



SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE, ELECTRICITY AND CRIME

NEGLECT LEADS TO CATASTROPHE

When the dust settles on South Africa's latest and most consequential tragedy, euphemistically called 'load shedding' (blackouts), the kernel at the heart of the dissipation of the country's power supplier Eskom will come down to the failure of the country's security services to crush crime and lawlessness right from the beginning, not only within Eskom but throughout the country. Crime should have been nipped in the bud! South Africa's national DNA has rapidly mutated into gangster state ranking, with all its appurtenances. This crime status is all encompassing and there are few areas of our daily life that have escaped this plague. Eskom has been crippled by a broad range of crimes, from sabotage, vandalism, theft, corruption and, not surprisingly, by cadre deployment, a policy where a job with the state is determined not by merit but by loyalty to the ruling party. Huge damage was caused within Eskom's structures because of this policy. These parasites had neither the skill, nor – more importantly – the integrity to put South Africa first. They were in it for the money; payback time for their (many dubious) roles in the revolution.

This policy of cadre deployment has been overseen by none other than President Cyril Ramaphosa since 2017, and he has not the slightest intention of abolishing it despite his alluding to the fact that it is "unfair". This is usually pronounced at pre-election public meetings, not far from the sewage-strewn streets of the country's municipalities.

Nipping crime in the bud was the secret of New York City mayor Mike Bloomberg's spectacular success in crime prevention. Malfeasance never got off the ground under his watch! During his 12 years in office, his "zero tolerance" policy regarding any sort of crime, no matter how insignificant, turned New York City into the safest city in the USA. In 2013, New York City set record lows for, *inter alia*, murders and shootings. Between 1993 and 1996, general arrests increased by 23%, misdemeanour arrests hit a high of 40% and drug related apprehensions shot up by 97%.

South Africa is unfortunately not New York City. The African National Congress (ANC) came to power in 1994 on a wave of vacuous promises, outdated socialist-type ideology and a jobs-for-political-pals policy that saw ignorant and self-inflated individuals calling themselves comrades, take power.

Crime in South Africa is broad based. It is not only physical, however terrible this type of felony. Stealing anything that is not yours is rampant. Embezzlement and syndication to plunder are crimes. Kidnapping for ransom is a felony. Omission – looking the other way when the state's funds are siphoned off, for example – is a crime. Crime has grown exponentially in proportion to the lack of active policing to curtail it. Clearly, the South African Police Service has never received any directives relating to zero tolerance. Thus petty thievery became gross embezzlement. Skimming off a tender's profit became the wholesale redirection of the tender's goal away from service to the public. This led to criminality never before heard of in South Africa: criminals actually sabotaging state structures so that the repairs of same would be granted to them via a tender. In other instances, sabotage has taken a darker route, to the extent that the country's government could be brought to its knees as structures collapse, lights go out and job losses soar. Political foes have found a new way to undermine what authority the government has maintained, however slight. It was the late Chris Hani who said that South Africa would have to become a "wasteland" before it could rise again under a new dispensation.

ESKOM

Crime has played a significant role in the destruction of the country's heartbeat – Eskom. Who is to blame? The SA Police Service, charged with maintaining law and order, has failed miserably. It is ridden with corruption, and there are, in some instances, dangerous nests of corrupt officials who are tied to syndicates. Then there's the Minister of Police Bheki Cele whose loyalty to president Cyril Ramaphosa has been purchased by awarding him the cabinet post of Minister of Police, whether he can fulfil his mandate or not. Despite regular calls for him to step aside, he continues as minister despite his woeful record. He is the president's Teflon prince in KwaZulu-Natal, an ANC party baron who cannot be touched. The president needs re-election in 2024, so Mr Cele must remain where he is. It could be argued that had the SAPS been effective in intelligence gathering within Eskom, it could have prevented to a large degree the sabotage and vandalism that has plagued the crippled enterprise. Corruption could have been nailed early on in the piece. The theft of R1 billion per month estimated by outgoing CEO Andre de Ruyter to have occurred under the stewardship of "senior officials" (so far unnamed!), could have been curtailed.

Minister Cele just let it happen, and so did South Africa's president. Where was the parliamentary oversight committee on policing? Where indeed were the hundreds of ANC members of parliament sitting in their seats every day, basking in the profligacy to which they had become accustomed? Reports were circulating for years about Eskom's failures. The media was onto them, but there was a deafening silence from the top to the bottom of the ANC. Were these reports studiously ignored by those responsible for Eskom? One cabinet minister told former CEO Andre de Ruyter that the bigwigs with their fingers in the cookie jar "have to eat". Turning a blind eye to an R12 billion theft per annum is simply criminal.

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN AND WHAT IS!

The scale of South Africa's violent crime is horrific – more than three times more deaths per 100 000 in this country than in African nations such as Nigeria, Congo and Ethiopia, all of them countries fighting low-intensity wars. In the last three months of last year no fewer than 7 555 people were murdered, 3 144 by firearms. To put this in perspective, some 7 199 civilians are believed to have died during the first year of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a conventional high-intensity conflict. (*Daily Maverick* – DM – 19 February 2023)

Hit squads appear to operate with impunity across South Africa, with the police either helpless, or worse. The rise of organised crime is truly astonishing. Companies such as Anglo-American, Glencore and Sibanye Stillwater are regularly shaken down for up to 30% of their procurement spending by extortion mafias. (*Mills & Hartley* – DM – 19 February 2023)

Illegal mining is out of control. Thieves arrive at mines with heavy machinery to open new pits on private mining land. (*Business Maverick*, 6 February 2023) The costs of providing security and making good on criminal losses, plus rolling blackouts, are estimated on the platinum mines to subtract as much as 6% of revenue. A coal mafia is stealing from Eskom, contributing to South Africa's power woes. "Coal loads are swapped in Mpumalanga coalfields for lower-grade coal or discarded coal by-products, which are inefficient and can damage power stations." (DM 19 February 2023) *Business Tech* reports that "one night almost 2 000 tons of RB1 (high grade) coal was dropped off. Two thousand tons fill 65 trucks." This top quality stolen coal is mostly exported by the thieves themselves.

A construction mafia is now almost institutionalised in the industry. This new development has been "well documented by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime (GITOC). These activities have been fuelled by the weak response from the state, allowing them to expand their activities. In

2019, at least 183 infrastructure and construction projects worth more than R63 billion had been affected by these disruptions.” These shakedowns have continued unabated throughout the country. Where are the police?

POLICE

The police appear wholly unable to investigate and prosecute crimes such as murder, contract killings, extortion, syndications and the plethora of new crimes that have mushroomed under SAPS neglect. The present SAPS leadership – from Police Minister Bheki Cele (previously fired for dodgy property deals) to National Police Commissioner Fannie Masemola – are manifestly out of their depth (DM 19 February 2023). There is no movement from the government about this rise in every type of crime, so it can only be concluded that criminal violence is inextricably intertwined with the endless propensity for lawlessness which is embedded in the DNA of the ANC. From the SAPS minister down, the police services have been ruined despite all the good people remaining in the service.

This was amply exposed throughout the recently-completed Zondo Report on state capture. The rot is deep and broad, and the vested interests will be almost impossible to budge unless there is a clean sweep within every vestige of ANC activities. Departing Eskom CEO Andre de Ruyter's explosive TV interview last week exposed the horrendous circumstances under which Eskom has operated over the past ten years. Where were the police while Eskom was ransacked? And where was President Ramaphosa?

When there is no law and order, this is the result. Everything crumbles – there is cause and effect as the dominoes fall. SA has a 19% conviction rate for murders. Between April 2012 and March 2019, there were 42 365 criminal cases against the police. Virtually no action was taken against these officials. (Stephen Grootes for DM, 20 February 2023) The police have been unable to prevent the removal of thousands of railway lines throughout South Africa, plus millions of rands worth of railway equipment, including whole railway stations. Recently four policemen were arrested in Mpumalanga after they were found loading railway tracks into a truck. (IOL News, 8 Feb 2023)

Columnist William Gumede hits the nail on the head, week after week. His comments on the need for government structural reforms are always tempered by the frightening reality of ANC's vested interests. The president puts these first, always, says Gumede. Ramaphosa's reforms and his governance must never “impinge on the vested interests of powerful ANC factions, or remove their leaders or disturb party beliefs.” (*Sunday Times*, 12 Feb 2023)

The ANC tolerates criminality in its midst because party loyalty trumps all. Is it any wonder the SAPS is floundering and that Eskom is emasculated? Zero tolerance is not in the ANC's playbook. South Africa is a beautiful garden choked with weeds, the creeping suffocation of the ANC.

Some have publicly advanced the "overthrow" of the ANC. (DM Opinion, 8 Feb 2023) One Marius Oosthuizen says the ANC has become "addicted to the abuse of power" and that there is a moral case "to overthrow the abusive ANC". "There are good people within the ANC and there may have been an opportunity for 'the good guys' to clean house," he says. "But when we see the revolving door of redeployment simply recycle the sewers of corruption back into our parliament and government departments, we know that the ANC is playing games with us," says Oosthuizen. "We cannot afford to become just another failed state," he declares. And so say all of us!