



SAGA Press Release – 20 June 2024

Opinion Piece – Strategic Pro Gun Advocacy FINAL

by Shaun Lyle, SAGA Trustee

A Strategic Perspective on Pro-Gun Advocacy

1. Historical Perspective

‘South Africa is experiencing crisis levels of violent crime and social instability – among the highest globally. ‘ Gideon Joubert, Crime, Violence And Social Instability In South Africa - A Report on the Safety and Security Situation, June 2024. ^{Note 3}

According to this report, South Africa has among the highest incidences of violent crime in the world. Of particular concern are homicide and sexual assault. A large proportion of violent crimes are as a direct result of the activities of organised crime, an entrenched and rapidly growing problem in South Africa.

South Africa has experienced alarming increases in organised criminal activity. According to the 2023 Global Organised Crime Index ^{Note 6}, South Africa ranked 7th out of 193 countries – a deterioration of 8 places since 2022.

As the famous Latin adage states: **“*Si vis pacem, para bellum*”** translated **‘If you want peace, prepare for war.’** ^{Note 1}

We suggest this remains as true, if not more relevant, today as 15 centuries ago. This ancient Latin adage can be applied directly to the modern pro-gun lobby who, contrary to the gun free activists, are not blood thirsty, violent or vigilantes but are rather family, friends and flag people who believe in self-determination, have a strong internal locus of control and are focused on the protection and wellbeing of others.

Some of the most disciplined and stable people you are ever likely to meet are firearm owners; morality and responsibility cruises through their veins. Firearm competency and licence applications even require character references attesting to this.

2. American Pro Gun Constitution

The American Constitution is packed with strategic wisdom and provides us with some profound lessons that we would all be the better for if we listened and learned.

In contrast to the American 1st Amendment which relates to *Freedom of Expression*, ours relates to the Right to Life (s11 of the South African Constitution).

The American 2nd Amendment relates to the '*Right to bear Arms without infringement*' ours relates to Right to Freedom (s12 of the South African Constitution).

The American 2nd Amendment states: ***'A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.'***

While the South African Constitution does not have an American style 2nd Amendment, in it firearm ownership is considered a 'privilege' rather than a right however, our constitution does afford us the right to self or private defence.

In this context the American 2nd Amendment is both profound and thought provoking and bears important consideration for us too. The 2nd Amendment was arguably written to provide a strategic counterbalance against the coercive power of a tyrannical state. Whereas the limited modern interpretation leans toward the individual's right to self-defence via the proportional use of force.

3. State of the South African Nation

Post our May 2024 elections, where no political party obtained an outright majority, South African stands at a momentous watershed moment of either a fragmented government with infighting and lack of leadership dominated by self-interest, or a coalition government, or a government of national unity or some combination thereof will result. South Africans are anxious but hopeful that we as a country take the least travelled, high road. Time will tell.

While most political parties are negotiating the terms of a government of national unity (GNU), purportedly in support of the good governance and service delivery that voters made clear they wanted. At least two key parties, for now, have excluded themselves from this process. Both with anti-constitutional ideologies and the potential to undermine and disrupt any coalition they oppose.

In this context we need to consider recent history, namely the July 2021 civil unrest in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. Respected members of the security industry including Professor Anthony Turton, former military intelligence analyst, have been quite open and vocal about the 2021 civilian unrest and looting. Stating in part that this was seemingly highly organised and a purposeful attempt to destabilise the country – possibly an insurrection!

The Human Rights Commission's, National Investigative Hearing and Report into the July 2021 Unrest (Gauteng & KZN) ^{Note 2} published 29 January 2024, was scathing of the government, police and crime intelligence failures. Pertinent here are these key observations:

- The South African Police Service was ill-prepared to deal with the orchestrated attacks. This included allegations of insufficient training, equipment, or resources to effectively respond to the situation (HRC Summary 1.7, page 12).
- The State's intelligence apparatus and approach to the Unrest have self-evidently proven to be ineffective (HRC Finding 3.2, Page 18).
- The State's response to the unrest in the Provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng was hindered by poor communication, coordination, planning, and high-level management. There was a delayed response and inadequate resource management, leading to an ineffective response to the crisis. (HRC Finding 3.7, page 19).
- Integration of neighbourhood watches and Community Police Forums (CPF's) should be facilitated by local SAPS precincts, as it appears that neighbourhood watches operate parallel and collaborate with local CPF structures, Metro police units and other law enforcement agencies. The public is therefore an invaluable resource and stakeholder for SAPS to invest in. (HRC Finding 3.26, Page 23).

As those that stood up to defend their families, homes, businesses and communities, and hence by extension the country, know all too well – if it had not been for ordinary residents prepared to protect their areas in the **complete void** (over a full eight days) left by an absent police force, and equally ill-prepared and late arriving SANDF, the disaster would have been exponentially worse!

Exacerbating these issues is the safety and security vacuum resulting from the deterioration and increasing dysfunctionality of the SAPS and the criminal justice system where successful prosecutions are abysmally low numbered and frankly embarrassing.

On a strategic level, the points so far could be considered MOTIVATION in itself for legal and responsible firearm ownership. Adapting the ancient Roman adage with creative and poetic licence - '***Prepare for conflict but fight for peace.***'

4. The Real Risk of being Unarmed and Unprepared

4.1 Mass Killings

The global Early Warning Project's Statistical Risk Assessment ^{Note 5} uses multiple variables, publicly available data and statistical modelling to produce a list of countries ranked by their estimated risk of experiencing a new episode, or onset, of mass killing. This report aims to help identify countries where preventive actions may be needed.

The Early Warning Projects' latest 2023/2024 Statistical Risk Assessment for Mass Killing ^{annexed} reviewed over 166 countries, and provides some very thought provoking facts in terms of the risk of mass killings (ranked by risk with 1 highest to 166 lowest):

1. Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen rank 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively.
2. **South Africa ranked 30th** behind 14 other African countries.
3. 15 or 50% of the 30 highest risk countries are African (Sudan 4th, Ethiopia 6th, Somalia 8th, Nigeria 12th, Uganda 13th, DRC 17th, Congo 18th, Mozambique 19th, Egypt 23rd, Niger 24th, Angola 25th, Tanzania 26th, Chad 27th, Burkina Faso 29th).

4. Our SADC neighbours Botswana ranked 115th with Lesotho at 117th.
5. First world western countries USA, UK and Australia ranked 74th, 112th and 113th respectively.

4.2 Global Peace Index

The Global Peace Index (GPI) is produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace ^{Note 4} and is the leading global measure of worldwide peacefulness covering more than 99% of the world's population.

The GPI is compiled using multiple indicators from highly respected sources, and measures the state of peace across three main categories:

1. Level of Societal Safety and Security
2. Extent of Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict
3. Degree of Militarisation

This composite index measuring the peacefulness of countries comprises 23 quantitative and qualitative indicators weighted on a scale of 1 to 5. The lower the score, the more peaceful the country.

South Africa scored **2.4 / 5.0** (Sub-Sahara Africa on average scores 2.3). This places the country 130 out of 163 nations, South Africa's position has deteriorated by 8 places since the prior year's report.

Additionally, on another scale, the Global Peace Index ranked South Africa as the 35th most dangerous country in the world, and that includes countries at war!

By all these and other international safety and security measures, South Africa consistently ranks very poorly and keeps some poor and questionable company on these lists.

4.3 Mass Shootings

While mass shootings in America are often mentioned, the interesting fact is the USA is NOT the number one country for mass shootings. The USA is well below the world average in terms of the number of mass public shootings, the global increase over time has been much bigger elsewhere. Out of the 101 countries identified for mass public shootings, the United States ranked a 'low' 66th in the per capita frequency of attacks and 56th in the murder rate (*Crime Prevention Research Center, JR Lott, August 11, 2020*).

Unlike in South Africa, mass shootings in the USA are generally the consequence of mentally disturbed individuals with a history of mental illness and multiple red flags. In South Africa's case, mass shootings generally have a criminal or political agenda and are seldom if ever perpetrated by law-abiding citizens, mentally ill or not! Our Firearms Control Act (FCA) is a very good piece of legislation; administrative and implementation issues aside.

According to the recent Gideon Joubert, Crime & Violence Report ^{Note 3} the most recent cases of mass shootings occurred at Gauteng taverns in July 2022, leaving 30 people dead. The shootings were primarily perpetrated by illegal miners who acted as hitmen in these mafia-style attacks for economic gain. Proving how different sectors of organised crime, in this case illegal mining, extortion and organised violence, overlap resulting in violence.

5. Conclusion

The facts are in, and the messaging is unequivocally clear. Legal firearm owners are often their family's first – if not only – responder. Know the law and be prepared to defend those you love.

One of the best tools available to combat crime is a legally owned firearm in the hands of a responsible law-abiding citizen trained and willing to use it. A firearm remains a tool, it does not kill, hurt or maim – only a person with nefarious intent can use it for that.

We encourage all disciplined and law-abiding citizens to stand with us and push back hard against any irrational disarming agendas. We cannot permit the cancerous gun free ideology to take hold anywhere!

- SAGA works to counter anti-gun propaganda by taking positive action.
- SAGA is an active voice for South Africa's law-abiding firearm owners.
- SAGA supports the right of responsible citizens to own & use firearms for sport, self-defence, recreation and other legitimate purposes.
- SAGA is unequivocally opposed to firearm misuse/abuse.
- SAGA believes that over-restrictive legislation & regulations are unfair to the responsible citizen.
- SAGA engage & negotiate with government & other bodies for practical logical reforms.
- SAGA are a non-party political, independent, non-profit association.

Shaun Lyle

SAGA Trustee
saga@saga.org.za

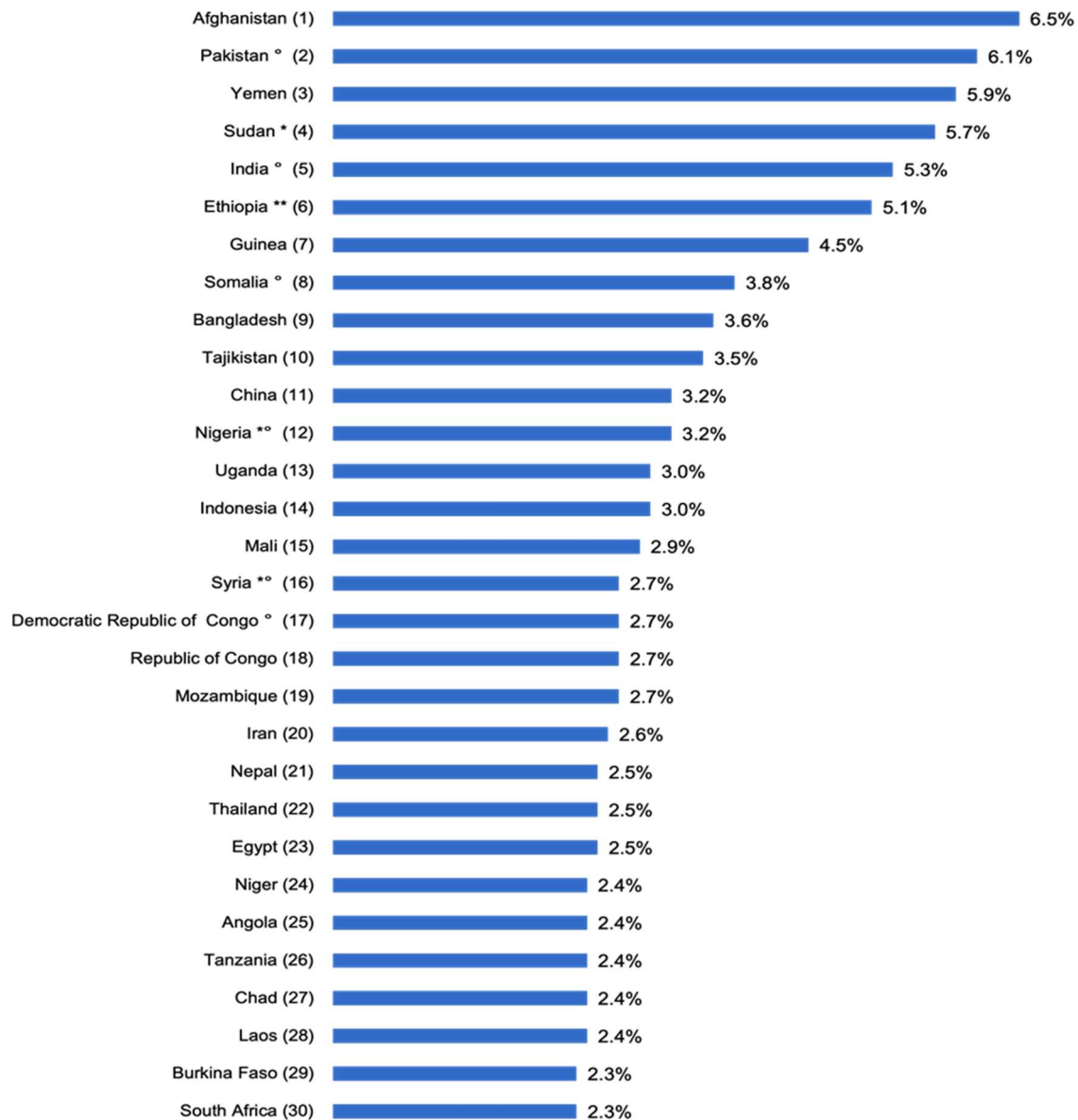
Acknowledgements:

1. Tract *Dē Rē Militārī* , Roman author Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus's (circa: fourth or fifth century AD).
2. Human Rights Commission, *National Investigative Hearing and Report into the July 2021 Unrest (Gauteng & KZN)*, 29 January 2024
3. Gideon Joubert, *Crime, Violence And Social Instability In South Africa - A Report on the Safety and Security Situation*, June 2024
4. Institute for Economic & Peace, *Global Peace Index 2023*
5. Early Warning Project, *Statistical Risk Assessment, 2023/2024*
6. Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime/ENACT, 2023 *Global Organised Crime Index*

Annexures:

1. Early Warning Project – Research Findings

Worst 30 countries by estimated risk of new mass killing, 2023–24.



2, Early Warning Projects Ranking of countries per 2023/24 Statistical Risk Assessment for Mass Killing: Worst ranked 30 countries out of 166

<u>RANK</u>	<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>RISK FACTOR</u>
1	Afghanistan	6.5
2	Pakistan	6.1
3	Yemen	5.9
4	Sudan	5.7
5	India	5.3

<u>RANK</u>	<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>RISK FACTOR</u>
6	<u>Ethiopia</u>	5.1
7	<u>Guinea</u>	4.5
8	<u>Somalia</u>	3.8
9	<u>Bangladesh</u>	3.6
10	<u>Tajikistan</u>	3.5
11	<u>China</u>	3.2
12	<u>Nigeria</u>	3.2
13	<u>Uganda</u>	3.0
14	<u>Indonesia</u>	3.0
15	<u>Mali</u>	2.9
16	<u>Syria</u>	2.7
17	<u>Democratic Republic of Congo</u>	2.7
18	<u>Republic of Congo</u>	2.7
19	<u>Mozambique</u>	2.7
20	<u>Iran</u>	2.6
21	<u>Nepal</u>	2.5
22	<u>Thailand</u>	2.5
23	<u>Egypt</u>	2.5
24	<u>Niger</u>	2.4
25	<u>Angola</u>	2.4
26	<u>Tanzania</u>	2.4
27	<u>Chad</u>	2.4
28	<u>Laos</u>	2.4
29	<u>Burkina Faso</u>	2.3
30	<u>South Africa</u>	2.3

Edits: African countries highlighted in orange.