The Toyi - Toyi Spirit of Democracy

Civilian-led Protest In South Africa: 1994-2019

**WHY SOUTH AFRICA?**

South Africa has been repeatedly dubbed the “protest capitil of the world”. When the end of Apartheid in 1994 marked the beginning of a new democracy, free speech was enshrined in the constitution as a right. From that year to the present, the people of South Africa have used civilian protest, both peaceful and violent, as a tool to expose both the inequitable realities of and their belief in the power of democracy. This makes for a fascinating study of the nature of these civilian uprisings—the who, what and where. This analysis is important because there are no studies that examine this time span.

**METHODS**

1. Total, peaceful, and violent protest counts were joined to the underlying municipal boundaries and data was normalized by population. Data was sorted to determine most popular reasons and groups involved in protest. “Violent” included protests labeled as “Mob Violence” and “Violent Demonstrations” in the original dataset. “Peaceful” included only protests labeled as “peaceful.”
2. Data from four socioeconomic indicators (race, education, employment, and income) was used to construct a vulnerability analysis of poverty by municipality. This data was superimposed to create a composite vulnerability index by municipality.
3. To test the strength of the nexus (with little support from prior literature reviews) between individual poverty and participation in protest, the number of cumulative protests were compared against the number of individuals falling under the socioeconomic indicator of interest by municipality and the R value of the trendline was calculated.

**VULNERABILITY TO POVERTY (& PROTEST) BY MUNICIPALITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composite Vulnerability Index</th>
<th>Socioeconomic Indicators, Census 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Black Africans by Race</td>
<td>% ≤ Grade 6 Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% With no Annual Income</td>
<td>% Unemployed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RESULTS & CONCLUSION**

1. There are more cumulative peaceful protests (5928) than there are violent protests (4975) for this time period. The municipalities of Cape Town and Johannesburg consistently emerge with the greatest density of both peaceful and violent protests, with more peaceful than violent protests. Students protesting against tuition and discriminatory policies followed by workers’ groups/labor unions demanding higher wages and better benefits are the two actors that have been most active in peaceful protesting in this period while vigilante groups are most active in violent protests.
2. The municipalities that are most vulnerable to poverty are largely in the upper half/northeastern side of the country. Close to 9 million people are at risk. As the scatterplots suggest, there is a very strong positive correlation between number of protests and those who are unemployed. The same is true for those with no income. There is a strong positive correlation between number of protests and those who have completed less than Grade 6. The same is true for those who are Black Africans. Two outliers that were consistently present in all four plots were of the Cape Town and Ekurhuleni municipalities. Together, there seem to be no patterns with either the vulnerability indicators or protest density that suggest why they are outliers. Thus, these were not included in the regression.

**LIMITATIONS**

- There was far fewer data available of protest incidents from 1994-1997, having more accurate numbers could change the analysis.
- Different stakeholders define what should fall in the umbrella of “violent” protests differently.
- It is not possible to assess if there is a greater likelihood of participation in peaceful or violent protest given vulnerability to poverty.

**DATA SOURCES**

- Statistics South Africa (For Census 2011 Data)
- ACLED for protest data (points)
- Photo near title depicts the South African dance of Toyi-Toyi that symbolizes resistance to struggle. It is a popular dance during protest. Photo credits to Sam Peet and the CultureTrip.