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OFFICIAL GUIDE TO SOUTH AFRICA



HISTORY

History

Modern humans have lived at the southern tip of Africa for more than 100 000 years and their ancestors for some 3,3 million years. Some 2 000 years ago, the Khoekhoen (the Hottentots of early European terminology) were pastoralists who had settled mostly along the coast, while the San (the Bushmen) were hunter gatherers spread across the region. At this time, Bantu-speaking agropastoralists began arriving in southern Africa, spreading from the eastern lowlands to the Highveld. At several archaeological sites there is evidence of sophisticated political and material cultures.

European contact

The first European settlement in southern Africa was established by the Dutch East India Company in Table Bay (Cape Town) in 1652. Created to supply passing ships with fresh produce, the colony grew rapidly as Dutch farmers settled to grow crops. Shortly after the establishment of the colony, slaves were imported from East Africa, Madagascar and the East Indies. The first British Settlers, known as the 1820 Settlers, arrived in Algoa Bay (now Nelson Mandela Bay) on board 21 ships, the first being the Chapman. They numbered about 4 500 and included artisans, tradesmen, religious leaders, merchants, teachers, bookbinders, blacksmiths, discharged sailors and soldiers, professional men and farmers.

Conflict

From the 1770s, colonists came into contact and inevitable conflict with Bantu speaking chiefdoms some 800 km east of Cape Town. A century of intermittent warfare ensued during which the colonists gained ascendancy over the isiXhosa speaking chiefdoms. In 1795, the British occupied the Cape as a strategic base against the French, controlling the sea route to the East.

In the 1820s, the celebrated Zulu leader, Shaka, established sway over a vast area of south-east Africa. As splinter Zulu groups conquered and absorbed communities in their path, the region experienced a fundamental disruption. Substantial states, such as Moshoeshoe's Lesotho and other Sotho-Tswana chiefdoms were established. This temporary disruption of life on the Highveld served to facilitate the expansion northwards of the original Dutch settlers' descendants, the Boer Voortrekkers, from the 1830s.

Occupation

In 1806, Britain reoccupied the Cape. As the colony prospered, the political rights of the various races were guaranteed, with slavery being abolished in 1838. Throughout the 1800s, the boundaries of European influence spread eastwards. From the port of Durban, Natal settlers pushed northwards, further and further into the land of the Zulu. From the mid-1800s, the Voortrekkers coalesced in two land-locked white-ruled republics, the South African Republic (Transvaal) and the Orange Free State.

The mineral revolution

South Africa's diamond mining industry dates back to 1867, when diamonds were discovered near Kimberley in what is today known as the Northern Cape. The Kimberley diamond fields, and later discoveries in Gauteng, the Free State, and along the Atlantic coast, emerged as major sources of gem-quality diamonds, securing South Africa's position as the world's leading producer in the mid-twentieth century.

Gold

The discovery of the Witwatersrand goldfields in 1886 was a turning point in South Africa's history. The demand for franchise rights for English-speaking immigrants working on the new goldfields was the pretext Britain used to go to war with the Transvaal and Orange Free State in 1899. The Anglo-Boer/South African War was the bloodiest, longest and most expensive war Britain engaged in between 1815 and 1915. It cost more than 200 million pounds and Britain lost more than 22 000 men. The Boers lost over 34 000 people and more than 15 000 black South Africans were killed.

Union and opposition

In 1910, the Union of South Africa was created out of the Cape, Natal, Transvaal and Free State. It was to be essentially a white union. Black opposition was inevitable, and the African National Congress (ANC) was founded in 1912 to protest the exclusion of black people from power. In 1921, the South African Communist Party was established at a time of heightened militancy. More discriminatory legislation was enacted. Meanwhile, Afrikaner nationalism, fuelled by job losses arising from a worldwide recession, was on the march.

The rise of apartheid

In 1948, the pro-Afrikaner National Party (NP) came to power with the ideology of apartheid, an even more rigorous and authoritarian approach than the previous segregationist policies. While white South Africa was cementing its power, black opposition politics were evolving. In 1943, a younger, more determined political grouping came to the fore with the launch of the ANC Youth League, a development, which was to foster the leadership of people such as Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu.

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Reform

Shaken by the scale of protest and opposition, the government embarked on a series of limited reforms in the early 1980s. In 1983, the Constitution was reformed to allow the coloured and Indian minorities limited participation in separate and subordinate houses of Parliament. In 1986, the pass laws were scrapped. The international community strengthened its support for the anti-apartheid cause. Mass resistance increasingly challenged the apartheid State, which resorted to intensified repression accompanied by eventual recognition that apartheid could not be sustained.

Apartheid's last days

Afrikaner élite openly started to pronounce in favour of a more inclusive society, with a number of businesspeople, students and academic leaders meeting publicly and privately with the ANC in exile. Petty apartheid laws and symbols were openly challenged and eventually removed. Together with a sliding economy, increasing internal dissent and international pressure, these developments inevitably led to historic changes and the fall of apartheid.

Democratic government

South Africa held its first democratic election in April 1994 under an interim Constitution. The ANC emerged with a 62% majority. South Africa was divided into nine new provinces to replace the four existing provinces and 10 black homelands. In terms of the interim Constitution, the

NP and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) participated in a Government of National Unity (GNU) under President Mandela, South Africa's first democratically elected President.

The second democratic election, in 1999, saw the ANC increasing its majority to a point just short of two-thirds of the total vote. In the April 2004 election, the ANC won the national vote with 69,68% and the celebration of 10 Years of Freedom attended by heads of state and government delegations from across the world. In 2008, Mr Kgalema Motlanthe became President following the recalling of President Thabo Mbeki. On 22 April 2009, South Africa held national and provincial elections with about 76% of registered voters casting their votes.

Mr Jacob Zuma was inaugurated as President of South Africa on 9 May 2009. The following year, a significant milestone for South Africa was the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup™. Municipal elections were held on 18 May 2011, electing new councils for all municipalities in the country. October 2011 saw Statistics South Africa conducting a comprehensive national census. The census, which analysed the country's demographics, population distribution and access to services, average household size, income, migration, and mortality, was the third national population and housing count in post-apartheid South Africa.

The exercise saw 156 000 field staff employed to count more than 14,6 million households. South Africa has continued to build on its international profile. On 1 January 2011, the country started its second term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations (UN) Security Council between 2011 and 2012, serving alongside the five permanent members, China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as well as elected members Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Colombia, Gabon, Germany, India, Lebanon, Nigeria and Portugal.

In 2011, as part of government's commitment to secure a better quality of life for all, the National Planning Commission in The Presidency finalised the draft National Development Plan (NDP): Vision for 2030. The plan is a step towards charting a new path for South Africa in dealing with the triple challenge of poverty, unemployment and inequality. 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 and the continent.

In May 2012, the Square Array Kilometre (SKA) Organisation announced that the SKA Project would be shared between South Africa and Australia, with a majority share coming to South Africa. The full dish array and the dense aperture array will be built in Africa. In November 2012, South Africa was elected by the members of the UN General Assembly to the UN's 47 member Economic and Social Council. In December 2012, President Zuma was re-elected as the president of the ANC during the ruling party's congress in Mangaung, Free State with Cyril Ramaphosa elected as the party's deputy president.

In July 2013, Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka was appointed executive director of the UNWomen Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, and Ms Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, was appointed director in the UN Development Programme's Bureau for Development Policy. On 5 December 2013, South Africa's first democratically elected President and Anti-apartheid icon Mandela died at the age of 95. Mr Mandela led South Africa's transition from white-minority rule in the 1990s, after 27 years in prison for his political activities.

He had been receiving intensive medical care at home for a lung infection after spending three months in hospital. His body lay in state at the Union Buildings from 11 to 13 December. 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, which was released in 2013, and the National Planning Commission's 2011 Diagnostic Report, highlight that poverty, inequality and unemployment continue to negatively affect the lives of many people. Despite progress in reducing rural poverty and increasing access to basic services in rural areas over the past 20 years, rural areas are still characterised by great poverty and inequality. 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. South Africa's fifth general elections were held on 7 May 2014.

It was also the first time that South African expatriates were allowed to vote in a South African national election. The ANC won the National Assembly election (62,1%) and the official opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) won 22,2% of the votes, while the newly formed Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) obtained 6,4% of the vote.

The ANC also won eight of the nine provincial legislatures. 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%. In 2015, South Africa celebrated the 60th Anniversary of the Freedom Charter, which called for peace and friendship among nations.

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 of 1996. The 2016 municipal elections were held on 3 August 2016. The ANC won 53,9% of the total vote, followed by the official opposition DA with 26,9% and the EFF with 8,2%. In 2017, South Africa celebrated five years since the launch of the NDP, which outlines the goals to achieve the vision of a prosperous South Africa by tackling the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality by 2030.

South Africa celebrated the Centenary of the late Oliver Reginald Tambo in 2017, under the theme: “Life and Legacy of OR Tambo”. He was one of the key drivers of South Africa’s liberation and one of the founding fathers of the country’s constitutional democracy. At its 54th National Conference held at Nasrec in Soweto on 18 December 2017, the ANC elected Mr Ramaphosa as its president.

Following the resignation of President Zuma in February 2018, Mr Ramaphosa was elected unopposed as the fifth President of democratic South Africa by the National Assembly on 15 February 2018. In 2018, South Africa celebrated the centenary of two Struggle stalwarts, Tata Mandela and Mama Albertina Nontsikelelo Sisulu. In 2019, South Africa celebrated 25 Years of Freedom.

In May 2019, the country also held its sixth national and provincial elections. The ANC won 57,50% of the total vote, followed by the official opposition DA with 20,77% and the EFF with 10,79%. On 25 May 2019, Mr Ramaphosa was inaugurated as the sixth 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 Loftus Versfeld Stadium in Pretoria. On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization reported a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan City, China.

‘Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2’ (SARSCoV-2) was confirmed as the causative agent of what we now know as ‘Coronavirus Disease 2019’ (COVID-19). Since then, the virus has spread to more than 100 countries, including South Africa. On 15 March 2020, President Ramaphosa declared a National State of Disaster, and announced measures such as immediate travel restrictions and the closure of schools from 18 March.

The declaration of the National State of Disaster empowered government to take the measures that prevented many more people from becoming severely ill and saved countless lives. It also provided the legal basis for the introduction of the special R350 Social Relief of Distress Grant and the establishment of the COVID Temporary Employee/ Employer Relief Scheme, which provided wage support to millions of workers.

On 17 March, the National Coronavirus Command Council was established to lead the nation’s plan to contain the spread and mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19. On 23 March, a 21-day national lockdown was announced, starting on 27 March 2020.

President Ramaphosa announced that from 1 May 2020, a gradual and phased easing of the lockdown restrictions would begin. From 1 June, the national restrictions were lowered to Alert Level 3. The restrictions were lowered to alert Level 2 on 17 August 2020 and from 21 September 2020 restrictions were lowered to Alert Level 1.

Government declared 2021 The Year of Charlotte Manyama-Maxeke under the theme: “The Year of Charlotte Manyama-Maxeke: Realising Women’s Equality”. She was a pioneer, activist, artist, intellectual, internationalist and visionary. On 1 November 2021, the country held its sixth Local Government Elections. The ANC won the majority 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 the 9th to the 18th of 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 (now Chief Justice), handed all its reports 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 Made, was arrested and charged with arson.

In April 2022, government lifted the National State of Disaster but retained “transitional 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 transitional 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 Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the ANC.

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, the latter 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 democratic Administration. Mr Mashatile was elected as the Deputy President of the ANC in December 2022 during the ANC's 55th national conference held at the Johannesburg Expo Centre in Nasrec.

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 World Rugby Cup tournament held at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, France. On 29 December 2023, South Africa filed the case against Israel's genocide in Palestine at the International Criminal Court (World Court).

The seventh democratic national elections were held on 29 May 2024 to elect a new National Assembly as well as the provincial legislature in each of the nine provinces. The ruling ANC lost the parliamentary majority significantly but remained the largest party since the inaugural post-apartheid election in 1994. The DA remained in second place with a slight increase and the newly formed MK Party came in third place.

Since there was no outright majority winner, 10 political parties agreed to form a GNU, with Mr Ramaphosa being re-elected President of South Africa.