

## **Deconstructing Gangsterism in South African Legislation and Policy: Reframing Anti-Gang Strategies by Utilising At-Risk Definitions**

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### **Abstract**

The issue of gangs, and ensuing gang violence, predates democracy in South Africa. While the dawn of democracy promised a new beginning, the lingering effects of Apartheid remained, particularly the spatial configuration of cities and legacies of fractured communities. Cape Town, the country's second largest city and metropole of the Western Cape province, exemplifies this more starkly than elsewhere, as apartheid spatial planning relegated the historically disadvantaged to the limits and outskirts of society, where they still remain, but the City of Cape Town perpetuated the relegation of the poor and working class to the verges. The nascent democratic government and newly recalibrated police forces have struggled to address gang violence effectively amidst the backdrop of widespread organised crime and corruption, social inequality, a sluggish economy, and poor service delivery. The National Anti-Gangsterism Strategy (2017), the country's latest strategy framework, requires policy implementation at provincial level. This paper will assess the Western Cape policy content and deconstruct the concept of gangsterism so as to discuss the measures best suited to bring about change in society. It will be argued that sustained anti-gang strategies and interventions demand that structural obstacles and inequality in lieu of the spill over from the Apartheid era are addressed. Concludingly, the long-term benefits of reframing the problem of gangsterism in the Western Cape as 'a youth-at-risk-crisis' as such policy responses contribute to local peace, including the view to allowing youth(s) to exert agency and become empowered in pursuit of individual and community resilience and active citizenry.

**Keywords:** Gangsterism, gang violence, organised crime, policy, South Africa

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