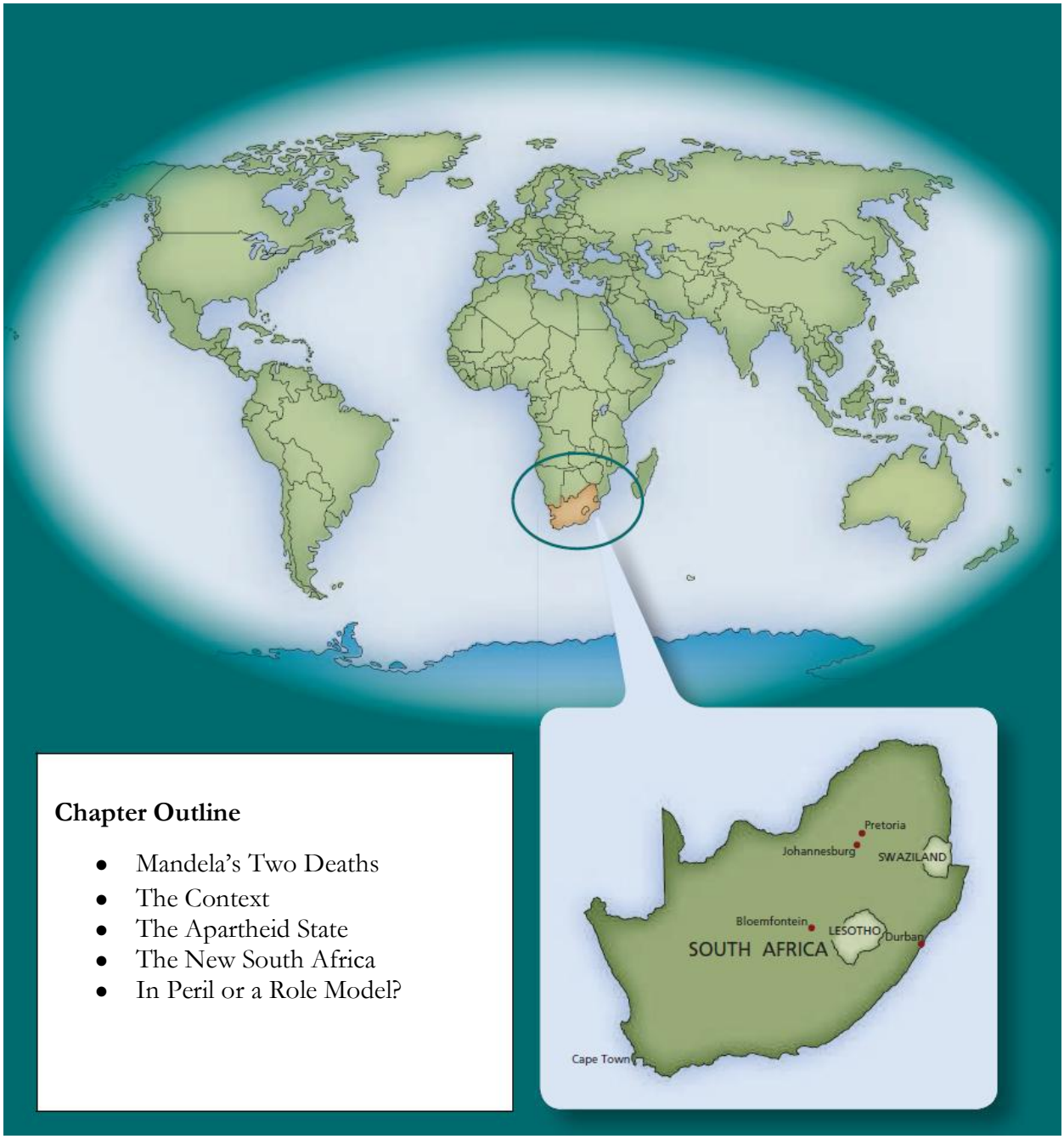
# Chapter 21
# South Africa




**Chapter Outline**

- Mandela's Two Deaths
- The Context
- The Apartheid State
- The New South Africa
- In Peril or a Role Model?

*Never, never, and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world.*

*--Nelson Mandela*

*Apartheid fell, Mandela walked free, and black South Africa went to war with itself.*

*--Trevor Noah*

## The Basics
## South Africa

| | |
|---|---|
| **Size** | 1,219,912 sq. km (almost twice the size of Texas) |
| **Population** | 49.0 million |
| **GDP per capita** | $13,300 |
| **Currency** | 12.36 Rand = $1 |
| **Ethnic groups** | Black 80%; white 8%; coloured 9%; Indian/Asian 3% |
| **Languages** | 11 official, including English, Afrikaans, and 9 African languages |
| **Religion** | 80% Christian, 2% Muslim, 16% None or indigenous religions, 4% Other |
| **Capital** | Pretoria (administrative), Cape Town (legislative), Bloemfontein (Judicial) |
| **President** | Jacob Zuma (2009–) |

## Mandela's Two Deaths

Unlike most chapters, this one begins with two quotes and a section with an unusual title.

Although you read it after the quotes (or what my editor wanted me to call epigraphs), let's start with this section's title. Obviously, **Nelson Mandela** (1918-2013) only died once at the age of 95. But, *politically*, he really died at least twice, first when his political dreams began to die and only second when his life came to an end amid significant political infighting among his supporters.

The two deaths can be seen in the two statements that begin this chapter. The first comes from the famous speech Mandela gave after he was released from 27 years in prison in 1990. He was right. Within four years, **apartheid** legally ended, the transition to a multi-racial and democratic government began, and the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission** was created—all of which we will explore in detail later in this chapter.

Many of us who study both peacebuilding and comparative politics world hoped South Africa was starting a history-making transition in which it would become a model for overcoming bigotry and authoritarianism while democratizing and developing at the same time. In retrospect, those dreams of a new South Africa could never fully or easily have been turned into reality.

As we will also see, South Africa has made tremendous strides in overcoming the abuses of its past, creating democracy, forging reconciliation among previously antagonistic racial groups, and (re)building its economy. Indeed, it deserves high praise for laying the groundwork for a multiracial government, even though everyone knew from the beginning that it would take decades before South Africa could even dream of having a multiracial *society* at peace with itself, and then, only if it is lucky. But 20 years into its transition, it is important to see that South Africa is one of the few "success stories" in comparative politics, whatever your own political viewpoint happens to be.

Almost everyone in South Africa -- other than die-hard **Afrikaners** -- pays at least lip service to racial equality. Those who do not have lost almost all of their political clout. That has not brought any of South Africa's long-standing difficulties to a conclusion. We will emphasize the political transition in this chapter. For the longer term, however, it may be even more important that South Africa has just become the "s" of the **BRICS** group of rapidly emerging economies.

Perhaps most of all, it is important to stress that the transition was a political accomplishment achieved by men and women who disagreed with each and often did not like each other. Nonetheless, they were able to summon up the political will for change in most segments of the South African population, something we were rarely able to discuss in other chapters.

Things have improved to the point that it is safe to claim that the first phase of the transition is over. As we will see time and time again, that all starts with Nelson Mandela and his leadership. He was one of a handful of charismatic leaders discussed in *Comparative Politics*. However, the heroic accomplishments of his years in power are a thing of the past. By the time of his second and physical death the year after the ANC celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of its founding, many of those hopes had evaporated.

Despite that remarkable progress, South Africa has fallen far short of the goals so many of us had in the early 1990s. Some of that was undoubtedly inescapable given the problems the country faced then and still faces now, most notably the tremendous economic and other inequalities between whites and the rest of the population.

Some of the problems were beyond South Africa's political control. Thus, it was hit hard by the recession that began in 2008. It has a massive AIDS epidemic, which stretches its medical and financial resources far beyond their capacities. Its violent crime rate is almost certainly the highest in the world.

Some of the problems almost certainly were avoidable, and that's where Trevor Noah's statement comes in. As most readers of this book will know, Noah replaced John Stewart as host of *The Daily Show* in 2015. What you may not know is that Noah was born in South Africa in 1984 which meant he was six years old when Mandela was let out of jail. He lived there until 2011 when he moved to the United States. By the time he left, South African politics was characterized by corruption and ethnic infighting within Mandela's dominant **African National Congress (ANC)**.

South Africa had a hard time replacing Mandela. As we have seen in other chapters, charismatic leaders are rarely able to "routinize" their "gift" and transfer their personal authority to a set of institutions and practices that their successors can use effectively in more "normal times."

Mandela's hand-picked successor, **Thabo Mbeki** (1942–) might have seemed like a good choice. He had been part of the ANC his whole life since his father had been one if Mandela's contemporaries. He also was highly educated having earned graduate degrees while living in exist in the UK. However, he made mistake after mistake at home and abroad and had to resign the presidency after a court determined that he had, among other things, improperly sought to prosecute **Jacob Zuma** (1942-), who ultimately replaced him.

Zuma had even less in common with Mandela. Unlike Mbeki, Zuma grew up illiterate and rose through the ANC's ranks as part of its security services that often had to act ruthlessly in the face of repression from the apartheid regime.

As I wrote these lines in early 2018, his successor as president, **Jacob Zuma** (1942–) had just been forced to resign, and next to no one would consider South Africa to be a paragon of anything—at least anything good. He is widely seen as facilitating corruption by favoring his fellow Zulus and other supporters and destroying the careers of those who oppose him inside the ANC.

This chapter has to do justice to both visions of South Africa. First, how and why did the white-dominated apartheid regime survive for more than 30 years after most other African countries came to be ruled by black Africans? How did Mandela and his colleagues destroy apartheid and set the country off on what of the most remarkable paradigm shifts in modern political history? Second, we also have to ask why those initial hopes became dashed under Mbeki and Zuma and wonder if the country can pull itself out of what just about everyone other than the people around Zuma acknowledge is a downward social, political, and economic spiral. And, as was the case with Russia that also had a **regime change** in recent years, we will have to make two intellectual passes through the South African system, first for the apartheid years and then for the transition since then.

Don't get me wrong. South Africa has done better than most countries on the continent, however you choose to define the word better. The Mo Ibrahim Institute has developed a sophisticated index of government effectiveness in all African countries. South Africa has higher scores than all but a handful of other African countries on most indicators (see the section on the state). Still, we cannot ignore its problems some of which have clearly been exacerbated under ANC rule since Mandela's first death.

If you look at South African politics today, it is hard not to focus on its problems rather than its accomplishments. As this video from the PBS NewsHour in November 2017 suggests, South Africans will need decades if not centuries to overcome its racial divisions for many of the same reasons it will take us a long time in the United States and other Northern countries with a history of intolerance and inequality.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGXmQrJ4GFg

## The Context

In South Africa, almost every political question boils down to race. I first became interested in South Africa during the anti-apartheid campaigns of the 1980s at a time when racial politics was also heating up again in the United States. One of the best books about race and politics in the U.S. at the time was Andrew Hacker's *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal.* His title would have been even more fitting for South Africa at the time.

Historically, no modern country ever did more to separate the races. Although apartheid was only the country's official policy from the late 1940s until the early 1990s, Europeans began systematically discriminating against other groups almost as soon as they established permanent settlements in the region during the seventeenth century. The society they created over the next 340 years was one that gave rise to more inequality and bred more hostility than most Americans could dream of.

Before digging ino that history, I should point out that everything we know about genetics and evolution today suggests that what we think of as race is an artificial human construction. Our genetic makeup is virtually identical whatever our physical appearance may be. Recent research has shown that differences in human skin color, in particular, evolved relatively recently, in some cases only in the last ten to twenty thousand years.

We are, in short, all members of a single species.

That was not what people thought when Whites began taking over parts of Africa in the fifteenth century. That was not what most White people thought when South Africa gained its de facto independence early in the last century. Such attitudes were beginning to change when the apartheid laws were enacted after World War II. It took a lot longer in South African than it did in much of the rest of the world. However, as the PBS video I cited in the previous section suggests, it will take us a long time to truly overcome the legacy of racism and imperialism that came with it in the case of South Africa.

## *A Story in Black and White*

Table 21.1 presents statistical data on the four major racial groups in South Africa during the final years of apartheid. Only about one in seven South Africans is white. In 1988, however, they accounted for over half of all income earned by South Africans. Their share of the national wealth was much greater. And, of course, they controlled the political system lock, stock, and barrel.

| Race | Population (%) | Disposable Income (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Black** | 75.2 | 34 |
| **Coloured** | 8.6 | 9 |
| **Indian/Asian** | 2.6 | 4 |
| **White** | 13.6 | 54 |

Table 21.1
Race and Personal Income in South Africa, 1988

To be counted as white under apartheid, a person could not have any "blood" from other ethnic groups. This does not mean that the white community is homogeneous. In fact, it has three main subdivisions. A majority of whites are Afrikaners—descendants of the original Dutch colonists plus settlers from Germany and France who were assimilated into Afrikaner culture. About two-fifths of the white population is either of English origin or became part of Anglophone

society after moving to South Africa. Finally, there is a small Jewish population, most of which is part of the English culture. The Jews are worth noting, however, because they played a disproportionate role in the antiapartheid struggle, especially as members of the **South African Communist Party (SACP)**.

Blacks make up three-quarters of the population. The very term "black" shows just how racially charged South African politics has been. In fact, both "black" and "African" are regularly used to label this part of the population. However, many whites have African roots that go back hundreds of years and believe that they, too, are Africans. To respect their tradition—and to keep my prose from being too confusing—I will use the term African in this broader and more inclusive way.

But black South Africans, too, are a diverse group, as can be seen from the fact that there are nine official indigenous languages to go along with English and Afrikaans. It should also be noted that the blacks are themselves divided into tribes, which are easiest to identify along linguistic lines. Tribe is a term most western scholars frown upon and avoid but most blacks take for granted. In many cases, the Afrikaners and the English created the tribes in the first place, but they have nonetheless become a fixture in the lives of most blacks.

The black share of the population will continue to grow for the foreseeable future because its birth rate far outpaces that of whites and as much as ten percent of the white population has emigrated. Thus, current projections suggest that blacks will make up about 87 percent and whites only 6 percent of the population in 2035.

### The Language of Race in South Africa

Under apartheid, the government codified South African law so that it had explicit definitions for what the Afrikaner elite saw as four racial groups:

- Whites—people of European origin with no trace of —other blood|| in their families
- Coloureds—a grab bag category, including people of mixed racial origin but also descendants of Malaysians and others brought to South Africa as slaves, and of the Khoikhoi and other lighter-skinned people who lived in what is today's Western Cape before the whites arrived
- Asians or Indians—the descendants of people who emigrated from what was colonial India
- Africans or blacks—everyone else whose family roots are on the continent

As the table also suggests, few Blacks share the affluence of White South Africa. In urban areas, most live in ramshackle huts or decrepit trailers. In the countryside, few of their homes have electricity, running water, or any of the other basic amenities of life that whites take for granted. There has been some progress on this front, but not enough to keep the tensions mentioned above from remaining a potentially disruptive problem for the new regime.

Almost nine percent of South Africans are coloured which is a euphemism for people of mixed race. Some are descendants of the Khoikhoi who lived in the area around what is now Cape Town before the British arrived. Others trace their roots to slaves who were brought to South Africa from what is now Malaysia. Most, however, owe their relatively light skins to forced sexual relations between white men and black women.

South Africa also has a small but influential Asian or "Indian" population. "Indian" is in quotes here because many of their ancestors came from today's Pakistan and Bangladesh as well as India. They are still called Indians because the subcontinent was not divided in the late nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries, when most of their ancestors were brought to South Africa as indentured servants. Both terms are still used, but increasingly South Africans use the most accurate "Asian" to describe this final group.

The country is also religiously diverse. Almost 80 percent of the population, including almost all of the whites, is Christian. About 2 percent are Muslims and Hindus. The rest practice a variety of traditional religions.

## *Apartheid, Its Legacy, and the Stakes of South African Politics Today*

When Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as president of South Africa in 1994, the country abandoned a regime that denied basic civil and political rights to more than 80 percent of its population and replaced it with one of the most open and democratic governments in the world.

At this point, you only need to see two things about the old regime. First, apartheid was far more ruthless than any of the segregationist or Jim Crow laws in the United States. Second, South Africa has made remarkable progress in healing the psychological—if not the economic—wounds the new regime inherited from the architects of apartheid.

Three issues are most important in defining South African politics today. All have their some of their roots in apartheid and the way it was replaced. None seems likely to put the new regime in jeopardy, but each could pose serious problems in the not so distant future:

- Domination by a single party
- Tenuous if rapid economic growth
- Widespread accusations of corruption within the ANC

### Think About It

In other words, we will explore the same basic issues covered in the printed version of Comparative Politics: the evolution of the state, political culture, forms of political participation, the current state, public policy, and feedback. And we will consider the legacy of imperialism, economic development, and other policy issues that are central to political life anywhere in the Global South today.

However, we also have to ask five questions that are unique to South Africa:

- How could such a small minority of the population exert overwhelming control over a huge majority and maintain it for so long?
- What impact did apartheid have on the people of South Africa, majority and minority alike?
- What combination of domestic and international forces brought the regime down in the early 1990s?
- What are the new regime's prospects either for establishing a viable multiracial democracy or for redressing the remaining massive inequities?
- In other words, can South Africa get beyond Hacker's two nations: black and white, separate, hostile, and unequal?

In addressing those questions, we will deviate a bit from the structure used in most of the other chapters on individual countries. As with Russia, which has also recently undergone a regime change, we will have to cycle through the themes of comparative politics twice in this case by exploring the apartheid and multiracial states separately.

## The Evolution of the South African State

South Africa was one of the few countries in the Global South to which large numbers of whites from the colonial powers moved who also went on to dominate political life after independence. What's more, the South African experience was complicated by the fact that it had two different imperial powers, Great Britain and the Netherlands.

### *Imperialism*

South Africa's experience with imperialism began two centuries before Europeans began to colonize the continent as a whole in earnest. Even more importantly for our purposes, it had by far the largest white population, one that was well established before the European powers began their "scramble for Africa" in the late nineteenth century (See Table 21.2).

| Year | Event |
|---|---|
| **1652** | Dutch arrive |
| **1806** | British take over Cape Colony for good |
| **1816–28** | African wars |
| **1820** | British settlers arrive |
| **1835–40** | Great Trek |
| **1867** | Diamond mining begins |
| **1886** | Gold mining begins |
| **1899–1903** | Boer War |
| **1910** | Union of South Africa formed |
| **1912** | African National Congress formed |
| **1948** | National Party elected |

Table 20.2
Key Events in South African History before Apartheid

The Dutch were the first to arrive. Like most Europeans at the time, the Dutch did not want to establish a full-blown colony in what became South Africa. Instead, they only wanted to build outposts they could use to resupply ships during their trips to and from their main trading outposts in Indonesia. The area around today's Cape Town was ideal because of its deep harbor and mild climate. It was also sparsely populated, which enabled a small group of Dutch settlers to easily take over the region around the Cape in 1652.

For the next 150 years, there were not many Dutch colonists. A 1793 census, for instance, listed only 13,830 free Dutch citizens in the entire Cape Colony. Nonetheless, their descendants spread out over most of what is today's Western Cape province. In establishing their communities and building their trading networks, they destroyed the khoikhoi's pastoral civilization. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the **Boers** (from the Dutch word for farmer) had been there for generations and had come to believe that they were in fact Africans in much the same way that descendants of British and French migrants to North America who identified themselves as Americans or Canadians.

The Boers (now more commonly called Afrikaners) might have remained a relatively small group controlling only a part of the current South Africa had the region not become a minor battleground in the Napoleonic wars. In fact, without the events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, there probably would not be a South Africa at all!

In 1795 the British seized the Cape Colony from the Dutch for reasons that had nothing to do with Africa and everything to do with political rivalries in Europe itself. Although it would be another eleven years before they took definitive control of the area around the cape, the arrival of the British ignited a century of on-again, off-again armed struggles between English and Dutch forces that intensified after the British started sending settlers of their own in 1820.

Finally in 1835, most of the Boers in the Cape Colony decided they could not stay now that they had become second-class citizens in "their" territory and set off on the **Great Trek** in search of land they could call their own and farm in peace. The *voertrekkers* loaded their families, household goods, and slaves into wagons and headed northeastward toward what became the two Transvaal provinces under apartheid.

The regions they trekked into were far more densely populated than the Cape. Moreover, the blacks they encountered did not want to see their lands taken over and attacked the trekkers' wagon trains in ways similar to the Indian resistance against American pioneers when they headed west a few decades later. The most important skirmish occurred in 1838 at Blood River (Bloemfontein), where a vastly outnumbered group of voertrekkers circled their wagons, prayed to their God, and somehow managed to defeat their Zulu foe. The **Battle of Blood River** remains the most important symbol of Afrikaner resistance and solidarity.

By 1840 the *voertrekkers* were well established in their new homeland. Later in the decade, another community was established by Boers who left Natal on the east coast after it became a British colony as well.

Tensions between the British and Dutch did not disappear, however. In 1867 and 1886, vast deposits of diamonds and gold were discovered in the area around Johannesburg and Pretoria respectively. Thousands of English and black workers were transported to these boomtowns. Finally, in 1895, the British governor of the Cape Colony, Cecil Rhodes—the founder of the De Beers Company whose estate funds Rhodes scholarships--called on the English workers to rise up against the Dutch.

After four tense years, Paul Kruger, the president of the Boer Republic, declared war on the British in October 1899. Although their forces were outnumbered by more than five to onthe Afrikaners fought tenaciously. The British responded with brutality of their own, creating the world's first concentration camps where at least twenty thousand civilians died.

The two sides agreed to a treaty in 1902. The Boer Republic ceased to exist when the Transvaal and the Orange Free State became British colonies in 1906 and 1907. In 1910, all of the previously separate territories were united as the Union of South Africa, which was a dominion of the British Empire whose combined administration was dominated by whites.

## Who Is an African?

Whites in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand have no trouble identifying themselves as Americans, Canadians, Australians, and New Zealanders respectively, even though they are all immigrants and, in some cases, the descendants of colonizers. But they have a much harder time understanding why whites in South Africa should be allowed to think of themselves as Africans.

However, many Afrikaner and English families have been in South African longer than all but a handful of Americans or Canadians have been in North America. Australia and New Zealand were colonized much later.

On a more practical level, it is all but impossible for those millions of white South Africans—especially the Afrikaners—to move "back to where they came from" even if they wanted to.

This point is well understood by all but a handful of militant pan-Africanists in South Africa today.

Apologists for the South African regime argued it was democratic. They claimed, too, that blacks benefited from the new dominion status because they lived better than Africans elsewhere on the continent.

Such claims should not obscure a far more important point. If South Africa was a democracy at any time before 1994, it was a democracy for the few. Whites never made up more than twenty percent of the population, yet they controlled the state. They also were far better off than the rest of South Africa's population. The data most favorable to the regime showed that whites were at least five times wealthier than blacks, and most statistical measures show that the gap between them was much, much wider.

Apartheid, per se, did not become official policy until after World War II, but racial discrimination was a fact of life from the beginning. T The two sides agreed to a treaty in 1902. The Boer Republic ceased to exist when the Transvaal and the Orange Free State became British colonies in 1906 and 1907. In 1910, all of the previously separate territories were united as the Union of South Africa, which was a dominion of the British Empire whose combined administration was dominated by whites.

he whites codified existing policies toward blacks, coloureds, and Asians. Only in the region around Cape Town could a small number of coloureds and an even smaller number of blacks vote. One of the Union's first acts was a 1913 law that barred blacks from buying land outside of "reserves" or land set aside for them which were not terribly different from American Indian reservations.

Politics in the first half of the twentieth century was for all intents and purposes a struggle between the English and the Afrikaners from which blacks, coloureds, and Asians were excluded. To make a long and complicated story short, Afrikaner resentment toward English economic and cultural domination grew. English remained the official and dominant language, and English speakers were much better off economically even though they were outnumbered by the Afrikaners. If anything, the Afrikaners' status worsened—as, for instance, when the largely English mine owners decided to replace their largely Afrikaner workforce with blacks who would work for far lower wages.

Afrikaners channeled their anger through two main organizations. The first was the **National Party**, which usually came in second behind the more moderate South African Party and later, the United Party, which recruited support from both the Afrikaner and English communities. The other was the smaller, secretive, and more militant ***Broederbond*** (Band of Brothers). Membership in it was open only to Protestant men and then only by invitation. Ostensibly, it existed to promote the Afrikaans language, Afrikaner culture, and Calvinist doctrine. By 1949, it provided most of the National Party's and, therefore, the apartheid state's leaders.

World War II was a major watershed for Afrikaners. During the 1930s their racism had deepened to the point that many Afrikaner leaders supported Nazi Germany. Some of them were arrested during the war for doing so. Because of that pro-German sentiment, South Africa did not institute a draft, and its volunteer army did not serve outside of Africa. Nonetheless, the war deepened Afrikaners' resentment toward the English and brought their community closer together.

The National Party won the 1948 election and came to power for the first time with a majority of its own and formed a government led by Prime Minister Daniel Malan. It then started passing the apartheid legislation we will examine shortly.

It is hard to overstate how brutal and repressive the National Party was. At a time when most other countries were granting their racial and ethnic minorities civil rights and political freedoms, South Africa went in the opposite direction. Conditions for the majority of South Africans worsened in every way imaginable, including restrictions on where they could live, what they could study, and what jobs they could hold. Needless to say, no non-whites were allowed to participate in political life "inside the system."

## Day of the Covenant/Day of Reconciliation

Since 1838, Afrikaners have celebrated December 16 as the Day of the Covenant. Because they were able to kill thousands of Zulus and suffer only a single casualty (a wounded hand) at the Battle of Blood River, they were convinced that their victory was a sign that they were God's chosen people—superior to the blacks and later justified in establishing apartheid.

In an equally symbolic move, the new government changed the name of the holiday to the Day of Reconciliation in 1994. Four years later, a new monument to honor the Zulus was unveiled next to the one the Afrikaners had erected to celebrate their heroes.

As a government spokesperson put it on December 16, 1994, it was time for South Africans to stop glorifying the ways they had killed each other in the past and realize that they could settle their disputes peacefully.

## *Political Culture and Participation: Democracy for the Few*

Under apartheid, South Africa had two white subcultures. Both shared an unquestioned assumption that whites were superior to blacks which therefore gave them the right to rule. However, there were important differences between the value systems of most Afrikaners and of most English South Africans.

The majority culture was, first and foremost, Dutch. However, it was not the same as the one we find in the Netherlands today, which is among the most open-minded in the world. Rather, Afrikaners tended to be provincial and, in the minds of some, intolerant, largely because they had been cut off from the liberalizing trends that swept western Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Their experience in South Africa itself made generations of Afrikaners even more intolerant and conservative. For two hundred years, rural Afrikaners eked out a marginal livelihood from a less than hospitable land, which turned them into a version of what United States lauded as rugged individualists who succeeded because they asserted their superiority over the land and the people they encountered.

The most important of the rightward shifts in Afrikaner culture occurred following the Battle of Blood River. The victory convinced them that it was God's will for them to live in rural and pious communities where they could rule over the inferior "descendants of Ham."

But Afrikaners also felt threatened by the English. They only set off on the Great Trek because many Boers felt British rule prevented them from living in accordance with their beliefs. The British then treated them brutally during the Boer War. Finally, the British came to own and run the mines and other industries, even in Afrikaner-dominated areas.

The Afrikaners' rather diffuse values crystallized into support for apartheid between the two world wars when a group of Afrikaner intellectuals combined political and theological values into an ideology that had a lot in common with Nazism. According to James Barry Munnik Hertzog, who founded the National Party in 1914 and became its first prime minister a decade later, Afrikaners had to purify themselves to defeat the English. The early National Party politicians did not pay much attention to the blacks for the simple reason that they had no political party and therefore posed next to no political or economic threat.

It is hard to underestimate the impact of the Dutch Reformed Church, which is still sometimes referred to as "the National Party in prayer." Between the wars, Dutch Reformed clergymen argued over and over again that the Afrikaner *volk* needed first their own church and then their own society to escape British tyranny in all its forms. This led them to join the more extreme politicians and the Broederbond (membership in these groups, of course, overlapped significantly) in demanding power for Afrikaners.

After the war, they focused their anger on the blacks rather than the English by beginning to make the case that the Afrikaners could develop their own society and culture only if they enforced a strict and total separation of the races. They rode that belief to power in 1948 with a narrow majority of eight seats when they began passing a series of laws that came to define apartheid.

We do not know just how deeply Afrikaners as whole supported separate development or the racism that underlay that policy. But all the signs are that the new laws were popular indeed, especially among the poorest and least-educated segments of the Afrikaner population.

The minority English were somewhat more tolerant. English settlers had arrived in South Africa later, when liberal and democratic values had put down deeper roots in their country of origin. But make no mistake. With the exception of a handful of Marxists and some unusually progressive liberals, English speakers supported at least the basic principles of apartheid for two reasons. First, most felt that the Africans were not "ready" to govern themselves, an attitude shared with many British colonists around the world. Second, and in the long run more important, they stood to lose their economic power should the country ever adopt majority rule.

The journalist Allister Sparks summed up the situation and the ties between the two white subcultures succinctly and powerfully just as apartheid was beginning to unravel:

> **White South Africans are not evil, as much of the world believes. But they are blinded by the illusion they have created for themselves that they live in a white country in Africa, that it belongs to them by right and to no others. It is this which makes South Africa's race problem so much more intractable. Prejudice is there, to be sure. But that is only part of it. The other part is a power struggle for control of a country, between a racial minority long imbued with the belief that its divinely ordained national existence on retaining control of the nation-state and a disinherited majority demanding restitution of its rights, which would make that impossible.**[1]

## *Participation and Elections*

In the mid-1960s, Leonard Thompson described the South African party system as having a right and a center but not a left.[2] From 1909 on, electoral life had pitted an ethnocentric Afrikaner party against one or more competitors who tried to find a middle ground by appealing to English voters as well.

The election of 1948 brought the National Party to power. It then won every election until 1994, when all blacks, Asians, and coloureds could vote for the first time.

The party held on to power often without winning a majority at the polls. Thus, in 1961, it won 105 of 156 seats despite getting only 46 percent of the vote. It could win so many more seats than votes because South Africa used the same first-past-the-post electoral system as Britain, which routinely turns a small plurality of the vote into an overwhelming parliamentary majority. The effects of the system were magnified by the unusual demographics of the South African electorate. First, it was small. Fewer than 800,000 people voted in those 156 constituencies or an average of just over 5,000 each (by contrast, a U.S. House of Representatives district has between 500,000 and 1,000,000 voters). Second, because the English population was concentrated in a few areas, there were few truly competitive districts. Overall, seventy candidates for the 156 seats won after running unopposed.

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[1] Sparks, Allister, *The Mind of South Africa* (Boston: Ballantine Books, 1990), xvii, 31.
[2] Thompson, Leonard, *The Republic of South Africa* (Boston: Little Brown, 1966).

There were opposition parties. The United Party got almost 300,000 votes and won forty-nine seats that same year. It appealed primarily to moderate Afrikaners and to the bulk of the English-speaking electorate. It was also in a difficult position. Although it opposed the harshness of apartheid, it did not favor getting rid of it altogether. Indeed, like all South African centrists over the years, it did not offer a credible alternative to the right on either apartheid or the other policies that mattered to voters.

| Date | Event |
|---|---|
| **1948** | Election of the National Party |
| **1853** | Adoption of the Freedom Charter |
| **1960** | Sharpeville Massacre |
| **1963** | Nelson Mandela and others jailed |
| **1966** | Assassination of Verwoerd |
| **1977** | United Nations arms embargo |
| **1983** | United Democratic Front Formed |
| **1984** | New Constitution |
| **1986** | Pass Law abolished |
| **1990** | Mandela released<br>Ban on organizations lifted |

**Table 21.3**
**Key Events during the Apartheid Years**

Vocal but ineffectual opposition came from the Liberal and Progressive parties, which together normally won almost 15 percent of the vote. However, because of the electoral system, they elected only two members of Parliament (MP) in 1961. And most of the time they could count on getting only one—the Progressives' Helen Suzman, who was a lonely voice arguing against apartheid from "within the system" for many years.

We can all but ignore the public opinion and political participation of the vast majority of the South African population. They were legally denied almost all civil rights, which meant that their opinions and actions did not matter.

Most blacks understood their plight and made no overt attempt to shape political life. There was, however, a small, mostly middle-class opposition that tried to find a niche between participation in an electoral process that they could not be part of and revolution.

Two such groups bear at least a brief mention here. We will, of course, return to them both in more detail shortly when we consider why apartheid collapsed.

First were the communists who began by organizing whites in the mines and factories during the interwar years. Because white manual laborers' jobs were being taken over by blacks, the party did not strongly support racial equality at first. By the 1940s, however, a combination of shifts in the world communist movement and its own new, mostly Jewish leadership led it to the forefront

of the opposition to apartheid. The Party was banned by the new government in 1950 and had a limited impact while operating underground after that.

The ANC was the most important of the largely black-based organizations. Formed in 1912, it initially endorsed the nonviolent resistance of the Indian Congress on which it was modeled.[3] But with the emergence of its Youth League (including Mandela) in the 1950s, it adopted the more militant **Freedom Charter** in 1955 and opened a Defiance Campaign to resist apartheid. Although the ANC was nominally legal, the regime continually harassed it. Among other things, the authorities tried to prevent the meeting at which the Freedom Charter was adopted.

At the end of the 1950s, many of its younger leaders convinced themselves that they had to abandon nonviolence. As far as they were concerned, the last straw came with the **Sharpeville Massacre** on March 21, 1960, when government troops fired on marchers at a peaceful rally held by another organization, killing at least sixty-seven. In its aftermath, all the leading ANC and other leaders were arrested.

The next year, the ANC reluctantly decided to approve using violent tactics and formed ***Umkhonto we Sizwe*** (Spear of the Nation) to wage a guerrilla struggle. It, too, was quickly thwarted, and the regime used the pretext of violence to ban the ANC and re-arrest most of its leaders. Some, like Mandela, would spend the next quarter century in prison. After Sharpeville, blacks and their allies could no longer press their political demands legally, so we can defer further discussion of their involvement until the section on the new South Africa.

## *The Apartheid State*

Like India, South Africa "inherited" traditional parliamentary institutions from its British colonial masters. These bodies and practices were laid out in the Union of South Africa Act, which the country used as its constitution from 1910 to 1984. That year, the leadership adopted a new constitution for a Second Republic that, paradoxically, was designed to solidify Afrikaner control while giving the appearance of more democracy.

It was a large and powerful state. By 1980 it employed over 30 percent of the white workforce. And as we will see in this section and the one on public policy that follows, it was responsible for everything from state security to economic development.

### Parliamentary Institutions

South Africa became less democratic over the course of the National Party's forty-six years in power in two ways. First, the executive gained power at the expense of the legislature and other bodies that elsewhere provide for democratic accountability. Second, as we will see in the next section, the regime increasingly relied on its security services to keep the growing opposition at bay.

Prior to 1984 power was vested in a bicameral, all-white parliament. As in Britain, its majority party formed the government by naming the prime minister who chose the rest of the cabinet. The government stayed in power as long as it retained the support of that majority. Some minor changes were made when South Africa quit the British Commonwealth in 1961 and formally adopted its own constitution. These changes were mostly cosmetic, such as replacing the powerless governor

[3] This was not a coincidence. Mahatma Gandhi spent the first twenty years of his career as a lawyer and organizer of Asians in South Africa. See Chapter 12 on India.

general, who supposedly represented the British Crown as head of state, with an almost equally powerless president. (See Table 21.4.)

| Prime Minister/President | Started Term |
|---|---|
| Daniel Malan | 1948 |
| Johannes Strjdom | 1954 |
| Hendrik Verwoerd | 1958 |
| B. J. Vorster | 1966 |
| P. W. Botha | 1978 |
| F. W. de Klerk | 1989 |

Table 21.4
Prime Ministers and Presidents of South Africa under Apartheid

By the late 1970s, however, the National Party leadership felt it had to respond to growing pressures on the state that had arisen from outside parliament. Therefore, Prime Ministers B. J. Vorster and P. W. Botha took steps to strengthen executive authority. Botha, for instance, replaced the partially elected Senate with a State Council appointed by the prime minister.

In 1983, the parliament adopted a new constitution that restructured the state and its institutions. The traditional, British-style dual executive was abandoned in favor of a single state president, who was chosen by an electoral college. The president's term was the same as the Parliament's, but he could not be removed through a vote of confidence.

As a sop to international public opinion, the new Parliament had three houses—one each for whites, coloureds, and Asians. However, all real power was lodged in the whites-only executive and its house of Parliament. Most coloureds and Asians recognized that these institutions were shams and boycotted subsequent elections. Blacks were excluded altogether.

In practice, the presidency became the most powerful institution for the same reasons it did in France after 1958 or Russia after 1991. The president was the one politician with a national mandate, which gave him more exposure and de facto power than earlier prime ministers. Further, it allowed Botha and, later, F. W. de Klerk to transfer more and more power to the State Security Council.

## The Repressive Apparatus

Despite what its supporters may have claimed, the South African state was not a whites-only version of a Western democracy. Especially from the mid-1970s on, it survived in large part because it developed a massive, ruthless, and effective police state led by civil servants who came to be known as **securocrats**.

In the 1970s white South Africans suffered two setbacks. First, when Richard Nixon resigned the U.S. presidency in 1974, South Africa lost its most loyal ally. Second, revolutions in Angola and Mozambique replaced Portuguese colonial rulers with radical governments who

joined with others to form the "front line states" on South Africa's borders giving the ANC bases much closer to the country from which to operate.

In response, the parliament passed the 1982 Internal Security Act, which created the National Security Management System headed by the **State Security Council**. This was a powerful body whose membership included the top cabinet ministers and the heads of the many police and military security units. It defined security as broadly as possible by giving the securocrats jurisdiction over everything that could potentially threaten the regime in the short or long term.

In the eyes of most observers, the council overshadowed the cabinet as the main decision-making body. And because it was extra-constitutional, there were few ways MPs could hold it accountable, had they been interested in doing so which, of course, they were not.

As hard as it may be to believe, as with the KGB in the Soviet Union in the late 1970s, the securocrats were not the most reactionary members of the South African elite. Many senior security officers realized that they could not continue to stay in power through force alone and urged some reforms, such as allowing blacks to form unions as long as they were not political. But few people realized the importance of those reformist ideas at the time, because their most visible response to the opposition was to step up repression in ways that made any lingering thoughts that this was a democratic regime absurd.

## *Public Policy Under Apartheid*

### The Apartheid Laws


In its first years in power, the National Party passed a number of laws that formalized what had been only partially spelled out in the statute books before World War II. As would be the case throughout its time in office, the party often justified its actions in other terms, most frequently anti-communism. Nonetheless, the party's primary motivation was to complete and formalize the separation of the races that had been common practice for generations. The most important of the laws were the:

- Population Registration Act (1950), which defined all people as members of one of four racial groups.
- Group Areas Act (1950), which regulated the sale of property across racial lines.
- other acts passed from 1936 through the mid-1950s gradually took away the rights of blacks to live in white areas and authorized their forcible resettlement.
- Prohibition of Mixed Marriages (1949) and Immorality (1950) acts, which banned sexual relations across racial lines.
- Suppression of Communism Act (1950), which outlawed the SACP and allowed the state to ban individuals from political life. It and subsequent acts were later used as justification for banning the ANC as well.
- Bantu Authorities Act (1951), which removed anti-regime "chiefs" in "tribal" areas and replaced them with government-appointed ones.
- Native Laws Amendment Act (1953), which allowed only blacks who had been born there to legally live in urban areas.

- Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (1953), which provided legal justification for separate, segregated facilities.
- Extension of University Education Act (1959), which prohibited Africans from attending the three major universities that had previously enrolled some black students.
- Bantu Homeland Constitution Act (1971), which allowed for the creation of nominally independent black homelands.

The state also rigidly enforced **pass laws**, which required blacks who moved from the homelands to the cities in search of work to carry what amounted to an internal passport indicating whether or not they had the legal privilege to live in white areas. Employers used the laws to enforce labor discipline because any worker who was fired would have his or her passbook changed and would lose the right to visit, let alone live in, an urban area. Passbook checks and arrests were random and arbitrary, thereby instilling fear and uncertainty in the black community. Each year an average of 100,000 Africans were arrested and either jailed or sent back to the homelands for pass law violations. Sometimes the state used the laws to ban known opponents and troublemakers.

In urban areas, the government began forcibly relocating township dwellers in 1954 when it flattened the Johannesburg suburb of Sophiatown, where Archbishop Desmond Tutu (arguably the second most influential architect of the new South Africa after Mandela) had been raised. Its sixty thousand residents were forced into a new slum that would later be known as **Soweto** which is short for South Western Townships. Some 3 million people had been uprooted by the end of the 1980s.

The authorities stopped using overtly racist rhetoric after 1958, claiming that they were seeking the separate development of each community. Although this new language often seemed more benign to outsiders, the state's policies and actions were just as brutal as they had been during the early years of apartheid.

The underlying rationale was that if the races were to develop on their own, they should live separately or at least as separately as the economy permitted. Thus, areas of rural South Africa were set aside as **homelands** for blacks and supposedly granted a degree of self-government. In practice, these areas -- pejoratively known as bantustans -- occupied the 13 percent of the land that the whites did not want for themselves, could not economically support their residents, and had governments that were controlled by puppets of the National Party.

This shift toward a language of separate development may have assuaged some of whatever guilt Afrikaners felt. It certainly improved the regime's image abroad especially among conservatives like U.S. President Ronald Reagan and UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Under the last two presidents, Botha and de Klerk, a few of the least important racial laws were eliminated without undermining the basic premises of apartheid. The arrogance and racism of those beliefs were graphically summarized by Prime Minister **Hendrik Verwoerd** (1901–66) in explaining why they had to keep control of the bantustans:

> **There is nothing strange about the fact that here in South Africa the guardian in his attempts to uplift the Bantu groups who have been entrusted to his care must in various ways exercise supervision over them during the initial stage.**[4]

4 Cited in Patti Waldmeier *Anatomy of a Miracle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 142

## Profile

## Desmond Tutu

Desmond Tutu grew up in a middle-class family by black standards. His father was a teacher, which was the younger Tutu's first career as well. He came to the ministry relatively late, being ordained as an Anglican priest at the age of twenty-nine. Much of his first fifteen years in the ministry was spent either teaching or engaging in further study.

He rose through the ranks of the church hierarchy quite quickly, having been named bishop of Lesotho in 1977 and secretary general of the South African Council of Churches in 1980. Nine years later he became Anglican archbishop for all of South Africa after winning the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize. Tutu is widely respected at home and abroad for his moral courage and the compassion with which he as always treated his adversaries.

In 1996, he retired from his position in the church to chair the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was undoubtedly the crowning accomplishment of his long career. He then spent two years in the United States so that his successor as archbishop would be able to establish himself without dealing with Tutu's continuing influence among South Africans. In 2010, he officially retired from political life, which has not kept him from speaking out on dozens of issues of racial, economic, and sexual equality. (www.nobel.se/peace/laureates/1984/ tutu-bio.html).

### Import Substitution from the Right

At the time, left-wing scholars insisted that apartheid was far more than a racist policy. In addition, they claimed it dramatically altered the distribution of wealth and power in South African capitalism in ways that mostly benefited Afrikaners.

When the National Party came to power, Afrikaners were less well off than the English. Many were actually poorer than earlier generations had been because of the declining role of agriculture and the use of cheaper African labor in the mines and factories.

For Afrikaners, however, political power also brought economic power. Although they were anything but left wing, they pursued policies much like the **import substitution** that was used early on in many countries with left-of-center governments in the Global South.

The South African industrial revolution took off in the 1940s when World War II cut off access to the imported industrial goods its middle class wanted. After the war, the National Party government decided to continue the practice of import substitution and to support the development of South African–based industries, especially those owned or operated by Afrikaners.

By the 1970s, the government had no choice but to develop the economy on its own. As we will see, the international community gradually distanced itself from South Africa. Although sanctions and the corporate withdrawals were never complete, South African businesses and

consumers increasingly had to meet their own needs which, in turn, led to their reliance on a highly interventionist state.

It used its control over the Bantu Administration Boards to keep African workers' wages as low as possible in part to encourage foreign investment. It also used its control of the national purse strings to create an Afrikaner capitalist class by, for instance, shifting its accounts to banks they owned and awarding firms the owned contracts to rewrite school textbooks. The government also used taxation and other levers to encourage joint ventures between traditionally English-dominated firms and Afrikaner ones. Overall, the state's share of overall investment grew to a high of 37 percent in 1992.

The government erected high tariffs and other barriers to limit the importation of manufactured goods and plowed the profits from the sale of gold, diamonds, and other exports into industrial development. Thus, it set up parastatals (state-controlled companies) such as ISCOR (steel), ESKOM (electricity), and SASOL (other forms of energy).

The strategy worked. The economic growth rate was quite high in the 1960s and the early 1970s. Foreign investment flowed into the country. Major industrial firms from Europe, North America, and Japan all established subsidiaries, although the Japanese had to be declared honorary whites so that they could legally do business in South Africa. Perhaps most important of all politically, the Afrikaners prospered. No longer were they among the poorest and least-educated white populations in the world. Instead, they enjoyed lifestyles not terribly different from those of most Europeans or English-speaking South Africans.

At this point, two problems surfaced, both of which apartheid's weaknesses that eventually did it in. First, black trade unions were formed, which drove the price of labor up and hence reduced the attractiveness of doing business in South Africa in many industries. Second, as a result of a worldwide antiapartheid movement, foreign investment declined, and some firms pulled out altogether. Neither change dealt the economy a crushing blow, but it stagnated in the early 1980s and suffered a limited, but real, decline in the second half of the decade.

The economic changes led to an intriguing contradiction that left-wing analysts, again, are convinced contributed heavily to the end of apartheid. As industrialization progressed and more and more Afrikaners attained middle-class status, they had no choice but to employ African workers, even though the apartheid laws banned Africans from living in the urban areas where the factories were located. The Afrikaners thus tacitly allowed a system of temporary migration of black workers, enforced using the pass laws and more, which, as we will see, only served to indirectly heighten opposition to the regime.

## THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA

On 2 February 1990, President **F. W. de Klerk** opened the new session of the National Assembly with a political bombshell:

> **The prohibition of the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress, the South African Communist Party and a number of subsidiary organizations is being**

**rescinded. The government has taken a firm decision to release Mr. Nelson Mandela unconditionally.**[5]

## *How it Happened*

Apartheid always had its opponents. Some, like the predominantly English-speaking liberals, tried to reduce discrimination in ways reminiscent of a traditional interest group. Because blacks could not vote and had no civil rights, there was little they could do by working within the system. Therefore, most black activists and their allied had no choice but to be revolutionaries of one form or another.

### Profile
### F. W. De Klerk

Early in his career, no one would have predicted that F. W. de Klerk would be one of the architects of the end of apartheid. His family had been involved in National Party politics from the days of Paul Kruger in the 1910s. His uncle was a leading architect of apartheid, and his father was a senator.


*De Klerk and Mandela: Source Wikimedia*

De Klerk earned a law degree in 1958 and was slated to begin a career as a professor of law in 1972 when he was first elected to political office. In 1978, he was named to his first cabinet post. In 1986, he became leader of the National Party in Parliament. In that position, he was part of the group that convinced P. W. Botha to step down as president. De Klerk succeeded him and almost immediately gave his famous speech ending the ban on the ANC and announcing Nelson Mandela's release from prison.

De Klerk and Mandela were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 for their efforts in the transition. De Klerk resigned as deputy president in 1996, took the National Party into opposition, and retired from active political life (www.nobel.se/peace/laureates/1993/klerk-bio.html).

None of apartheid's opponents had much of an impact before the mid-1980s. Nonetheless, it was probably just a matter of time before apartheid collapsed. Although repression could keep the state in place and make it seem invincible, the National Party government was fighting a losing battle. If nothing else, the numbers were stacked against it. In the 1960s more blacks were born than there were whites of any age.

### The Hurting Stalemate

Once some cracks in white and Afrikaner unity appeared, apartheid collapsed remarkably quickly, though not in the same ways or for the same reasons that communism did in Eastern

[5] Cited in Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa,* 213.

Europe. Rather, change became possible because the two sides realized that they had reached what students of conflict resolution call a mutually **hurting stalemate** in which each side comes to twin conclusions. It can continue to fight and might conceivably win someday, but the costs of continuing the struggle would far outweigh any conceivable benefits. A hurting stalemate does not necessarily lead to successful negotiations, as the continued tensions between the Israelis and the Palestinians attest, but it does make such talks possible.

It is safe to say that such a stalemate had been reached in South Africa long before negotiations began in earnest in 1989. The moment was eventually seized because remarkable leaders, most notably Mandela and de Klerk, took the political risk of gradually bringing the ANC and the National Party together.

As Mandela himself put it,

> **It was clear to me that a military victory was a distant if not impossible dream. It simply did not make sense for both sides to lose thousands if not millions of lives in a conflict that was unnecessary. It was time to talk.**[6]

## The Sources of Resistance

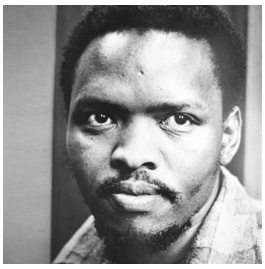
Resistance to apartheid came from five main sources, each of which gained strength in the 1980s. In the long run, the liberals had the smallest impact. Nonetheless, there were some crusading moderates who occasionally dented apartheid's armor, like the journalist David Wood, who broke the story about Steve Biko's execution (see below). In all likelihood, they had the most influence outside South Africa because they could be portrayed as people of good faith who demonstrated to opinion leaders in Britain, the United States, and elsewhere that apartheid was unacceptable and that there was a non-revolutionary alternative to it.

*A Street Scene in Soweto*

Second were the churches. As in the American South during segregation, one of the few jobs an educated black could aspire to was the clergy. And because the Anglican (Episcopalian in the United States) and some of the Calvinist churches were part of worldwide denominations, their African ministers gained a degree of international exposure that was denied other blacks.

Two members of the clergy stand out. The coloured Dutch Reformed pastor, Alan Boeszak, was a major force attacking the immorality of apartheid until his own involvement in an affair forced him to resign from the clergy and destroyed his political credibility. More important to this day is Tutu, who was named Anglican archbishop for South Africa in 1989 and who won the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize. The very naming of a black to head the Anglican Church was a political act. In addition, Tutu is a remarkable and charismatic man who would have been seen as one of the world's great leaders of our time had he not had to share the limelight with Mandela.

[6] Cited in Waldmeier, *Anatomy of a Miracle*. 94



*Steve Biko: Source Wikipedia*

Third was the loosely organized and largely spontaneous **Black Consciousness** movement, which probably did the most to galvanize opposition in the African community in South Africa itself. It was inspired by **Steve Biko** (1952–77) and burst on the political scene in 1978. Biko had dropped out of medical school in the late 1960s to create an organization that could build a sense of identity, pride, and power among young Africans. He was part of a generation of students educated at segregated universities who were unwilling to put up with apartheid and who sought to organize younger, less-educated people in the townships. His supporters claim that he was largely responsible for the uprising that swept Soweto in 1976. The next year, he was arrested, tortured, and killed, which gave the opposition yet another martyr and more first-hand evidence of the state's repression and corruption. It also marked the first time that many average Africans came both to doubt the possibility of a gradual solution and to realize that they would have to exert their influence from outside the system.

To see the impact that the likes of Biko had, consider the following passage from Mark Mathabane's autobiography written in the mid-1980s. In it he describes a conversation with his mother about his first real awareness of the pass laws, which came a few weeks after his father had been arrested because his book was not in order.

> When will Papa be back? I don't know.
> He may be gone for a long, long time.
> Why does he get arrested so much?
> Because his pass is not in order.
> Why doesn't he get it fixed?
> He can't.
> Why? You're too young to know.
> What's a pass, Mama?
> It's an important book that we black people must have in order always, and carry with us at all times.
> I don't have a pass.
> You'll get one when you turn sixteen.
> Will they take me away, too, Mama? Like they do Papa?
> Hush. You're asking too many questions for your own good.[7]

Prior to the mid-1970s, a boy like Mathabane would probably have accepted his family's predicament for what it was--an unavoidable fact of life. Young urban blacks of his day, however, found that obeying the pass laws -- along with being forced to learn Afrikaans, enduring wretched living conditions, and the like -- was no long acceptable, and they lashed out whenever and however they could.

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[7] Mark Mathabane, *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Plume, 1986), 36.

The Black Consciousness movement lost in the short run because the state was able to weather its demands amd put it down. It did, however, have a lasting impact by demonstrating that the opposition was widespread, if poorly organized and left the ANC and the groups affiliated with it as the only opposition force with enough legitimacy and a popular base for the opposition to build on.

Fourth, as we saw earlier, the ANC abandoned its commitment to nonviolence after it was banned in the aftermath of the Sharpeville Massacre. From then on, it waged a guerrilla war against the apartheid state. The ANC was never much of a fighting force. However, the combination of its underground organization at home, the appeals made by its leaders in exile, and the example set by Mandela and others imprisoned for so long went a long way toward strengthening opposition to apartheid at home and abroad.

Although it was an illegal organization, the ANC was strong enough to have a significant impact inside the country by the 1980s, largely because it was able to operate through two other, legal organizations. In 1983, it helped form the **United Democratic Front (UDF)**, a coalition that eventually numbered nearly six hundred organizations. Although the UDF was not able to coordinate and control everything at the grassroots level, the fact that it was dominated by the ANC increased support for the banned and exiled party. Less visible but perhaps even more important were the trade unions, especially the **Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)**, which is still affiliated with the ANC and which successfully organized industrial workers after multiracial unions were legalized in 1985. Together, activists in all these groups developed what are now known as **struggle credentials** or reputations they built up over the course of their years in the resistance.

Finally, the apartheid state faced growing pressure from abroad. As soon as the National Party took office, an international anti-apartheid movement was launched under the leadership of an English clergyman, Father Trevor Huddleston, who had worked in South Africa for many years. In the 1970s and 1980s, South Africa faced a mounting barrage of criticism, the impact of which has never been fully measured.

For instance, many U.S. universities and a few major pension funds divested themselves of stock in companies that did business in South Africa but did not oppose apartheid. This led to the creation of a code of conduct drawn up by the late Reverend Leon Sullivan that many companies voluntarily adopted and that gave rise to the broader investor responsibility movement that is best known today for its efforts to produce change in corporate environmental policy.

Similarly, most international athletic authorities imposed boycotts on this sports-crazy country. Indeed, there are some pundits who argue half seriously that the inability to see their beloved Springboks play rugby or cricket did the most to convince the Afrikaners to abandon apartheid.

Although the United Nations imposed an arms embargo in 1977, many powerful governments were slow to jump on the anti-apartheid bandwagon. A number of countries did impose economic sanctions. However, the United States under Ronald Reagan and Great Britain under Margaret Thatcher were by no means among the world's leaders.

By the same token, the end of the Cold War put significant pressure on the ANC. The Soviet Union had provided it with much of its funding and military training. When its support disappeared, the ANC and other organizations like the Palestinian Liberation Organization found themselves in a financial bind. The events of the late 1980s and early 1990s were also a crushing emotional blow to the SACP that led many of its leaders to question their commitment to revolution. In particular, its

chair, **Joe Slovo** (1926-1995)**,** made a remarkable turnaround to become one of the ANC's most fervent advocates of negotiation in the early 1990s and of reconciliation with the whites before his untimely death in 1995.

It is important to note that the ANC or the Black Consciousness movement did not wholly define the resistance, which also used tactics those of us who live in more open societies would not find either normal or acceptable. There was a great deal of random violence, including "necklacings" (immobilizing people by putting large tires around them, dousing them in gasoline, and burning them alive) of young Africans thought to be traitors to the cause. Many of these and other acts of violence were carried out by dissident ANC factions, including **Winnie Madikizela-Mandela**'s (Nelson Mandela's former wife) "football club." Frankly, some of these incidents were little more than an opportunity to seek vengeance against personal rivals or members of other ethnic groups. On balance, however, there was surprisingly little violence from the regime's opponents, and it is not clear how important any of it was in forcing the apartheid state to its knees.

## Toppling Apartheid

The crackdown following the Sharpeville Massacre took a heavy toll on the resistance, especially the ANC. Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and most of its other key leaders were sent to prison on the infamous Robben Island. Oliver Tambo, Slovo, and the other leaders who managed to escape imprisonment ran the movement from exile. The armed uprising began with an act of sabotage in December 1961 during the annual commemoration of the Battle of Blood River. The ANC put sharp limits on Umkhonto we Sizwe, ruling out, for instance, attacks on white civilians. The uprising was not very effective because the vast majority of the fighters were captured or killed within forty-eight hours of reentering the country.

The 1970s, however, saw a marked increase in anti-system activity. In part inspired by the U.S. civil rights and black power movements, Biko and his generation organized the first university student unions and then the broader Black Consciousness movement. Biko argued that blacks had to organize themselves, starting with, as he put it, "the realization that the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed."

In so doing, the two sides set off an ever escalating cycle of protests and ensuing crackdowns that continued until apartheid collapsed. At each stage through the 1980s, the government was able to defeat the protesters in the short run. In the longer term, however, repression served only to deepen opposition at home and abroad.

In retrospect, it is somewhat surprising that the government initially allowed groups affiliated with the Black Consciousness movement to organize openly and legally. Although Biko himself was banned in 1973, there were large, public protests, such as one in 1974 in support of neighboring Mozambique, which had just thrown out its Portuguese colonial rulers. As was usually the case, the leaders were arrested but the organizations they created continued their tenuous legal existence.

An uprising in Soweto proved to be an important turning point in this early period. It began on June 16, 1976 and was led by high school students protesting a new rule that made Afrikaans the language of instruction in black schools, which next to none of them either spoke or wanted to learn. The police fired on the crowd, killing twenty-three people according to the official figures, which was almost certainly an underestimate. More protests broke out around the country in which again, according to official figures, nearly six hundred died. (See Table 21.5.)

| Date | Event |
|---|---|
| **1985** | Initial discussions between the ANC and the government |
| **1989** | F. W. De Klerk replaces P. W. Botha |
| **1990** | Mandela released; ANC ban lifted |
| **1992** | Whites-only referendum endorses negotiations |
| **1994** | First elections; Nelson Mandela president |
| **1996** | Growth, Employment, and Rehabilitation Act |
| **1998** | Truth and Reconciliation Commission report |
| **1999** | Thabo Mbeki elected president |
| **2009** | Jacob Zuma elected president |

Table 21.5
Key Events During and After the Transition to Democracy

After that, the movement grew in two directions, both of which worked to the ANC's advantage. First, many of the protesters left the country to join the armed struggle. Second, a decade-long "battle for the township" began in which blacks stopped attending school, paying rent for public housing, and patronizing white businesses, in what came to be known as the "ungovernability campaign." As noted earlier, in 1983, many of the protesters formed the UDF, which was dominated by ANC activists. The state continued to counterattack, detaining 40,000 people and killing 4,000 more from 1979 on.

Meanwhile, pressure from abroad intensified. The United Nations suspended South Africa's membership in the General Assembly in 1974, imposed a global arms embargo in 1977, and declared apartheid a crime against humanity in 1984. Demands for corporate disinvestment and sanctions imposed by individual European and U.S. governments continued to grow. By the early 1980s more than two hundred American corporations had pulled out of the country. Although many critics of apartheid complained that corporations and governments did not do enough soon enough, Chase Manhattan Bank led a number of its peer institutions in refusing to extend South Africa $24 billion in short-term loans in 1985. The next year, the U.S. government passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, which, among other things, outlawed further U.S. investment in South Africa. The European Union and most individual European countries followed sui

Meanwhile, Mandela's international reputation soared in ways that carried that of the ANC with it. The regime and its apologists abroad tried to paint the ANC as communists and terrorists, but more and more people thought those claims paled in comparison with what they took to be the government's human rights violations. Further, the ANC, Tutu, and others were able to convince people around the world that their cause was just, that the ANC had turned to violence only because they had no other viable option, and that they were only attacking the South African state, not the white population as a whole.

The government knew it was in a bind and responded with political carrots and sticks. It enacted reforms that ended the pass laws and other so-called petty apartheid policies but such incremental reforms did little to slow down anti-system moment. The same was true of the 1983–84 constitutional changes which failed abysmally. More than three fourths of the eligible coloureds and 80 percent of the Asians, for example, boycotted the elections in which members of "their" houses of Parliament were elected. In fact, the sham elections only intensified the protest movements in the streets.

## Comparative Emphasis
## Globalization

For the most part in *Comparative Politics,* I have treated globalization as an outgrowth of the spread of global markets and neo-liberalism. As we will see in the section on public policy, those forces are at work in the new South Africa. However, it makes more sense to stress how global opposition to apartheid helped bring down the regime in the early 1990s.

No one knows how to measure the impact of sanctions and embargoes. Similarly, no one in the National Party elite has been willing to say how much international pressure contributed to the party's decision to capitulate. Nonetheless, as Archbishop Tutu pointedly asked, if sanctions were not having a major impact, why did the elite oppose them so strongly? In short, international pressure did more to change the behavior of the National Party government than it would with the Baath regime in Iraq over the next decade. This may say less about the sanctions, which were far more severe and more strictly enforced in the Iraqi case, than it does about the two regimes. Here, the key may have been that the Afrikaners were not willing to jeopardize their economic and cultural gains "just" to retain apartheid and minority rule. By contrast, sanctions imposed on Russia and North Korea in recent years do not seem to have had the same kind of effect.

In the meantime, the National Party government seemed to double down in its use of repression as it became clear that the reform legislation and decrees were not having the intended effect. The infamous Bureau of State Security, for example, arresting about 25,000 blacks and killed another 2,000 in the late 1980s alone.

## Negotiations

Although no one outside of the top leadership of the ANC and the government knew it at the time, secret negotiations had begun in 1985. While Mandela was recuperating from minor surgery, he began meeting with the attorney general. The next year, he was allowed to see former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo when he visited South Africa in his capacity as the head of a delegation of British Commonwealth leaders.

Relations between Mandela and his jailers improved in ways that augured well for the broader negotiations. One day he was taken for a drive by a warder, who went into a store to buy him a soda and left the keys in the ignition. Mandela did not try to escape. Mandela's relationship with the men assigned to guard him became so close that their chief, James Gregory, actually voted for the ANC in 1994 and was invited to his inauguration.

Meanwhile, the ANC and interlocutors for the government began holding informal meetings outside the country. Little substantive progress was made at them, but the participants on both sides got to know each other and saw that they actually had a lot in common personally, if not yet politically.

Things had progressed enough by 1989 for Mandela to have a face-to-face meeting with then President Botha. They did not accomplish at the time either. Indeed, both refused to budge on the conditions under which the world's most famous political prisoner might be released. Nonetheless, Botha later acknowledged that he considered releasing Mandela, although he publicly refused to do so until and unless the ANC renounced violence.

As is so often the case, a historical accident made a huge difference. In January 1989 the intransigent Botha suffered a serious stroke. Later in the year, his party convinced him to step down to be replaced by F. W. de Klerk.

De Klerk was no liberal. His uncle had been prime minister, and his father helped write the apartheid laws. De Klerk, himself, rose through the National Party ranks because he was mostly seen as a member of its right wing. He came to power ready to make reforms that would dilute apartheid. He was not, however, prepared to give up Afrikaner control.

Nonetheless, the Afrikaners' world had begun to change even before he took office. As early as 1986, a number of Afrikaner clergymen who were close to de Klerk began meeting with ANC leaders at their bases in Angola. The head of the Broederbond circulated a document that called for a negotiated settlement as the only approach that could ensure the survival of Afrikaner culture, although he stopped short of advocating one person/one vote. Officials, including some in the security services, then began secret, informal, and unauthorized discussions with the ANC, often brokered by leaders of the biggest South African business, the Anglo-American Corporation, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Ford Foundation. One of the most important meetings took place under the auspices of the Consolidated Goldfields Company at its Mells Park country home in England, where the ANC's Mbeki and his white interlocutor ended their work by watching Mandela's release from prison on television.

Although the details are still not completely known, a number of senior securocrats apparently convinced de Klerk that a negotiated settlement including some sort of power sharing had become the government's only acceptable option. Indeed, one of the most important of them, Niel Barnard, conducted many of the secret talks with Mandela and apparently played the leading role in convincing de Klerk.

Meanwhile, Mandela and the ANC had reached a similar conclusion. In particular, they understood that there would never be a resolution unless they found a way for the Afrikaners to retain their culture and, even more importantly, their dignity.

Thus, in a series of forty seven meetings in which he normally spoke in the Afrikaans he had learned in prison, Mandela kept stressing the need to share power and the fact that blacks and whites had one thing in common: they were all Africans. Meanwhile, the government permanently moved Mandela from Robben Island to a small, comfortable home, both to make meetings with him easier to arrange and to send a signal that he was being taken seriously. Mandela so appreciated his time there that he had a replica of the house built in his hometown, which served as his first retirement home.

Finally, de Klerk agreed to deliver his unexpected speech to the National Assembly in 1990. Mandela was released the next day. That afternoon, he spoke to a crowd estimated at over 100,000,

many of whom had never even seen a picture of the man who had not been mentioned in the South African media since his imprisonment twenty-seven years earlier. His remarkable speech is available on YouTube, but note that almost the first seven minutes has nothing more than the crowd rapturously greeting their hero.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6U_QeIgepI

Formal negotiations began soon afterward but did not go well. The ANC and the government agreed on very little, and at first, Mandela and de Klerk had trouble geting along with each other well personally.

Gradually, things began to improve. The Afrikaners even discovered that they liked the communist Slovo, who seemed more like a grandfather than a guerrilla. Sometimes they found common ground on important political issues and other times on seemingly more mundane matters such as everyone's desire to see South African sports teams competing again internationally.

In the end, it took three years for the **Conference on a Democratic South Africa (CODESA)** to reach an agreement. In between, there were walkouts, more repression, and an upsurge of violence, including the murder of Amy Biehl. She was a recent Stanford graduate who was helping the ANC on the transition and living in Cape Town. One day she was driving some colleagues to their homes in one of the townships when a group of angry young blacks pulled her from the car and beat her to death. We will have more so say about her legacy and her parents' remarkable response when we get to reconciliation.

At long last, the parties agreed to an interim constitution in 1993. It called for elections in which all South African adults could vote for the first time. While thereby assuring an ANC victory, it also contained provisions that guaranteed cabinet posts to all parties that won at least 20 percent of the vote.

The ANC won in a landslide. To no one's surprise, Mandela was chosen president and named de Klerk first deputy president. In 1996, a permanent constitution was adopted that did not retain the minority representation clauses at which point, the National Party left the coalition and de Klerk retired.

Critics were quick to point out that South Africa faced what seemed like insurmountable difficulties. Crime and violence were both at an all-time high, and economic growth was slow.

Towering above all the other problems, South Africa had to confront theemotional legacy of three and a half centuries of white rule. As any American who has seriously thought about the legacy of slavery has to acknowledge, the kind of discrimination and abuse suffered by Africans left emotional scars that could not be healed with "mere" majority rule.

That legacy makes the accomplishments of the first few years of the new South Africa all the more remarkable. Knowing that it could not risk alienating the white population, the new government decided to take the country in an unprecedented direction. Rather than seeking vengeance and the spoils of majority rule, it sought reconciliation, nation building, and consensus.

South Africa's first few years after apartheid were as remarkable as the negotiations that freed Mandela and brought him to power. The new regime had broad-based support and even integrated whites from the old regime, including much of the security service, into the new bureaucracy. The principle of one person/one vote is more securely established than anywhere else in Africa or, for that matter, most of the rest of the Global South.

South Africa also had no trouble making the transition from Mandela to his successors even though Mbeki and Zuma lacked Mandela's charisma and have made their share of political mistakes, as we will see shortly in the section on the state. Nonetheless, the government continues to function smoothly and enjoy massive popular support.

As we discuss those accomplishments, do not forget that the ANC inherited a country that was well off by African standards. It had the twenty-seventh largest population in the world and, by conventional accounting methods, was also the twenty-seventh richest. It was far more industrialized than any other country in Africa with manufacturing accounting for a quarter of its GNP. South Africa also sat atop tremendous mineral resources, including 40 percent of the world's known gold deposits and more than half of its diamonds, manganese, and chromium.

As we will see in the rest of this chapter, ANC governments have squandered many of those resources, especially under Zuma. Now that **Cyril Rampahosa** (1952-) has become president, things could change given his role in negotiating the transition and his work in the business community since then. There is little doubt that Ramaphosa and his Afrikaner counterpart, Roelf Meyer, played a major role in the years before and after Mandela's release. Indeed, a key story in the mythology of the transition revolves around a fishing trip the two took before a round of negotiations began. Meyer got a fish hook dangerously embedded in his arm, which could only be removed by Ramaphosa's wife who is a nurse. As the story has it, the two men began a powerful friendship to this day—one that I've heard Meyer speak fondly—and publicly—about.

*Cyril Rampahosa: Source Wikipedia*

Rather than naming him his successor, Mandela "ordered" Ramaphosa to go into business where his record has been somewhat tarnished. He has had positions on the boards of directors of more than 30 companies including McDonald's and the mining giant Lonmin. His net worth is estimated to exceed $400 million which certainly leaves him open to charges of corruption. Nonetheless, because of his experience working with white business leaders, many hope he will return the country to the kind of policy line that made it one of the BRICS in the first place.

## *Political Culture*

Two key lessons stand out from the research done on democratic political culture in general. First, a tolerant culture with a strong civil society helps sustain democracy. Second, political cultures change slowly.

What South Africa shows us is that while the first conclusion may be correct, the second need not be. The dramatic shifts in less than two decades of democracy show that the core values of most people in a country can indeed change very quickly and that a government can help make that happen.

We will have to add one important caveat here. While the South African voters may have made major strides toward accepting a democratic regime, it is less clear that their elites have done so as well.

### The South African People

There have been few systematic studies of South African political culture. However, the impressionistic evidence plus a few recent polls suggest that the South African people have adopted norms supportive of democracy and toleration surprisingly rapidly given their history.

Support for the national government and democracy in general has hovered between 64 and 70 percent in a series of polls conducted since the ANC came to power, a figure that compares favorably with any major country (http://www.afrobarometer.org). In a 2010 poll, about three quarters of those sampled said they had confidence in the presidency, the national government as a whole, and the supreme court. The people showed less trust in such institutions as the police, but even there the level of support grew dramatically after 2006 (http://reconciliationbarometer.org).

But South Africans are also realists. Most understand that the still faces major racial divisions especially those involving the distribution of wealth. Not surprisingly, too, black support for the current democratic regime is about 20 percent higher among blacks than it is among whites. Perhaps most worrisome of all, about two thirds of blacks and about the same percentage of young voters express a willingness to give up democracy if pressing social needs could be met under some other kind of regime.

Another Afrobarometer poll echoes many of these anecdotes but also provides us with some concerns for the future (www.afrobarometer.org). The survey reveals a country in which blacks and whites live, think, and vote differently. But it also offers a picture of a society in which all groups are more optimistic than one might otherwise expect. Whites are a bit more supportive of core civil liberties including free speech and a free press, but a majority of both communities support all of these rights. Both cited civil liberties and freedoms as the most important characteristic of democracy. Majorities in both groups endorsed multiparty democracy and rejected anything like military rule, although the support was slightly higher among whites than blacks. Only 12 percent of whites (but, oddly, 11 percent of blacks) wanted to go back to the apartheid regime. Perhaps most telling of all, 73 percent of blacks and 63 percent of whites were convinced that South Africa would remain a democracy.

On balance, no country has made as serious an attempt to bring former adversaries together in cooperative and constructive ways. There is no better evidence of this than the fact that South Africans have been called on to help calm ethnic tensions in such faraway places as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Northern Ireland, not to mention neighboring Zimbabwe, which experienced a wrenching regime change as I was drafting this chapter.

To no one's surprise, however, race and ethnicity still deeply divide South Africans and will continue to do so for decades to come. This is easiest to see in the crime and violence that has wracked the country since the transition to democracy. Violent crime has always been a serious problem in the townships, where the murder rate is ten times that in the United States.

That was easiest to see in the first years after the end of apartheid in the "hostels" which housed men who worked in the townships while separated from their families because of the apartheid laws. Clashes between supporters of the ANC and the IFP (see the section on political parties below) resulted in the deaths of well over 10,000- people in the first half of the 1990s. This violence reflected the frustrations of a generation that seemed consigned to permanent poverty as much as the ideological differences that have long separated the two movements.

Today, the violence plays itself out in other ways. These include attacks on immigrant workers from other African countries, criminal theft against whites that also brings violence in its wake, and widespread attacks on women.

Still, South Africa does not seem to suffer from one of the cultural problems that exist in much of the Global South: the lack of a national identity. Indeed, one of the reasons it was so hard to find the common ground that allowed the various communities to do away with apartheid was that they all were convinced that they were patriotic South Africans. Unfortunately, each had a very different conception of what that meant.

If nothing else, South Africa has been able to avoid the civil wars—almost all of which were rooted in issues of religion, ethnicity, or race—that have engulfed much of the Global South. Remember, too, that South Africa had a "worse" historical track record than most of those countries. Yet, somehow, it has managed to avoid the carnage that has devastated countries like Rwanda, where the majority Hutu systematically slaughtered 10 percent of the country's population, including virtually all the minority Tutsi, in a three-month period in 1994.

## And the Elites: Part I

At first, the post-apartheid government went out of its way to be as inclusive as possible. The constitution, for example, guarantees people the right to be educated in their own language. It also tried to promote a sense of inclusiveness through symbolic measures that are probably more assuring than they might seem at first glance. Thus, in 1995, Mandela resisted efforts on the part of many ANC activists to ban rugby, a sport played almost exclusively by Afrikaners and seen as a bastion of their culture and a symbol of their racism. Instead of acceding to their demands, Mandela went to the 1995 World Cup final match wearing a copy of the uniform shirt of captain François Pienaar and warmly greeted the Afrikaner when handing him the winners' trophy, an exchange that has been portrayed with reasonable accurately in the feature film *Invictus*.


*A Poster for the Film, Invictus: Source Wikipedia*

Since then, most of the sports authorities have made major progress in integrating the national teams, bringing blacks into the rugby squad and firing the coach when he resisted doing so, while including more whites into the previously almost all-black soccer team. Afrikaners we know speak with delight about taking blacks they met to rugby games and of their own newfound love for soccer after those visits were reciprocated. One of the consequences of all this was FIFA's awarding of the 2010 World Cup to South Africa, the first time the global sports extravaganza was held in Africa.

Although Mandela and his colleagues get much of the credit, we should not understate the role played by the National Party and the white community in general. Affluent whites could have opposed the new regime or taken their money and fled, which as many as one in five of them did in the first years after apartheid ended. Today, almost all remaining whites have consciously chosen to stay and to give the new regime at least their grudging support. There are fringe elements in the Afrikaner population who want to restore apartheid and, failing that, to acquire their own independent homeland. However, such groups have minimal influence, and unless the bottom falls out of the economy or the crime and violence escalate out of control, the regime seems likely to keep that support.

In some cases, the shift in white elite culture antedates the end of apartheid. Even prior to 1990, foreign governments and private foundations had donated hundreds of millions of dollars to fund NGOs trying to end apartheid and build bridges between the communities. Typical of these is the National Business Initiative (NBI www.nbi.org.za). The organization that turned into the NBI was founded by Theuns Eloff, who is the great-great-great grandson of Paul Kruger, who led Afrikaner

forces into the Boer War. Eloff is a Dutch Reformed Church minister who had grown disillusioned with apartheid in the 1980s and began meeting secretly with ANC officials outside the country. When, following Mandela's release, the negotiations bogged down and township violence escalated, Eloff and his colleagues realized they had to help people from all racial and ethnic groups find common ground. Eloff argued that only if people could find ways to cooperate with rather than shoot at each other would South Africa make it through the transition.

No one has done research on the impact of organizations like NBI. Certainly, none of them were significant enough to move the entire country toward a consensus on their own. However, it is also clear that each helped create a larger "space" in which blacks and whites can interact with each other peacefully and comfortably. Intriguingly, in 2001, this man who was once shunned by his own parishioners was named president of Potcherstroom University for Christian Higher Education, the most prestigious Dutch Reformed seminary. Three years later, he guided it through a merger with the predominantly black North-West University where he served as vice-chancellor/ Now, he is head of the F. W. de Klerk Foundation which fosters dialogue between South Africa's many racial and ethnic communities by upholding the democratic provisions of the constitution which—for good and/or ill—we turn to next.

### And the Elites: Part II

As in Nigeria (at least among the countries covered in *Comparative Politics*), people have begun raising doubts about the impact elite political culture has and will have on the future of democracy, racial equality, development, and other goals in South Africa. Put simply, the remarkable generation epitomized by Mandela but also de Klerk and other reformers in the Afrikaner community has largely left the political scene. The few who remain, like Ramaphosa who remain active have lost some of the sheen of their once all but superhuman struggle credentials now that they have spent a generation as normal leaders helping run a country that faces the kinds of social and economic problems found in much of the rest of the Global South.

Problems with the elite culture can be found in two main areas.

First are the whites who have turned into critics of the new regime. Many of their disagreements with ANC policy will appear in the pages that follow and should be seen as little more than the kinds of disputes one expects to find in a normal democracy.

However, some white critics are casting doubts on the viability of the ANC-led regime. Many of them have actually left South Africa, thus defusing whatever tensions they might have otherwise led to. Therefore, we can defer dealing with their concerns for now but return to them later when we deal, in particular, with corruption and economic policy.

Therein lies the second and, for now, more worrisome side of elite culture—the way the ANC and some of its allies have evolved since Mandela retired. That is what we turn to next

## *Political Participation*

The key to the input side of South African now lies in the way its people have voted in the five national elections since 1994 and how that has led to a system all but completely dominated by the ANC. However, the issues and the stakes we will be seeing in this section are very different from those covered in comparable parts of almost every other chapter in *Comparative Politics* because the ANC is different from all the other political parties I have covered other than, perhaps, India's Congress at roughly the same point in its evolution.

As we saw earlier, the two organizations had similar origins as liberation movements that only turned into conventional political parties after the old regime was overthrown. After a quarter century of independence, both movements-turned-parties began to show signs of fraying which, in South Africa's case, burst into the open during the last two leadership struggles in which Zuma replaced Mbeki and now Ramaphosa has ousted Zuma.

Like Congress, the ANC came to power as an amazingly popular part that also was able to attract even more support from the rest of the population—even including its former enemies in the National Party and the Afrikaner community in general. And, as Table 21.5 suggests, has routinely done extremely well, never falling below 60 percent of the vote. All the signs are, however, that it will not do as well in the next elections to be held in 2019 because of the problems it has faced since Mandela left office. Nonetheless, it has enjoyed a remarkable string of successes, which has often been the case for insurgent movements that end up taking power as a result of a largely nonviolent revolution.

In recent years, the "big issues" raised during and shortly after the independence movement, including reconciliation and overall rates of economic growth, have not been on political center stage as much. Instead, the ANC has had to deal with a range of more difficult issues such as the closing of the economic and political gap between black and white or the nature of its own leadership which may now finally be putting its dominant role in political life in jeopardy. Even if that is happening, however, the ANC is not likely to lose control of the country any time soon.

| Party | 1994 (%) | 1999 (%) | 2004 (%) | 2009 (%) | 2014 (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ANC** | 62.6 | 66.4 | 69.7 | 65.6 | 62.2 |
| **Inkhata** | 10.5 | 8.6 | 7.0 | 4.6 | 2.4 |
| **NNP** | 20.4 | 6.9 | 1.7 | — | — |
| **Democratic Alliance** | — | — | 12.4 | 16.7 | 22.2 |
| **Other major parties** | — | — | — | 7.4 | 8.4 |

Table 21.6
Elections in the New South Africa: Major Parties Only

## The African National Congress

The ANC (www.anc.org.za) did not begin as a "normal" political party—however you define that term. Like its Indian namesake, it was created to end an unjust system of minority and colonial rule. Unlike the Indian Congress, however, the ANC was denied the right to pursue that goal through electoral or other legal means. As we saw in Chapter 11 of the printed version of *Comparative Politics*, India's Congress relied heavily on civil disobedience but also began contesting elections in the 1930s

and gained valuable experience running local governments prior to independence. The ANC never had that opportunity until literally weeks before it came to power.

The ANC had to operate underground and in exile until 1990. In less than four years, it turned itself from a party that led an armed resistance into one that had to run the new South Africa's government. In the process, it changed dramatically.

Four phases in its evolution stand out. Only the third of them, however, leads to the kinds of concerns currently being raised about its future.

**Conventional Political Party**. First, it easily turned itself from a radical liberation movement into an extremely effective electoral machine. That may not seem surprising. However, relatively few independence movements were able to do so in a way that sustained democratic rule elsewhere in Africa, including in its neighbor, Zimbabwe.

Instead, the ANC was ideally suited to succeed in the newly democratic South Africa. If nothing else, it was the only party with a track record as a multiracial organization which ZAPU in Zimbabwe never could claim. It also boasted Mandela, Slovo, and other leaders who had been known to South Africans for more than a generation. And because of its underground organization and role in the UDF and the unions, it had a large, if not always disciplined, organization.

The ANC turned those assets into a landslide victory in 1994, winning almost 63 percent of the vote and 252 of the 400 seats under South Africa's provincially based version of proportional representation. Despite the economic difficulties the country encountered during his term and the fact that Mandela retired, the ANC actually increased its support slightly in 1999. And it did so again in 2004 when it surpassed the two-thirds of the seats needed to amend the Constitution. As noted above, it chose not to do so other than by slightly changing the borders of seven of the nine provinces. Its total fell to just below 66 percent in 2009 and 62 percent five years later. However, it is hard to anticipate it losing its lock on a majority vote even if it does dip well below the two-thirds figure in 2019.

For example, the AfroBarometer survey in 2008-9 found that 79 percent of the entire electorate and 88 percent of the blacks identified with the ANC, by far the largest proportion to align with any one party in all of the countries covered in this book. In the organization's 2015 poll, it found that support for the ANC had slipped, but only about one fourth of the electorate thought that one of the opposition party could do a better job of addressing the problems the country faces. As a result, the ANC has had little trouble converting that support into loyalty at the polls despite dangers posed by its opposition, its internal dynamics, and the quality of its own leadership, all of which will be considered in the rest of this chapter.

**Moderation.** Second, the party also succeeded because it moderated its ideology during the critical first years of the transition away from apartheid. The ANC committed itself to socialism in the 1950s and forged a long-term alliance with the Communist Party, which continues to this day. It is close enough that the old regime was able to convince some people at home and abroad that they were one and the same. Although it took pains to deny government charges that it was itself communist, the ANC never wavered from its commitment to a more egalitarian society—until coming to power, that is.

The ANC obviously did not win because of where it stood on the economy. However, since 1994, poll after poll has shown that economic issues and especially inequality are by far the ones voters care about most. Thus, when the AfroBarometer pollsters asked which issues voters thought

was most important in 2009, over half cited the need to improve economic conditions for the poor. No other issue was mentioned by more than fifteen percent of those sampled.

We will put off discussing the party's new economic focus until the section on public policy. Here, it is enough to note that its acceptance of neo-liberal policies with a longer term commitment to reducing inequality has paid off handsomely at the polls *so far*.

**Leadership Struggles and Oligarchy.** I italicized the words so far in the preceding sentence because that statement may not hold for long. Despite these strengths, the ANC *could* face far more serious competition in the future. The problems can best be seen in the two leadership struggles that have taken place since Mandela retired and the ways in which they have begun splintering the party's base of support.

There is nearly universal agreement that neither Mbeki nor Zuma nor any other possible leader caame close to matching Mandela's abilities and appeal. As we have seen in other chapters, charismatic leaders often have a hard time transferring their unusual leadership skills to less dynamic leaders who have to govern using conventional institutions and practices

## Profile
## Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela was born in 1918. His father was a chief in the Thembu tribe but died while he was quite young. Afterward, Mandela was raised by even higher-status relatives.

Mandela studied at the all-black Fort Hare University but was expelled in 1940 for participating in demonstrations. He finished his B.A. by correspondence and earned a law degree in 1942. He was one of the first blacks to practice law in South Africa.

*Statue of Nelson Mandela in Cape Town" Source Wikimedia commons*

He joined the African National Congress and in 1944 helped form its Youth League, which moved the organization leftward. In 1952, he was elected one of its four deputy presidents.

Mandela was first arrested for treason in 1956 but was acquitted five years later. In 1964 he would not be as lucky. Sentenced to life in prison, he spent twenty-seven years in custody, the first eighteen on the infamous Robben Island.

During the negotiations with the apartheid government and later as president, Mandela was able to combine what can only be described as remarkable personal charm with a powerful commitment to equality and an unbending negotiating style to become arguably the most respected world leader of his generation (www.nobel.se/peace/ laureates/1993/mandela-bio.html).

In South Africa's case, there was no one with anything like his charisma to replace Mandela. Perhaps because he spent more than two decades in exile, Thabo Mbeki never developed a close emotional connection with rank and file voters. Joseph Zuma did spend the bulk of the time during the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and is very much a creature of the ANC organization. However, if nothing else, his lack of formal education makes it hard for him to develop anything like Mandela's charm. Instead, oligarchical tendencies and other leadership issues tarnished their terms in office

A little over a century ago, the Italian sociologist Roberto Michels introduced what he called the "iron law of oligarchy." As political parties and other organizations get larger, power inevitably becomes concentrated in their leadership. Oligarchy does not mean that a single individual rules or that there is no disagreement within a political party or interest group. However, if Michels and his disciples are right, it is hard to sustain democratic dynamics in a mature group with a national impact.

Few scholars today think that oligarchy is an inevitable byproduct of a mature organization. Nonetheless, the ANC probably needed to have some oligarchical features when it led the underground resistance against apartheid. That said, its recent evolution in more authoritarian directions were by no means inevitable and reflect the values and styles of the two men who replaced Mandela.

That is easiest to see, first, in Mbeki's frankly bizarre policy on AIDS which ultimately helped destroy his presidency. AIDS has been a serious problem for South Africa throughout the post-apartheid era. The country has one of the highest infection rates in the world. Millions of South Africans have died, including a number of leading ANC politicians and/or members of their families. Almost as many South African children are AIDS orphans, having lost one or both parents to the disease. The best guess is that 19 percent of the population today is HIV positive as are as many as 30 percent of pregnant women.

By the time Mbeki came to office in 1999, there was a nearly universal, global consensus that the HIV virus causes AIDS. Then and now, anti-retroviral drugs hold out the most promise of preventing the infection from turning into a full-blown and fatal case of AIDS. At the time, those drugs were prohibitively expensive for a country like South Africa, although there were pressures to reduce their cost and signs that their price would soon drop precipitously, which is precisely what happened.

What's interesting from our perspective is that Mbeki and his government did not join the ranks of people around the world who applied pressure to bring the price of the drugs came down so that most South Africans could afford them, as is the case today. Instead, Mbeki became the world's most prominent AIDS denier and claimed that there was no link between HIV and the disease *and* that it was somehow foisted on Africa as a continuing impact of imperialism. Even more important for our purposes, Mbeki and his colleagues forced party leaders to adopt these far-fetched beliefs in making public policy, which was all the more appalling when it was revealed both Mandela and Zuma had lost adult children to the disease.

Many of Mbeki's critics claim that his policy positions reflected his power-hungry and perhaps even paranoid personality. By the time he began his second term as president, he was deeply embroiled in a factional fight for control of the party with Jacob Zuma and his supporters who argued that President Mbeki had abused his powers and used the selection of the new ANC party president to wreak their revenge. Meanwhile, Mbeki's wing of the party had pursued corruption and rape allegations against Zuma and forced him out of his position as deputy president. While

not convicted on either charge, most impartial observers were convinced both that Zuma was a less than honorable political figure *and* that Mbeki was out to do him in.

Then as now, the ANC president's term ends a year or so before the next scheduled national election. And, since being elected party president is tantamount to becoming the national president, the party ballot is widely seen as the one key decision making point for choosing the country's next leader. Therefore, when the party chose Zuma to be its new leader in 2008 and its presumptive candidate for president, he convinced the party as a whole to demand Mbeki's resignation and his replacement by a powerless figurehead who would serve until the formal election as held the following year.

The factional disputes by no means disappeared under Zuma; if anything, they got worse. As Andrew Harding of the BBC put it, he has turned into a "jarring, charmless cliché—the hollow mirth of a man whose presidency is widely blamed for the corruption, misrule and economic stagnation that now afflict [the] nation."[8]

We can leave the corruption, misrule and stagnation until the state and policy sections of this chapter. For now, it is enough to see that Zuma's presidency only deepened the leadership struggle within the ANC. Most people agree that Zuma comes across as a "nice guy" but that he also lives up to his middle name which can literally be translated as "I laugh at you as I destroy you."

There is no question that Zuma and the people around him have accumulatated tremendous wealth and power, much of which is concentrated in his native KwaZulu-Natal. Corruption charges filed against his close colleagues, including most recently the Gupta family. Just before the party held its election to name its successor, the Supreme Court allowed a case to proceed involving 18 incidents and 783 separate payments to Zuma and his personal entourage. While that case will probably not be heard until after Zuma leaves office, it kept allegations about his power hungry nature on center stages.

Then, when it came time to choose his successor as party leader, the split within the ANC burst out into the open again. Zuma openly supported ones of his ex-wives against Ramaphosa. When the votes were finally counted, Ramaphosa won by a mere 179 votes out of a total of 4,708 cast. As we will see in the policy section below, Ramaphosa's victory will probably strengthen the party's more urban and pro-business leaders. It  dod not, however, end either the corruption or the demand from Zuma's supporters to address inequality between blacks and whites far more aggressively. It did lead to a repeat of what happened when Zuma became party leader. In this case, the ANC backed Ramaphosa and his desire to force Zuma out of power as soon as possible so he could begin to restore the ANC's tarnished image and jump start the economy. In early 2018, Zuma reluctantly resigned once it became clear that he would lose a vote of confidence and was immediately replaced by Ramaphosa, a year before he would normally have won the presidency.

To complicate matters even further, the unions, communists, Youth League, and others on the left are not happy with the ANC's acceptance of capitalism. For now, there seems to be little chance that the ANC will split and give birth to a more orthodox left wing party. But should economic growth slow and the gap between rich and poor remain wide, such an outcome should not be ruled out.

[8] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/Trials_of_Jacob_Zuma. Accessed December 20, 2017

**Rural bastions.** As Table 21.6 also suggests, the ANC is the most popular political party covered in any country covered in *Comparative Politics*. Although it has consistently won over 60 percent of the vote and controls all but one province, there have been some noticeable—and some would say ominous—shifts in its electoral base in the last decade or so.

The ANC is still able to draw on its historical legacy to keep the support of most voters. As memories of the liberation struggle fade, the party has to find new reasons for people to support it which are in many ways tied to its performance in office. In that respect, the party has seen its vote go up significantly in rural areas where its patronage and policy initiatives have had the greatest impact. By contrast, it has lost support in urban areas to opposition groups that position themselves both the ANC's left and right as we are about to see.

## The Black Opposition

The ANC has never enjoyed unanimous support even among black opponents of apartheid. Although there is little likelihood that an opposition party with a predominantly black base of support will displace the ANC, at least three alternatives to it are worth mentioning here.

**The Inkhata Freedom Party.** Among blacks, the most serious opposition to the ANC used to come from Mangosuthu Buthelezi (1928–) and his **Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)** (www.ifp.org.za). Buthulezi is from KwaZulu, one of the tribal homelands created by the apartheid government, which was incorporated into the new province of KwaZulu-Natal in 1994. Although the ANC leadership wanted to prevent the creation of regional and therefore ethnically based parties, Mandela and Oliver Tambo had been personally close to Buthelezi for years and understood that he was highly popular among Zulus who make up about one sixth of the South African population, while the various dialects of isiZulu are spoken by about half the people. The ANC therefore felt it had little choice but to authorize creation of the IFP.

In retrospect, their decision to work with the IFP may not have been very wise because the Buthelezi and his party have been thorns in the ANC's side ever since. In the 1980s, Buthelezi began informally cooperating with the authorities (it is now known that the IFP was partially funded by the security services) and was seen by conservatives abroad as a potential moderate alternative to the ANC.

Buthelezi also has a monstrous ego and resents not having been a major player in the negotiations that led to the 1994 transition. Indeed, he frequently walked out of the discussions and only agreed to IFP participation in the 1994 elections at the eleventh hour. Nonetheless, because of the power-sharing provisions for the first government, Buthelezi became minister for home affairs, a post he held until 2004.

Since then, the party has been in decline, dropping to less than three percent of the vote in 2014. That's the case because it has never been anything but a a regional and increasingly ethnically defined party. It never won attracted significant support outside of KwaZulu-Natal and Zulu enclaves in Johannesburg and other metropolitan areas. And although it originally won some white and Asian support in the state (there are very few coloureds in the eastern half of the country), its electorate now is almost exclusively Zulu. It also declined because of Zuma's roots in KwaZulu-Natal and the way he distributed political patronage to his home region.

Most important for our purposes is the fact that the IFP is little more than Buthelezi. If nothing else, he was born in 1928 and is not likely to be politically active much longer. What's more, he has done little to either groom a successor or build a grass roots organization.

Its future is therefore, very much in doubt.

**Congress of the People.** The debate over Zuma's leadership did split at least temporarily split the ANC. In 2008, a group of Mbeki loyalists founded the **Congress of the People** (**COPE**), which held its first meeting in the symbolically laden town of Blomfontein.

COPE defined itself as a multi-racial party that wanted to break the stranglehold on power the electoral system gives the ANC. Otherwise, it supported many of the same policies as the majority party but was criticized for not delivering on its promises.

Its most visible leader was Alan Boesak, one of the most prominent early opponents of apartheid whose theological career was all but destroyed when it was revealed that he had had an extramarital affair and then spent time in prison for fraud. He left the ANC when it refused to endorse same-sex marriage and joined COPE.

Despite a flurry of initial support, COPE did poorly in 2009, winning only seven percent of the vote and 30 seats. That led to a flurry of departures, including Boesak and the former SACP activist Philip Dexter in January 2012. What was left of the party won less than one half of a percent of the vote and three seats in 2014 at which point the party effectively went out of existence.

**Economic Freedom Fighters.** This new opposition party appeared to the ANC's left in time for the 2014. Julius Malema (1981-) served as head of the ANC Youth League from 2008 until 2012 when he was expelled from the party largely because of his radical views and the violence he was accused of endorsing. Some pundits also argued that the charismatic Malema had become too much of a threat to Zuma and other members of the ANC elite.

After his expulsion, Malema created the Economic Freedom Fighters in 2013 with a view toward contesting the 2014 elections. The EFF pulled no punches. It attacked the ANC for having "sold out" the egalitarian goals of the apartheid era resistance movemeant. It advocated the expropriation of white-owned land, the nationalization of key industries, a radical expansion of social service programs, and the radical redistribution of income and wealth to black South Africans. Malema and his colleagues were particularly critical of what they saw as corrupt ANC politicians like Zuma and, even more, of others who, like Ramaphosa, had made millions by entering the post-apartheid business world.

The party won a respectable 8.4 percent of the vote in 2014 and could do as well in 2019, especially if Ramaphosa emphasizes the ANC's ties to the business community.

## The Democratic Alliance

No one is likely to dethrone the ANC any time soon. Its majority will probably be reduced significantly in 2019, but it is hard to imagine any of the existing parties outpolling it in the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, the opposition is too fragmented to provide a viable alternative government—at least not yet. That said, we can now see where that alternative might eventually come from—the Democratic Alliance, some of whose roots lie in the old National Party.

At first, the main opposition to the ANC came, not surprisingly, from the National Party, which probably changed more than any other group and perished in the process. To the surprise of many, the National Party did not become the party of white resistance and did fairly well at first among coloured voters. Still, as Table 21.6 shows, it won barely 20 percent of the vote in 1994, did not even reach half that total in 1999, and disappeared before a small rump organization ran--and had a disastrous showing--five years later.

By then, it had been reconstituted as the **New National Party (NNP)**, which was a new party in almost every respect. In 1996 de Klerk resigned from both the government and his position as head of the National Party so that it could make a fresh start in the opposition. It also had to endure the defection of its heir apparent, Roelf Meyer, who formed a new party that tried to counter the National Party's inability to attract African voters but who later left active political life.

After those setbacks, the NNP worked hard to redefine itself as a multiracial alternative to the ANC. It portrayed itself as more pragmatic and responsible than the government, and it proposed implementing change more gradually. Ironically, for the party that created the strong state economically as well as politically, the NNP claimed to want less government involvement in the economy and in people's lives.

Its leader, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, reacted to its 1999 electoral debacle in ways no one could have imagined a decade earlier. He merged the NNP with the ANC. Some party stalwarts refused to go along with the merger, but the rump party only won 1.7 percent of the vote in 2004. It decided to disband the following spring, and all of its members of Parliament joined the ANC, a remarkable fact for a party whose parent organizations created apartheid in the first place.

Given the difficulties we have just seen, the leading--and predominantly white-- opposition to the ANC today comes from a new coalition/party, the **Democratic Alliance**. It has multiple roots, including both white progressives from the apartheid era and dissident members of the NNP who left the party when it merged with the ANC.

The DA is not a right wing party. Its roots lie primarily among the small group of white progressives who were largely frozen out of power under apartheid. It is hard to tell exactly where the alliance stands on most substantive issues (www.da.org.za) other than its firm support for human rights and democratic principles. It tends to endorse the policy goals similar to those of the ANC, but as a party with strong liberal roots, it wants to reach them through by issuing vouchers and giving grants rather than the more top down planning preferred by the government.

More important than its stance on social and economic problems is the fact that it is fast becoming the party whites are most likely to support. Its leadership is biracial. But if it is going to become a viable opposition to the ANC, it must find a way for its electorate to become more like its leadership which has won rave reviews for its tolerance and openness, especially in the Western Cape.

It has made a major effort to recruit black voters and activists but it initially succeeded in doing so only in the Western Cape province where it controls both the city of Cape Town as wekkas the provincial government. It mad more inroads into the urban black electorate in the 2016 electorate when it won control of two other major cities and denied the ANC a majority in three others. Because it has in second in the last three elections, it has become the regular official opposition to the ANC.

## The Post-Apartheid Streets

When political scientists write about the importance of **pacting** or agreements between moderates in the opposition and the regime, they rarely include the South African transition at the state level as we will see in the next section. They almost never even mention it when it comes to the grass roots.

Nonetheless, South Africa does not have much anti-system protest from either the left or the right, which might seem surprising given the intensity of the anger and violence during the last quarter century of apartheid rule or the difficulties the regime faces today.

There certainly is simmering resentment about the slow pace of economic change among the millions of blacks who live in what remains of the townships like Soweto or in impoverished rural areas. Some blacks have called for the expropriation of white-owned property and a few white farmers have been killed, but this kind of vigilante violence has been rejected by just about everyone. Similarly, the Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB) has all but disappeared since the death of its founder, Eugene Terre'Blanche, in 2010.

Instead, most of its once radical social movements have either morphed into conventional interest groups or disappeared. That transformation is easiest to see in COSATU, the trade union federation that was at the heart of the above ground protests against apartheid. The union joined the ANC and the communist party to form what is officially a tripartite alliance that has governed the country since 1994. Although its leaders have been critical of some of the government's pro-business policies and its former leader, Cyril Ramaphosa have been among Zuma's most strident critics, the fact is that COSATU's criticisms have come from within the governing coalition and few members have supported its shift into the opposition. Instead, Ramaphosa is like many anti-apartheid activists who have become wealthy because they entered corporate life. In his case, that included serving as an intermediary between the Lonmin mining company (for which he has worked) and its workers after police killed 34 of its workers at a protest in 2012.

That does not mean that *the potential* for radical protest has disappeared. As we will see, there is plenty to be angry about in South Africa today. The country has not moved very fast toward reducing the economic and other differences separating the black majority from the white minority. Similarly, despite the ANC's rhetoric, there is still a lot of violence against women which extends all the way to the top, including Zuma's rape trial and the dozens of other allegations that have marred his presidency. Last but by no means least, it is frankly rather surprising that more people have not taken to the streets to protest the corruption and mismanagement we will see in the next section.

## *The New State*

As just noted, at least through the Mandela years, South Africa could be considered the world's best example of what elite pacting can lead to.

Viewed with the benefit of hindsight, the transition from apartheid to democracy might not seem all that surprising. For some, it seems to have been the all but inevitable outcome. For South Africans themselves or for those of us who were part of the global anti-apartheid movement in the mid-1980s, it did not seem inevitable at all.

It took courage on the part of all those involved on both sides of the racial divide to make the transition happened. And as the rocky history of the first half of the 1990s shows, it did not come about easily, and the country could easily have slid into civil war.

The fact is, however, that South Africa ended the twentieth century on a political high note that no one could have anticipated barely a decade earlier. As we will see in the rest of this chapter, that led to dramatic policy and other improvements that went so far as to get South Africa included in the BRICS or the list of countries that seemed most likely to develop the most and the fastest.

But, as we are also about to see, South Africa's fortunes have declined a good bit since Mandela left office. Elite pacts have given way to elite infighting and corruption which have made the rosy prediction of a mere 26 years ago seem like fantasy today.

In the end, the "up" of the last 25 years still outweigh the "downs" as Table 21.7 suggests. Along with India, South Africa ranks as one of the most democratic countries in the Global South. Despite

its violent reputation and high murder rate, it also scores comparatively well on the positive peace index, largely because of its accomplishments in addressing racial inequality through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other initiatives we will be considering.

It does not fare as well on the other indicators of state performance. Of the countries covered in this book, it ranks near the bottom of the list when it comes to government effectiveness and dead last in controlling corruption. However, these indicators suggest that it is by no means certain that the new regime has developed the kind of support it will need to survive the erosion of ANC support or any of the other difficulties it is likely to confront in its second 25 years of its post-apartheid existence.

| Country | Democratization (Country Rank) | Governance | Control of Corruption | Positive Peace (country rank) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **India** | 32 | 56 | 44 | 107 |
| **Iran** | 154 | 47 | 32 | 137 |
| **Nigeria** | 109 | 17 | 11 | 153 |
| **Mexico** | 67 | 61 | 25 | 65 |
| **Brazil** | 51 | 48 | 41 | 63 |
| **South Africa** | 39 | 66 | 61 | 56 |

Table 21.7
Political Indicators

## Rights and Freedoms

The South African constitution was drafted by the parliament elected after Mandela's release and went into effect in early 1997. In part because it is new and in part because of South Africa's troubled history, the constitution enumerates more rights and guarantees than most. For instance, people are guaranteed the right to an education in their own language, and women have the right to an abortion. Overall, people's rights (including whites) are more securely guaranteed than at any time in South African history. The only even vaguely controversial limits are a ban on hate speech and the ANC's acceptance of an employer's right to lock out workers.

## President and Parliament

At the heart of the constitution is a peculiar variant of a traditional parliamentary system. As is usually the case, the executive is responsible to the lower house of a bicameral parliament (www.parliament.gov.za). However, there is no prime minister or any notion that the chief executive should be little more than the first among equals.

Rather, the constitution calls for a strong president, albeit one chosen by the lower house of parliament, the 400-member **National Assembly**. Its members are elected under a complicated system of proportional representation in which a party must get slightly over two percent of the vote either nationally or in one of the nine provinces to win any seats. In 2014, only the four parties we just discussed passed that threshold nationally and together shared 93 percent of the vote. A few

others did well enough in a single province or two to win seventeen seats in Parliament. However, that was by no means enough for any of the opposition partis to have an impact on the National Assembly day-to-day proceedings.

The National Assembly chooses the president who, so far, has always been the president of the ANC except for the brief period before the 2009 election when Kgalema Motlanthe held the job on an interim basis before Zuma's election (see Table 21.8). Title aside, the South African president is really the equivalent of the prime minister in most parliamentary systems because he or she is responsible to the National Assembly and its majority party, the ANC.

| Name | Years in Office |
|---|---|
| **Nelson Mandela** | 1994-1999 |
| **Thabo Mbeki** | 1999-2008 |
| **Kgalema Motlanthe** | 2008-2009 |
| **Jacob Zuma** | 2009-2018 |
| **Cyril Ramaphosa** | 2018- |

Table 21.7
Presidents of South Africa

The president chooses a deputy president (as of this writing, the post is vacant), a minister in the presidency who is a de facto chief of staff, and 30 or so members of a cabinet who have responsibility for individual departments. Under the interim constitution, all parties that won at least 20 percent of the vote had to be included in the cabinet, which had two deputy presidents (initially de Klerk and Mbeki). Those provisions for minority representation were dropped when the permanent constitution went into effect in 1997 at which point the National Party resigned from the government. There is also now only a single deputy president. Needless to say, the ANC has all but total control of the cabinet.

The National Assembly must pass all legislation, and it initiates all bills authorizing the spending funds or raising taxes. It can also amend the constitution with a two-thirds vote. Although the ANC has crossed that threshold in two of the five elections, it has not shown any sign of wanting to change the constitution in a way that could lead to a de facto one-party state as many critics feared. Since the ANC is unlikely to win two-thirds of the vote again, the constitution seems likely to survive intact—at least on paper.

Like a prime minister, the president is subject to a vote of confidence. Needless to say, Mandela never faced one. Technically, Mbeki was not defeated in a vote of confidence either, since he was "recalled" by the ANC after he lost the leadership contest at the party conference in Polokwane in 2007.

By contrast, the unpopular and controversial Zuma had faced eight of them by the end of 2017. Although none of them succeeded, two stand out because they set the stage for the discussion of corruption that follows.

In 2010, President Zuma acknowledged that he had fathered a child out of wedlock in addition to those he had had with his three wives. He had earlier been found innocent of rape charges, but has always been sharply criticized for his attitudes and behavior with women. Thus, COPE decided

to table a vote of no confidence. Given the party discipline one expects in parliamentary systems, Zuma won easily with 241 votes against the motion and only 84 for it.

He came close to falling, however, in August 2017, when the Democratic Alliance demanded a vote of confidence largely around the allegations of corruption alluded to in the introduction to this chapter and which we will consider in some detail shortly. Zuma was extremely unpopular with polls routinely showing that a majority of the electorate thought he should resign.

This time, they took the unusual step of a secret ballot. In almost all of the world's legislatures, confidence and other votes are public so that the electorate has a chance to hold their representatives accountable. It is also the case that the public nature of those votes allows leaders to enforce party discipline. The Democratic Alliance properly understood that it only had a chance of winning if the vote was secret. Then, ANC members might feel comfortable enough to vote their consciences if the man who controlled many of their careers did not know who voted for whom.

Surprisingly to some, the ANC speaker of the National Assembly did not rule against the DA proposal and allowed the Constitutional Court to rule in favor of the unprecedented secret ballot. In the end, at least 26 ANC members voted to remove Zuma, but there were not enough of them to overcome the party's 249 to 151 majority in the National Assembly.

Zuma survived, but almost all observers took the closeness of the vote as a sign that ANC was likely to lose even more of the vote in 2019 than it had in five years earlier. And, the closeness of the vote may have helped pave the way for Ramaphosa's victory over Dlamini-Zuma in the party's leadership election three months later which all but sealed Zuma's fate and his resignation a few months later.

As is the case in most parliamentary system, the upper house of parliament is nowhere near as influential. The National Council of Provinces was created by the 1996 constitution and replaced the former Senate. It is indirectly elected by the nine provincial legislatures and has ninety members--ten from each province--who also serve five-year terms. Like most upper houses, it has limited budgetary powers and no control over the executive. Its primary mission is to protect minority cultural interests.

## The Rest of the State

The most surprising, and perhaps most encouraging, long-term trend is the ANC's decision not to purge the bureaucracy. It would have been understandable if the new government had gotten rid of everyone who had helped make and implement apartheid public policy. Instead, reflecting their desire for reconciliation, the ANC decided to retain most incumbent civil servants. Critics have accused the ANC of filling new state positions with their own members. In fact, one cannot help but be struck by the other side of the coin: the number of Afrikaners who remain in positions of responsibility. This is true even in such sensitive areas as law enforcement and education, where only people who committed the worst offenses have been fired.

South Africa does have an affirmative action program to help women, people with disabilities, and members of minority groups find jobs and build careers. Such a program is needed despite the overwhelming black majority because racial and other forms of inequality are deeply entrenched, beginning with the school system if not in the conditions under which infants and toddlers are raised. It will literally take generations before blacks and whites have equal opportunities for careers that could lead to the top of the civil service. With the growing number of retirements and the affirmative action program, more and more top civil servants (and corporate executives) are non-white, but the transition has been slower than many on the left would have wanted.

The constitution also gives the nine provinces quite a bit of autonomy, especially over education and cultural affairs. More important in the long run, perhaps, is the fact that the ANC won control in only seven of them in the 1994 elections (losing KwaZulu Natal to the IFP and the Western Cape to the National Party), which seemed to mean at the time that credible opposition to the ANC could be built on the provincial level. However, by 2004, the ANC had won control of those two states. The Democratic Alliance did win the Western Cape five years later and three major urban areas in 2016. Still, it now seems as if the provinces are not likely to be a springboard for building a national opposition anytime soon.

## Profile

### Jacob Zuma

Jacob Zuma was the fourth president of post-apartheid South Africa, assuming one includes Motlanthe. And while very different from his predecessors Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, his arrival in power by no means involved a shift in power from one party to its opposition, which many political scientists regard as a necessary part of any successful democratization process.

Like his two colleagues, Zuma has impeccable struggle credentials given his long-career in the African National Congress. However, he is also not part of the intellectual elite from which Mandela and Mbeki emerged. Zuma had little or no formal education and apparently learned to read and write as an adult and an activist. Also unlike Mandela and Mbeki, much of his pre-1994 career was spent as an intelligence officer; in that role, he is accused of having been responsible for the deaths of many former colleagues who became viewed as traitors to the cause.

When he took office, Zuma was known for his skills as a bridge builder. However, that reputation did not last once it became clear that—at best—Zuma favored his supporters and was willing to destroy his opponents, starting with Mbeki. Less charitable interpretations present him as power hungry and corrupt, and both of those images led to the problems he faced especially during his second term.

Zuma inherited a country in some, but not great, trouble. The economic crisis probably hit South Africa harder than the four original BRIC countries. While the economy revived a bit in the early years of this decade, it is hard to argue that his presidency has been a policy success on any front.

He is also a highly controversial figure because of the way he has conducted his personal life. His Zulu tribe allows a man to have multiple wives. He has been married five times (three currently), has at least twenty children, and was charged with and acquitted of rape in 2005.

The constitution also supposedly created South Africa's first independent judiciary. The nonpartisan Judicial Services Bureau appoints judges at all levels. Like many countries, South Africa's judiciary has two wings. The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court deals with appeals

regarding cases that do not involve constitutional matters). Those that do are referred to the Constitutional Court. (www.constitutionalcourt.org.za). It has ten judges. Six are appointed by the president on the basis of recommendations by the Judicial Services Bureau; the other four are chosen by the president and the chief justice of the court itself. It is too early to tell how effective the courts will be, but they certainly are more independent than their apartheid-era predecessors. To cite but two prominent examples, the courts forced the government to revise the draft 1996 constitution to, among other things, make it harder to amend if civil liberties are at stake. Six years later, it ordered the Ministry of Health to nationalize a floundering program designed to limit the spread of HIV/AIDS from pregnant mothers to their fetuses.

I used the term supposedly in the previous paragraph, because the courts have not been able to escape political controversy. As we are about to see, Zuma was accused of packing the courts with his cronies who were more than willing to subvert the rule of law in dozens of ways as we are about to see.

## Corruption and a One-Party State?

No matter what your personal values might be, it is hard to argue that there are many "success stories" in the countries covered in *Comparative Politics*.

Especially for those of us who were involved in the global movement to end apartheid, a lot was expected of the new South Africa. And, in many ways, the ANC leaders have lived up to those hopes. We will see evidence of that in the public policy section by exploring the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and South Africa's economic successes that turned it into one of the BRICS. We will also have to stress the ways in which the ANC did not seek vengeance against its opponents. In particular, it won enough seats in two of the first three elections to have revised the constitution in ways that could have led to the creation of a one-party state, something that has happened far too often in the rest of Africa when revolutionary movements have come to power.

Still, there were some worrying trends that did not fully play themselves out under Mandela or Mbeki when the ANC had the votes to change the rules of the game. There were concerns, for example, that the party will build on dynamics similar to those we saw in AIDS policy and create a de facto one-party state. If these interpretations are correct, competitive elections would not have disappeared. However, the ANC would use all of its political levers to make effective opposition difficult.

Similarly, the new South African state inherited a massive and well-equipped military, especially if you include the domestic security apparatus in the calculations. By 1994, the country faced no external threats. If anything, the neighboring states had vocally opposed apartheid and were among the new regime's leading cheerleaders.

Nonetheless, South Africa's government reentered the arms trade with a vengeance, and in so doing made itself vulnerable to charges of corruption and abuse of power that touched especially on President Mbeki before and after he assumed office. The details of the arms scandal would take us far beyond the scope of this book. Suffice it to note that ANC leaders used insider information and contacts to steer contracts for a number of weapons systems to their favorite foreign suppliers and received handsome payoffs in return. When some ANC and other politicians brought evidence of the misdoing to light, the party imposed tight discipline, which led some of the whistleblowers to recant their story and others to leave political life and the country altogether.

The fact is that none of these fears seemed all that threatening for South African democracy until after Zuma forced Mbeki out and quickly seized control of virtually the entire ANC and, with it, the powers of the state. Put in the simplest possible terms, Zuma's South Africa has become one of the world's most corrupt regimes.

Of the countries covered in this book, Mexico and Nigeria are also known for the widespread corruption among their political elites. In those and other cases, steps have been taken to limit corruption. If anything, South Africa has been moving in the opposite direction.

It is obviously difficult to study corruption with any degree of precision since officials who abuse their power do everything they can do hide their actions from public scrutiny. As a result, political scientists have spent less time studying it than most other issues involving the modern state. Nonetheless, one cannot avoid a serious discussion of corruption in today's South Africa even if the evidence behind the allegations is invariably somewhat less than iron-clad. Therefore, if anything, what follows *understates* the problems and focuses on trends that just about all observers other than Zuma's die-hard supporters acknowledge.

It is hard to pick up a book on South African politics today and not be overwhelmed by the kinds of allegations that follow. Much of it comes from white observers who allied themselves with the ANC during the struggle against apartheid but have distanced themselves from the party since 1994. In some cases, concerns about corruption blend into concerns about public policy and the ways in which whites are losing their economic as well as their political power. Nonetheless, there are three overlapping areas in which it is hard to overlook corruption and the devastating impact it *could* have on South African democracy.

Personal Greed. The best estimate is that Zuma and his immediate family made tens of billions of dollars from corrupt enterprises. Their colleagues have siphoned off far more than that. Corruption comes in many forms ranging from police sales of illegal arms to the publicly funded construction of Zuma's palatial estate at Nkandla supposedly as a security measure to the placement of Zuma's relatives and friends at or near the top of leading corporations. In addition to Nkandla, the most attention has been paid to the family's cozy relationship with the shadowy Gupta brothers, who moved to South Africa as apartheid was ending and have made hundreds of billions of (tainted) dollars.

It's not just Zuma. Huge opportunities in the corporate world and the bureaucracy opened up for blacks and other ANC members. Even though the implicit deal to end apartheid included the continued acceptance of white affluence and control over much of the economy, all rational business leaders knew they had to recruit blacks for prominent positions. As a result, many of the ANC activists with the strongest struggle credentials ended up becoming instant millionaires, including Cyril Ramaphosa. While some—like Ramaphosa—turned out to be adept private sector leaders, there is no question that many comrades turned a blind eye to their Marxist goals and enriched themselves.

State Capture. This is a term ANC critics frequently use because they think Zuma and his colleagues have tried to completely dominate the ANC and the state. On one level, there is little surprising about that, since even the most honorable political leaders try to expand their influence over the institutions they work in.

In this case, however, the most charitable thing one can say is that Zuma and his colleagues tried to keep individuals they did not control out of positions of influence. It started with the 2009 election when the 100 or so members of parliament most loyal to Mbeki were not allowed to run

for reelection. Since then, state capture has taken a number of overlapping forms, including naming a disproportionate number of fellow Zulus to key positions and freezing out intellectuals like Mbeki who spent most of the apartheid years in exile.

Rule of Law. Any discussion of threats to the rule of law has to start with the fact that Zuma still faces charges for 783 alleged instances of corruption, though it now seems certain that he will not face trial on them before he leaves office. There is little doubt, too, that he backed his former wife's candidacy to head the ANC because he assumed she would keep him and dozens of others out of prison, something he certainly can't take for granted now that Ramaphosa has assumed the presidency.

But the alleged abuses go far beyond the Zumas' personal wealth and power. Though these allegations are harder to pin down, there is little doubt that the Zuma team has consistently sought to marginalize and even railroad the conviction of dozens of their potential opponents in the police and other law enforcement agencies.

I only raise corruption here because of the threat it poses to South African democracy and the entire transition. As I noted just before I started listing the allegations, even some long-standing ANC allies worry that a corruption-riddled ANC will not allow itself to be voted out of office and would support the creation of some sort of single-party, hybrid authoritarian regime to prevent that from happening.

As the statistics in Table 21.7 suggest, that problem may not be looming on the immediate horizon. However, it should also be noted that South African "scores" on all indicators of democracy, good governance, and the rule of law are trending in the wrong direction.

## *Public Policy*

Mandela's government came to power amid great expectations, but it also faced the tremendous challenge of bringing together a society that had been riddled with hatred for so long. To make matters worse, it simultaneously had to deal with the massive economic gap between blacks and whites at a time when the economy had been shrinking for at least a decade, largely as a result of international sanctions and disinvestment. Given what we have seen in other chapters about transitions in troubling times, the new South African state has done surprisingly well, even if it has

Therefore, it makes sense to focus here on the two policy areas in which the new government has done the most to meet these challenges. As should be clear from the discussion so far in this chapter, we should not expect the government to have been able to meet either of them fully in seventeen years. Nonetheless, it has taken some important first steps to bring black and white together but has fared less well economically after an initial surge in which the government built on international goodwill and the assets it inherited from the old regime.

### Truth and Reconciliation

As we have already seen, the new government did not seek revenge. Instead, it took its commitment to a multiracial South Africa seriously.

Central to these efforts was the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As of late 2017, there have been more than 40 such bodies that have been created by governments in countries that had been through traumatic periods in their history. Many of them were inspired by the South African TRC, although few sought to go as far and none enjoyed anywhere near as much success.

They all share some common features, two of which are important here. First, they all help a society recover from wounds that are akin to PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) which many combat veterans, rape survivors, and others suffer from (www.traumacenter.org). Second, they are part of a broader movement for **restorative justice** that is causing quite a stir in legal circles (www.restorativejustice.org). Traditionally, new states have sought to punish the perpetrators of crimes against humanity by seeking retribution and even vengeance. By contrast, in restorative justice, the emphasis literally is on restoring the situation of the victims before the crimes occurred to the degree that it is possible. Together, the two common denominators reflect the unusual political assumption that recovery from trauma can only begin with an honest confrontation with past horrors and a vision of justice that revolves around restoring healthy relationships.

South Africa's TRC sought to go farther in recovering from social trauma than most of these bodies. To be sure, the commission did all it could to document offenses that occurred between the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 and the transition to democracy thirty-four years later. However, it was a truth *and reconciliation* commission whose main goal was to use the truth about apartheid as an important first step in healing the wounds it had created.

The commission was created by a 1995 law and chaired by Archbishop Tutu, who was the most authoritative moral voice in the country after Mandela (http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1984/tutu-bio.html). Its mandate allowed the Commission to grant amnesty to people who committed explicitly political crimes, confessed fully and publicly to what they had done, and expressed remorse for their actions. The assumption underlying its work was that learning the truth and beginning to build bridges across communal lines was far more practical than prosecuting tens of thousands of wrongdoers and risking further deepening tensions as a result.

In many ways, the logic behind the TRC and reconciliation lies in a word found in almost all southern African languages--*ubuntu*. It can be translated in many ways, the most useful of which for our purposes is that "a person is a person through another person." In other words, I define who I am in part through my relationship with you. If those relationships are out of balance, so are those within a society as a whole.

In the three years before publishing its final report in late 1998, the commission held hearings around the country in which victims and perpetrators alike told their stories. The results were mind boggling because many people were hearing systematic accounts of the atrocities under apartheid for the first time. They also witnessed the remarkable spectacle of many people who committed some of those crimes confessing in public before the world's television cameras.

When all was said and done, South Africans probably learned as much as they could have about what had happened. Although the security services destroyed thousands of documents in the early 1990s, the Commission uncovered abundant evidence about a period when authorities thought it was perfectly acceptable to torture and kill their opponents. After wading through the evidence of 20,000 witnesses, much of which is published in the 3,500-page report, the commission minced no words about apartheid.

The country learned that the cabinet and, almost certainly, de Klerk knew of a shadowy "third force" of vigilantes who terrorized blacks and their allies on the orders of the security services. Botha, in particular, was singled out for having fostered a climate in which torture and executions were tolerated, if not encouraged. He refused to appear before the commission and was found guilty of contempt, although the verdict was overturned on appeal in 1999. It was never likely that someone well into his eighties would be sent to prison. However, the mere fact that a former

president both refused to cooperate and was convicted for doing so is a sign of how much South Africa changed in a few short years.

The commission investigated the ANC's excesses as well as those of the apartheid regime. Among other things, it was judged to have summarily executed members who were suspected of collaborating with the regime and killed more civilians than security officers in the underground struggle.

Most notable here was the testimony about the president's former wife, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, who had long been a controversial figure. On the one hand, she had stood by her husband during his years in prison and served as a powerful symbol and organizer for the ANC within South Africa. On the other hand, she and her entourage were implicated in much of the violence in the townships and were accused of murdering opponents.

In September 1998, she appeared before the commission to answer charges that she was involved in eighteen human rights abuses, including eight murders. Although she refused to testify about any specific allegations, she acknowledged her involvement and guilt, and like many others who appeared before the commission, expressed remorse for her actions. The commission, however, still found that the Mandela United Football Club that she headed was a "pure vigilante unit."

When the TRC's interim report was handed over to President Mandela on 28 October 1998, it was already controversial. At Mbeki's urging, the ANC had gone to court to try to block its publication because of its judgments about the resistance.

Archbishop Tutu was adamant. There was no doubt that the white authorities committed the overwhelming majority of the crimes and the ANC and the rest of the resistance occupied the moral high ground. There was also no doubt that the insurgents used unjust means toward just ends on numerous occasions. As Tutu himself put it, "Atrocities were committed on all sides. I have struggled against a tyranny. I did not do that in order to substitute another. That is who I am."

By the time the full report was released, the committee on amnesties had dealt with most of the applications. To the surprise of many, it had granted amnesty to only 849 of the 7,112 people who applied as of January 2001. It rejected over 5,000 applicants because the actions were not linked to the kind of political causes specified in the authorizing legislation. Individuals who were not granted amnesty are subject to criminal prosecution, though as of this writing more than a decade later, it is clear that such prosecutions will be few and far between.

Any focus on prosecutions misses the most important point: the commission's primary task was to establish the truth and then use it as a starting point toward reconciliation. As Tutu saw it, that first step was a hard one because it required bringing the horrors of South Africa's past into the open, but it was also a necessary one. As he put it in the final report,

> **Reconciliation is not about being cozy; it is not about pretending that things were other than they were. Reconciliation based on falsehood, on not facing up to reality, is not reconciliation at all.**
>
> **We believe we have provided enough of the truth about our past for there to be a consensus about it. We should accept that truth has emerged even though it has initially alienated people from one another. The truth can be, and often is, divisive.**

**However, it is only on the basis of truth that true reconciliation can take place. True reconciliation is not easy; it is not cheap.**[9]

The TRC was not perfect. No political institution is. However, progress on race relations and related issues over the last quarter century in South Africa is remarkable, at least some of which can be attributed to the commission. According to the 2010 poll for the Reconciliation Barometer mentioned above, two-thirds of the population think a united South Africa is a definite possibility. The same proportion of the people talk to someone of a different race at least weekly, although only about one in five socialize with members of other groups. Nine out of ten people of all races believe that apartheid was a crime against humanity. Three-quarters affirm that the country needs a work force that is representative of all racial and other groups. Half approve of interracial marriage. Two-thirds would be comfortable living in mixed neighborhoods. The same number would be comfortable working for a person from another race.

The journey toward reconciliation can be summarized in facts and figures. For good or ill, however, they do not get at the raw emotion that was--and still is--involved. Nothing does that better for non-South African readers than the story of the late **Amy Biehl**.

In 1993, Biehl was a white, twenty-five-year-old Fulbright scholar who had gone to South Africa to help prepare for the first multiracial elections. As an undergraduate at Stanford University, she had become fascinated with South Africa and Mandela. Therefore, after graduation, she moved to South Africa to help out in any way she could.

Biehl spent the last day of her life with black friends helping organize a voter registration campaign. She was driving them back to their home in Gugulethu township on the outskirts of Cape Town. A gang of black teenage boys who belonged to the Pan-African Congress (with its slogan, "one settler, one bullet") forced her to stop. Four of them dragged Biehl from the car, beat her, and stabbed her to death on the assumption that she was a white South African.

Despite its deserved reputation for reconciliation, South Africa was a very violent place between the time of Mandela's release from prison in 1990 and his inauguration as president in 1994. Thousands were killed in violence that ranged from the explicitly political to the plainly criminal. Biehl's murder lay somewhere in the middle because it was carried out by highly politicized teenagers but was completely unprovoked.

At the time, her death caused a brief stir in the media because Biehl was a white American. Her murderers were duly arrested, convicted, and sentenced to eighteen years in prison.

It was only three years later that the Biehl story became worth retelling here. As was their right, the four young men who killed her applied for amnesty to the TRC. They did not seem like good candidates to get it.

But then Amy's parents stepped in.

Peter and Linda Biehl had done a lot of soul searching in the three years since their daughter's murder. Along with the grief that accompanies the loss of a child came the realization that her work and her cause were all the more important because of her death.

[9] From the text of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report. www.doj.gov.za/trc. Accessed 10 July 2005.

So, in keeping with the South African commitment to reconciliation, they decided to continue their daughter's work in the only ways they could. First, they appeared before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in support of her murderers' request for amnesty. Second, they met with the mother of one of the young men.

After that emotional trip to South Africa, they devoted their lives to the newly formed Amy Biehl Foundation in the United States and the Amy Biehl Foundation Trust in South Africa (www.amybiehl.org). The Biehls contributed quite a bit of their own money and raised more than $2.5 million (including $1.9 million from the U.S. Agency for International Development) to fund the kinds of projects Amy believed in. Among other things, the foundation has helped finance a group of small bakeries, training programs for troubled teenagers, and a series of after-school programs for children. In keeping with Amy's love of competitive sports, it has also opened a driving range in a poor area of Cape Town; the foundation's website asks for donations of golf clubs and balls because poor blacks cannot afford their own.

Most remarkably, the Biehls learned that two of the men responsible for Amy's death wanted to meet with them. The other two—who had been primarily responsible for the murder itself—had committed other crimes and disappeared. These two, however, had taken advantage of the amnesty program and had put their personal priorities in order. Then, in what can only be called the ultimate gesture of reconciliation, the Biehls decided to use foundation funds to help pay for their training and hired them afterward. Their logic was the same as that for all the foundation's work: if they could help South Africans escape poverty and the legacy of apartheid, and then help improve conditions in their country, it was worth the money.

There are no other Amy Biehls in *Comparative Politics*, because there could not have been a politically significant young woman like her in any of the other countries included in this book. In none of them did the horrors and hopes of political life attract young idealists like her to make a long-term commitment. In none of them was there the kind of social and political chaos that made the all-but-random killings of young people—black and white—a part of everyday life.

In other words, Amy was drawn to South Africa for the same reasons the country as a whole should be included in courses on comparative politics. In her day, South Africa had just taken the first steps from having one of the most brutal, repressive, and racist regimes in history toward being a country that ranks among the world's leaders in reconciling people with its negative history. Or, as the title of a documentary about the TRC put it, she was part of a "long night's journey into day."

No one is under any illusion that race relations in South Africa are perfect. Therefore, reconciliation work continues, but is largely carried out behind the scenes by NGOs like the Reconciliation Barometre mentioned earlier. Still, ever since 1995, the country has celebrated an official national holiday, Reconciliation Day, to mark the transition away from apartheid on a day that is of symbolic significance. Coincidentally, December 16 happens to be the date on which white South Africans took the vow that they believed led them to victory over the Zulus at Bloemfontein in 1838 but is also the day that the ANC decided to take up arms against the white regime more than a century later.

## The Economy

Neither the legal end of apartheid nor the work of the TRC would address the most significant problem facing the new South Africa. Whatever their legal status, blacks and whites were not economically equal, and equality on that score could not be achieved quickly without a

revolutionary change in the distribution of wealth which had been ruled out by the way the parties agreed to end apartheid.

The statistics are stark. A majority of the blacks—but onlytwo percent of all whites—lived in poverty, earning less than the equivalent of three hundred dollars a month (also, see Table 21.1 again). A third of them did not have access to safe drinking water. Only 20 percent had electricity in their homes. To make matters even worse, economic conditions deteriorated during the first few years of the 1990s before the transition to majority rule. To this day, all public opinion polls show that South Africans see economic inequality—not race relations—as the most important and difficult issue facing their country.

The ANC governments have been far less successful in creating an economically equal South Africa. In part, that reflects the implicit bargain made during the transition in the early 1990s; white South Africans agreed to give up political power but not at the cost of their standard of living. As a result, the new government had little choice but to adopt incremental reforms that did not attack the basic distribution of economic power. In part, it reflects decisions made by and the corruption of the Mbeki and Zuma governments that made a difficult political and economic challenge even more difficult.

The new government started with an advantage no other African country has enjoyed--the industrial and financial foundation created under colonial and National Party rule. South Africa was far more advanced than all the other countries in Africa, and today accounts for 40 percent of all economic activity on the continent. It has a significant industrial base and, by African standards, a relatively well-trained workforce. Thus, one trade group estimates that it has the fourth most extensive mobile telephone network in the world on a per capita basis. Even at the beginning of the transition, there was already a substantial regional trade network involving South Africa and its neighbors. Therefore, it is the logical place for foreign investors to place their money, at least for the southern third of the continent. The lifting of sanctions and the goodwill generated by the transition produced a short-term growth spurt, averaging three percent per year in 1994 and 1995.

For the first few years, things went quite well.

Given the implicit underlying the transition, the assets it inherited from the apartheid regime, and its traditional commitment to socialism, no one was surprised when the new government announced its Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) in 1994, placing the basic needs of the people—jobs, housing, electricity, telecommunications, health care, and a safe environment— ahead of economic growth.

By 1996, however, the government realized that it was not going far enough given the rapid growth and the needs of the people. None of the policies envisioned in the RDP would yield a growth rate that could come close to funding the jobs and services it felt the country needed. The best estimate was that if it continued to follow RDP, unemployment would actually *increase* by 5 percent by 2000. And one worst-case scenario predicted that less than 10 percent of the young people entering the workforce each year would find a job. In reality, per capita GNP declined from 13 percent of that in the United States to 8 percent between 1995 and 2000. By then, the unemployment rate hovered around one-fourth, concentrated, of course, in the black community.

In short, the government reached a reluctant decision. It had to adopt an economic strategy that would get the growth rate up to six or seven percent per year. That, in turn, would require adopting the kind of **structural adjustment** policy we saw in India and Mexico. (See Chapters 11 and 14).

This, of course, produced one of those ironies that are so common in political life. It was the right-wing National Party government that introduced import substitution, a policy normally associated with the left. And it was the radical ANC that turned its back on massive state intervention and adopted something like the hands-off policies advocated by the most conservative, market-oriented economists

This new policy became known as the **Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR)** Program, that would cover the last five years of the twentieth century. GEAR's goal was to maximize growth by increasing foreign investment, which required giving businesses considerable freedom to chart their own course. Priorities included developing industries to manufacture goods that could be priced competitively for domestic and international markets, creating a business climate of low inflation and stable exchange rates to encourage investment, making public services more efficient, improving the infrastructure, and adding to labor market flexibility.

To accomplish this, tariffs and other demand side taxes were cut, and the state offered the private sector incentives to become more productive and profitable. Government spending shrank so that the budget deficit could be reduced to three percent by 2000. The government also called for negotiations leading to a national plan to keep wage and price increases below the rate of growth in productivity. And, much like Labour in Britain (see Chapter 4), the South African government thought that much could be accomplished through public-private partnerships in which the latter plowed back some of its profits in the form of both investment and community-oriented projects. Thus, in the automobile industry, the government and the major foreign companies worked together to lower production costs so that cars produced there can find a market elsewhere in Africa.

Critics properly pointed out that GEAR marked a major shift in ANC policy toward capitalism, if not the outright abandonment of socialism. However, it did not represent it as a marked a shift toward an all but total profit orientation that most structural adjustment programs emphasize.

GEAR officially ended in 2000. However, most of its basic principles guide economic policy to this day. As with any government's policy, it is hard to determine just how much GEAR and its successor programs contributed to South African economic performance. It certainly was one of the reasons the economy grew by about five percent per year for the first decade of this century. Per capita income reached an all-time high vis-à-vis the United States at 15 percent of the latter in 2010, but it is no closer to the distribution of income and wealth that one finds in advanced industrialized countries than it was at the time of the transition from apartheid.

That said, South African economic policy has been far more egalitarian than most structural adjustment programs that put overall growth and private sector competitiveness at the top of their list of priorities. The still left-leaning ANC instead has decided to use a disproportionate share of the revenues from economic growth to fund both infrastructure projects that benefit everyone and the kinds of programs initially laid out in the RDP.

It committed itself to free basic health care for pregnant women and infants and to a program of land reform that will turn over about five million acres of land to the poor. Zuma announced plans to create five million new jobs by 2020, though it should be pointed out that no post-apartheid government has ever reached such an ambitious goal, and this one will not either.

The government has also announced a series of Spatial Development Initiatives. The plan is to channel investment capital to, and offer tax holidays for, targeted industries and communities

beyond Cape Town, Port Elizabeth (now called Nelson Mandela Bay), Johannesburg, and Durban where recent growth has been concentrated. It is hoped that these funds will stimulate the development of aluminum production and other key manufacturing sectors that could lead to export opportunities.

Most investments funds in this century have been directed toward black-owned firms in underdeveloped regions. The best known of those projects is the Maputo Development Corridor, a devastated region that straddles the border between South Africa and Mozambique. Funds have been provided to build transportation and telecommunications networks to facilitate such activities as tourism and the export of crops and manufactured goods. It is assumed as well that once these infrastructural projects are finished the region could provide a trade outlet for Swaziland and Botswana.

South Africa is also the one country covered in this book to have seriously experimented with **microcredit** strategies. First developed by Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh (see Chapter 10 and 17), microcredit uses small loans to help poor people form small businesses. One of its goals is to help give the ultra-poor incentives and skills to pull themselves and their families permanently out of poverty. In South Africa, the government's hope is that microcredit can also create more black-owned businesses and, in time, reduce income and wealth differentials. By 2007, the small loans totaled 30 million rand and were regulated under the National Credit Act because there were so many of them and they were subject to at least a degree of corruption.

The best known is the Small Enterprise Foundation, which operates in the Northern Cape Province, where up to two-thirds of the population is unemployed. In 2017, the foundation had 138,000 active clients who had borrowed an average of less than one thousand dollars each. In all, it has issued more than two million loans since it was created in 1997. As is typical of microcredit programs, 99 percent of the loans went to women for dressmaking, hawking, and "spaza," which are small grocery stores operated from either a shack or someone's home. In all, it had 100 million rand in outstanding loans at the end of 2010. Only one percent of the loans have not been repaid

Borrowers are organized into small groups of five or six who meet every other week to make their payments and discuss their progress or setbacks. A similar organization operating near Cape Town gives its borrowers a "township MBA" or basic business training before a loan is issued. Small Enterprise Foundation clients typically employ the equivalent of 2.5 full-time workers. The poorest families are able to use the money made in the business to afford three meals a day, not one. More affluent families are able to send their children to secondary school, add electricity to their homes, and purchase other "luxuries." Studies of microcredit operations in South Africa and elsewhere have also found that they offer women an unprecedented degree of independence and can be a lifeline for those who have suffered spousal abuse. Profits from the program are, in turn, reinvested in the form of new loans that further contribute to community development.

The government has one other trump card it has just begun play to bring in a short-term infusion of cash--selling off state-owned companies that were created by the National Party government. Some observers estimate that they make up at least half of South Africa's total capital stock. As of this writing, the government has not moved rapidly in this direction, but it has sold some small companies and minority interests in the telecommunications and airlines industries. The water supply, for instance, is now privately owned. But, anticipating the criticisms we are about to see, privatization's track record is uneven. Price increases for water have been so steep that many families have had to rely on other, more polluted sources to meet their needs.

South Africa's progress was so dramatic that it reached a symbolic peak in 2010 when it was asked to join Brazil, Russia, India, and China in the informal BRIC group (now BRICS). As we saw in Chapter 10, BRIC is a term invented by a team of investment bankers at Goldman-Sachs led by Jim O'Neill to call attention to the most dynamic emerging economies that have large enough populations to exert global political clout.[10] O'Neill does not include South Africa in his list. However, as the countries themselves started to organize in 2010, they sought to add an African country. South Africa was the only viable possibility and hence the shift from BRIC to BRICS. The original BRIC countries also wanted greater access to South Africa's mineral resources and to, through the country as a whole, sell more goods and services to the more than one billion other Africans.

Even at that time, there were easy-to-see signs that the South African economy was heading toward the troubles that have hit the country since then as reflected in Table 21.8. Even during the best of times, development was concentrated in urban areas. Even though the gap between black and white narrowed a bit, average black incomes were only 13 percent of those of whites. A significant black middle class has emerged, but real economic power remains largely in white hands. The unemployment rate still hovers around 25 percent and is, of course, noticeably higher among blacks. Foreign investment has slowed dramatically yet to reach the level the government had hoped and planned for, which has limited its ability to reach its other ambitious economic goals. Reasons range from potential investors' concerns about profitability to the high crime rate.

| **Indicator** | **2012** | **2015** |
|---|---|---|
| GDP per capita ($US) | 7,590 | 5,299 |
| Growth rate (%) | 2.2 | 0.3 |
| Investment (%) | 2.9 | 0.9 |
| Unemployment (%) | 24.9 | 26.7 |
| Exports (billions $US) | 100 | 867 |
| Imports (billions $US) | 105 | 79 |

Table 21.8
Economic Indicators: 2012-2016

There is no way to determine why the South African economy has slowed to the point that it no longer should be thought of as one of the world's emerging economies. Virtually all observers, however, would put corruption near the top of any list of causes. Even if corruption only accounts for $20 billion dollars a year as many estimate, that is the equivalent of three or four percent of GNP and money that could have been used for pressing social needs rather than for filling the bank accounts of corrupt officials in the public and private sectors alike.

## SOUTH AFRICA: IN PERIL OR A ROLE MODEL?

[10]Jim O'Neill, *The Growth Map: Economic Opportunity in the BRICs and Beyond.* New York: Penguin, 2011.

The presidential transition in 2019 will mark an important turning point in South African history. On one level, statements like this one border on being non sequitors. After all, most presidential transitions usher in new periods in a country's history as we in the United States have certainly seen with the shift from Barack Obama to Donald Trump. However, we comparativists should pay particular attention to what the new president does, especially if, as expected, Cyril Rampahosa gets the job. That's the case because the stakes of South African politics have suddenly gotten very high.

On the one hand, South Africa is a rarity in comparative politics, because so much of the news from there was so good for the first two decades since the collapse of the whites-only regime. Whatever one's ideological position, it is hard not to acknowledge that ending apartheid so peacefully not only removed one of the greatest human rights violations of our time but also propelled the country toward a more just and egalitarian future. The joy and optimism that came with the transition to majority rule are reflected in the titles of the two most popular books on South Africa in the 1990s, *Anatomy of a Miracle* and *Tomorrow Is Another Country*.

The transition occurred with minimal strife and bloodshed. Plans were laid for a new economy that can build on the positive aspects of the apartheid years to create a regional hub for the southern third of the continent. Some important first steps were taken to ease the burden of centuries of racism and racial antagonism. Things progressed so far that South Africa was often looked upon as a role model for other divided societies seeking to make the transition toward a more democratic and inclusive government.

In purely economic terms, it probably never belonged in the BRICS. Mexico, South Korea, Indonesia, Turkey, and a handful of other countries could make a stronger case for being an emerging power. Still, it was hard to deny the progress South Africa had made.

Then came the Zuma presidency.

There is no need to repeat the evidence about corruption, the threats to democracy, the economic downturn, or the increased tensions between blacks and whites here. To be fair, Zuma represents an important wing of the ANC without which the transition away from apartheid would not have been possible.

At the same time, it is hard to watch Mandela's remarkable speech after his release, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, or Amy Biehl's parents talking about what they did to honor their daughter's memory without feeling that something remarkable could be slipping away.

Cyril Ramaphosa has personally benefited from the transition in ways that should give us pause. At the same time, there are reasons to be hopeful. He will probably be the last South African leader to have been a major figure in the anti-apartheid movement and thus be able to rely heavily on his struggle credentials. Therein lies the basis for hope which lie not only in the apocryphal story of the fishhook in Roelf Meyer's wrist but in a career spent building bridging social capital, first, as head of COSATU, and, later, in his business career.

Of course, only time will tell.

## Key Terms

### *Concepts*

*Afrikaner*

apartheid
Boers
hurting stalemate
import substitution
microcredit
pass law
restorative justice
securocrat
structural adjustment
struggle credentials

### *People*

Biehl, Amy
Biko, Steve
De Klerk, F. W.
Madikizela-Mandela, Winnie
Malan, Daniel
Mandela, Nelson
Mbeki, Thabo
Ramaphosa, Cyril
Slovo, Joe
Tutu, Desmond
Verwoerd, Hendrik
Zuma, Jacob

### *Acronyms*

ANC

CODESA
COPE
COSATU
GEAR
IFP
NNP
SACP

UDF

### *Organizations, Places, and Events*

African National Congress

Black Consciousness movement

Blood River, Battle of

*Broederbond*

Conference on a Democratic South Africa

Congress of South African Trade Unions

Congress of the People

Democratic Alliance

Freedom Charter

Great Trek

Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Act

Homelands

Inkatha Freedom Party

National Assembly

National Party

New National Party

Sharpeville Massacre

South African Communist Party

Soweto

State Security CouncilTruth and Reconciliation Commission

*Umkhonto we Sizwe*

United Democratic Front

## Further Reading

Calland, Richard, *Make or Break: How the Next Three Years Will Shape South Africa's Next Three Decades*. Johannesberg: Penguin South Africa, 2016. The least biased of the books by white sympathizers turned critics of the new regime.

Faure, Murray, and Jan-Erik Lane. *South Africa: Designing New Political Institutions*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1996. An anthology on the basic institutions—how they were created and how they are supposed to work—in the new South Africa.

Feinstein, Andrew. *After the Party*. London: Verso 2009. By a former ANC member of parliament who led the campaign against the illicit arms deals mentioned in the text. Feinstein's experiences have led him to become one of the world's leading experts on the underground trade.

Johnson, R.W. *How Long Will South Africa? The Looming Crisis*. London: Hurst, 2016. As critical of the ANC-led regime as any book in the field. For that reason, it is worth reading.

Lodge, Tom. *Politics in South Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003. The best single volume providing an overview of the South African political system.

Marais, Hein. *South Africa: Limits to Change: The Political Economy of Transformation*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1998. The most accessible book on the new South African economy. Although Marais is skeptical about the changes described in this chapter, his account is fair and balanced.

Marks, Susan Collin. *Watching the Wind*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2000. A participant-observer account by one of the world's leading experts in conflict resolution. Also my boss.

Meredith, Martin. *Nelson Mandela: A Biography*. New York: Penguin Books, 1997. A massive, readable, and not uncritical biography of perhaps the most widely respected politician in the world today.

Naidoo, Jay. *Change: Orgaizing Tomorrow, Today*. (Johannesberg: Penguin, 2017. The one thoughtful book on building a sustainable South Africa (and planet) by the former head of COSATU.

O'Meara, Dan. *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948–94*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996. An empirically and theoretically sound analysis by a South African Marxist currently teaching in Canada.

Pauw, Jacques. *The President's Keepers: Those Keeping Zuma in Power and Out of Prison*. Johannesberg: Tafelberg, 2017. A leading investigative journalist's look at state capture especially regarding the police and the judiciary.

Reconciliation Barometer. An annual online overview of progress toward reconciliation in the broadest possible sense of the term. Each edition is almost book-length. www.reconciliationbarometer.org.

Slovo, Gillian. *Every Little Thing*. London: Faber & Faber, 1997. Half an autobiography and half an account of her relationship with her famous parents, Joe Slovo and Ruth First, also a leader of the SACP, who was assassinated by the security services in Angola. Gillian Slovo also writes novels, many of which deal with the struggle to end apartheid and her troubled relationship with her father.

Sparks, Allister. *Beyond the Miracle: Inside the New South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. Yet another insightful book by one of the best Western journalists working on South Africa.

Thompson, Leonard. *A History of South Africa,* 3rd. ed. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001. The best single-volume history of South Africa; takes readers up to the transition to democratic rule.

Tutu, Desmond. *No Future without Forgiveness*. New York: Doubleday, 1999. An impassioned presentation of the commission's work.

Waldmeier, Patti. *Anatomy of a Miracle*. New York: Penguin Books, 1997. A somewhat more detailed and more economic analysis of the transition than the book by Sparks. Not surprising, given that the author was the South African correspondent for the *Financial Times*.