

“Regime Change”? South Africa Targeted by Western Destabilization Efforts?

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Issues surrounding a minimum wage bill, education and services are being utilized in attempts to overthrow the African National Congress

South African President Jacob Zuma has come out publically to state that there are efforts underway by the West to undermine the African National Congress (ANC) government which has held power for over 22 years.

A myriad of challenges are facing the South African ruling party including an economic recession, the bringing of several allegations about corruption within the office of the presidency, a declining stock market and national currency along with increasingly worsening relations with the United States.

In Africa there are numerous examples from the post-colonial period of the last five decades where the intelligence and military apparatuses of the imperialist states have sought to reverse the forward progress of the masses of workers, farmers, youth and their leadership. In the recent period in the South American state of Brazil, the first woman President Dilma Rousseff of the Worker’s Party, was forcefully removed from office in a political coup.

In addition to the decline in the South African economy largely due to the overall world crisis which has driven down commodity prices and systematically disinvested from the emerging states, there has been a fracturing of the national democratic movement and the workers organizations over contentious debates surrounding a way forward. In an October report delivered at the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) 17th Congress in Durban, South Africa, Dr. Blade Nzimande, the Secretary General of the South African Communist Party (SACP), placed these contradictions inside the national democratic revolution and the largest trade union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), within a broader context of the desire by the imperialist states to reverse the advances of the liberation struggles.

In a recent article published by the Agence France Press (AFP), President Zuma emphasized that: “Western powers want to remove the ANC because they do not want the ANC to develop relations with those countries which helped the party in the anti-apartheid struggle.” This statement was made by President Zuma on Nov. 19 laid the blame directly on certain Western countries which do not wish the ruling African National Congress success.

Zuma spoke to ANC supporters at a rally in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga Province that the imperialist states were utilizing some ANC members to further their agenda, adding that some party members had been won over to the views of Western countries. The president

said that those ANC members calling for his resignation were in fact serving the interests of the Western states.

The Political Economy of Destabilization

Since 1994 there have been substantial reforms initiated under the ANC government. There has been the construction of housing for the poor and working class, the expansion of healthcare, the breaking down of racial barriers in public facilities, along with access to household utilities and clean drinking water.

However, the fundamental relations and ownership of production remains under the control of the capitalist class. As a manifestation of modern-day capitalism, high unemployment, rising costs of living including education fees as well as problems associated with service delivery, have continued.

“In all other countries, the majority controls everything from politics, economy and defense . . . It’s only in this country (South Africa) where we don’t have economic freedom. It’s controlled by the minority and those who oppressed us,” Zuma stressed. (AFP, Nov. 21)

The president went on to say: “That is why they are scared that we will take away this economy. They want to take away the strength of the ANC because they know the ANC is the only organization trying to balance the scales.”

Zuma said that his government would not break ties with longtime friends internationally in order to win the approval of the imperialist governments. The president had also spoke at the WFTU 17th Congress noting that the capitalist system would not relinquish concessions to the working class without demands based upon mass struggle.

Recounting the history of the national liberation movement in South Africa, Zuma said: “Socialist countries like Russia and China helped the ANC, giving it military training and aid during the anti-apartheid struggle. The socialist countries came to our aid. It was Russia who trained us and helped us with the tools to fight. China and other socialist countries helped us.”

In addition Zuma said the Western states are retaliating against the ANC government due its affiliation with the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) Summit. The advent of such blocs among the emerging states was a threat to Western hegemony of the world economy.

“They are fighting us because we joined BRICS. Some are in ANC gear but are in the company of the West. We are at war. We are going to protect the ANC,” Zuma emphasized.

In an article published by the South African Mail & Guardian in reference to the stock values of holdings traded on the local market, it noted: “Should South Africa avoid having its credit rating cut to junk in the next two weeks, it could just be staving off the inevitable. More than half of 12 economists surveyed by Bloomberg said S&P Global Ratings will strip the nation of its investment-level rating. The median probability of South Africa retaining its current assessment in December is 45%, falling to only 20% in 2017, the survey shows. The economy faces a cut to junk on its foreign-currency credit rating as output is forecast to expand at the slowest pace this year since a 2009 recession, delaying the government’s

plans to narrow the shortfall on the budget and rein in debt.” (Nov. 18)

Debate Surrounds a National Minimum Wage Amid Allegation of Regime Change Agenda

The ANC government has proposed the adoption of a national monthly minimum wage of 3,500 rand which is approximately \$242 U.S. dollars. 47 percent of the working population earns less than this proposed amount. (BBC, Nov. 21)

Despite the possible introduction of such legislation, it falls far short of what is actually needed to maintain a basic household. Prof. Chris Malokane of the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg suggested that 12,000 rand per month was essential in maintaining a decent home. (BBC, Nov. 21)

This issue is controversial among the business interests which claim that any significant government-mandated increase in the minimum wage would create further unemployment which stands officially at around 25 percent. Over the last few years there have been large-scale job losses in the mining sector which is impacting economic recovery.

Two years ago COSATU proposed a minimum wage of 4500 rand per month. With inflation since 2014 the amount would be at least 5000 today.

Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa said the 3,500 rand per month figure was decided by a panel of experts. Ramaphosa said: “We are now a step closer to finalizing discussions on the national minimum wage. All social partners will now decide what their take is.” (BBC, Nov. 21)

The ANC must address the issues of joblessness, poverty and service delivery in order to win back its two-thirds majority electoral base inside the country. Local governmental elections which were held in August saw a decline in support for the ruling party by approximately ten points although it remains by far the most popular party in South Africa winning 54 percent of the votes in the August poll.

A commission report issued several weeks ago alleged that the government of President Zuma has been involved in corruption. Zuma has denied the charges and attempts to pass motions of no-confidence in parliament failed on numerous occasions. The current ANC leadership seems solidly committed to keeping Zuma in office until his term expires in 2019.

The party maintains that Washington through its embassy in Pretoria is pursuing a regime-change agenda. Party spokesperson Zize Kodwa stated in March: “They have taken about 45 young people to America to train them as part of their leadership program. What we got from those young people is not what they expected; they were trained on how to destabilize the country and regime change.” (Xinhua News Agency, March 16)

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