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AUBREY IMMELMAN

South Africa's Long March to Freedom

A Personal View

The inauguration of Nelson Mandela as South Africa's first democratically elected president on May 10, 1994, marked the formal end of statutory apartheid in that country. After more than three centuries of white domination, there has finally been a relatively peaceful, orderly transfer of power to the black majority. As stated by outgoing president F. W. de Klerk in his concession speech ending nearly 46 years of National Party (NP) rule: "After so many centuries, we will finally have a government which represents all South Africans; after so many centuries, all South Africans are now free. ... I hold out my hand to Mr. Mandela in friendship and in cooperation." In his victory speech, president-elect Nelson Mandela hailed the election result as "one of the most important moments in the life of our country" and thanked De Klerk for "the four years that we have worked together, quarreled, addressed sensitive problems, and at the end of our heated exchanges, were able to shake hands," concluding that the time had come "to heal old wounds and to build a new South Africa."

For a country relegated to pariah status in the world community for more than three decades, events of the past four years have been nothing short of remarkable: the release of Nelson Mandela in February 1990, the ensuing dismantling of apartheid, successful multiparty negotiations for the transition to majority rule, the "substantially free and fair" nonracial elections in April 1994, and finally the transfer of power to Mandela's government of national unity in May 1994.

This dramatic turn of events in South Africa raises some significant questions. How and why did a relatively small white minority come to subjugate the indigenous population

of an entire subcontinent? Why did the deeply entrenched apartheid system finally collapse? What are the prospects for South Africa's future?

In this article I first offer a brief historical account of white settlement, and ultimately political dominance, in southern Africa. Next, I outline how the whites, and in particular Afrikaner-dominated Nationalist governments after 1948, achieved almost total subjugation of South Africa's black majority through oppressive legislation and the calculated use of force. In this regard I will enumerate some of the draconian laws enacted in the post-1948 apartheid state — laws that served as an impetus for black nationalism, anger, resistance, protest and, after 1960, the armed struggle to achieve liberation from white oppression. Against this background, I will consequently examine salient factors accounting for South Africa's relatively peaceful transition from apartheid state to nonracial democracy, focusing on situational factors as well as the personal characteristics of South Africa's three most recent presidents — P. W. Botha, F. W. de Klerk, and Nelson Mandela.

The Dutch Period (1652–1795)

The history of white domination in South Africa starts with the arrival of the predominantly Dutch and Low German ancestors of the present-day Afrikaners at the Cape of Good Hope. Ironically, it was neither their mission nor their intent to colonize southern Africa. On April 6, 1652, a contingent of approximately 90 men, women, and children under the command of Jan van Riebeeck arrived at the Cape aboard five ships for the sole purpose of establishing a fortified outpost to supply fresh provisions to Dutch East India Company vessels on the sea route to the Dutch commercial empire in the East Indies.¹ Nonetheless, the site selected by Van Riebeeck, near the southern tip of Africa, was eventually to grow into the city of Cape Town, legislative capital of the 20th-century apartheid state of South Africa.

The arriving Europeans encountered an indigenous population consisting of hunter-gatherers and semi-nomadic pastoral people, respectively the San (Bushmen) and

Khoikhoi (Hottentots).² A barter trade with the Khoikhoi soon developed, yet chronic labor shortages presented Van Riebeeck with persistent problems in meeting production goals. The Company consequently turned to slave labor. The import of slaves, mainly from India, eastern Asia, Madagascar, and the east African coast continued throughout the period of Dutch East India Company rule of the Cape.³ Cultural diversity was thus an integral aspect of social life in southern Africa from the very outset of white settlement. Slave labor did not, however, alleviate all of Van Riebeeck's headaches with regard to servicing visiting ships and providing support and maintenance services for the garrison. Private enterprise seemed to offer a viable solution. Thus, in 1657 Van Riebeeck released nine of his men from Dutch East India Company service, granted them "free burgher" status, and assigned them grazing land for their cattle — unfortunately on Khoikhoi land. Inevitably, this led to numerous skirmishes between whites and Khoikhoi. Van Riebeeck intervened in the conflict by informing the Khoikhoi that they had lost part of their land as a consequence of war and in 1660 planted a hedge of bitter almonds across part of the Cape Peninsula to separate the Khoikhoi from the settlers. This, in effect, was the first "apartheid measure" in South Africa.⁴ By the time Van Riebeeck returned to Batavia at the end of his tenure as Company commander, in 1662, the white community at the Cape numbered some 260,⁵ many of them having attained free burgher status. Their numbers were swelled by continuing settlement, natural increase, and the arrival, between 1688 and 1700, of about 225 French Huguenots (Protestant refugees).⁶

Many of the free burghers eventually migrated into the interior to escape Dutch East India Company officialdom and taxes. These so-called *trekboers*, rugged and independent minded⁷ if not uncouth and obstinate, became the cultural forebears of Afrikaner-nationalist ideology. Their first significant contact with Bantu people — the Xhosa — occurred in the 1770s as they penetrated eastward into the interior of southern Africa.⁸ Once again, territorial conflicts were inevitable, with the first of many frontier wars breaking out in 1779. By this time the burgeoning white population in the Cape was approaching 20,000. By the end of the 18th century, two enduring facts of life in southern Africa had thus been firmly established: the permanence of white settlement and territorial conflict between black and white.

Against this background, the white settlers were developing a distinct political culture. Strongly influenced by the ideas of Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, and the success of the American Revolution, educated, literate elements among the trekboers began to forge a fledgling Afrikaner nationalism, referring to themselves as Patriots. In 1795 Patriots in two outlying districts gave concrete expression to their political ideology by unilaterally declaring themselves free republics, independent of Dutch East India Company political control.⁹ But these developments in the Cape were about to be overtaken by the course of European history.

The British Period (1806–1910)

With the outbreak of the Napoleonic wars in Europe following the French Revolution of 1789, a British expeditionary force seized the Cape of Good Hope in 1795. The Cape briefly returned to Dutch control in 1803, but at the European Convention following the wars the Cape was formally ceded to Britain, in 1806.¹⁰ The British takeover set the stage for further European settlement; in 1820 some 4,000 British settlers arrived aboard 21 ships in Algoa Bay¹¹ (later to become the city of Port Elizabeth), on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony.

The Great Trek and the Boer Republics (1834–1902)

As Britain tightened its political, social, and economic control over the Cape Colony, descendants of the Dutch settlers sought to escape British influence by venturing into the interior of southern Africa.¹² This migration of approximately 15,000 *Voortrekkers* between 1834 and 1840,¹³ known as the Great Trek, resulted in the subjugation of the indigenous black population in the interior,¹⁴ and ultimately the establishment of two Boer republics — the South African Republic (Transvaal) in 1852 and the Orange Free State (Transorangia) in 1854, both recognized by Britain.¹⁵ The Great Trek is of great historical significance: it established Afrikaner communities over vast parts of the southern African interior, established a model for independent white republics dependent on black labor, and

served as the major impetus for the development of Afrikaner nationalism; it also led to isolation, a “*laager mentality*,” and intellectual and cultural impoverishment¹⁶ — traits still evident today among white right-wing extremists.

The Anglo–Boer War (1899–1902)

The course of South African history was dramatically altered by the discovery of gold in the South African Republic, in 1886, near what is today Johannesburg, South Africa’s largest city and financial center. By 1898 the South African Republic was already producing more than a quarter of the world’s gold,¹⁷ challenging British supremacy in the region and culminating in the bitter Anglo–Boer conflict of 1899–1902. Historical interpretations of the causes of the Anglo–Boer War abound.¹⁸ Indisputable, however, is the tragic toll in human lives — at least 34,000 Boers, 22,000 British, and 15,000 blacks perished in the war.¹⁹ Of the Boer dead, 26,000 were women and children who died in British concentration camps — an event that played a considerable role in molding the emerging Afrikaner consciousness. One outcome of the war was the unification of the two former Boer republics and the two southern African British colonies (Cape and Natal) as the Union of South Africa in 1910.²⁰

From Unified Nation to Apartheid State (1910–1948)

In the newly established Union of South Africa, the political aspirations of blacks and mixed-race “coloureds” were dashed by their almost complete exclusion from the political process, along with the total exclusion of Indians.²¹ Unification resulted not only in the birth of a nation; it was the dawn of the liberation struggle. The African National Congress was founded in 1912 as the African Native National Congress while Gandhi actively pursued his passive resistance campaign (*Satyagraha*) for the liberation of Indians in South Africa.²² Half a century would pass, however, before the liberation movements would exert a significant influence on South African politics. It would be preceded, if not indirectly caused, by a major turning point in the history of South Africa: the narrow election victory²³ in 1948 of the pro-apartheid National Party over General Jan Smuts’s somewhat more

moderate United Party. In order fully to appreciate this course of events, it is necessary to examine one more building block in the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism: the “poor white” predicament.

The Anglo–Boer War had displaced many Afrikaners in the former Boer republics, whose economic base prior to the war had been agrarian. Many of these sought a livelihood in the English controlled gold mining and manufacturing industries in the rapidly growing Witwatersrand region extending east and west of Johannesburg. By the 1920s, large numbers of Afrikaners ill equipped for urban life were eking out a poverty-stricken existence in the cities. Their plight was exacerbated by the Great Depression following the Wall Street crash of October 1929 and the drought of 1932, the worst in living memory. These conditions created a receptive environment for the revival of Afrikaner nationalism. The organization at the vanguard of this movement was the National Party (founded in 1914–1915 by Afrikaner nationalists under the leadership of former Boer general, J. B. M. Hertzog), assisted in its aims by the Dutch Reformed Church and a number of cultural organizations working for the promotion of Afrikaner unity and economic empowerment.²⁴

The Apartheid State (1948–1994)

When the National Party (NP) came to power under D. F. Malan in 1948 it immediately embarked on a vigorous program of statutory apartheid to promote Afrikaner hegemony in South Africa. Its apartheid policies, once euphemistically referred to as “separate development,” regulated almost every facet of life in South Africa — social, economic, and political.²⁵ This is graphically illustrated by an examination of some of the South Africa’s most significant apartheid laws.

The *Population Registration Act* (1950) served as the foundation for subsequent apartheid legislation by officially classifying all South Africans according to race. It established a national register in which every individual was classified, set out guidelines

for determining a person's race, and established the Race Classification Board to take the final decision in "dubious cases."²⁶

Social Apartheid

The *Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act* (1949), augmented by the *Immorality Amendment Act* (1950), prohibited marriage and extramarital sexual intercourse of whites with blacks, "Asiatics," or coloureds (despite the fact that, since 1946 there had been only 75 "mixed" marriages, compared with 28,000 "white" marriages).²⁷

The *Reservation of Separate Amenities Act* (1953), one of the most contentious apartheid laws, enforced segregation of hotels, restaurants, cinemas, parks, beaches, toilets, post offices and various other public buildings, public transportation (including elevators), and so on,²⁸ giving rise to the term "petty apartheid." Its segregation measures were gradually dismantled from the mid-1970s onwards by local authorities, accompanied by an increasing lack of will on the part of the government to enforce those laws — in part because they came to be seen as a public relations fiasco with no useful role in maintaining white political supremacy.

Residential Apartheid

The *Native Land Act* (1913), a significant piece of pre-1948 segregationist legislation, demarcated part of South Africa as black territory, prohibiting the sale of land in the remaining (white) area to blacks. The *Native Trust and Land Act* (1936) subsequently increased land allotted to blacks to 13 percent of the total land area of South Africa and in a further effort to ensure white political and territorial domination, exerted increasing pressure on black labor tenants, rent tenants, and sharecroppers on white farms to become wage laborers.²⁹

The *Group Areas Act* (1950) augmented various existing laws providing for racially segregated areas by proclaiming specific areas as belonging to particular racial groups and

prohibiting other racial groups from living, trading, or owning land in those areas.³⁰ This law gave rise to numerous forced removals, in most cases the removal of blacks from areas proclaimed white. The *Natives Resettlement Act* (1954) supplemented the Group Areas Act by eliminating black townships in group areas proclaimed white and removed the home ownership rights of blacks. Jointly, these laws ultimately resulted in the forced relocation of over three million blacks.³¹

The *Natives (Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents) Act* (1952), with its deceptive Orwellian title, imposed the hated pass book system. Pass books, which regulated black residence and movement outside the tribal reserves, had to be carried by blacks at all times and produced on demand. During 1983 alone there were 262,904 arrests for pass book offenses, with some cases taking as little as 30 seconds to prosecute in the special courts established for this purpose.³²

Security Legislation

The South African government had at its disposal an all-embracing web of security legislation. The *Suppression of Communism Act* (1950) outlawed the Communist Party and made provision for extreme penalties of any action that could be remotely construed as communist inspired.³³ Until the passage of the Terrorism Act 17 years later it was the law of choice for suppressing anti-government activities; in effect the only requirement for successful prosecution was to show that a political act was consistent with the supposed objective of international communism to subvert white rule in South Africa.

The *Public Safety Act* (1953) made provision for the proclamation of a state of emergency,³⁴ allowing for the temporary suspension of due process of law, in effect enabling the government to rule by decree.

The *Unlawful Organizations Act* (1960) outlawed various political organizations, including the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress.³⁵

The *General Law Amendment Act* (1964) introduced the infamous “90-day clause” under which the police were granted the power to arrest without warrant anyone suspected of sabotage and to detain him or her for 90 days for interrogation (and sometimes torture) without arraignment.³⁶ The *Criminal Procedure Amendment Act* (1965) extended the 90-day clause in the General Law Amendment Act to 180 days.³⁷ The *Terrorism Act* (1967), which superseded the General Law Amendment Act and the Criminal Procedure Amendment Act, stipulated that a suspected “terrorist” could be detained indefinitely without trial and removed the obligation of the State divulge information about detainees in custody.³⁸

The *Internal Security Act* (1982) provided for the arrest and detention without trial of suspected political agitators; it was used primarily to prohibit anti-government activities which would be regarded as part of the normal democratic process in most Western societies.³⁹

Apartheid Legislation in Retrospect

There is a discernible trend in the passage of apartheid legislation. All the laws necessary for a segregated society were in place by 1954, within the first six years of National Party rule — for example, the Population Registration, Prohibition of Mixed Marriages, and Group Areas acts. The next wave of legislation, during the 1960s, consisted of security laws designed not so much to further the aims of apartheid as to suppress opposition to apartheid policies — for example, the Unlawful Organizations, General Law Amendment, and Terrorism acts. No significant apartheid laws were passed between 1967 and 1982. The first half of this 15-year period, until the Soweto uprising of 1976, was one of relative quiescence as the liberation movement recovered from the large-scale government repression of 1960s, with most of its leaders either in prison (e.g., Nelson Mandela) or in exile (e.g., Oliver Tambo). The mid-1970s saw the emergence of a new generation of leaders spearheading the “Young Comrades” of the seventies and eighties. Apartheid’s last stand was the Internal Security Act of 1982. By 1985 and 1986 the slow

dismantling of apartheid began with the repeal of the marriage and sex laws, pass laws, and most of the influx control laws.

In retrospect, the major outcome of South Africa's apartheid and security laws was large-scale misery and the politicization and mobilization of South Africa's black population. In this regard, I might note that, during my compulsory military service in the late 1970s, I frequently heard fellow (white) conscripts — even those who were pro-government — remark, “If I were black, I'd be a terrorist, too.” Who were these so-called terrorists? As I will show in the next section, they were essentially products of National Party policy and practice, born of apartheid.

The Liberation Struggle (1960–Present)

The three decades of the liberation struggle preceding the advent of majority rule in South Africa are symbolized by three place names etched in the collective consciousness of the nation: Sharpeville, Robben Island, and Soweto.

Act I: Sharpeville to Robben Island

One of the most significant events in the history of the liberation struggle was the Sharpeville massacre. On March 21, 1960, a group of blacks demonstrating against pass laws marched on and surrounded the police station of this black township, about 50 miles southwest of Johannesburg. The police opened fire, leaving 69 dead and 180 wounded.⁴⁰ Apart from the effect of this tragedy on black attitudes, Sharpeville played a special part in the demise of apartheid in that it became an enduring rallying point for both domestic and international condemnation of apartheid. It also acquired a symbolic significance — something akin to “Remember the Alamo.”

The hidden tragedy of Sharpeville is that, rather than serving as a wake-up call for the architects of apartheid, it only spurred them on to tighten their oppressive rule. A week after Sharpeville, on April 8, 1960, Parliament passed the Unlawful Organizations Act

banning the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), declared a state of emergency, prohibited all public meetings, subjected offenders to detention without trial, and made preparations to mobilize the army.⁴¹ The ANC and PAC went underground and established military wings for the purpose of conducting an armed struggle against apartheid.⁴² In the face of increasing opposition to its race policies, the National Party government terminated South Africa's membership of the British Commonwealth on March 15, 1961 and established the Republic of South Africa on May 31, 1961.⁴³ South Africa was now a full-fledged apartheid state constitutionally unaccountable to any foreign power.

In June 1961, the ANC and the banned South African Communist Party (SACP), under the leadership of Bram Fischer, a white lawyer, decided to initiate a campaign of violence on December 16, the Day of the Covenant, when Afrikaners commemorate their victory over the Zulus at the 1836 Battle of Blood River. As commander of the ANC's military wing, *Umkonto we Sizwe*, acts of sabotage carried out during the campaign were conducted under the direction of Nelson Mandela.⁴⁴ Ironically, the ANC president general, Chief Albert Luthuli, accepted the Nobel Peace Prize just one week prior to the first wave of bombings.⁴⁵ A few months later, on August 5, 1962, 17 months after going underground, Mandela was arrested following a tip-off by police informants.⁴⁶ He was initially sentenced to a 5-year term, but then tried on additional charges in *The State v. Mandela and Nine Others* in the famous Rivonia trial, which lasted from October 1963 until June 1964.⁴⁷ Mandela, along with seven others was found guilty of sabotage and sentenced to life in prison. He would ultimately serve 27 years.

Act II: Soweto

With the Struggle's leadership either in prison, in exile, or forced underground by the government's vigorous enforcement of its harsh security legislation, the System seemed to have triumphed. The first significant cracks in the wall of apartheid appeared with the Soweto uprising of June 16, 1976, in which several hundred blacks were killed by security

forces.⁴⁸ The ensuing government clampdown effectively “painted over” these cracks and crippled resistance for nearly a decade, until 1984.

Act III: Sustained Mass Action and the State of Emergency

In 1984 widespread, organized mass action against the government began to erupt. On July 20, 1985, President P. W. Botha, in a nationwide radio and television address, proclaimed a state of emergency, the first since the Sharpeville incident of 1960. Thousands of people were rounded up and detained without trial⁴⁹ to contain the mass action that appeared to be set on a course of succeeding in its aim of making South Africa ungovernable. The state of emergency remained in effect for 5 years, until lifted in 1990 by Botha’s successor, F. W. de Klerk, who was sworn in as president on September 20, 1989.

Act IV: From Armed Struggle to the “Mark of Freedom”

Botha’s unresponsiveness to the need for fundamental change ultimately culminated in his ouster in 1989, De Klerk’s assumption of the presidency, the dismantling of apartheid, and nonracial, democratic elections in South Africa. In his opening address to Parliament on February 2, 1990,⁵⁰ De Klerk announced the lifting of the state of emergency, the lifting of the ban on the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress, and the South African Communist Party, the suspension of the death penalty, the repeal of the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, the abolition of political bannings, the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, the removal of curbs on political organizations and trade unions, and the abolition of media restrictions, thus charting a course for South Africa’s path to nonracial democracy. Mandela triumphantly walked out of prison a week later on February 11, 1990, setting the stage for a negotiated settlement. On April 26–29, 1994, the ballot finally triumphed over the bullet as South Africans of all races went to the polls. The vast majority of voters were black South Africans able, for the first time, to commit the simple, nonviolent act of making their “mark of freedom” on a ballot. On May 10 Nelson Mandela became South Africa’s first

democratically elected president and De Klerk one of two deputy presidents. Apartheid had finally succumbed to the liberation struggle.

Epilogue: The Cost of Freedom

The four years between Mandela's release and his assumption of the presidency were not easy ones for South Africa. The dismantling of apartheid and negotiations for the reconstruction of South Africa took place against the backdrop of sustained violence; it is estimated that more than 10,000 people died in politically motivated acts of violence during this period. In addition, there was the looming specter of civil war as powerful political factions such as Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Zulu nationalist movement — the Inkatha Freedom Party — and former chief of the South African Defense Force, General Constand Viljoen's ultra-conservative Freedom Front initially refused to participate in the election. The Conservative Party, the official opposition in South Africa's last white parliament, maintained its boycott to the bitter end.

Factors Accounting for Political Change in South Africa: The Stage

What caused apartheid to crumble? As was the case with the tumbling of the Berlin Wall, there is a multitude of reasons. The major situational factors appear to be the following: the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the successful transition to majority rule in Namibia, international sanctions against South Africa (including economic and cultural isolation), the liberation struggle, white opposition to apartheid, the failure of apartheid, moderation of the leadership in the ruling National Party, and the breakdown of National Party hegemony.

Collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

The collapse of communist governments in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union — for many years major sponsors of the African National Congress (ANC) — provided a strong incentive for the ANC to forgo the armed struggle in favor of seeking a

negotiated settlement with the National Party government. As stated by South African newspaper editor and academic, Willem de Klerk,⁵¹ it eroded the financial and moral support base of the ANC. From the perspective of the South African government, developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union not only reduced the perceived threat of communism but also presented them with a contemporary model of the power of internal resistance to unpopular regimes — a scenario they did not savor for South Africa.⁵²

The Successful Transition to Majority Rule in Namibia

Namibia provided a model of a different kind. Annexed in 1946 but governed by South Africa as a *de facto* fifth province since 1920 when granted a League of Nations mandate to administer the territory, Namibia finally became independent on March 21, 1990. Its transition to majority rule under the leadership of Sam Nujoma's South-West African People's Organization (perceived by the NP as the Namibian equivalent of the ANC) played a considerable role in allaying the fears of the South African government with regard to power sharing.⁵³

International Sanctions Against South Africa

Coinciding with changes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, punitive economic sanctions imposed by the international community were slowly sapping the South African economy, exerting pressure on the government to negotiate with, rather than fight, the ANC. The NP could no longer tolerate the drain on the country's economic and human resources imposed by the escalating war of attrition.

The Liberation Struggle

Against the background of increasing economic and cultural isolation, the liberation struggle in South Africa drastically intensified during the mid-1980s. Internal resistance to apartheid took many forms, including consumer boycotts of white-owned businesses, rent boycotts in the black townships, nationwide strikes and stayaways, and

other forms of mass action aimed at making the country ungovernable. In the end, the National Party could no longer effectively govern the country in defiance of the will of the black majority. Internal resistance to apartheid arguably had a much greater impact than the armed struggle in toppling the apartheid system, though internal and external manifestations of the struggle should not be treated as unrelated phenomena.

Sustained Pressure by the Liberal White Opposition

Though constituting a tiny minority in Parliament, the liberal opposition played an influential role in South African politics. A significant legacy of the Anglo–Boer War (1899–1902) was the perpetuation of the ethnic cleavage between Afrikaans- and English-speaking whites. Nearly all Afrikaners were members of the Dutch Reformed Church (which until the early 1980s sought Biblical justification for apartheid) and voted for the National Party. The English were less monolithic as a political force, but generally belonged to churches that denounced apartheid (e.g., the Anglican Church) and until the 1970s tended to vote for the relatively moderate United Party or the liberal Progressive Party. Gradually, however, their mutual fear of black domination began to crosscut the Afrikaner–English cleavage among whites, so that by the 1980s the majority of English-speaking South Africans supported the National Party. Those who voted Progressive were cynically characterized by their detractors as “voting Prog and thanking God for the Nats.” Though it may be true that some Progressive votes were motivated more by guilt of conscience than conviction, the Progressive Federal Party served an important “watchdog” function and constituted the official opposition in Parliament from 1977 until 1987 (when it was displaced from this role by the emergent right-wing Conservative Party). In 1989 it merged with the Independent Party and the National Democratic Movement, founded by politically moderate NP defectors, to form the Democratic Party. With its broadened base, the party’s support among white voters during the last year of the Botha regime was estimated at close to 25 percent.⁵⁴

The Failure of Apartheid

A frequently ignored factor in the demise of apartheid is that its very fabric primed it for self-destruction in a modern world.⁵⁵ Just as the feudal system in Europe succumbed to the modern nation state, apartheid, as conceptualized by its architects in the 1950s and 1960s, became a political dinosaur. The apartheid system simply could not be sustained in a modern, industrialized economy.

Moderation of the National Party Leadership

By the 1970s the writing was already on the wall for apartheid, as the National Party haltingly started liberalizing its policies. The reform process gained momentum with P. W. Botha's assumption of power in 1978, though it was significantly reversed with his declaration of a state of emergency in July 1985, extended to an unprecedented nationwide state of emergency on June 12, 1986⁵⁶ — four days prior to the 10th anniversary of the Soweto uprising of 1976. Nonetheless, the National Party of P. W. Botha was no longer the same National Party that ruled in the heyday of apartheid in the 1950s and 1960s; the breakaway of right-wingers in 1969 to form the *Herstigste Nasionale Party* was followed in 1982 by a much more significant split when Andries Treurnicht led a breakaway of far-right *verkramptes* to form the Conservative Party.⁵⁷ One implication of this realignment is that the ideological center in the National Party shifted to the left, creating new opportunities for the emergence of moderate leadership.

The Breakdown of National Party Hegemony

Relentless international sanctions and isolation, the breakdown of apartheid policies, internal opposition, and the weakening of the old National Party with defections to the right and left all contributed to a breakdown of four decades of National Party hegemony. The climate was ripe for new initiatives. By the late 1980s the stage was set; what remained was for someone with the right personal qualities for an event-making role

to step into the act. F. W. de Klerk was to be this man, with Nelson Mandela waiting in the wings.

Factors Accounting for Political Change in South Africa: The Players

Despite all of the contextual factors enumerated in the preceding section, a decade ago political analysts were confidently predicting that the Nationalist government in South Africa had the resources to remain in control for the foreseeable future, albeit under a “state of siege.”⁵⁸ How then does one account for its virtual capitulation in the early 1990s? In my judgment there is some justification for attributing South Africa’s sudden change of direction to the transfer of political leadership in 1989 from P. W. Botha to F. W. de Klerk. The change in leadership hastened Nelson Mandela’s release from prison, and this in turn triggered a fresh political context.

Personality Profiles of Botha, De Klerk, and Mandela

Over the past seven years I have conducted empirical investigations⁵⁹ of the political personalities of P. W. Botha, F. W. de Klerk, and Nelson Mandela. De Klerk, in particular, is an enigma because his initiatives militated against the laws of politics, which are governed by the maintenance, enforcement, and extension of power. Instead, he played the role of dismantler of white supremacy.⁶⁰ The results of my assessments of Botha, De Klerk, and Mandela are briefly summarized below.

P. W. Botha emerged from the assessment as primarily an aggressive personality with distinct suspicious (though not quite paranoid) features and secondary egotistic, negativistic, and conventional features in conjunction with a strong self-orientation and a lack of sensitivity to others.

F. W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela were found to have quite similar personality profiles. The primary personality trait for both men turned out to be conventionalism, with a sound work ethic and commitment to traditional values. The two leaders also shared a

strong sense of self-confidence as a secondary feature in their personality profiles. The major personality difference between the two was that another secondary feature was cooperativeness with respect to De Klerk, versus forcefulness for Mandela (though De Klerk nonetheless displayed considerable forcefulness and Mandela a fair degree of cooperativeness).

The Personality Profiles in Context

What light do these personality profiles of South Africa's three most recent presidents shed on the impact of the personal characteristics of these leaders on the destiny of their country? I turn first to a consideration of De Klerk, the man who was instrumental in initiating the negotiation process. As stated above, De Klerk's personality profile is characterized by a high degree of conventionalism. According to psychodiagnostician and personality theorist Theodore Millon, individuals with this quality

are notably respectful of tradition and authority, and act in a responsible, proper, and conscientious way. They do their best to uphold conventional rules and standards, following given regulations closely.⁶¹

This description is consistent with De Klerk's history as a middle-of-the-road Afrikaner nationalist. It fails, however, to shed any light on his change of direction upon assuming the presidency in 1989; after all, his predecessor, P. W. Botha, also demonstrated conventionalism. It is necessary, therefore, to focus on pertinent differences between the personalities of De Klerk and Botha.

The primary difference between these two leaders is Botha's self-orientation versus De Klerk's other-orientation. Botha's aggressive, suspicious, and negativistic features are essentially absent in the case of De Klerk, who — unlike Botha — has strong cooperative features and sensitivity to others. Although this analysis does not explain *why* De Klerk initiated political change in South Africa, it does serve to show why Botha could not; in

short, Botha was constrained by aggressive and suspicious personality features, as well as a disdain for the needs of others and a lack of sensitivity to the social environment.

The critical ingredient for successful reform in South Africa was the leader's ability to cooperate rather than compete with political rivals. De Klerk, with his cooperative nature, possessed exactly this quality. This personality pattern is described as follows:

Disinclined to upset others, they [cooperative personalities] are willing to adapt their preferences to be compatible with those of others. Trusting others to be kind and thoughtful, they are also willing to reconcile differences and to achieve peaceable solutions, as well as to be considerate and to concede when necessary. Cordiality and compromise characterize their interpersonal relationships.⁶²

It appears to be the combination of De Klerk's cooperative characteristics with his deep-rooted conventionalism (which allowed him to retain the trust of his constituency) that served as the key to South Africa's transformation. But De Klerk's personal disposition would have been of little consequence had it not been for compatible qualities on the part of Mandela, in whose cooperation ultimately lay the solution.

Mandela, like De Klerk, emerged from the assessment as a predominantly conventional personality, the characteristics of which have already been discussed. Characterizing Mandela as conventional is a contradiction in terms only from the perspective of the "system" politics of the old order; from the perspective of "struggle" politics,⁶³ Mandela personified the liberation establishment and its cause. Moreover, Mandela never represented the radical wing of the struggle, and has a long track record as an advocate of moderation and restraint, as reflected in the following statement from the dock on April 20, 1964, during the Rivonia trial:

I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal

which I hope to live for, and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.⁶⁴

This conciliatory quality favored Mandela for his role in South Africa's transition.

The transition from white domination to majority rule moved much faster than expected. At least in part, the rapid unfolding of events in South Africa can be accounted for by Mandela's confident assertiveness — a quality shared with De Klerk. This personality pattern is described as follows:

Competitive, ambitious, and self-assured, they naturally assume positions of leadership, act in a decisive and unwavering manner, and expect others to recognize their special qualities and cater to them. Beyond being self-confident, those with an Asserting profile often are ... persuasive, having sufficient charm to win others over to their own causes and purposes.⁶⁵

Finally, his other secondary personality feature, forcefulness, offers some clues concerning the type of leader President Mandela is likely to be. Individuals with this characteristic

enjoy the power to direct ... others, and to evoke obedience and respect from them. They tend to be tough and unsentimental. ... Although many sublimate their power-oriented tendencies ... these inclinations become evident in occasional intransigence, stubbornness, and coercive behaviors. ... [C]ontrolling types typically make effective leaders, being talented in supervising and persuading others to work for the achievement of common goals.⁶⁶

There is thus reason to believe that Mandela will be realistically hardheaded in managing the reconstruction of South Africa with the limited resources at his disposal. This suggests the need for lowered expectations all around. Those who reaped the benefits of apartheid will have to relinquish their sense of entitlement, while those who have borne its burden

will discover that the dismantling of apartheid is not tantamount to the creation of a state of Utopia.

To summarize, it appears that change in South Africa was driven by situational factors but given substance by the personal qualities of its leaders. Change was imminent; the crisis engendered by trying to stem the tide of black anger propelled into the leadership role individuals with the ability to manage that change. Thus, the change in its leadership in 1989 was the precipitating factor in the abrupt change of direction in National Party policy in 1990. When F. W. de Klerk and his allies effectively deposed P. W. Botha — who had held public office continuously since his election to Parliament in 1948 — there was a “changing of the guard.” Botha, sometimes called the “Great Crocodile,” represented the old order of Nationalist leaders that entered politics during the zenith of Afrikaner nationalism when the party’s primary objective was to break the economic, cultural, and political domination of Afrikaans-speaking South Africans by the English, and to establish an Afrikaner–nationalist state based on racial segregation and white supremacy. In essence, this fostered an inward-looking, self-serving, defensive mentality obsessed with exposing and destroying anything construed as plotting its destruction. Under the iron-fisted rule of the militaristic Botha and his like-minded predecessors the Nationalists were not given to compromise or negotiation.

The mild-mannered De Klerk, in contrast, represented the new breed of Afrikaner whose political socialization unfolded during an era of unrivaled Afrikaner hegemony and sufficient self-confidence to serve as a basis for a more broadly based South Africanism less fettered by exclusionism and the need for cultural domination. In psychological terms, Botha’s aggressiveness, dogmatism, and arrogance was superseded by De Klerk’s cooperativeness, pragmatism, flexibility, and sensitivity, complemented by compatible characteristics on the part of Mandela, with whom De Klerk chose to negotiate the future of South Africa.

Had there been any substance to the prevailing white right-wing view that blacks constitute a threat in South Africa — that the liberation struggle formed part of a

communist-inspired “total onslaught” against civilized values — F. W. de Klerk would have been, from an Afrikaner–nationalist perspective, the worst possible leader for South Africa. As it happens, however, the needs of the average black South African are no different from those of the average white; among these, quite literally, are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In retrospect, therefore, it is fortunate that the script for South Africa’s transition to nonracial democracy could be co-authored by a black moderate of unassailable⁶⁷ stature, and a rather conventional white conservative able to retain the trust of a significant part of the fearful white constituency, who had the insight to recognize the need for change, a conciliatory personal style, and the confident persistence to stay the course.

Prospects for Peace and Prosperity

As universally expected, Nelson Mandela’s African National Congress easily won the April 1994 election, with 62.6 percent of the vote. The runner-up was F. W. de Klerk’s National Party, with 20.4 percent. Other parties represented in the proportionally constituted National Assembly are Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi’s Inkatha Freedom Party, which gained 10.5 percent of the vote, General Constand Viljoen’s right-wing Freedom Front with 2.2 percent, the Democratic Party (founded as the Progressive Party in 1959 with an agenda of liberal opposition to the Nationalist government) with 1.7 percent, the militant Pan Africanist Congress of Azania with 1.2 percent, and the African Christian Democratic Party, with 0.5 percent. At the regional level, the ANC took control of seven of the nine provincial legislatures, the exception being the Western Cape, which was won by the National Party with 53.2 percent of the vote and KwaZulu–Natal, in which the Inkatha Freedom Party gained a majority of 50.3 percent.

These results are of considerable significance to the question of South Africa’s prospects for the future. First, although gaining a comfortable margin of victory for effective government, the ANC did not win the two-thirds majority required by the transitional constitution to write the final constitution that comes into effect with the next general election in 1999. Thus, it will have to continue negotiating with the NP, as it has

done since Mandela's release from prison — a factor that bodes well for a successful transitional period, given the success of the Mandela–De Klerk partnership which secured South Africa's transition to nonracial democracy. Second, under a constitutional dispensation that provides for considerable regional autonomy, the ANC will control only seven of the nine provincial legislatures, one of these without an outright majority. This, too, favors the continuation of the trend toward negotiation, consultation, and conciliation firmly established in the years since Mandela's release. Finally, the strength of the “middle ground” in South African politics is evident in that less than 4 percent of the vote went to the parties on the extreme right (Freedom Front) and left (Pan Africanist Congress) of the political spectrum.

Lingering fears about a conservative backlash appear to be unwarranted. Political analysts do not believe white right-wingers have the resources or the will to fight a civil war; in fact, the “lunatic fringe” among the hard-liners would be hard pressed to muster a small army of 1,000 bitterenders willing to make a desperate last stand for white supremacy.⁶⁸ On the other side of the political spectrum, reservations have been expressed concerning the alliance of the African National Congress with the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions, both of which have militant factions — as does the ANC itself. None of these factions, however, have the resources, internal support, or international backing to stage a secessionist breakaway,⁶⁹ as was the case in Zaire in 1960 when Katanga seceded from the Congo under Moïse Tshombe, or Nigeria in 1967 when the eastern region of Biafra with its Ibo majority declared its independence and provoked a bloody civil war which claimed more than one million lives, or Angola in 1976 when Jonas Savimbi's UNITA movement, with South African backing, refused to accept the outcome of that country's founding election, precipitating a drawn-out conflict with international ramifications.

One of South Africa's most powerful stabilizing factors is that, with an estimated population of nearly 40 million, it has no ethnic majority⁷⁰ among its black population of 28 million, as is the case in some of its neighbors — for example, Zimbabwe with its Shona and Namibia with its Ovambo majority, where there is strong party political support along

ethnic lines. The most likely source of ethnic or factional hegemony in South Africa is the Zulus, approximately 8 million in number; however the outcome of the elections clearly indicate that Buthelezi's IFP has the support of no more than half of the Zulu population, with most of the rest supporting the ANC, which is also the party overwhelmingly supported by South Africa's second largest ethnic group, the Xhosa, numbering over 7 million. Lines of ethnic cleavage are further blurred by the fact that the ANC is also supported by the majority of other Africans, including the North Sotho (more than 3 million), the Tswana (more than 3 million), the South Sotho (more than 2 million), and four smaller groups with a combined total of more than 3 million. In the final analysis, if South Africa's white minority of 6 million could not sustain their political domination, neither will any other ethnic group. Furthermore, fears of Zulu secession and ethnic warfare have been quelled by Buthelezi's participation in the electoral process, his party's election victory in its home base of KwaZulu-Natal, and Buthelezi's inclusion as cabinet minister in President Mandela's government of national unity. Despite dire predictions by doomsayers, it is unlikely, for at least two reasons, that South Africa will follow the classic African post-independence model where a single nationalist party sweeps to power in a founding election and entrenches itself into a position of one-party dictatorship, creating a system in which the military coup replaces the democratic process.⁷¹

First, South Africa's two largest political groupings, Mandela's ANC and De Klerk's NP are mutually interdependent: Political analysts point out the ANC cannot govern as complex and diverse a nation as South Africa unaided, and that it will need to retain the services of white bureaucrats, security forces, and police if effective administration and the enforcement of law and order are to be maintained;⁷² and the NP, as demonstrated by the recent history of South Africa, is unable to govern the country effectively in defiance of the will of the black majority. In addition, unlike other African countries, which experienced white flight following independence, whites in South Africa have the numbers, resources, and rootedness in Africa to allow them to adapt to black rule — which is really their only viable choice.

Second, South Africa is fortunate to have two individuals of the stature of Mandela and De Klerk — joint winners of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 — heading its two major political parties. Mandela, in particular, is one of the world's best known and most celebrated political leaders. At 76 years of age, however, he is unlikely to govern beyond the 5-year transitional period, and South Africa's continuing stability beyond the turn of the century will hinge on the smooth transition of the ANC leadership; a power struggle in the party hierarchy could trigger a serious crisis in South Africa.

But the darkest cloud on South Africa's horizon is the large number of unemployed blacks, which some estimates place at close to 50 percent. If South Africa's new government fails to deliver on its promises of better housing, education, and jobs, the dashed hopes of the black masses could unleash a seething tide of violence that would be difficult to stem, particularly in the post-Mandela era. The silver lining is that, for the formerly disenfranchised masses, it is hard to imagine that conditions could get much worse than those prevailing during the darkest days of apartheid, with its brutal repression and state-sponsored terrorism.

Whatever happens, there is no turning back for South Africa. It is committed on a course to majority rule, and has the will and the resources to become not only a paragon of economic success and political stability in Africa but proof that, even with a long history of ethnic, regional, and racial conflict, it is possible to walk the road to peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic, culturally diverse society.

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Notes

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2. Henry C. Bredekamp, "Hunter–gatherers, Herders, and Farmers: The Origin of the Southern African Khoisan Communities," in Trehwella Cameron (Ed.), *A New Illustrated History of South Africa* (2nd rev. ed.; chapter 3) (Southern Book Publishers, Johannesburg/Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1991), p. 30.
3. Boucher, op. cit., pp. 62–63, 70.
4. Leon Louw and Frances Kendall, *South Africa: The Solution* (2nd rev. ed.) (Bisho, Ciskei: Amagi, 1987), p. 20.
5. Boucher, op. cit., p. 63.
6. Ibid., pp. 65–66.
7. Louw and Kendall, op. cit., pp. 21–22.
8. Boucher, op. cit., p. 72.
9. Louw and Kendall, op. cit., pp. 22–23.
10. Graham Leach, *South Africa: No Easy Path to Peace* (rev. ed.) (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 22–23. For a more detailed account, see Basil A. de Cordeur, "The Occupations of the Cape, 1795–1854," in Trehwella Cameron (Ed.), *A New Illustrated History of South Africa* (2nd rev. ed.; chapter 6) (Southern Book Publishers, Johannesburg/Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1991), pp. 76–79.
11. Leach, op. cit., p. 23. For a more detailed account, see M. D. Nash, "The 1820 Settlers," in Trehwella Cameron (Ed.), *A New Illustrated History of South Africa* (2nd rev. ed.; chapter 7) (Southern Book Publishers, Johannesburg/Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1991), pp. 94–99.
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16. Du Bruyn, *op. cit.*, p. 139.
17. Albert M. Grundlingh, “Prelude to the Anglo–Boer War, 1881–1899,” in Trehwella Cameron (Ed.), *A New Illustrated History of South Africa* (2nd rev. ed.; chapter 13) (Southern Book Publishers, Johannesburg/Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1991), p. 184.
18. For an account of the causes of the Anglo–Boer War, see *ibid.*, pp. 197–199.
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20. See S. B. Spies, “Reconstruction and Unification, 1902–1910,” in Trehwella Cameron (Ed.), *A New Illustrated History of South Africa* (2nd rev. ed.; chapter 15) (Southern Book Publishers, Johannesburg/Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1991).
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26. Coetzer, op. cit., p. 278; Leach, op. cit., pp. 73–75.
27. Coetzer, op. cit., p. 278; Leach, op. cit., pp. 75–76.
28. Louw and Kendall, op. cit., pp. 40–41; Leach, op. cit., pp. 77–79.
29. Louw and Kendall, op. cit., pp. 14, 35, 39.
30. Louw and Kendall, op. cit., p. 40; Leach, op. cit., pp. 76–77.
31. Louw and Kendall, op. cit., p. 41; Leach, op. cit., pp. 76–77.
32. Leach, op. cit., pp. 80–81.
33. Ibid., p. 183
34. Coetzer, op. cit., p. 282.
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36. Ibid.
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38. Ibid.
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41. Coetzer, op. cit., p. 286.
42. Ibid., pp. 288–289.
43. Ibid., p. 287.
44. Ibid., p. 289.
45. Cf. Fatima Meer, *Higher than Hope: The Authorized Biography of Nelson Mandela* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), pp. 169–170, 419–420.
46. Ibid., p. 420.
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48. Davenport, *op. cit.*, p. 310.
 49. *Ibid.*, p. 318.
 50. *Ibid.*, pp. 320–321.
 51. Willem J. de Klerk, *F. W. de Klerk: Die Man en Sy Tyd* [*F. W. de Klerk: The Man in His Time*] (Cape Town and Rosebank, South Africa: Tafelberg and Jonathan Ball, 1991), p. 28.
 52. *Ibid.*, pp. 107–110.
 53. *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 176.
 54. See *ibid.*, pp. 110–115, for an analysis of the role of liberal opposition voices in creating a climate for change in South African politics.
 55. De Klerk, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–68 has cited “seven sins” of apartheid that consumed it from within: Its ill-conceived dream of “ideological orderliness” could be sustained only through structural violence (which ultimately created chaos); the fallacy that a tiny white majority could maintain its influence by isolating itself from society at large; the “astronomical cost” of apartheid, which made its continuation contingent on foreign capital investment and loans; its immorality; its transparently racist foundations; its underestimation of the power of black nationalism; and its unmanageable complexity.
 56. See Leach, *op. cit.*, pp. 214–215.
 57. For a detailed account of these political dynamics, see De Klerk, *op. cit.*, pp. 115–134.
 58. See “Scenarios for South Africa,” *The Economist*, August 17, 1985, pp. 16–18.
 59. Aubrey Immelman, *The Perception of South African Psychologists of P. W. Botha’s Personality Style* (Paper presented at the Eleventh Annual Scientific Meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology, Secaucus, NJ, July 1988); *A Millon-based Study of Political Personality: Nelson Mandela and F. W. de Klerk Part I. Method and Preliminary Results* (Paper presented at the Sixteenth Annual Scientific Meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology, Cambridge, MA, July 1993); *A Millon-based Study of Political Personality: Nelson Mandela and F. W. de Klerk Part II. Further Results and Implications* (Unpublished manuscript, St. John’s University, Collegetown, MN, 1994); *South Africa in Transition: The Influence of the Political Personalities of Nelson Mandela and*

- F. W. de Klerk* (Paper presented at the Seventeenth Annual Scientific Meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology, Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain, July 1994).
60. See De Klerk, op. cit., p. 172.
 61. Theodore Millon, *Millon Index of Personality Styles Manual* (San Antonio, TX: Psychological Corporation/Harcourt Brace, 1994), p. 33.
 62. Ibid., p. 34.
 63. According to De Klerk, op. cit., p. 55, “system” politics refers to elements which constituted, in one way or another, the “cogs” of the apartheid system; for example, political parties represented in the South African parliament, parties in homeland or national-state legislatures, representatives of local and regional governments, and so on. “Struggle” politics refers to activist organizations that operated outside the system, often as fronts for the banned ANC.
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 67. See, for example, “Mandela Transforms South Africa,” *St. Cloud Times*, September 18, 1994, p. 6D.
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