

Why South Africa Will Survive



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and Peter Duignan**

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(A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS)

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PREFACE

South Africa is one of the most unpopular countries on the face of the globe; its critics disagree widely among themselves, but they do share certain assumptions. South Africa supposedly is governed by a ruthless white oligarchy that oppresses the blacks; the mass of the people are getting poorer, if not in absolute terms, then at least in comparison with the privileged whites. But the day of reckoning is at hand. Critics claim: the winds of change are irresistible; the tide of revolution cannot be stopped. America and the Western world as a whole should therefore take a tough line against the white minority regime in power at Pretoria — both in the interest of America's legitimate national concerns and of humanity at large.

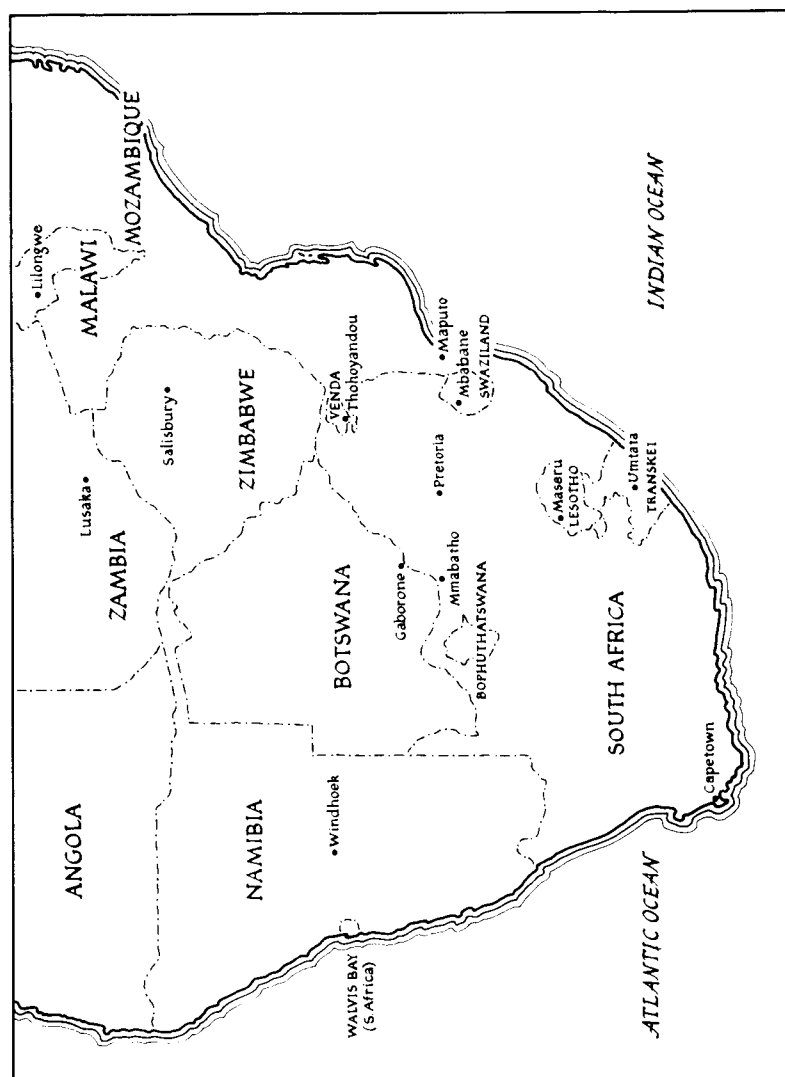
We disagree with many of these assumptions. We are impressed by the extraordinary social and economic changes that have come over South Africa during the last generation, and by the extent of the progress made in a great variety of spheres. We do not believe that a South African revolution will come during our lifetime; we are convinced that change will rather come from within the ruling white oligarchy rather than by liberation movements. We believe therefore that American support should go to the *verligtes*, the reformers, within the ruling National Party; our slogan is: all power to the moderates!

The present study is a greatly expanded version of a brief policy study, *South Africa: War, Revolution, or Peace?*, which we published in 1978. This book attempts to set South Africa's predicament in a wider setting, and examines the country from the historical, political, economic and strategic standpoint. We are aware that our views concerning South Africa are unpopular within the academic establishment, but we are convinced that an interpretation different from the current 'gloom, guilt and doom' school deserves to be heard.

We should like to express our thanks to Professors Thomas Karis, Edwin S. Munger, Leo Kuper and Paul Seabury, and to John Chettle and Pine Pinaar of the South African Foundation for reading the manuscript. Our appreciation also to the many South African politicians, government and military officials, academics and citizens who talked to us or read portions of this manuscript. Their willingness to give us the benefit of their criticism does not, of course, imply approval of our views.

L.H. Gann
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Southern Africa



PART ONE:

THE PEOPLES OF SOUTH AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

South Africa is a land of contrasts. The country covers 472,359 square miles, about three times the size of California and five times the size of Great Britain. A traveller going by road from Cape Town to Johannesburg covers 900 miles; if he motors from Cape Town to Durban in the north-east, his route will have exceeded 1,000 miles, the distance from London to Leningrad. South Africa's geographical diversity is as stunning as its size. South Africa has Mediterranean coastland, snow-covered mountains, parkland, forests, steppes and desert – almost every kind of vegetational zone except arctic tundra or tropical rain forest. The peoples of South Africa are equally varied. South Africa is a complex mosaic of differing races and ethnic groups, the world in microcosm. The country's inhabitants include whites, Africans (blacks), Bushmen (San), Asians and Coloureds (people of mixed parentage). The white men's ancestors mostly came from Europe; the Bantu-speaking peoples had their remote origins in the central and north-central parts of Africa; the Asians are of Malay, Indian and Pakistani descent. The earliest aboriginal population is composed of the San, Stone Age hunters who now form but a tiny fragment of the population, and the Khoikhoi (Hottentots), a herding people now largely absorbed into the Coloured people. Each of these four major population groups consists of several different components, whose members often differ considerably from one another.

For all these contrasts, South Africa's population groups have certain demographic features in common. All have benefited from a striking rate of natural increase during the course of the present century (see Table 1). South Africans have continued to increase since 1900. The proportion of whites will decrease somewhat, as the white birth rate has diminished. Africans will improve their numerical position over the remaining population, as African mortality figures have declined and African health has improved (Table 2). South Africa will continue as a multiracial country with a relatively youthful population, a high proportion of which will be of working age (see Table 3).

South Africans today are the most urbanised people in sub-Saharan Africa, though the proportion of townsmen to countrymen differs sharply among the various ethnic segments. Urbanisation is linked to rapid industrialisation. South Africa was the first country on the African

2 Introduction

Table 1: Population of South Africa, by Race

Year	Total	Whites	Blacks	Asiatics	Coloureds
1904	5,174,827	1,117,234	3,490,291	122,311	444,991
1921	6,927,403	1,521,343	4,697,285	163,594	545,181
1936	9,587,863	2,003,334	6,595,597	219,691	769,241
1946	11,415,925	2,372,044	7,830,559	285,260	928,062
1951	12,671,452	2,641,689	8,560,083	366,664	1,103,016
1960	15,902,664	3,008,492	10,907,789	477,125	1,509,258
1970	21,447,230	3,750,716	15,057,559	620,422	2,018,533
1974 (est.)	24,936,000	4,158,000	17,761,000	710,000	2,307,800
1978 (est.) ^a	23,894,000	4,408,000	16,214,000	778,000	2,494,000

Note: a. All statistical material for the earlier history of Africa is subject to inaccuracies. The 1978 figure excludes the population of the Transkei and Bophuthatswana. If these were to be added, the population would amount to 27,400,000.

Source: *Economic, Financial, and Statistical Yearbooks for South Africa* (Da Gama, Johannesburg, various years).

Table 2: Rate of Natural Increase, 1970 (rate per thousand)

Rate	1910	1970
Whites	21.7	14.4
Coloureds	23.2	21.4
Asians	—	25.9
Africans (est.)	—	29.0

Source: *South Africa 1974: Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1974), p. 71.

continent to experience the Industrial Revolution. The value of South Africa's manufactures is greater than that of all other African countries combined. The Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging complex, strategically and economically the heartland of modern South Africa, accounts for about half of the country's industrial output. Set in the southern Transvaal, this small region alone has a manufacturing output more than three times that of Egypt and four times that of Algeria. Qualitatively,

Table 3: Projected Population, 1980-2000 (figures in brackets indicate those economically active)

	1980	1990	2000
Aggregate	29,044,000 (11,327,000)	38,464,000 (15,000,000)	50,288,000 (19,612,320)
Whites	4,767,000 (1,857,200)	5,798,000 (2,261,200)	6,890,000 (2,687,100)
Blacks	20,639,000 (8,049,200)	27,892,000 (10,877,900)	37,293,000 (14,544,270)
Asians	825,000 (321,700)	1,018,000 (397,000)	1,215,000 (473,850)
Coloureds	2,818,000 (1,099,000)	3,756,000 (1,464,800)	4,890,000 (1,907,100)

Source: Figures from J.L. Sadie, cited in W.J. de Villiers, *The Effective Utilisation of Human Resources in the Republic of South Africa* (General Mining and Finance Corporation, Johannesburg, 1974), p. 7.

South Africa's industrial preponderance is equally marked. Within its borders are a variety of backward, black, rural economies alongside a highly industrialised Western economy, the only one in Africa capable of simultaneously turning out merchant ships, sophisticated mining equipment, computers and rockets.

Whites, followed by Coloureds and Asians, have always been the most urbanised people in South Africa. The Africans traditionally lived in their villages or on homesteads scattered throughout the countryside. The proportion of black city folk, however, is increasing rapidly and, taken as a whole, the South African blacks are the most citified African people on the entire continent (see Table 4). Perhaps as many as 9 million blacks now are urbanised or in the modern sector of the economy. With urbanisation has come an increase in wealth, and the spread of new ideas and skills. Urbanisation has also helped to create new social and psychological tensions. South African city-dwellers have a fairly high suicide rate. The incidence of homicide is even higher than that in the USA.¹ Crime, drunkenness and prostitution have all increased greatly as blacks moved from village to town.

Despite the severity of its racial and social problems in the 1960s and early 1970s, South Africa continued to attract a considerable number of immigrants during a time of economic prosperity. Some

Table 4: Urban Population, 1904-70 (per cent)

Year	Whites	Coloureds	Asians	Africans
1904	53.6	49.2	35.5	10.4
1921	59.7	52.4	60.4	14.0
1936	68.2	58.0	69.5	19.0
1951	79.1	66.2	77.6	27.9
1970	86.7	74.3	86.2	33.6

Source: *South Africa, 1976*, p. 36.

410,512 immigrants, mainly from Western Europe, entered the country between 1960 and 1971, while 118,577 left South Africa. But during the first nine months of 1977 21,026 whites left the country, and new white immigration dropped by half.

This outflow was paralleled by the falling off of new foreign investment – partly as a consequence of an economic slump, partly by reason of investors' fears concerning the country's future. To a minor extent, emigration and 'disinvestment' acted as a political sieve; the most liberal whites (usually drawn from the English-speaking professional upper middle class) were most apt to look for new homes abroad. But the country's white demographic structure as a whole was little altered.

Despite its reputation, South Africa is a country also desirable for black newcomers. Even more blacks than whites have, in Lenin's phrase, 'voted with their feet' to come to South Africa. The total number of blacks born outside South Africa's borders, but now working within the country either as annual labour migrants or as permanent residents with a legal or non-legal status, amounts to well over 0.5 million.

Note

1. According to Fatima Meer, *Race and Suicide in South Africa* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1976), pp. 233-4, the mean suicide rate for Africans in Durban during the period 1962-71 was 17.3 per 100,000 for Africans and 15.4 for Europeans. This is compared with the following figures during the same period: Denmark, Austria and Sweden – over 20; West Germany – between 15 and 20; the United Kingdom and the USA – between 10 and 12.

1 THE WHITES

Historical Background

South Africa is a country obsessed with its past. No account of that land can be complete without at least a brief sketch of its ethnic origins. The fate of white people, black and brown has been inextricably interwoven. Yet each of these people has retained a separate sense of identity, a sense so strong that there is still no satisfactory national history of South Africa, no account that does equal justice to all segments of its population. At the risk of repetition, we shall therefore try to outline the roots of each major ethnic community.

The first Europeans to settle permanently in South Africa came from Holland. Dutch settlements at the Cape began in 1652, and coincided roughly with the European colonisation of New England. When the Dutch first dropped anchor at the Cape, they merely wanted a stronghold where their ships might refit and obtain food and water on the long trip to the Indies. But the original market garden unintentionally turned into a colony. The settlers began to move inland, and white society gradually split into a number of distinct components. Cape Town grew into a substantial port that provided the inland farmers with a market, an urban community that looked towards both the Atlantic and the Indian oceans. The Cape settlements drew their supplies of grain from European farms in the western Cape, substantial estates, worked by Coloured or 'half-caste' (Eurafrican) labour. The wealthier European farmers built substantial homes for themselves, with white-washed walls, great verandas and fine portals, simply furnished, but impressive in their dignity.

The sedentary society of the western Cape — linked to Holland by ties of culture, religion and descent — contrasted sharply with the pastoral society of the interior. As the colonists pushed deeper inland, they took to pastoral rather than arable farming. Subdivision of land, accompanied by more intensive cultivation, was not a feasible proposition as long as labour and capital were scarce, markets inadequate, and only land was plentiful. Afrikaans-speaking herdsmen kept trekking in order to avoid competing with their neighbours for pastures and wells. Trekking got rid of boundary quarrels; it also provided opportunities for the poor, who could not afford to buy extensive farmland.

The frontiersmen's methods of cultivation, moreover, were apt to exhaust the soil. 'The veld got tired,' and the trekkers moved on.

The *trekboer* has become a mythological subject. To Afrikaner nationalists, the frontiersman represented all that was noble. The Boers (farmers) of the frontier were the first people in Africa to call themselves 'Africans'. These trekkers supposedly shaped the modern Afrikaner nation, endowing South Africans of a subsequent vintage with the pioneer spirit of independence. British imperialists, on the other hand, commonly looked upon the trekker as a barbarous fellow, offensive to God and man by reason of the Afrikaner's supposed lack of economic enterprise, his assumed hostility to Africans, his reluctance to accept the suzerainty of the British Crown, and his unwillingness to recognise English gentlemen as his social superiors. Many liberal scholars of a more recent vintage took over these stereotypes. According to their mythology, the Afrikaners were a backward, reactionary people, addicted to a peculiarly primitive and bigoted form of Calvinism. The Afrikaners, supposedly, were more racially prejudiced than all other whites, were particularly litigious in the Dutch tradition, and were descended from the lowest class of Dutch emigrants, the kind of people unable to succeed at home. The *trekboer*, the frontier farmer, the most isolated and poverty-stricken of the Afrikaners, was considered to be the prototype of all.¹ According to popular history books written in the liberal vein, the Boer was an eternal anachronism who wandered from one century to the next, with his rifle in one hand and the Bible in the other, a man perpetually behind the times, forever cut off from the progress of humanity.²

The realities were nothing like as melodramatic. The *trekboer* was neither a backwoods patriarch, innocent of economic incentives, nor a bloody-minded oppressor. He was shaped by the harsh environment of the frontier. The *trekboer* first supplied the Cape markets with cattle and hides; later the economic centre of gravity shifted more towards new ports that were being opened on the east coast. By this time the trekkers belonged to a new nation, no longer Dutch, speaking a new language — Afrikaans ('African'), a Dutch derivative with great literary potential. The *trekboer* became one of the world's greatest wilderness specialists. He knew how to handle a span of oxen in rough country. He became knowledgeable as a soil prospector, wise in finding the best farming land in the wilderness. He turned into a crack shot and an expert hunter. The wild interior held no terrors for him, as he developed a most effective system of military tactics. The Boer's wagon came to serve both as a mode of transport and as a means of forming

mobile pivots in battle. Boer military skill defeated the Khoikhoi and the San.

Later, the Afrikaners met far more warlike opponents, dark-brown or black-skinned people who spoke tongues belonging to the Bantu group of languages, and who were familiar with the use of iron. (The so-called 'Kaffirs' were first encountered in 1704 near what is now Somerset East.) The Bantu were technologically much superior to most of the Indian peoples whom white settlers met on the American frontier. Bantu-speaking people had developed their own systems of arable and pastoral farming which were as extensive as those of the Boers, requiring ever new expanses of woodland and pasture for their sustenance. Not surprisingly, Boers and Africans fought over the land. The blacks fought hard, but the Afrikaners won; they were less numerous, but better armed, mounted and organised than their opponents. The African economies depended solely on the power of human muscles, on rudimentary tools like the hoe, and on simple weapons like shields and spears.

The settlers' relations with their African neighbours were double-edged. The frontiersmen fought bitter battles against the black peoples. But lack of numbers and resources also forced the white pioneers into political – and sometimes even into martial and marital – alliances with African chiefs. The early pioneers might own imported slaves. By and large, however, their herding economy did not require as many servile labourers as were needed in the plantations of the New World. Hence slavery never became an irremovable feature of frontier culture. The Africans proved to be a flexible, adaptive people. Unlike the Indian tribes on the North American and Argentinian frontiers, the Bantu-speaking communities of South Africa were not destroyed.

In addition to war, the frontier witnessed a good deal of trade and other forms of amicable intercourse between black and white. The forms of economic interchange varied. As long as the white man could be kept at arm's length, the various African peoples were satisfied to farm, to engage in commerce with whites, and occasionally even to work for wages in European employment. European contacts were ambiguous in their effects. The colonists created new markets for African cattle and corn. Missionaries began to set up schools. Many African chiefs looked to Europeans for alliances against their local opponents. On the other hand, the whites and blacks competed for arable land, pastures and water in a contest that Europeans were bound to win in the long run.

But the main menace to the settler's existence came not so much