



# South Africa

Domestic and Foreign Policy

# South Africa in 1994

The ANC government that took power in April 1994 faced several massive challenges, including:

- Overwhelming economic and educational inequality between white and non-white South Africans
- A stagnant economy, largely isolated from the world, that saw almost no growth throughout the 1980s
- Huge service delivery shortcomings
- Rapid urbanization
- Rising crime

# South Africa in 1994

Inequality astounding:

- In 1994, approximately 65 percent of black South Africans were classified as “poor”, as opposed to 1 percent of whites
- Whites, about 13 percent of the national population, accounted for 60 percent of the wealth
- About 80 percent of whites had a high school education or higher, compared to about a quarter of blacks; product of apartheid-era “Bantu education” policies



# South Africa in 1994

How to address these challenges unclear, and interests diverse. First attempt to discuss these came at the Mont Fleur talks of 1991-92, where a diverse group of academics, political figures, businessmen, and others mapped out scenarios for the country. Two particularly important:

- *Icarus* saw rapid transformation through heavy government spending and populist policies, but no long-term sustainability
- *Flight of the Flamingoes* took a slower approach, but with an eye on long-term sustainability

# Flamingoes Ascendant...

Despite criticisms from the left, ANC bought into the Flamingoes scenario early on, advocating:

- Respect for private property
- Paying debts incurred by apartheid government
- Adherence to broadly neo-liberal economic policies
- A consistent fight against inflation
- Breaking down trade barriers, opening the local market to foreign competition



# ...But With Eye on Equality

At the same time, the government implemented policies and devoted significant resources to combating inequality:

- Huge investments in infrastructure, housing, education, and health care in underserved areas
- Transformation of civil service
- Implementation of Black Economic Empowerment
- Rollout of far-reaching social welfare system
- Implementation/retention of strict labor laws

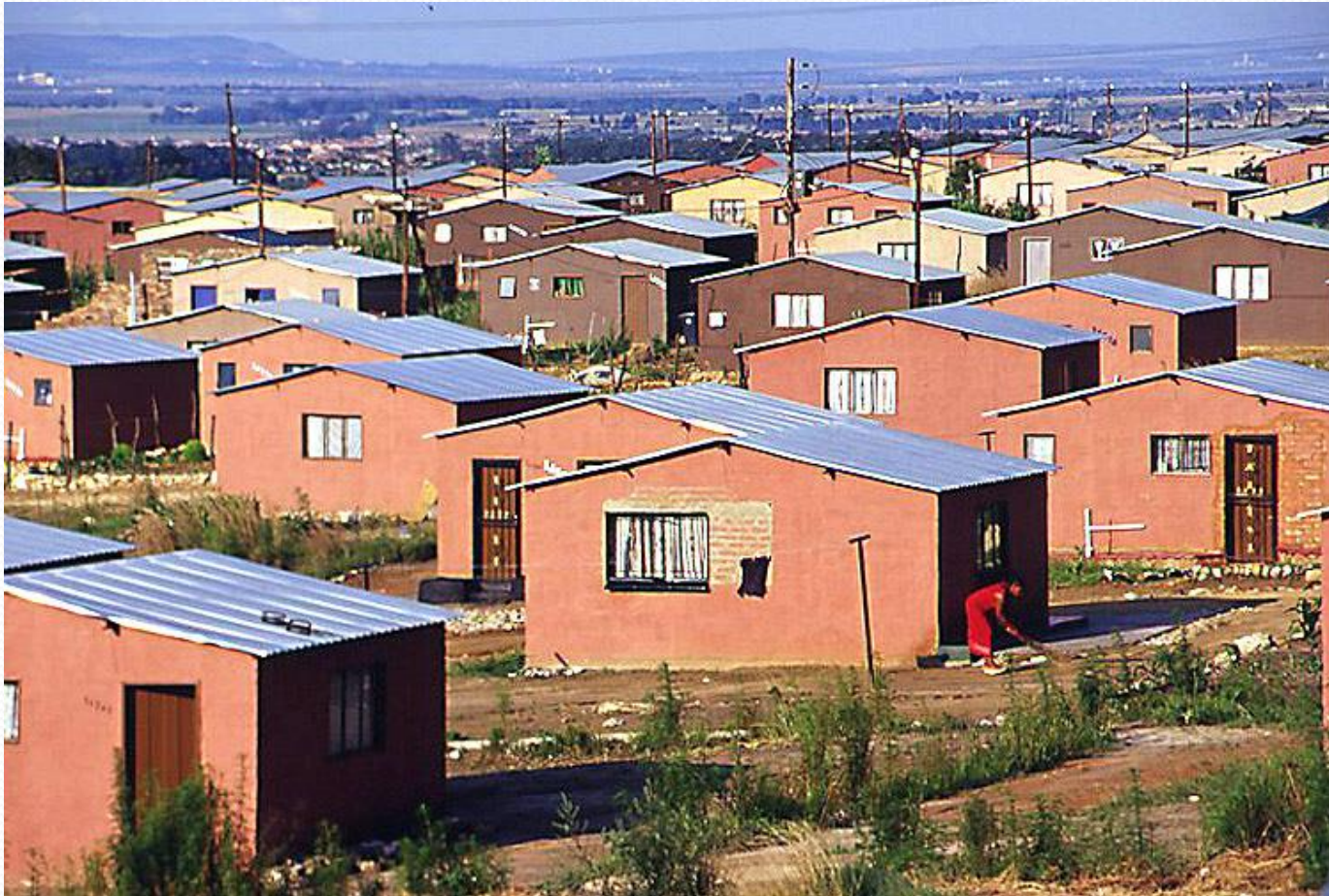
# Successes, Failures, and Questions

Twenty years on, analyzing “success” and “failure” in a South African context is a very difficult proposition:

- In regard to many metrics, South Africa has made clear and significant progress...
- ...but in others—particularly in fighting inequality—progress has been far more spotty
- What constitutes “good enough”? While most South Africans acknowledge progress, they still want more from their government



# Housing: Quantity, Quality





# Housing Successes...

- Held up as one area in which the SAG has made significant progress in past two decades
- According to government, SAG has constructed 3 million houses, providing shelter for 13 million people in both rural, urban, and peri-urban areas
- In process of upgrading housing stock for hundreds of thousands of people in informal settlements (squatter camps)

# ...But Challenges Remain

- Questions of quality of houses being built...
- ...and way they are allocated
- Despite numbers being built, they are still not keeping pace with urbanization
- Contracts questionable—questions raised over favoritism and potential corruption
- Urban planning increasingly of interest—model of putting settlements on urban periphery straining transport networks



# Water, Sanitation, Electricity

- Access to these basic services also considered a huge success story in South Africa
- Currently, 93 percent of South African households have access to clean water; 83 percent with access to electricity
- Both figures have approximately doubled since 1994
- Huge focus on rural areas, where access figures have seen significant jumps
- Bucket system nearly (but not totally) eliminated

# Water, Sanitation, and Electricity

- However, pace of progress slowing; getting harder and harder to show—”what have you done for me lately?”
- Growing issues related to payment for electricity and water, particularly given price hikes on the former
- Meters effective, but not popular





# “Khayelitsha Toilet Saga”

- Controversy in Cape Town township of Khayelitsha in 2010. Cape Town government—controlled by opposition—provided sewage linkages and toilets to informal settlements in Khayelitsha, but with understanding that community would cover them
- City said they could provide 1 covered toilet per 5 households, or 1 per household uncovered
- Of 1300 toilets, only about 50 remained uncovered...
- ...but this sparked protests and criticism by ANC leaders, who blasted the city's decision

# “Khayelitsha Toilet Saga”

- Ultimately, courts pushed city to cover and replace toilets that had been destroyed
- Broadly, this issue epitomizes many of the tough questions and policy choices facing the government (at national, provincial, and local levels:
  - Limited resources
  - Fraying tempers
  - Politicization





# Service Delivery Protests

- Increasingly, South Africans—particularly in townships—are turning to often violent protests to show their displeasure with government policies
- By one count, 3,000 protests between 2009-12; numbers not precise, but a clear uptick over past years
- Motivations not always clear—political undercurrents often related to internal factionalism, particularly within ANC
- Also signify slow political realignment; more support for opposition

# Inequality Remains Persistent

- SAG has rolled out the most comprehensive system of social welfare in Africa (and possibly the developing world), which has significantly reduced extreme poverty through various disbursements—welfare state?
- BEE policies also have created a new, if small, black economic elite, and job preferences have opened doors to black workers across the public and private sectors
- However, real equality remains elusive; most of economy remains in white hands. Black per capita incomes jumped more than 50 percent since 1994, but they remain only about 15 percent of those of whites



# Skills at Root of Inequality

- Many reasons why inequality persists, but skills crisis probably the most important
- South Africa, despite spending about 5 percent of GDP on education (same as US/UK), continues to struggle to turn out non-white secondary (not to mention tertiary) graduates
- Results seem to be slowly improving, although questions remain about sustainability, quality

# Skills Shortage and Unemployment

- Unemployment has proven nearly impossible for the government to tackle; roughly 25 percent of working age population today and in 1994, with even higher numbers among young people
- However, want ads show that jobs aren't the problem—there just are not the right people to fill them
- This has been exacerbated by the roughly 1.6 million South Africans (most, but not all, white) who have left SA since 1994 (although this is slowing/turning around)



# Skills Shortage and Unemployment

- Immigration going part of way to addressing skills shortage, but not enough. Will persist until education quality at home improves
- Meanwhile, how do you deal with a nation of unskilled or semi-skilled workers?
  - Growing industries that will absorb them is one possibility, but inflexible labor markets and high wages make this difficult to do. Manufacturing, for example, not competitive
  - Workers, as at Marikana, pushing for higher wages, but questions over corporate profitability

# Health: Another Mixed Bag

- Pretoria in 1994 could not comprehend the degree to which HIV/AIDS would devastate the country
- 5.7 million people with HIV; up to half of deaths in last decade caused by HIV related illness
- Late response to crisis under Mbeki, although rollout of ARVs and assistance through PEPFAR program have brought the level down
- Still, a persistent problem, notably in changing behaviors—and despite progress, quality gap remains in health sector between black/white, urban/rural
- Not only health problem (TB, “Western” diseases)



# Many More Domestic Challenges

All of the afore-mentioned are likely to remain problematic in next decade, but many more:

- Crime situation improved, but still one of most violent countries in the world
- Agricultural sector in flux; concerns over redistribution
- Global warming also very worrying
- Energy—hydrocarbon/nuclear/green?
- Transportation and urbanization

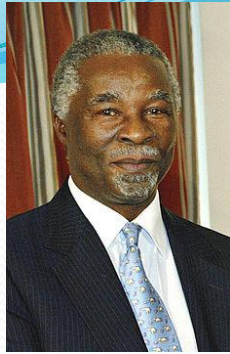
# South Africa' s Foreign Policy

South African foreign policy since 1994 has sought to balance a multitude of competing interests, not always successfully:

- Play a leading—if not domineering—role in Africa and the developing world in general...
- ...while pushing for good governance, democratization, conflict resolution, and human rights
- Push an agenda with the global North that emphasizes more equal political and economic relations with the developing world...
- ...while maintaining close economic ties with the US and European countries with which SA enjoys strong trade ties



# South Africa's Foreign Policy



- Thabo Mbeki—as Deputy President (1994-99) and President (1999-2008) was the dominant actor in SA foreign policy decision-making
- Focused heavily on African conflict resolution, devoting significant time and resources to solving conflicts and political impasses in places like Congo, Burundi, Sudan, Cote d' Ivoire, Madagascar, and elsewhere
- Not always successful, but a pretty solid track record, particularly in building African institutional capacity

# Military Engagement in Africa

- Mbeki's efforts to keep peace emphasized the use of South African military forces for peacekeeping
- By 2008, South Africa had approximately 3,500 members of the SANDF deployed in Africa
- Deployments were helpful, but stretched the military—strapped by years of budgetary neglect—to the breaking point
- Exemplifies outsized ambitions not being matched by resource commitments



# South Africa's Foreign Policy

Efforts further afield more problematic:

- Efforts to mediate in Middle East, Iraq largely ignored, as SA was not viewed as an even-handed player
- Push to reform UNSC and other multilateral institutions ineffective
- Tenures on UNSC (2007-08, 11-12) viewed as unremarkable and at times defensive of Chinese interests
- Commitment to human rights has ebbed and flowed, again with China being at the center of questions (Dalai Lama)

# Zimbabwe and Quiet Diplomacy

- Probably the key issue of the Mbeki administration
- South Africa blasted for not pushing for reforms in neighboring Zimbabwe, which saw a collapse of its economy and flood of migrants into South Africa and elsewhere between 2000-08
- Mbeki criticized for going easy on Mugabe...
- ...although government responded that it was engaging in “quiet diplomacy” to push changes
- Questionable whether SA or anyone could push Mugabe to change tack



# Post-Mbeki Foreign Policy

- Mbeki's departure has taken the emphasis off foreign policy; Zuma not as personally committed, and some perception that Mbeki's external focus was problematic at home
- South African policy not significantly changed, but resources (notably for PKOs) somewhat diminished
- No significant foreign policy "lobby" at home; not an issue that resonates with population as a whole
- What is "national interest"? Not a question with any clear answer

# Conclusion: The Difficult Task of Assessing Policy Efficacy

- Question: Would South Africa be better off today if the government had pursued different policy tracks, both at home and abroad?
- Answer: Hard to say...but I've had a hard time finding leading experts who think this is the case
- South Africa's problems structural and deep-rooted—apartheid legacy will take generations to overcome
- Where it goes from here shifts to a new generation of politicians and thinkers, less influenced by the ANC's legacy of liberation, old conceptions of SA's place in the world, and what's “good enough” for citizens