

## **ANNEX: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SOUTH AFRICA IN THE LATE 1980S**

The following information about political and population characteristics is based upon the situation in South Africa in the late 1980s. The information presented here is the basic reference for the analysis in this chapter.

**Name:** The Republic of South Africa (RSA).

**Capital:** Pretoria.

**Nature of government:** Oligarchy, with political rights defined by racial categories. A consociational democracy, dominated by one group, within the oligarchic system; a tricameral parliament provided for political participation for the “whites,” “coloureds” (term denoting people of mixed race), and “Asians.” Executive authority was vested in the Office of the President. The three houses chose the president, with the white chamber of parliament having an outright majority of the votes.

**Organization of the state:** A republic, with four provinces: Cape, Natal, Transvaal, and Orange Free State. In addition, there were ten Bantustans (“historic homelands”) set up for the black population: Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Transkei, Venda, Gazankulu, KaNgwane, KwaNdebele, KwaZulu, Lebowa, and Qwaqwa. The first four were recognized by the government of South Africa as sovereign states (no other country recognized them as such). The other six had a status of “self-governing” territories.

**Date of constitution:** 1984.

**Population:** approximately 35,094,000 (July 1988). 1980 census showed 28,087,489; 1991 census showed 37,944,000.

**Major ethnic groups:** Legal separation and classification of people into four main “racial” groups: “whites” (denoting those of indigenous European background), “blacks” (denoting those of indigenous African background), “Asians” (denoting those of indigenous Asian background), and “coloureds” (denoting those of mixed “race,” usually of “black” and “white”). The main division among the whites was into two groups along linguistic and ancestry lines: the Afrikaners (descendants of Dutch, French Huguenot, and German settlers) and the English speakers (primarily descendants of British settlers); a more recent (1970s) group of whites included Portuguese who fled the former Portuguese colonies in Africa. The coloureds were a catch-all category and included the long-established “Cape Coloureds.” The category of Asians generally referred to people primarily of Muslim and Hindu background descended from laborers from India and the East Indies, though it also applied to some descendants of Chinese indentured laborers. The black population belonged to a large number of southern African groups: Zulu, Xhosa, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Tswana, Shangaana-Tsongo, Transkei, Venda, and numerous smaller groups.

**Languages:** Official languages: Afrikaans and English. The black population usually used their own tribal-based languages. These included Nguni languages (mainly Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi, South Ndebele), Sotho languages (Seshoesho [southern], Sepedi [northern], Tswana [western]), Tsonggo, and Venda. The “Cape Coloureds” generally spoke Afrikaans and were often bilingual. Urban “Asians” generally spoke English as well as their own Asian languages. Generally, the language of interethnic communication was English in the urban areas and Afrikaans in rural areas. Among the laborers in the mines, a pidgin language, Fanakilo, was used.

**Religions:** Christianity (in almost all the European Christian denominations), tribal religions, Islam.

**Population statistics:** According to one of the *apartheid* laws, the Population Registration Act of 1950, all South Africans were to be registered at birth according to “race,” with four main racial distinctions: white, black, Asian, and coloured. The term “race,” as used in *apartheid*-era South Africa, had a meaning akin to rigidly and ascriptively defined ethnicity.

Population statistics are problematic, in that South African census estimates stopped including data for the population of the four “sovereign” homelands (Bantustans) when the South African government no longer considered the territories a part of South Africa. The government also no longer considered the people connected to the “homelands” to be citizens of South Africa, even though large portions of the nominal homeland populations continued to reside and work in South Africa proper. Tables 4.15 and 4.16 show the difference in population figures depending on whether the black populations associated with “sovereign” homelands were counted or not. In any event, the official figures probably undercounted the black population because of widespread reluctance among blacks to provide census data. In reality, the black population was probably larger.

Table 4.15

## Population of South Africa (Including “Homelands”) by Official “Races”

| Group     | Population (1,000s) | Percent of Total |
|-----------|---------------------|------------------|
| Whites    | 4,961               | 14.8%            |
| Blacks    | 24,901              | 74.1%            |
| Coloureds | 2,881               | 8.6%             |
| Asians    | 878                 | 2.6%             |
| Total     | 33,621              | 100.0%           |

Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: *Survey of Race Relations—1986*, Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1986.

Table 4.16

## Population of South Africa (Excluding “Homelands”) by Official “Races”

| Group     | Population (1,000s) | Percent of Total |
|-----------|---------------------|------------------|
| Whites    | 4,574               | 19.5%            |
| Blacks    | 15,200              | 65.0%            |
| Coloureds | 2,810               | 12.0%            |
| Asians    | 821                 | 3.5%             |
| Total     | 23,391              | 100.0%           |

SOURCE: Compilation of 1985 South African census estimates.

There was substantial ethnic heterogeneity in the intraracial categories, especially among the black population. However, it is difficult to put together a complete picture of the intrablack population breakdown for all of South Africa because population statistics for South Africa did not include the four “sovereign” homelands and the homelands themselves kept poor statistics and/or were not “homelands” to one particular group. Table 4.17 provides an indication of the intrablack distinctions within South Africa proper (excluding the “homelands”). It provides information for the *de jure* populations, meaning those who did not lose South African citizenship, whether they lived in South Africa proper or not. The *de facto* populations were actually much larger, since the same people continued to reside and work in South Africa proper even if they were considered citizens of a “sovereign” homeland. The populations of the six non-“sovereign” but “self-governing” territories are included in the figures for Table 4.17.

Table 4.18 complements these figures by providing information on the population of the four “sovereign” homelands.

Among the whites, intragroup distinctions were based primarily on linguistic affiliation, ancestry, and religion. The Afrikaners considered themselves to have descended from the original Dutch colonists, and almost all were affiliated with the Dutch Reformed churches. The Anglophone population, considered to be descended primarily from British settlers, varied in religious affiliation: Anglican (Episcopal), Methodist, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Jewish, and Lutheran.

Table 4.17

**Major Intrablack Distinctions Among the Population of South Africa  
(Excluding *de jure* “homelands” populations)**

| Group                       | Population (1,000s) |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Zulu                        | 5,683               |
| Xhosa                       | 2,987               |
| Sepedi (Northern Sotho)     | 2,348               |
| Seshoeshoe (Southern Sotho) | 1,742               |
| Tswana                      | 1,357               |
| Shangaan-Tsongo             | 996                 |

SOURCE: 1980 South African census data.

**Table 4.18**  
**Population of the “Sovereign” Homelands**

| “Homeland”     | <i>De jure</i><br>Population<br>(1,000s) | <i>De facto</i><br>Population<br>(1,000s) | Primary<br>Group |
|----------------|--|---|------------------|
| Transkei       | 3,000                                    | 1,500                                     | Xhosa            |
| Bophuthatswana | 3,200                                    | 1,700                                     | Tswana           |
| Venda          | 550                                      | 385                                       | Venda            |
| Ciskei         | 2,200                                    | 682                                       | Xhosa            |

SOURCE: 1985 individual “homelands” estimates.

**Table 4.19**  
**Intrawhite Distinctions Among the Population of South Africa**

| Native<br>Language | Population<br>(1,000s) | Percent of Total<br>Whites |
|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Afrikaans          | 2,581                  | 57.0                       |
| English            | 1,763                  | 38.9                       |
| Portuguese         | 70                     | 1.5                        |
| others             | 114                    | 2.5                        |
| Total              | 4,528                  | 100.0                      |

Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

SOURCE: 1980 South African census data.

Most coloureds were members of the Dutch Reformed or Anglican church. Most Asians were either Hindu or Muslim. The most important native languages among the Asians were Tamil, Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, and Telugu.