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## South Africa

Paul W Nesbitt-Larking



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**POLITICS**

*The Left and The Right*

VOLUME 1: *The Left*

GENERAL EDITOR

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RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

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*Volume 1 Cover Photo:* President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on July 2, 1964, as Martin Luther King, Jr. looks on. Credit: LBJ Library Photo by Cecil Stoughton.

*Volume 2 Cover Photo:* President Gerald Ford (center, right) and former presidential candidate Ronald Reagan (center, left) show solidarity at the Republican National Convention, August 19, 1976. Credit: Courtesy Gerald R. Ford Library.

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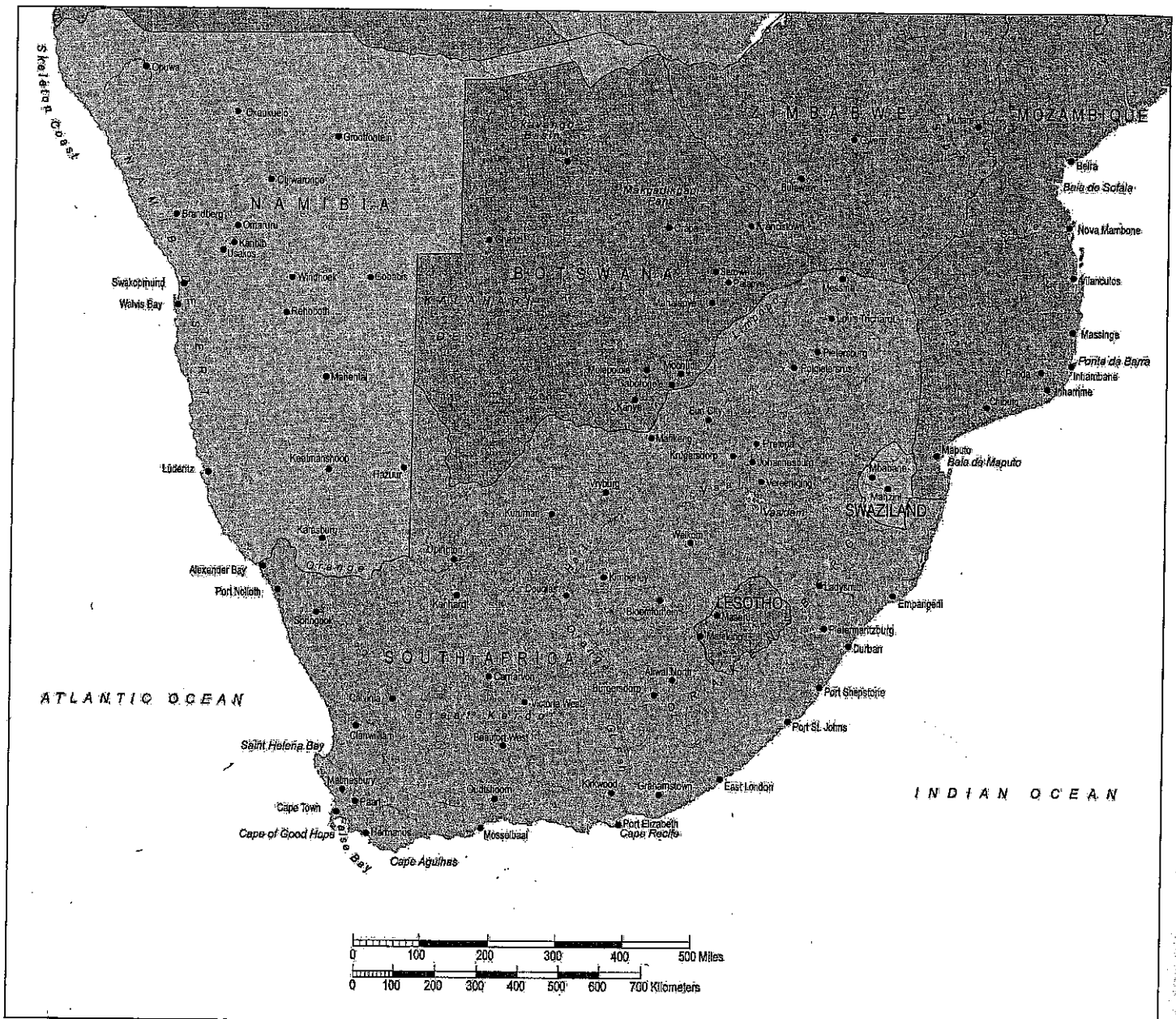
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**South Africa**

THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA is a constitutional democracy whose basic laws are enshrined in the Constitution of 1996. The constitution transformed an apartheid state based on racial segregation to an egalitarian democracy. Reflective of the will of the black African majority, South African government has a strong central bureaucracy with a powerful presidency. The president is both the head of state and government



South Africa employed a rightist apartheid or segregationist form of government and society that was challenged and eventually replaced by the leftist African National Congress, which brought an end to the apartheid regime.

leader. Modern South Africa consists of an ethnically diverse population of 43,586,097 (2004). The constitution recognizes 11 official languages and specifies nine provinces with defined authority. The South African parliament is bicameral. Citizens vote directly for 400 members of the National Assembly, while their provincial legislators select representatives to serve in the 90-seat National Council of the Provinces.

The background to politics and government in South Africa is a tribal history of conflict, accommodation, and resolution. Much of the destiny of modern South Africa was shaped by the two principal white "tribes," the Afrikaners of Dutch origin and the British. The Dutch settled South Africa in 1652, and the British arrived in 1806. Conflict throughout the 19th century involving the Afrikaner, British, and indigenous populations culminated in the South African (Boer) War of 1899–1902. Following the war, the British and Afrikaner leaderships achieved a political settlement in the Act of Union (1910), the first formal constitution of South Africa. Establishing a racially exclusivist framework that was to continue until the end of apartheid, only whites were granted citizenship. An assertively nationalist Afrikaner leadership established the regime of apartheid in the late 1940s and early 1950s, introducing legislation to limit social, political, and economic advantage to the white minority and to segregate the races. The African majority engaged in sustained acts of protest, boycott, disobedience, and sabotage in order to press for change. In the end, the apartheid regime crumbled. A political deal between African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela and South African President F.W. de Klerk marked the demise of apartheid in 1989.

The South African Constitution has certain federal characteristics, but with a strongly centralized presidency. The president and the assemblies are elected for five-year terms, with fixed election dates. However, the president, who is a sitting member of the National Assembly, can dissolve the National Assembly at any time after three years if a majority of members demand it. The president selects most members of the cabinet from the National Assembly, to which it is collectively and individually responsible. A simple majority vote of no-confidence in the cabinet causes the entire cabinet, including the president, to resign.

Regional government in South Africa is very important. Provincial governments spend most of the national budget and employ most of the public servants. Most provincial expenditure is on health, education, and social security and provincial politicians enjoy wide

discretion. The leading political party in contemporary South Africa is the ANC. Banned in 1960, it reassembled in exile, where it continued to operate in the apartheid decades. The post-apartheid ANC regards itself as an inclusive popular front, representing a diverse coalition of voices in the new South Africa. The party was the runaway victor in the national election of April 2004, winning 70 percent of the vote in a national turnout of 77 percent. President Thabo Mbeki was elected for a second term.

The main opposition party is the centrist and post-apartheid Democratic Alliance, which picked up about 12 percent of the vote in 2004. It represents an increasingly liberal white electorate and hopes to generalize itself into the natural party of opposition. It has supplanted the New National Party (NNP), a reinvention of the dominant apartheid-era party. In the 2004 elections, NNP received less than 2 percent of the vote and seemed destined to disappear. The principal black alternative to the ANC is the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) that has its origins in the Zulu politics of KwaZulu Natal. While the IFP carries with it the taint of having accommodated itself to the apartheid regime and of having collaborated in the oppression of the ANC and its allies, the party has moved on to become a more moderate voice of black South Africa. In the 2004 election, it received less than 7 percent of the vote and was unable to defeat the ANC in its home territory.

#### SEE ALSO

*Volume 1 Left:* African National Congress; Africa.  
*Volume 2 Right:* Apartheid; South Africa.

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## South America

THE LEFT IN SOUTH AMERICA can be described in two ways. First, it is an ideal that has been pursued by many political groups in the history of Latin America,