families abroad.
- Dramatic increase in media interest and statements regarding the emerging conflict situation.
- Dramatic increase in military forces in neighbouring states.
- Dramatic increase in xenophobic attacks and conflict nationwide.
- Dramatic increase of attacks on and exploitation of soft targets.
- Dramatic increase of violence and racial incidents in schools and other academic institutions.
- Visible revolutionary incitement and mobilisation of inciting masses (for example, Article 25 ground meetings).
- Increasing statements by endangered minority groups to resort to violence and take the law into their own hands.
- Drastic increase in violent crime in general.
- Widespread political vigilantism.
- Increasing and visible indecision of the government to act.
- Visible increase in the actions of veterans, who appear armed in uniform.
- Increasing inability of the state to pay off its debt.
- Drastic and visible weakening of the economy.
- Sudden government action to disarm civilians.
- Increasing reluctance on the part of the government to protect minority groups.
- Arrest of leading figures speaking out against unsafe conditions in the country.

- Increasing bomb threats and incidents.
- Identification and victimization of persons forming part of endangered minority groups.
- Deliberate attacks on members of minority groups and extermination of families / groups.
- Dramatic increase in perversion of justice and contempt of court orders.

Closing Remarks

The use of words in the daily language of our people such as failing state, failed state, famine, violence, civil insurrection, terrorism, sabotage, civil war and even coup (a sudden, violent, and illegal seizure of power from a government) are reasons for serious concern about our country's future.

The fact that the ruling ANC is described as a criminal enterprise indicates a cause for real concern about the future security for the citizens of this country. This describes the narrative of a lawless country, with an inept government prone to corruption on all levels.

The fact that the ANC government is not governing its police and other security structures well, is discussed openly in influential circles locally and abroad. Is it any wonder that the economy is in a deplorable state, especially when unemployment is at a record high, when crime figures are among the highest in the world, and when millions of impoverished people with nothing to lose live in disgraceful circumstances, how can the country face any other future than disorder.

Red flags must go up and citizens must take note of the threat to their safety and security.

Let us work together in the process of safeguarding our people and in creating hope and trust in Faith.

Good planning saves lives and leads to action and economic-social stability ... let us keep on initiating community safety driven initiatives by our people, for our people!

“The inevitable is only what a fool hasn't the wit to avoid” - Somerset Maugham!