SOUTH AFRICA
YEARBOOK
2024/25

History

Early inhabitants

The discovery of a skull belonging to a child from Taung in 1924; discoveries of hominid fossils at Sterkfontein Caves, a World Heritage Site; and the ground-breaking work done at Blombos Cave in the southern Cape, have all put South Africa at the forefront of palaeontological research into the origins of humanity. Modern humans have lived in the region for more than 100 000 years.

The small, mobile bands of Stone Age hunter-gatherers, who created a wealth of rock art, were the ancestors of the Khoikhoi and San of historical times. The Khoikhoi and San, although collectively known as the Khoisan, are often thought of as distinct peoples. The former were those who, some 2 000 years ago, adopted a pastoralist lifestyle, herding sheep and later, cattle.

Whereas the hunter-gatherers adapted to local environments and were scattered across the subcontinent, the herders sought out the pasture lands between modern-day Namibia and the Eastern Cape. At around the same time, Bantu-speaking agropastoralists began arriving in southern Africa, bringing with them an Iron Age culture and domesticated crops.

After establishing themselves in the well-watered eastern coastal region of southern Africa, these farmers spread out across the interior plateau, or "Highveld", where they adopted a more extensive cattle-farming culture. Chiefdoms arose, based on control over cattle, which gave rise to systems of patronage and, hence, hierarchies of authority within communities. Metallurgical skills, developed in the mining and processing of iron, copper, tin and gold, promoted regional trade and craft specialisation.

At several archaeological sites, such as Mapungubwe and Thulamela in the Limpopo Valley, there is evidence of sophisticated political and material cultures, based in part on contact with the East African trading economy. These cultures, which were part of a broader African civilisation, predate European encroachment by several centuries. Settlement patterns varied from the dispersed homesteads of the fertile coastal regions in the east, to the concentrated towns of the desert fringes in the west.

The farmers did not, however, extend their settlement into the western desert or the winter-rainfall region in the south-west. These regions remained the preserve of the Khoisan until Europeans put down roots at the Cape of Good Hope. Aided by modern science in uncovering the continent's history, which forms part of the African Renaissance, South Africa is gaining a greater understanding of its rich pre-colonial past.

The early colonial period

Portuguese seafarers, who pioneered the sea route to India in the late 15th century, were regular visitors to the South African coast during the early 1500s. Other Europeans followed from the late 16th century onwards. In 1652, the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* [VOC]) set up a station in Table Bay (Cape Town) to provision passing ships. Trade with the Khoikhoi for slaughter stock soon degenerated into raiding and warfare. Beginning in 1657, European settlers were allotted farms by the colonial authorities in the arable regions around Cape Town, where wine and wheat became the major products. In response to the colonists' demand for labour, the VOC imported slaves from East Africa, Madagascar and its possessions in the East Indies. By the early 1700s, the colonists had begun to spread into the hinterland beyond the nearest mountain ranges. These relatively independent and mobile farmers (trekboers), who lived as pastoralists and hunters, were largely free from supervision by the Dutch authorities.

As they intruded further upon the land and water sources, and stepped up their demands for livestock and labour, more and more of the indigenous inhabitants were dispossessed and incorporated into the colonial economy as servants. Diseases such as smallpox, which was introduced by the Europeans in 1713, decimated the Khoisan, contributing to the decline of their cultures. Unions across the colour line took place and a new multiracial social order evolved, based on the supremacy of European colonists.

The slave population steadily increased as more labour was needed. By the mid-1700s, there were more slaves in the Cape than there were "free burghers" (European colonists). The Asian slaves were concentrated in the towns, where they formed an artisan class. They brought with them the Islamic religion, which gained adherents and significantly shaped the working-class culture of the Western Cape. Slaves of African descent were found more often on the farms of outlying districts.

In the late 1700s, the Khoisan offered far more determined resistance to colonial encroachment across the length of the colonial frontier. From the 1770s, colonists also came into contact and conflict with Bantu-speaking chiefdoms. A century of intermittent warfare ensued, during which the colonists gained ascendancy, first over the Khoisan and then over the isiXhosa-speaking chiefdoms to the east. It was only in the late 1800s that the subjugation of these settled African societies became feasible. For some time, their relatively sophisticated social structure and economic systems fended off decisive disruption by incoming colonists, who lacked the necessary military superiority.

At the same time, a process of cultural change was set in motion, not least by commercial and missionary activity. In contrast to the Khoisan, the black farmers were, by and large, immune to European diseases. For this and other reasons, they greatly outnumbered the white people in the population of white-ruled South Africa, and were able to preserve important features of their culture. Perhaps because of population pressures, combined with the actions of slave traders in Portuguese territory on the east coast, the Zulu kingdom emerged as a highly centralised state. In the 1820s, the innovative leader Shaka established sway over a considerable area of south-east Africa and brought many chiefdoms under his dominion.

As splinter groups conquered and absorbed communities in their path, the disruption was felt as far north as central Africa. Substantial states such as Moshoeshoe's Lesotho and other Sotho-Tswana chiefdoms were established, partly for reasons of defence. The *Mfecane* or *Difaqane*, as this period of disruption and state formation became known, remains the subject of much speculative debate.

The British colonial era

In 1795, the British occupied the Cape as a strategic base against the French, thus controlling the sea route to the East. After a brief reversion to the Dutch in the course of the Napoleonic Wars, it was retaken in 1806 and kept by Britain in the post-war settlement of territorial claims. The closed and regulated economic system of the Dutch period was swept away as the Cape Colony was integrated into the dynamic international trading empire of industrialising Britain.

A crucial new element was evangelicalism, brought to the Cape by Protestant missionaries. The evangelicals believed in the liberating effect of "free" labour and in the "civilising mission" of British imperialism. They were convinced that indigenous peoples could be fully assimilated into European Christian culture once the shackles of oppression had been removed.

The most important representative of the mission movement in South Africa was Dr John Philip, who arrived as superintendent of the London Missionary Society in 1819. His campaign on behalf of the oppressed Khoisan coincided with a high point in official sympathy for philanthropic concerns. One result was Ordinance 50 of 1828, which guaranteed equal civil rights for "people of colour" within the colony and freed them from legal discrimination.

At the same time, a powerful anti-slavery movement in Britain promoted a series of ameliorative measures imposed on the colonies in the 1820s, and the proclamation of emancipation, which came into force in 1834. The slaves were subject to a four-year period of "apprenticeship" with their former owners, on the grounds that they must be prepared for freedom, which came on 1 December 1838. Although slavery had become less profitable because of a depression in the wine industry, Cape slave-owners rallied to oppose emancipation.

The compensation money, which the British treasury paid out to sweeten the pill, injected unprecedented liquidity into the stagnant local economy. This brought a spurt of company formation, such as banks and insurance companies, as well as a surge of investment in land and wool sheep in the drier regions of the colony in the late 1830s.

Wool became a staple export on which the Cape economy depended for its further development in the middle decades of the century. For the ex-slaves, as for the Khoisan servants, the reality of freedom was very different from the promise. As a wage-based economy developed, they remained dispossessed and exploited, with little opportunity to escape their servile lot.

Increasingly, they were lumped together as the "coloured" people, a group which included the descendants of unions between indigenous and European peoples, and a substantial Muslim minority who became known as the "Cape Malays" (misleadingly, as they mostly came from the Indonesian archipelago). The coloured people were discriminated against on account of their working-class status as well as their racial identity. Among the poor, especially in and around Cape Town, there continued to be a great deal of racial mixing and intermarriage throughout the 1800s.

In 1820, several thousand British settlers, who were swept up by a scheme to relieve Britain of its unemployed, were placed in the eastern Cape frontier zone as a buffer against the Xhosa chiefdoms.

The vision of a dense settlement of small farmers was, however, ill-conceived and many of the settlers became artisans and traders. The more successful became an entrepreneurial class of merchants, largescale sheep farmers and speculators with an insatiable demand for land. Some became fierce warmongers who pressed for the military dispossession of the chiefdoms.

They coveted Xhosa land and welcomed the prospect of war involving large-scale military expenditure by the imperial authorities. The Xhosa engaged in raiding as a means of asserting their prior claims to the land. Racial paranoia became integral to white frontier politics. The result was that frontier warfare became endemic through much of the 19th century, during which Xhosa war leaders such as Chief Maqoma became heroic figures to their people. By the mid-1800s, British settlers of similar persuasion were to be found in Natal. They, too, called for imperial expansion in support of their land claims and trading enterprises.

Meanwhile, large numbers of the original colonists, the Boers, were greatly extending white occupation beyond the Cape's borders to the north, in the movement that became known as the Great Trek, in the mid-1830s. Alienated by British liberalism, and with their economic enterprise usurped by British settlers, several thousand Boers from the interior districts, accompanied by a number of Khoisan servants, began a series of migrations northwards.

They moved to the Highveld and Natal, skirting the great concentrations of black farmers on the way by taking advantage of the areas disrupted during the Mfecane. When the British, who were concerned about controlling the traffic through Port Natal (Durban), annexed the territory of Natal in 1843, those emigrant Boers who had hoped to settle there returned inland.

These Voortrekkers (as they were later called) coalesced in two landlocked republics, the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (Transvaal) and the Orange Free State. With limited coercive power, the Boer communities had to establish relations and develop alliances with some black chiefdoms, neutralising those who obstructed their intrusion or who posed a threat to their security.

Only after the mineral discoveries of the late 1800s did the balance of power swing decisively towards the colonists. The Boer republics then took on the trappings of real statehood and imposed their authority within the territorial borders that they had notionally claimed for themselves. The Colony of Natal, situated to the south of the mighty Zulu State, developed along very different lines from the original colony of settlement, the Cape. The size of the black population left no room for the assimilationist vision of race domination embraced in the Cape.

Chiefdoms consisting mainly of refugee groups in the aftermath of the Mfecane were persuaded to accept colonial protection in return for reserved land and the freedom to govern themselves in accordance with their own customs. These chiefdoms were established in the heart of an expanding colonial territory.

Natal developed a system of political and legal dualism, whereby chiefly rule was en-trenched and customary law was codified. Although exemptions from customary law could be granted to the educated products of the missions, in practice

they were rare. Urban residence was strictly controlled and political rights outside the reserves were effectively limited to white people. This system is widely regarded as having provided a model for the segregationism that would prevail in the 20th century.

Natal's economy was boosted by the development of sugar plantations in the subtropical coastal lowlands. Indentured Indian labourers were imported from 1860 to work the plantations, and many Indian traders and market gardeners followed. These Indians, who were segregated and discriminated against from the start, became a further important element in South Africa's population.

It was in South Africa that Indian activist and leader Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, also known as Mahatma Gandhi, refined, from the mid-1890s, the techniques of passive resistance, which he later effectively practised in India. Although Indians gradually moved into the Transvaal and elsewhere, they remain concentrated in Natal.

In 1853, the Cape Colony was granted a representative legislature in keeping with British policy, followed in 1872 by self-government. The franchise was formally non-racial, but also based on income and property qualifications. The result was that black and coloured people formed a minority of voters – although in certain places a substantial one. What became known as the "liberal tradition" in the Cape depended on the fact that the great mass of Bantu-speaking farmers remained outside its colonial borders until late in the 19th century. Non-racialism could thus be embraced without posing a threat to white supremacy.

A number of black people within the Cape Colony had sufficient formal education or owned enough property to qualify for the franchise. Political alliances across racial lines were common in the eastern Cape constituencies. It is therefore not surprising that the eastern Cape became a seedbed of African nationalism, once the ideal and promise of inclusion in the common society had been so starkly violated by later racial policies.

The mineral revolution

By the late 19th century, the limitations of the Cape's liberal tradition were becoming apparent. The hardening of racial attitudes that accompanied the rise of a more militant imperialist spirit coincided with the watershed discovery of mineral riches in the interior of southern Africa. In a developing economy, cheap labour was at a premium, and the claims of educated blacks clamouring for equality met with increasingly fierce resistance. At the same time, the large numbers of Africans in the chiefdoms beyond the Kei River and north of the Gariep (Orange River), then being incorporated into the Cape Colony, posed new threats to racial supremacy and white security, increasing segregationist pressures.

Alluvial diamonds were discovered on the Vaal River in the late 1860s. The subsequent discovery of dry deposits at what became the city of Kimberley drew tens of thousands of people, black and white, to the first great industrial hub in Africa, and the largest diamond deposit in the world. In 1871, the British, who ousted several rival claimants, annexed the diamond fields. The Colony of Griqualand West thus created was incorporated into the Cape Colony in 1880.

By 1888, the consolidation of diamond claims had led to the creation of the huge De Beers monopoly under the control of Cecil John Rhodes. He used his power and wealth to become Prime Minister of the Cape Colony (from 1890 to 1896) and, through his chartered British South Africa Company, conqueror and ruler of modern-day Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The mineral discoveries had a major impact on the subcontinent as a whole. A railway network linking the interior to the coastal ports revolutionised transportation and energised agriculture. Coastal cities such as modern-day Cape Town, Gqeberha, East London and Durban experienced an economic boom as port facilities were upgraded. The fact that the mineral discoveries coincided with a new era of imperialism and the scramble for Africa brought imperial power and influence to bear in southern Africa as never before. Independent African chiefdoms were systematically subjugated and incorporated by their white-ruled neighbours. In 1897, Zululand was incorporated into Natal.

The Transvaal was annexed by Britain in 1877. Boer resistance led to British withdrawal in 1881, but not before the Pedi (northern Sotho) State, which fell within the Republic's borders, had been subjugated. The indications were that, having once been asserted, British hegemony was likely to be reasserted. The southern Sotho and Swazi territories were also brought under British rule but maintained their status as imperial dependencies, so that both the current Lesotho and Eswatini escaped the rule of local white regimes.

The discovery of the Witwatersrand goldfields in 1886 was a turning point in the history of South Africa. It presaged the emergence of the modern South African industrial state. Once the extent of the reefs had been established, and deep-level mining had proved to be a viable investment, it was only a matter of time before Britain and its local representatives again found a pretext for war against the Boer republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

The demand for franchise rights for English-speaking immigrants on the goldfields (known as uitlanders) provided a lever for applying pressure on the government of President Paul Kruger. Egged on by the deep-level mining magnates, to whom the Boer government seemed obstructive and inefficient, and by the expectation of an uitlander uprising, Rhodes launched a raid into the Transvaal in late December 1895. The raid's failure saw the end of Rhodes' political career, but Sir Alfred Milner, British High Commissioner in South Africa from 1897, was determined to overthrow Kruger's government and establish British rule throughout the subcontinent. The Boer government was eventually forced into a declaration of war in October 1899.

The mineral discoveries had a radical impact on every sphere of society. Labour was required on a massive scale and could only be provided by Africans, who had to be drawn away from the land. Many Africans responded with alacrity to the opportunities presented by wage labour, travelling long distances to earn money to supplement rural enterprise in the homestead economy.

In response to the expansion of internal markets, blacks exploited their farming skills and family labour to good effect to increase production for sale. A substantial black peasantry arose, often by means of sharecropping or labour tenantry on white-owned farms. For the white authorities, however,

the chief consideration was ensuring a labour supply and undermining black competition on the land. Conquest, land dispossession, taxation and pass laws were designed to force black people off the land and channel them into labour markets, especially to meet the needs of the mines.

Gradually, the alternatives available to blacks were closed, and the decline of the homestead economy made wage labour increasingly essential for survival. The integration of blacks into the emerging urban and industrial society of South Africa should have followed these developments, but short-term, recurrent labour migrancy suited employers and the authorities, who sought to entrench the system. The closed compounds pioneered on the diamond fields, as a means of migrant labour control, were replicated at the gold mines.

The preservation of communal areas from which migrants could be drawn had the effect of lowering wages, by denying blacks rights within the urban areas and keeping their families and dependants on subsistence plots in the reserves. Blacks could be denied basic rights if the fiction could be maintained that they did not belong in "white South Africa," but to "tribal societies" from which they came to service the "white man's needs." Where black families secured a toehold in the urban areas, local authorities confined them to segregated "locations." This set of assumptions and policies informed the development of segregationist ideology and, later (from 1948), apartheid.

The Anglo-Boer/South African War (October 1899 – May 1902) and its aftermath

The war that followed the mineral revolution was mainly a white man's war. In its first phase, the Boer forces took the initiative, besieging the frontier towns of Mafeking (Mahikeng) and Kimberley in the Northern Cape, and Ladysmith in northern Natal.

Some colonial Boers rebelled, however, in sympathy with the republics. But, after a large expeditionary force under Lords Roberts and Kitchener arrived, the British advance was rapid. Kruger fled the Transvaal shortly before Pretoria fell in June 1900. The formal conquest of the two Boer republics was followed by a prolonged guerrilla campaign. Small, mobile groups of Boers denied the imperial forces their victory by disrupting rail links and supply lines. Commandos swept deep into colonial territory, rousing rebellion wherever they went. The British were at a disadvantage, owing to their lack of familiarity with the terrain and the Boers' superior skills as horsemen and sharpshooters. The British responded with a scorched-earth policy, which included farm burnings, looting and the setting-up of concentration camps for non-combatants, in which some 26 000 Boer women and children died from disease. The incarceration of black (including coloured) people in the path of the war in racially segregated camps has been absent from conventional accounts of the war and has only recently been acknowledged.

They, too, suffered appalling conditions and some 14 000 (perhaps many more) are estimated to have died. At the same time, many black farmers were in a position to meet the demand for produce created by the military, or to avail themselves of employment opportunities at good wages. Some 10 000 black servants accompanied the Boer commandos, and the British used blacks as labourers, scouts, dispatch riders, drivers and guards.

The war also taught many Africans that the forces of dispossession could be rolled back if the circumstances were right. It gave black communities the opportunity to recolonise land lost in conquest, which enabled them to withhold their labour after the war. Most blacks supported the British in the belief that Britain was committed to extending civil and political rights to black people. In this they were to be disappointed. In the Treaty of Vereeniging that ended the war, the British agreed to leave the issue of rights for blacks to be decided by a future self-governing (white) authority. All in all, the Anglo-Boer/South African War was a radicalising experience for blacks.

Britain's reconstruction regime set about creating a white-ruled dominion by uniting the former Boer republics (both by then British colonies) with Natal and the Cape. The priority was to re-establish white control over the land and force the black people back to wage labour. The labour-recruiting system was improved, both internally and externally. Recruiting agreements were reached with the Portuguese authorities in Mozambique, from where much mine labour came.

When, by 1904, black resources still proved inadequate to get the mines working at pre-war levels, more than 60 000 indentured Chinese were brought in. This precipitated a vociferous outcry from proponents of white supremacy in South Africa and liberals in Britain. By 1910, all had been repatriated, a step made easier when a surge of blacks came forward from areas such as the Transkeian territories and the northern Transvaal, which had not previously been large-scale suppliers of migrants. This was the heyday of the private recruiters, who exploited families' indebtedness to procure young men to labour in the mines.

The blacks' post-war ability to withhold their labour was undercut by government action, abetted by drought and stock disease. The impact of the Anglo-Boer/South African War as a seminal influence on the development of Afrikaner nationalist politics became apparent in subsequent years. The Boer leaders – most notably Louis Botha, Jan Smuts and James Barry Munnik Hertzog – played a dominant role in the country's politics for the next half century. After initial plans for anglicisation of the defeated Afrikaners were abandoned as impractical, the British looked to the Afrikaners as collaborators in securing imperial political and economic interests.

During 1907 and 1908, the two former Boer republics were granted self-government but, crucially, with a whites-only franchise. Despite promises to the contrary, black interests were sacrificed in the interest of white nation-building across the white language divide. The National Convention drew up a Constitution and the four colonies became an independent dominion called the Union of South Africa on 31 May 1910.

The 19th century's formally non-racial franchise was retained in the Cape but was not extended elsewhere, where rights of citizenship were confined to whites alone. It was clear from the start that segregation was the conventional wisdom of the new rulers. Black people were defined as outsiders, without rights or claims on the common society that their labour had helped to create.

Segregation

Government policy in the Union of South Africa did not develop in isolation, but against the backdrop of black political initiatives. Segregation and apartheid assumed their shape, in part, as a white response to blacks' increasing participation in the country's economic life and their assertion of political rights.

Despite the government's efforts to shore up traditionalism and retribalise them, black people became more fully integrated into the urban and industrial society of 20th-century South Africa than elsewhere on the continent. An educated élite of clerics, teachers, business people, journalists and professionals grew to be a major force in black politics. Mission Christianity and its associated educational institutions exerted a profound influence on black political life, and separatist churches were early vehicles for African political assertion.

The experiences of studying abroad and, in particular, interaction with black people struggling for their rights elsewhere in Africa, the United States of America and the Caribbean, played an important part. A vigorous black press arose, associated in its early years with such pioneer editors as John Tengo Jabavu, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Dr Abdullah Abdurahman, Sol Plaatje and John Dube, serving the black reading public. At the same time, African communal struggles to maintain access to the land in rural areas posed a powerful challenge to the white state.

Traditional authorities often led popular struggles against intrusive and manipulative policies. Government attempts to control and co-opt the chiefs often failed.

Steps towards the formation of a national political organisation of coloured people began around the turn of the century, with the formation of the African Political Organisation in 1902 by Dr Abdurahman, mainly in the Cape Province. The African National Congress (ANC), founded in 1912, became the most important black organisation, drawing together traditional authorities and the educated African élite in common causes. In its early years, the ANC was concerned mainly with constitutional protest. Worker militancy emerged in the wake of World War I and continued through the 1920s. It included strikes and an anti-pass campaign, given impetus by women, particularly in the Free State, resisting the extension of the pass laws to them. The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, under the leadership of Clements Kadalie, was (despite its name) the first populist, nationwide organisation representing black people in rural as well as urban areas. But it was short-lived.

The Communist Party, formed in 1921 and since then a force for both non-racialism and worker organisations, was to prove far longer lasting. In other sections of the black population too, the turn of the century saw organised opposition emerging. Gandhi's leadership of protest against discriminatory laws gave impetus to the formation of provincial Indian congresses, including the Natal Indian Congress formed by him in 1894. The principles of segregationist thinking were laid down in a 1905 report by the South African Native Affairs Commission and continued to evolve in response to these economic, social and political pressures.

In keeping with its recommendations, the first union government enacted the seminal Natives Land Act, 1913 (Act 27 of 1913). This defined the remnants of their ancestral lands after conquest for African occupation, and declared illegal all land purchases or rent tenancy outside these reserves. The centenary of this Act was commemorated in 2013. The reserves ("homelands" as they were subsequently called) eventually comprised about 13% of South Africa's land surface. Administrative and legal dualism reinforced the division between white citizens and black non-citizens, a dispensation personified by the Governor-General who, as "supreme chief" over the country's African majority, was empowered to rule them by administrative fiat and decree.

The government also reserved skilled work for white people and denied black workers the right to organise. Legislation, which was consolidated in the Natives (Urban Areas) Act, 1923 (Act 21 of 1923), entrenched urban segregation and controlled black mobility by means of pass laws. The pass laws were designed to force blacks into labour and to keep them there under conditions and at wage levels that suited white employers, and to deny them any bargaining power. In these and other ways, the foundations of apartheid were laid by successive governments representing the compromises hammered out by the National Convention of 1908 to 1909 to effect the union of English-and Afrikaans-speaking white people.

However, divisions within the white community remained significant. Afrikaner nationalism grew as a factor in the years after the union. It was given impetus in 1914, both by the formation of the National Party (NP), in a breakaway from the ruling South African Party, and by a rebellion of Afrikaners who could not reconcile themselves with the decision to join the First World War against Germany. In part, the NP spoke for Afrikaners impoverished by the Anglo-Boer/South African War and dislodged from the land by the development of capitalist farming. An Afrikaner underclass was emerging in the towns, which found itself uncompetitive in the labour market, as white workers demanded higher wages than those paid to black people. Soon, labour issues came to the fore.

In 1920, some 71 000 black mineworkers went on strike in protest against the spiralling cost of living, but the strike was quickly put down by isolating the compounds where the migrant workers were housed. Another threat to government came from white workers. Immigrant white workers with mining experience abroad performed much of the skilled and semi-skilled work on the mines. As mine owners tried to cut costs by using lower-wage black labour in semi-skilled jobs, white labour became increasingly militant.

These tensions culminated in a bloody and dramatic rebellion on the goldfields in 1922, which the Smuts government put down with military force. In 1924, a pact government under Hertzog, comprising Afrikaner nationalists and representatives of immigrant labour, ousted the Smuts regime. The pact was based on a common suspicion of the dominance of mining capital, and a determination to protect the interests of white labour by intensifying discrimination against black people. The commitment to white labour policies in government employment, such as the railways and postal service, was intensified, and the job colour bar was reinforced, with a key objective being to address what was known as the "poor-white problem".

In 1934, the main white parties fused to combat the local effects of a worldwide depression. This was followed

by a new Afrikaner nationalist breakaway under Dr Daniel François Malan. In 1936, white supremacy was further entrenched by the United Party with the removal of the qualifying Africans of the Cape Province from the common voters' roll. Meanwhile, Malan's breakaway NP was greatly augmented by an Afrikaner cultural revival spearheaded by the secret white male Afrikaner Broederbond and other cultural organisations during the year of the Voortrekker centenary celebrations (1938), as well as by anti-war sentiment from 1939.

Apartheid

In 1948, the NP, with its ideology of apartheid that brought an even more rigorous and authoritarian approach than the segregationist policies of previous governments, won the general election. It did so against the background of a revival of mass militancy during the 1940s, after a period of relative quiescence in the 1930s when black groups attempted to foster unity among themselves. The change was marked by the formation of the ANC Youth League in 1943, fostering the leadership of figures such as Anton Lembede, Ashby Solomzi Peter Mda, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu, who were to inspire the struggle for decades to come.

In the 1940s, squatter movements in peri-urban areas brought mass politics back to the urban centres. The 1946 Mineworkers' Strike was a turning point in the emergence of the politics of mass mobilisation. As was the case with the First World War, the experience of the Second World War and post-war economic difficulties enhanced discontent. For those who supported the NP, its primary appeal lay in its determination to maintain white domination in the face of rising mass resistance; uplift poor Afrikaners; challenge the pre-eminence of English-speaking white people in public life, the professions and business; and abolish the remaining imperial ties. The State became an engine of patronage for Afrikaner employment.

The Afrikaner Broederbond coordinated the party's programme, ensuring that Afrikaner nationalist interests and policies attained ascendancy throughout civil society. In 1961, the NP government under Prime Minister Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd declared South Africa a republic, after winning a whites-only referendum on the issue. A new currency, the rand, and a new flag, anthem and coat of arms were formally introduced. South Africa, having become a republic, had to apply for continued membership of the Commonwealth. In the face of demands for an end to apartheid, South Africa withdrew its application and a figurehead president replaced the British Queen (represented locally by the Governor-General) as Head of State.

In most respects, apartheid was a continuation, in more systematic and brutal form, of the segregationist policies of previous governments. A new concern with racial purity was apparent in laws prohibiting interracial sexual activities and provisions for population registration requiring that every South African be assigned to one discrete racial category or another. For the first time, the coloured people, who had always been subjected to informal discrimination, were brought within the ambit of discriminatory laws.

In the mid-1950s, government took the drastic step of overriding an entrenched clause in the 1910 Constitution of the Union so as to be able to remove coloured voters from the common voters' roll. It also enforced residential segregation, expropriating homes where necessary and policing massive forced removals into coloured "group areas." Until the 1940s, South Africa's racial policies had not been entirely out of step with those to be found in the colonial world.

But by the 1950s, which saw decolonisation and a global backlash against racism gathering pace, the country was dramatically opposed to world opinion on questions of human rights. The architects of apartheid, among whom Dr Verwoerd was pre-eminent, responded by elaborating a theory of multinationalism. Their policy, which they termed "separate development," divided the African population into artificial ethnic "nations," each with its own "homeland" and the prospect of "independence," supposedly in keeping with trends elsewhere on the continent.

This divide-and-rule strategy was designed to disguise the racial basis of official policy-making by the substitution of the language of ethnicity. This was accompanied by much ethnographic engineering, as efforts were made to resurrect tribal structures. In the process, the government sought to create a significant collaborating class. The truth was that the rural reserves were by this time thoroughly degraded by overpopulation and soil erosion.

This did not prevent four of the "homeland" structures (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei) from being declared "independent", a status which the vast majority of South Africans, and therefore also the international community, declined to recognise. In each case, the process involved the repression of opposition and the use by the government of the power to nominate and thereby pad elected assemblies with a quota of compliant figures. Forced removals from "white" areas affected some 3.5 million people and vast rural slums were created in the homelands, which were used as dumping grounds. The pass laws and influx control were extended and harshly enforced, and labour bureaux were set up to channel labour to where it was needed. Hundreds of thousands of people were arrested or prosecuted under the pass laws each year, reaching over half a million a year from the mid-1960s to the mid- 1970s. Industrial decentralisation to growth points on the borders of (but not inside) the homelands was promoted as a means of keeping blacks out of "white" South Africa.

In virtually every sphere, from housing to education and healthcare, central government took control over black people's lives with a view to reinforcing their allotted role as "temporary sojourners", welcome in "white" South Africa solely to serve the needs of the employers of labour. However, these same programmes of control became the focus of resistance. In particular, the campaign against the pass laws formed a cornerstone of the Struggle.

The end of apartheid

The introduction of apartheid heralded the ANC's adoption in 1949 of its programme of action, expressing the renewed militancy of the 1940s. The programme embodied the rejection of white domination and a call for action in the form of protests, strikes and demonstrations. There followed a decade of turbulent mass action in resistance to the imposition of still harsher forms of segregation and oppression.

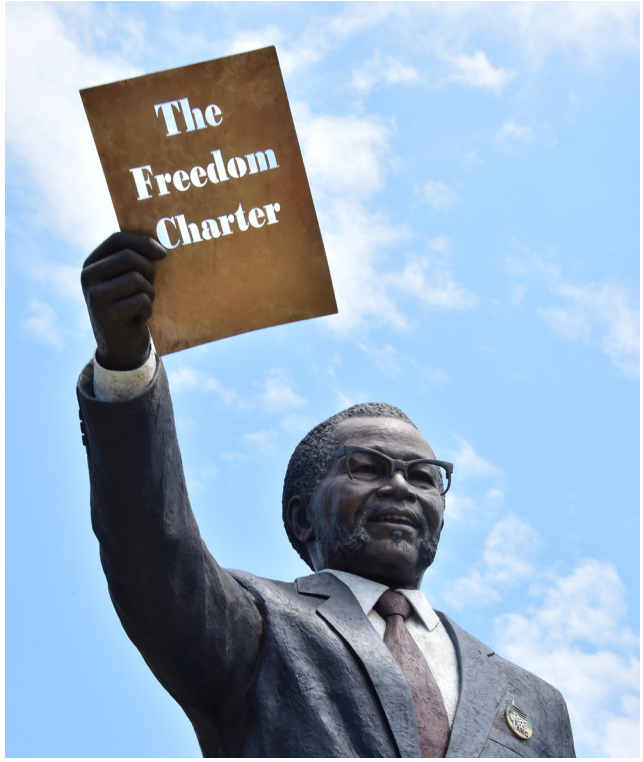
The Defiance Campaign of 1952 carried mass mobilisation to new heights under the banner of non-violent resistance to the pass laws. These actions were influenced in part by the philosophy of Gandhi. A critical step in the emergence of non-racialism was the formation of the Congress Alliance, including the ANC, South African Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress, the Congress of Democrats (a small white congress organisation) and the South African Congress of Trade Unions.

The alliance gave formal expression to an emerging unity across racial and class lines that was manifested in the Defiance Campaign and other mass protests, including against the Bantu Education Act of this period, which also saw women's resistance take a more organised character with the formation of the Federation of South African Women. In 1955, the Freedom Charter was drawn up at the Congress of the People in Soweto. The charter enunciated the principles of the struggle, binding the movement to a culture of human rights and non-racialism.

Over the next few decades, the Freedom Charter was elevated to an important symbol of the freedom struggle. The Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), founded by Robert Sobukwe and based on the philosophies of "Africanism" and anti-communism, broke away from the Congress Alliance in 1959. The State's initial response, harsh as it was, was not yet as draconian as it was to become. Its attempt to prosecute more than 150 anti-apartheid leaders for treason, in a trial that began in 1956, ended in acquittals in 1961. But by that time, mass organised opposition had been banned.

The year 2012, marked the 60th anniversary of the 1952 Women's March. You strike a woman, you strike a rock! *Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo!* In 1956, with these words, thousands of women advanced the cause to liberate South Africa from apartheid rule. The phrase has come to symbolise women's courage and strength in South Africa.

During the early 1950s, Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Albertina Sisulu, Sophia Williams-De Bruyn, and many others formed the Federation of South African Women. With the Blacks (Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents) Act, 1952 (Act 67 of 1952), the South African government amended the pass laws, requiring all black people over the age of 16 to carry a "reference book" at all times.



On 9 August 1956, more than 20 000 women of all races marched through the streets of Pretoria to the Union Buildings to hand over a petition to Johannes Gerhardus Strijdom, South Africa's Prime Minister, protesting the introduction of the new pass laws and the Group Areas Act, 1950 (Act 41 of 1950). The latter enforced different residential areas for different races and led to forced removals of people living in "wrong" areas. On the day of the march, Strijdom had arranged to be elsewhere, and the petition was eventually accepted by his secretary.

However, the first attempt to make black women carry passes was in 1913 when the then Orange Free State introduced a new requirement that women, in addition to existing regulations for black men, had to carry reference documents. The resulting protests, by a multiracial group of women, many of whom were professionals, took the form of passive resistance through refusing to carry the new passes. Matters came to a head at Sharpeville in March 1960, when 69 anti-pass demonstrators were killed when police fired on a demonstration called by the PAC. A State of Emergency was imposed and detention without trial was introduced.

The black political organisations were banned and their leaders went into exile or were arrested. In this climate, the ANC and PAC abandoned their long-standing commitment to non-violent resistance and turned to armed struggle, combined with underground organisation and mobilisation as well as the mobilisation of international solidarity. Top leaders, including members of the newly formed military wing Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) ("Spear of the Nation"), were arrested in 1963. In the Rivonia Trial, eight ANC leaders, including Nelson Mandela, were convicted of sabotage (instead of treason, the original charge) and sentenced to life imprisonment.

In this period, leaders of other organisations, including the PAC and the New Unity Movement, were also sentenced to long terms of imprisonment and/or banned. The 1960s was a decade of overwhelming repression and relative political disarray among black people in the country. Armed action was contained by the State. State repression played a central role in containing internal resistance, and the leadership of the struggle shifted increasingly to the missions in exile. At the same time, the ANC leadership embarked on a campaign to infiltrate the country through what was then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).

In August 1967, a joint force of MK and the Zimbabwean People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) of the Zimbabwe African People's Union entered Zimbabwe, and over a two-month period engaged the joint Rhodesian and South African security forces. Although the joint MK-ZIPRA force failed to reach South Africa, this was the first military confrontation between the military forces of the ANC-led alliance and white security forces. The resurgence of resistance politics in the early 1970s was dramatic. The Black Consciousness Movement, led by Steve Biko (who was killed in detention in 1977), re-awakened a sense of pride and self-esteem in black people.

News of the brutal death of Biko reverberated around the globe and led to unprecedented outrage. White capitalist economies sputtered with the oil crisis of 1973 and black trade unions were revived. A wave of strikes reflected a new militancy that involved better organisation and new sectors, in particular intellectuals and the student movement, being drawn into mass struggle and debate over the principles informing it. Rallies at black universities in support of Frelimo, the Mozambican liberation movement, also gave expression to the growing militancy.

The year 1976 marked the beginning of a sustained anti-apartheid revolt. In June, school pupils of Soweto rose up against apartheid education, followed by youth uprisings all around the country. Despite the harsh repression that followed, students continued to organise, with the formation in 1979 of organisations for school students – the Congress of South African Students, and college and university students – the Azanian Students Organisation. By the 1980s, the different forms of struggle – armed struggle, mass mobilisation and international solidarity – were beginning to integrate and coalesce. The United Democratic Front and the informal umbrella, the Mass Democratic Movement, emerged as legal vehicles of democratic forces struggling for liberation.

Clerics played a prominent public role in these movements. The involvement of workers in resistance took on a new dimension with the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the National Council of Trade Unions. Popular anger was directed against all those who were deemed to be collaborating with the government in the pursuit of its objectives, and the black townships became virtually ungovernable. From the mid- 1980s, regional and national states of emergency were enforced.

Developments in neighbouring states, where mass resistance to white minority and colonial rule led to Portuguese decolonisation in the mid-1970s and the abdication of Zimbabwe's minority regime in 1980, left South Africa exposed as the last bastion of white supremacy. Under growing pressure and increasingly isolated internationally, the government embarked on a dual strategy, introducing limited reform coupled with intensifying repression and militarisation of society, with the objective of containing the pressures and increasing its support base while crushing organised resistance. An early example of reform was the recognition of black trade unions to try to stabilise labour relations. In 1983, the Constitution was reformed to allow the coloured and Indian minorities limited participation in separate and subordinate houses of Parliament.

The vast majority of these groups demonstrated their rejection of the tricameral dispensation through massive boycotts of elections, but it was kept in place by the apartheid regime despite its visible lack of legitimacy. Attempts to legitimise community councils as vehicles for the participation of blacks outside the Bantustans in local government met a similar fate. Militarisation included the ascendancy of the State Security Council, which usurped the role of the Executive in crucial respects, and a succession of states of emergency as part of the implementation of a comprehensive counter-insurgency strategy to combat what, by the mid-1980s, was an endemic insurrectionary spirit in the land.

However, by the late 1980s, popular resistance was taking the form of mass defiance campaigns, while struggles over more localised issues saw broad sections of communities mobilised in united action. Popular support for released political prisoners and for the armed struggle was being openly expressed. In response to the rising tide of resistance, the international community strengthened its support for the anti-apartheid cause. Sanctions and boycotts were instituted, both unilaterally by countries across the world and through the United Nations (UN). These sanctions were called for in a coordinated strategy by the internal and external anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.

Mr Frederik Willem de Klerk, who replaced Mr Pieter Willem "PW" Botha as State President in 1989, announced at the opening of Parliament in February 1990, the unbanning of the liberation movements and release of political prisoners, among them Mandela. A number of factors led to this step. International financial, trade, sport and cultural sanctions were clearly biting. Above all, even if South Africa was nowhere near collapse, either militarily or economically, several years of emergency rule and ruthless repression had clearly neither destroyed the structures of organised resistance, nor helped establish legitimacy for the apartheid regime or its collaborators.

Instead, popular resistance, including mass and armed action, was intensifying. The ANC, enjoying popular recognition and legitimacy as the foremost liberation organisation, was increasingly regarded as a government-in-waiting. International support for the liberation movement came from various countries around the globe, particularly from former socialist countries and Nordic countries as well as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The other liberation organisations increasingly experienced various internal and external pressures and did not enjoy much popular support. To outside observers, and also in the eyes of growing numbers of white South Africans, apartheid stood exposed as morally bankrupt, indefensible and impervious to reforms.

The collapse of global communism, the negotiated withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola, and the culmination of the South-West African People's Organisation's liberation struggle in the negotiated independence of Namibia – formerly South-West Africa, administered by South Africa as a League of Nations mandate since 1919 – did much to change the mindset of white people. No longer could they demonise the ANC and the PAC as fronts for international communism.

White South Africa had also changed in deeper ways. Afrikaner nationalism had lost much of its raison d'être. Many Afrikaners had become urban, middle class and relatively prosperous. Their ethnic grievances and attachment to ethnic causes and symbols had diminished. A large part of the NP's core constituency was ready to explore larger national identities, even across racial divides, and yearned for international respectability.

In 1982, disenchanted hardliners split from the NP to form the Conservative Party, leaving the NP open to more flexible and modernising influences. After this split, factions within the Afrikaner elite openly started to pronounce in favour of a more inclusive society, causing more friction with the NP government, which became increasingly militaristic and authoritarian. A number of business, student and academic Afrikaners held meetings publicly and privately

with the ANC in exile. Secret talks were held between the imprisoned Mandela and government ministers about a new dispensation for South Africa, with black people forming a major part of it.

Inside the country, mass action became the order of the day. Petty apartheid laws and symbols were openly challenged and removed. Together with a sliding economy and increasing international pressure, these developments made historic changes inevitable.

The first decade of freedom

After a long negotiation process, sustained despite much opportunistic violence from the right wing and its surrogates, and in some instances sanctioned by elements of the State, South Africa's first democratic election was held in April 1994 under an interim Constitution. The interim Constitution divided South Africa into nine new provinces in place of the previous four provinces and 10 "homelands", and provided for the Government of National Unity (GNU) to be constituted by all parties with at least 20 seats in the National Assembly.

The NP and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) formed part of the GNU until 1996, when the NP withdrew. The ANC-led government embarked on a programme to promote the reconstruction and development of the country and its institutions. This called for the simultaneous pursuit of democratisation and socio-economic change, as well as reconciliation and the building of consensus founded on the commitment to improve the lives of all South Africans, in particular the poor. It required the integration of South Africa into a rapidly changing global environment.

Pursuit of these objectives was a consistent focus of government during the first decade of freedom, seeking the unity of a previously divided society in working together to overcome the legacy of a history of division, exclusion and neglect. Converting democratic ideals into practice required, among other things, initiating a radical overhaul of the machinery of government at every level, working towards service delivery, openness and a culture of human rights. It required a more integrated approach to planning and implementation to ensure that the many different aspects of transformation and socio-economic upliftment cohered with maximum impact.

A significant milestone in the democratisation of South Africa was the exemplary Constitution-making process, which in 1996 delivered a document that has evoked worldwide admiration. So, too, have been the national and local government elections subsequent to 1994 – all conducted peacefully, with high levels of participation compared with the norm in most democracies, and accepted by all as free and fair in their conduct and results. Since 2001, participatory democracy and interactive governance have been strengthened through the practice of public participation, the roving Executive Council and mayoral meetings, in which members of the Executive, in all three spheres of government, including The Presidency, regularly communicate directly with the public about the implementation of programmes of reconstruction and development.

The second democratic national election in 1999 saw the ANC majority increase to just short of two-thirds and the election of Thabo Mbeki as President and successor to Mandela. It saw a sharp decline in the popularity of the NP (then the New National Party [NNP]) and its replacement by the Democratic Party as the official opposition in Parliament. These two parties formed the Democratic Alliance (DA), which the NNP left in 2001.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, helped inculcate a commitment to accountability and transparency in South Africa's public life, at the same time helping to heal wounds inflicted by the inhumanities of the apartheid era. During 2003, Parliament accepted government's response to the final report of the TRC. Out of 22 000 individuals or surviving families appearing before the commission, 19 000 were identified as needing urgent reparation assistance – virtually all, where the necessary information was available, received interim reparations.

As final reparations, government provided a once-off grant of R30 000 to individuals or survivors who appeared before and were designated by the TRC, over and above the programmes for material assistance. There are continuing programmes to project the symbolism of the struggle and the ideal of freedom. These include the Freedom Park and other symbols and monuments, and such matters as records of history, remaking of cultural and art forms and changing geographical and place names. The ethos of partnership informed the establishment of the National Economic Development and Labour Council.

It brings together government, business, organised labour and development organisations to confront the challenges of growth and development for South Africa in a turbulent and globalising international economy. The Presidential Jobs Summit in 1998 and the Growth and Development Summit in 2003 brought these sectors together to take advantage of the conditions in South Africa for faster growth and development. At the summit, a comprehensive set of agreements was concluded to address urgent challenges in a practical way and to speed up job-creating growth and development. Partnership between government and civil society was further strengthened by the creation of a number of working groups through which sectors of society – business, organised labour, higher education, religious leaders, youth and women – engage regularly with the President.

In the first decade of freedom, government placed emphasis on meeting basic needs through programmes for socio-economic development such as the provision of housing, piped water, electricity, education and healthcare, as well as social grants for those in need. The integration of South Africa into the global political, economic and social system has been a priority for democratic South Africa.

As a country isolated during the apartheid period, an African country, a developing country, and a country whose liberation was achieved with the support of the international community, it remains of critical importance to build political and economic links with the countries and regions of the world, and to work with others for an international environment that is more favourable to development across the world, and in Africa and South Africa in particular.

The South African government is committed to the African Renaissance, which is based on the consolidation of democracy, economic development and a cooperative approach to resolving the challenges the continent faces. South Africa hosted the launch in 2002 of the African Union

(AU), a step towards further unification of Africa in pursuit of socio-economic development, the Organisation of African Unity having fulfilled its mandate to liberate Africa. The then President, Thabo Mbeki, chaired the AU for its founding year, handing over the chair to the former President of Mozambique, Joaquim Chissano, in July 2003. In 2004, the AU decided that South Africa should host the Pan-African Parliament and it met for its second session in South Africa, the first time on South African soil, in September that year.

By participating in UN and AU initiatives to resolve conflict and promote peace and security on the continent – in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Sudan – South Africa has contributed to the achievement of conditions conducive to the entrenchment of stability, democracy and faster development. During the first decade of freedom, it acted at various times as chair of the Southern African Development Community, NAM, AU and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings. It hosted several international conferences, including the UN Conference on Trade and Development in 1996, the 2000 World AIDS Congress, the World Conference Against Racism in 2001, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 and the World Parks Congress in 2003. The country has also been represented in international forums such as the International Monetary Fund's Development Committee and Interpol.

The second decade of freedom

When South Africa celebrated 10 years of freedom in 2004, there were celebrations across the world in countries whose peoples had helped to bring freedom to South Africa through their solidarity, and who were then partners in reconstruction and development of the country. As government took stock of the first decade of freedom in the "Towards a Ten Year Review", it was able to document great progress by South Africans in pursuit of their goals, as well as the challenges that faced the nation as it traversed the second decade of its freedom towards 2014.

In its third democratic elections, in April 2004, the country gave an increased mandate to government's programme for reconstruction and development and for the entrenchment of the rights in the Constitution. It mandated government specifically to create the conditions for halving unemployment and poverty by 2014. Following these elections, Thabo Mbeki was appointed to a second term of office – a position he relinquished in September 2008, following the decision of the National Executive Committee of the ANC to recall him.

Parliament elected Kgalema Motlanthe as President of South Africa on 25 September 2008. Local Government Elections in 2006, following a long period of civic unrest as communities protested against a mixed record of service delivery, saw increased participation compared with the previous local elections, as well as increased support for the ruling party based on a manifesto for a concerted effort, in partnership with communities, to make local government work better.

South Africa held national and provincial elections to elect a new National Assembly as well as the provincial legislature in each province on 22 April 2009. Some 23 million people were registered for the 2009 general election, which was about 2.5 million more than in 2004. About 77% of registered voters took part in the election. The results for thevtop five parties were as follows: the ANC achieved 65.9%; the DA 16.6%; the newly-formed Congress of the People (Cope) 7.4%; the IFP 4.5%; and the Independent Democrats 0.9% of the votes cast.

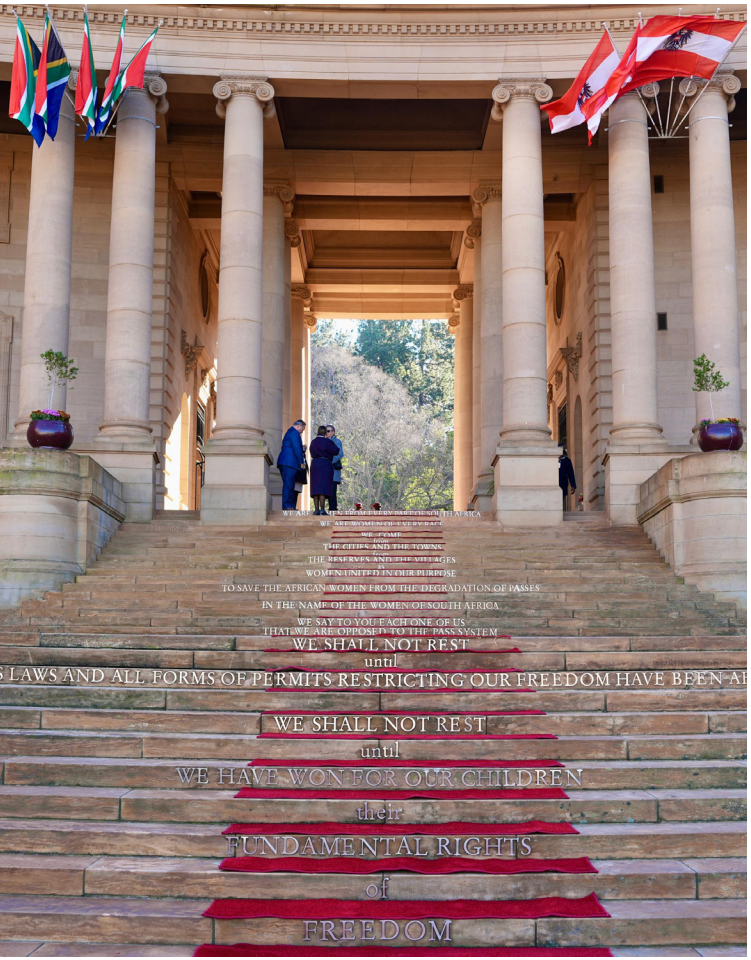
Mr Jacob Zuma was inaugurated as President of South Africa on 9 May 2009. Government adopted 14 outcomes as its focus areas. These included: improving the quality of basic education and health services, strengthening the fight against crime, creating decent employment through inclusive growth, and boosting skills development. Also included in the focus areas were the need of ensuring food security for all, building sustainable human settlements and an improved quality of household life, improving local government structures and creating an efficient and development-orientated public service.

A significant milestone for South Africa in the second decade of freedom was the successful hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The tournament, which was the first on African soil, demonstrated that South Africa has the infrastructure and capability to warrant serious investment consideration. It also showcased South Africa and its people to the world. The local government elections held on 18 May 2011 were characterised by lively and respectful campaigning with all political parties free to engage with voters in all areas. The Independent Electoral Commission highlighted decreased voter apathy and achieved an impressive 57.6% registered voter turnout, an improvement from the previous local government elections, which scored below the 50% mark.

The ANC won the highest number of seats and councils – 198 councils and 5 633 seats, constituting 62% of the vote. The DA came second with 18 councils, 1 555 seats and 23.9% support. The ANC and DA were followed by the IFP and Cope. To secure a better quality of life for all, government finalised the National Development Plan (NDP): Vision for 2030 in 2011. The plan was a step in the process of charting a new path for South Africa. By 2030, government seeks to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality.

The plan was the product of not just the National Planning Commission but also tens of thousands of ordinary South Africans who shared their dreams, hopes and ideas for the future. The revised NDP 2030 document titled, "Our future – make it work", is a policy blueprint for eliminating poverty and reducing inequality in South Africa by 2030. Implementation of the plan will be broken up into five-year chunks, in line with the electoral cycle, with the 2014 to 2019 Medium-Term Strategic Framework forming the first five-year building block of the plan. The 2019 to 2024 and 2024 to 2029 planning cycles will be used to initiate the remaining activities and will be informed by a performance review of the previous cycle.

On 8 January 2012, Africa's oldest liberation movement, the ANC, celebrated 100 years of existence. This was a historic achievement, not only for the movement, but also for South Africa, the continent and the world. Thousands of ordinary South Africans, political and religious leaders attended the centenary celebrations, which were held in Mangaung, Free State, the birthplace of the ANC. On 30 October 2012, StatsSA released the Census 2011 results. In 2011, the country held its third national population and housing census in post-apartheid South Africa.



The census analysed the country's demographics, population distribution and access to services, average household size, income, migration and mortality. Results showed that the country's population grew to 51.8 million people from 44.8 million in 2001, representing a 15.5% increase. In December 2012, Zuma was re-elected as the President of the ANC during the ruling party's congress in Mangaung. Cyril Ramaphosa was elected as the party's Deputy President. While receiving intensive medical care at home for a lung infection after spending three months in hospital, South Africa's first democratically elected President and anti-apartheid icon, Mandela, died at the age of 95, on 5 December 2013. Mandela led South Africa's transition from white-minority rule in the 1990s, after serving 27 years in prison for his political activities.

He was buried in his hometown of Qunu in the Eastern Cape on 15 December 2013. South Africa celebrated 20 years of freedom in 2014, which was a historic milestone for the country. The Twenty Year Review, and the National Planning Commission's 2011 Diagnostic Report, highlighted that poverty, inequality and unemployment continued to negatively affect the lives of many people. As stated in the NDP, by 2030, South Africa's rural communities must have better opportunities to participate fully in the economic, social and political life of the country.

Government's programme of radical economic transformation is about placing the economy on a qualitatively different path that ensures more rapid, sustainable growth, higher investment, increased employment, reduced inequality and deracialisation of the economy. The NDP sets a growth target of at least 5% a year, and emphasises measures to ensure that the benefits of growth are equitably shared. On 7 May 2014, the country elected a new National Assembly and new provincial legislatures. It was the fifth election held in South Africa under conditions of universal adult suffrage since the end of the apartheid era in 1994, and the first held since the death of Mandela. It was also the first time that South African expatriates were allowed to vote in a South African national election.

The National Assembly election was won by the ANC (62.1%). The official opposition, DA, won 22.2% of the votes, while the newly formed Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) obtained 6.4% of the vote. Eight of the nine provincial legislatures were won by the ANC. The EFF obtained over 10% of the votes in Gauteng, Limpopo and North West, and beat the DA to second place in Limpopo and North West. In the other six provinces won by the ANC, the DA obtained second place. In the Western Cape, the only province not won by the ANC, the DA increased its majority from 51.5% to 59.4%.

The third decade of freedom

In 2015, South Africa celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Charter, which advocated for a non-racial South Africa. The 40th anniversary of the 16 June 1976 Soweto Student Uprising was celebrated in 2016, along with the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996. The 2016 Local Government Elections were held on 3 August. The ANC won 53.9% of the total votes, followed by the official opposition, the DA, with 26.9% and the EFF with 8.2%.

The discovery of Homo naledi, an extinct species of hominin, in September 2015 became worldwide news. In 2017, South Africa commemorated the centenary of the birth of OR Tambo, the late former President of the ANC and one of the key founding fathers of South Africa's liberation and constitutional democracy. The centenary celebrations were held under the theme: "Life and Legacy of OR Tambo". The year 2018 marked the centenary of the birth of South Africa's first democratically elected President Mandela and struggle stalwart Albertina Sisulu respectively. Centenary celebrations for the two icons were marked with a year-long series of awareness, educational, celebratory and legacy commemoration events.

Mandela's centenary celebrations were held under the theme: "Be the legacy" while the Albertina Sisulu commemorations were held under the theme: "A woman of fortitude". On 8 May 2019, the country held its sixth national and provincial elections. On 25 May 2019, Ramaphosa was inaugurated as the fifth democratically elected President of South Africa. In a departure from the tradition of holding the inauguration at the Union Buildings, the event took place at the Loftus Versfeld Stadium in Pretoria. On 1 November 2021, the country held its sixth local government elections. The ANC won the majority of seats in 161 municipal councils, followed by the DA in 13 municipalities and the IFP in 10 municipalities.

A total of 66 municipal councils were hung – meaning that no party gained an outright majority in those councils. From 9 to 18 July 2021, South Africa experienced civil unrest mainly in some parts of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, which left in its wake over 354 people dead. The Judicial Commission

of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector, led by then Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo, handed its full report to The Presidency in 2022. On 2 January 2022, a major fire broke out at the parliamentary complex housing the Parliament of South Africa in Cape Town. A suspect, Mr Zandile Christmas Mafe, was arrested and charged with arson.

In April 2022, government lifted the National State of Disaster but retained "transitionary measures" for the following thirty days, which included the wearing of masks, limitations on gatherings and international travel. In June 2022, the Ministry of Health repealed the transitionary COVID-19 measures, including the wearing of masks, limitations on gatherings and international travel. In July 2022, Justice Mandisa Maya – the first woman to lead the Supreme Court of Appeal as Deputy President and President respectively – became the first woman to be appointed Deputy Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court of South Africa. President Ramaphosa appointed Maya in terms of Section 174(3) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996. On 20 August 2022, King Misuzulu ka Zwelithini was crowned as the new Zulu King at a ceremony held at the Moses Mabhida Stadium in Durban. This was the first Zulu coronation since South Africa became a democracy in 1994. It followed the death of his father, King Goodwill Zwelithini, on 12 March 2021, aged 72.

In November 2022, the Constitutional Court ordered the release of a Polish national, Mr Janusz Walus, on parole. In April 1993, Mr Walus assassinated Mr Chris Hani, the then General Secretary of the South African Communist Party and Chief of Staff of MK, the armed wing of the ANC. Stats SA's Census 2022 results showed that the population of South Africa was 62 million in 2022, increasing from 51,7 million in 2011. This represented an average annual growth rate of 1,8% between the two periods, which is the largest since 1996. Gauteng remained the province with the highest population (15 million), while Northern Cape had the smallest population at 1,3 million.

About 56% of the country's population lives in three provinces namely Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. The Western Cape has moved from being the fifth-largest province in terms of population size in 1996 to being the third-largest in 2022. Census 2022 was the fourth census after the advent of democracy, with the other three being conducted in 1996, 2001 and 2011 respectively. This was the first-ever digital census in South Africa.

On 7 March 2023, Mr Paul Mashatile was sworn in as South Africa's new Deputy President, following the resignation of former Deputy President David Mabuza, who was first sworn in as Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa on 27 February 2018 and again on 30 May 2019 for the 6th Administration.

Mr Mashatile was elected Deputy President of the ANC in December 2022 during the ANC's 55th National Conference held at the Johannesburg Expo Centre in Nasrec. At the 5th South Africa Investment Conference held at the Sandton Convention Centre in Sandton, Johannesburg, on 13 April 2023, the initial target to raise R1.2 trillion in new investment to boost the economy of South Africa was surpassed when over R1.5 trillion was raised through investment commitments.

On 28 October 2023, South Africa won a record fourth Webb Ellis Cup after defeating New Zealand 12–11 in the final of the 2023 Rugby World Cup tournament held at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, France.

On 29 December 2023, South Africa filed a case against Israel's actions in Gaza at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).