

## **The Case of South Africa**

If Africa tends to show a different pattern of colonization than the Americas and Asia, within the continent itself South Africa is a particularly special case. Today, South Africa exists as a parliamentary republic with a rather progressive constitution. However, they still have many violent protests each year. The legacy of colonization and subsequent apartheid still remain with the people of South Africa.

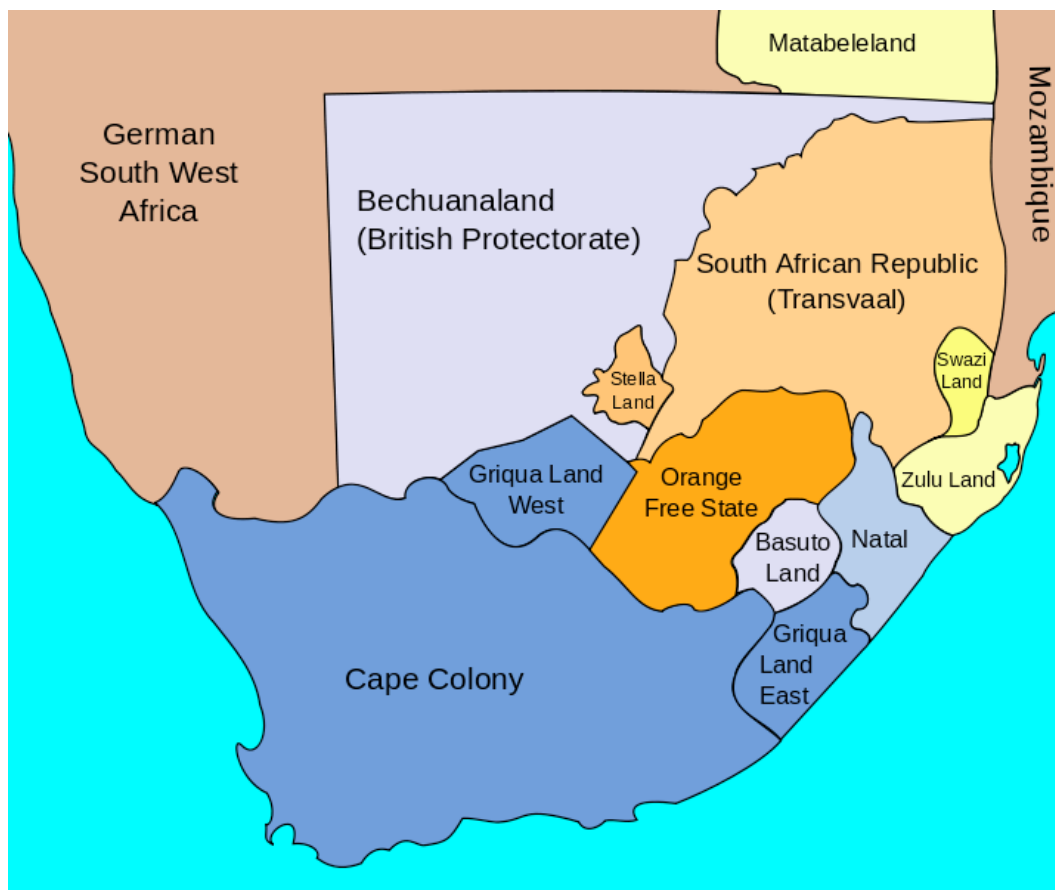
### **Dutch Settlement**

The boundaries of South Africa as we know them today were not created until 1909, but Western civilization entered the area much earlier. The Dutch East India Company arrived at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 (Jones). They initially did not plan to colonize the area, instead setting up a permanent resupply station. This changed gradually, with the arrival of French Protestants some thirty years later helping in the shift toward permanent colonization. The Cape area was home to a number of indigenous groups. These included both hunter-gatherers/pastoralists and agro-herders (Wiley). The tribes had their own firmly established political systems in place prior to the arrival of the colonizers, but these chiefdom-based societies would not be allowed to continue with European settlement. As the Dutch expanded their territory, tribes such as the Khoikhoi and Xhosa saw their lands disappear. Some entered European society, forming a mixed race known as “Coloureds”. Others tried to work as farm laborers, but this was difficult due to the import of slaves from other territories (Wiley).

### **British Colonization**

The British began their occupation of the area in 1795, but did not formally gain sovereignty from the Dutch until 1814 (Jones). In 1833 the British ended slavery in the colony but retained a stringent social hierarchy through Master and Servant Laws. This emancipation,

along with the pressures of British culture, caused many of the Dutch settlers (Afrikaners) to move inland. This move toward the interior continued with the discovery of diamonds and gold in the 1860s and 1880s respectively (Wiley). Industrialization in the Cape Colony put further distance between the African and European populations as mining companies employed African workers for very low wages in hazardous conditions. The mines also began the racist “dompas” or pass laws, which would become one of apartheid’s defining features (Wiley). Under these laws, Africans had to carry identification papers at all times.



*British Possessions in 1885*

### **Creation of the Union**

In 1899, the tension between the British and Afrikaner populations of the colony came to a head with the Anglo-Boer War. The British won the three year conflict and annexed both of the

Dutch Boer republics, Transvaal and the Orange Free State (Morris 130). In 1909, both of these republics as well as the Cape and Natal were pushed together by a British Parliament act to create South Africa. Many laws were created in this period that would set the stage for or continue into the apartheid era. The native population had already lost much of their pastoralist/herding tradition after European arrival, but this was almost entirely restricted with the passage of the Natives' Land Act of 1913. Under this act, 93% of South Africa's land was reserved for use by whites only. Thus, the black majority was largely unable to acquire land. Instead, they lived on reserve land, what would come to be called "Bantustans" during the apartheid. Segregation intensified during the period of urbanization that occurred between the World Wars. The European population felt urban areas were not suited for black inhabitants, and sought to curtail their burgeoning population with The 1923 Natives Act. By 1936, blacks were completely disenfranchised by the Hertzog Bills and racism aimed toward blacks, coloureds, and the Indian population continued to grow (Wiley).

## **Apartheid**

Despite outrageous racism, early leaders of anti-segregation movements were hesitant to use overtly radical or violent means of protest. They tried to use and appeal to British values to demonstrate their equality, but the British continued to hold to their ideological belief in white supremacy. Problems for black Africans intensified when in 1948, rather than an African nationalist party taking power, the Afrikaner Reunited National Party won. They had run on a platform based around the slogan "apartheid", the Afrikaner word for "apartness" (Wiley). It was Afrikaner nationalist movements, not African nationalist movements that would define South Africa for the next several decades. They mobilized politically (forming a number of new

parties), economically (forming their own unions), even religiously (forming the Dutch Reformed Church).



*Blacks were required to carry a pass under dompas laws*

## **Conclusion**

Apartheid officially ended in the 1990s, but its legacy remains. Living conditions for black South Africans have not improved significantly since apartheid ended and violence in these townships is not uncommon (Flak). While South Africa's politics have improved, it still has troubles that can be traced back to eras of colonization and decolonization.

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