

Video: Riots in South Africa: Causes, Interests and Consequences

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In July 2021, South Africa was swept by the largest wave of violence seen since the fall of apartheid in 1994. The protests that began on July 8 have quickly turned into pogroms that involved thousands of people.

The nominal cause for the outbreak of riots was the arrest of a former President of South Africa Jacob Zuma on charges of corruption. Mr. Zuma’s controversial activities have long raised questions.

After the fall of apartheid he acquired senior positions under Mandela’s administration. In that period, he was involved in an international scandal on a suspicious arms deal when Pretoria reportedly purchased warships and aircraft from European suppliers at exorbitant prices.

Despite all allegations, he became president in 2009, replacing the notorious Thabo Mbeki. New “Charming” president was handing over big chunks of the country’s economy to his Indian friends, the Gupta brothers, who were ‘at the heart of a long-running process of corruption in South Africa,’ according to the British Foreign Office.

First, Zuma was accused of corruption back in 2009. Then the case was postponed after he entered presidential office, but the disputes did not stop. In 2018, he had to resign, and legal procedures were resumed, new corruption charges were brought. The trial lasted for 3 years, until the summer of 2021, when Zuma defiantly refused to testify in the case of “seizure of power” and corruption. On June 29, he was found guilty of contempt of court, sentenced to 15 months in prison and ordered to surrender to the authorities before midnight on July 7, which he did at the very last moment. That same night, his supporters organized rallies, proclaiming Zuma a “prisoner of conscience”. A political crisis broke out.

The events came thick and fast amid a lasting economic crisis in the country. According to various estimates, the last years of Jacob Zuma’s presidency were marked with sharp drops in the economy. Ineffective administrative measures, populism and ineffectiveness of the health care system during the coronavirus pandemic have dramatically aggravated the situation in the country. Just in 2020, the RSA’s economy shrank by 7%, and the number of

citizens living below the poverty line increased by 2 million people.

“In 1994 the ANC inherited the strongest economy in Africa, with excellent infrastructure, including cheap, reliable electricity. The ANC has wrecked it all. We have continual blackouts; the passenger railways are crumbling into ruin; most of the municipalities are dysfunctional, with appalling water supply and sewage running in the streets; South African Airways is bankrupt; the economy is crippled; deep poverty is widespread, and unemployment is at 43 per cent (including many who have given up looking for work). This tragedy has been caused by systematic corruption, a bloated government, ruinous racial laws and a relentless assault on private enterprise.” – Andrew Kenny [wrote](#) in The Spectator.

It is no surprise that the protest has quickly engulfed a significant part of the poor black population in South Africa. The majority of those who finally took to the street were indifferent to the fate of Jacob Zuma himself. His arrest turned out to be a trigger of protest against hopeless poverty, the discrepancy between beautiful images on Sat TV and the reality on the streets. The protests instantly turned into a violent riot, “senseless and merciless,” as one of the classics of literature wrote.

The protesters, mostly black from the suburbs, staged mass pogroms. Thousands of shops, including big, white-owned supermarkets and small, uninsured, black-owned stores were destroyed. The rioters took the loot in carts from grocery, tech, furniture and luxury shops. Only bookshops seemed to have escaped the looters, as eyewitnesses noted.

Amid the general chaos, a spate of criminal activities was also detected. The gangs were replenished with newcomers. This led to robbing of civilian properties, and not only of the rich, but generally of white citizens. Shootings were regularly heard on the streets.

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During the two weeks of the pogroms, the death toll exceeded 300 casualties, more than 2000 people were detained. The riots resulted in losses estimated at hundreds of millions of dollars. The country was facing the risk of food and fuel shortage. International transport companies now recommend cargo ships to avoid calling at the ports of South Africa.

On July 15, the South African government had to deploy more than 20,000 troops to assist police in quelling the riots.



The main ‘battlefields’ were the provinces of Gauteng, in which the metropolis of Johannesburg is located, and the region of KwaZulu-Natal. If the second is one of the poorest areas of the country, then Gauteng is the most prosperous one, because a big part of the rich white population of the country lives here.

On July 29, KwaZulu-Natal became the first province to declare a state of emergency.

“Direct losses and losses caused to the province’s infrastructure and business reach 1.5 billion rand (\$108 million),” the prime minister said. “As a result, it was decided to declare a state of disaster in the province in order to redirect budget funds and gain access to new funds.” Sihle Zikalala noted that the proclaimed amount of damage is not a final one and may significantly increase.

The reasons for such bitterness and rage of the protesters are hidden deeper than the economic crisis and the arrest of the former president.

The current violence is a logical consequence of the physical, economic and cultural oppression of the white population in the country, which has been gaining strength for the past 20 years. The white citizens of South Africa have been consistently exposed as the perpetrators of social injustice for decades. The image of the “internal enemy”, guilty of all the troubles of the black majority, has been actively cultivated. This phenomenon has long gained a public character and has even become a kind of a “good manner”, “fashion”, both for the political elite and among the black population.

The reason why the situation in South Africa went out of control in 2021 is that internal political processes in RSA have resonated with modern global cultural and the ideological split between so-called conservatives and progressists. This split has objective reasons, primarily socio-economic ones, namely the systemic crisis of modern capitalism and, as a result, the desire of global elites to retain and strengthen their power in the new emerging reality.

Ironically, both opposing camps use slogans of social justice and equality of opportunities. In fact, actions of the so-called progressists often lead to greater segregation that is based on national, racial, religious or cultural principles. This process is now affecting more and more social spheres, including those of culture and economy; it determines national processes, international relations and law.



Due to its history, South Africa can be considered a litmus test of such processes within the global dimension. There, the concept of white supremacism was implemented in its very essential form, which led to two different vectors of the state’s development and it planted a ticking bomb in the country’s political system, predicting an inevitable collapse of the “social contract”.

On the one hand, the white wealthy educated minority arranged the RSA’s economy, such that the country’s development reached the 1st place in Africa and leading positions in world rankings. On the other hand, the same minority organized social processes in the state in such a way that the black majority was not only limited in their rights, but in fact, faced their liberties reduced to the same level that peasants had in the Early Middle Ages in Europe.

As a result, such an environment was fertile for the spread of pro-communist ideology in the country. Taking into account the low level of education of the RSA’s electorate, the communist ideas took a bizarre shape and, in fact, turned into an ideology of racial anarchism, an ideology that justifies idleness on a racial basis, often explaining it with a compensation for many years of “exploitation of the indigenous population by alien white invaders.”



This mix of contradictions was doomed to explode. It was a ticking bomb, the fuse of which ignited in the early 2000s.

Local experts and journalists have been sounding the alarm for a long time, defining the social developments as a catastrophe; but their opinion was of little interest to the world community fascinated by the global neoliberal agenda.

Back in 2010, Dr. Dan Roodt, a supporter for Afrikaners (mainly descendants from Dutch settlers), Anglo-Africans (descendants from colonists from the British Empire) and other groups of RSA's white population, claimed that since the end of apartheid, more than fifty thousand white citizens had been killed, over two hundred thousand women had been raped.

From 1997 to 2007, 1,248 white local farmers were killed. According to the Afrikaner Resistance Movement, more than 3,000 farmers were killed by 2010, which is, on average, one dead white farmer per day.

The social structure of the country has changed dramatically. The white minority faced all sorts of artificial barriers in business and social sphere, while numerous state programs were aimed to support the black majority. As a result, even the law enforcement bodies preferred to leave positions vacant for blacks, instead of appointing specialists according to their competencies, and not by the racial principle.

Today, there is a sharp decline in the income of the white population of the country.

The split also affected the culture of the nation. For example, not so long ago, a song with an open call to kill white farmers (Boers) became very popular in South Africa. Immediately after its ban, the leader of the white conservatives, Eugene Terreblanche, was killed, which his supporters linked to the political interests of the ruling African National Congress (ANC).

The situation was consistently worsening. Each new round of the crisis, whether it concerned racial, economic or cultural differences, was more dangerous than the previous one.



The current political contradictions within the ANC served as a trigger for the escalation. However, Summer 2021 Pogroms seem to be an absolutely new phenomenon that can serve as a harbinger of a fully-fledged civil war. In this hot conflict, the remnants of the white population are doomed to defeat, and the winners would get a destroyed economy and the country that would roll back for many decades.

Amid neoliberal propaganda promoted by Euro-Atlantic elites, the “conservatives” from South Africa have no chance of getting any support from the international community. Being white, Afro-British, devout Christians and often right-wing conservatives, they are doomed to become victims of international double standards. Indeed, any of their characteristics mentioned above does not fit into the political and ideological agenda of Washington and Brussels.

However, the global balance of forces is changing.

Both the United States and Western Europe are losing their positions on the international arena and are no longer the only decision makers to determine the vector of global development.

China, India, South Korea, Russia, Malaysia, Indonesia, and other countries are interested in developing cooperation with South Africa, which means they want to see its political stability. This is especially relevant on the eve of the expected tectonic shifts in the structure of the world system of international relations. Such an approach should determine the real allies and well-wishers of South Africa.

South Korea and South Africa seek for strengthening horizontal economic ties, for example, in the field of shipbuilding and sea cargo logistic. South Africa features as Korea's largest trading partner in Africa while Korea is South Africa's fourth largest trading partner in Asia. The positions of both countries on the world stage are similar, and largely depend on their similar geographical location.

If Seoul is primarily interested in developing economic ties with Pretoria, then China has broader, geopolitical interests in South Africa. In addition to economic cooperation, caused by Beijing's intention to get technologies and inlarge industrial potential in the region, it is also guided by the strategic need to enter and strengthen its position in South Africa. RSA could become an important foothold in case of a confrontation with the United States.

"China is highly concerned about the latest development in South Africa. We support the South African government's effort to stop violence and chaos, and believe that under the leadership of President Ramaphosa, it will restore social order and economic stability at an early date. Some Chinese nationals have suffered severe property damage and their life and safety have been seriously threatened. We express concern over that and have asked relevant departments of the South African government to step up protection of Chinese nationals and companies in the country. The South African side has promised that they will ramp up efforts to protect the property and safety of Chinese nationals in South Africa."- comment of the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

In its turn, India is a regional competitor of China and has similar motives, including maintaining the stability of the southern logistics maritime corridor, which runs off the coast of South Africa.

Russia does not have core strategic interests in South Africa, but Moscow also stands for preserving the stability of the region as a condition for the development of world trade, since once format of BRIC was expanded to BRICS.

"We hope that the consistent steps being taken by the South African authorities will help them to normalise the situation and bring it back to the constitutional ambit". - Spokesperson of the Russian Foreign Ministry commented on the riots in South Africa.

On the other side, apparently, there are interests of the United States and its satellites. The destabilization of the situation in South Africa is considered by the world banking capital as an opportunity to get a free space for new speculative operations and profit from the redistribution of property in the country gripped by an internal political crisis.

At the same time, the violent riots in South Africa should be another red flag for Washington. In fact, racial and ethnic contradictions in the United States are of the same nature as the processes that have been gaining momentum in South Africa in recent years. The difference is that the social system in the U.S. is much larger and more complex than that in South Africa, so the social developments may be of a slightly different dynamics.

In the U.S., it takes more time to accumulate a critical mass of contradictions, as well as a trigger mechanism of a different nature is required over there. Most importantly, it requires an irretrievable loss of trust in a just society. It requires a loss of faith in the American dream and a deep awareness of deception by at least every second American. If this happens, then developments in the United States will follow the South African scenario, but in a much more reactive manner. The multicultural and pseudo-tolerant Washington establishment should be prepared that what they are now observing in South Africa should be expected in their country already by the 2030s.

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