Chapter II: Socio-Cultural and Historical Background
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Colonial South Africa

Portuguese seafarers, who pioneered the sea route to India in the late 15th century, were regular visitors to the South African coast during the early 1500s. Other Europeans followed from the late 16th century. In 1652, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) set up a station in Table Bay (Cape Town) to provision passing ships. Trade with the Khoekhoe for slaughter stock soon degenerated into raiding and warfare. Beginning in 1657, European settlers were allotted farms by the colonial authorities in the arable regions around Cape Town, where wine and wheat became the major products. In response to the colonists’ demand for labour, the VOC imported slaves from East Africa, Madagascar, and its possessions from the East Indies.

By the early 1700s, the colonists had begun to spread into the hinterland beyond the nearest mountain ranges. These relatively independent and mobile farmers (trekboers), who lived as pastoralists and hunters, were largely free from supervision by the Dutch authorities. “As they intruded further upon the land and water sources, and stepped up their demands for livestock and labour, more and more of the indigenous inhabitants were dispossessed and incorporated into the colonial economy as servants.”

Diseases such as smallpox, which was introduced by the Europeans in 1713, decimated the Khoisan, contributing to the decline of their cultures. Unions across the colour line took place and a new multiracial social order evolved, based on the sovereignty of European colonists. The slave population steadily increased since more
labour was needed. By the mid-1700s, there were more slaves in the Cape than there were free burghers (European colonists). The Asian slaves were concentrated in the towns, where they formed an artisan class. They brought with them the Islamic religion, which gained adherents and significantly shaped the working-class culture of the Western Cape. Slaves of African descent were found more often on the farms of outlying districts.

In the late 1700s, the Khoisan offered far more determined resistance to colonial encroachment across the length of the colonial frontier. From the 1770s, colonists also came into contact and conflict with Bantu-speaking chiefdoms. A century of intermittent warfare ensued during which the colonists gained ascendancy, first over the Khoisan and then over the Xhosa-speaking chiefdoms to the east. “It was only in the late 1800s that the subjugation of these settled African societies became feasible. For some time, their relatively sophisticated social structure and economic systems fended off decisive disruption by incoming colonists, who lacked the necessary military superiority.”

At the same time, a process of cultural change was set in motion, not least by commercial and missionary activity. In contrast to the Khoisan, the black farmers were, by and large, immune to European diseases. For this and other reasons, they were to greatly outnumber the whites in the population of white-ruled South Africa, and were able to preserve important features of their culture.

Perhaps because of population pressures, combined with the actions of slave traders in Portuguese territory on the east coast, the Zulu kingdom emerged as a highly centralised state. In the 1820s, the innovative leader Shaka established sway
over a considerable area of south-east Africa and brought many chiefdoms under his
dominion. As splinter groups conquered and absorbed communities in their path, the
disruption was felt as far north as central Africa. Substantial states, such as
Moshoeshoe’s Lesotho and other Sotho-Tswana chiefdoms, were established, partly
for reasons of defence. The Mfecane or Difaqane, as this period of disruption and
state formation became known, remains the subject of much speculative debate.

In 1795, the British occupied the Cape as a strategic base against the French,
controlling the sea route to the East. After a brief reversion to the Dutch in the course
of the Napoleonic wars, it was retaken in 1806 and kept by Britain in the post-war
settlement of territorial claims. The closed and regulated economic system of the
Dutch period was swept away as the Cape Colony was integrated into the dynamic
international trading empire of industrialising Britain.

A crucial new element was evangelicalism, brought to the Cape by Protestant
missionaries. The evangelicals believed in the liberating effect of free labour and in
the civilising mission of British imperialism. They were convinced that indigenous
peoples could be fully assimilated into European Christian culture once the shackles
of oppression had been removed.

The most important representative of the mission movement in South Africa
was Dr John Philip, who arrived as superintendent of the London Missionary Society
in 1819. His campaign on behalf of the oppressed Khoisan coincided with a high
point in official sympathy for philanthropic concerns.

One result was Ordinance 50 of 1828, which guaranteed equal civil rights for
people of colour within the colony and freed them from legal discrimination. At the
same time, a powerful anti-slavery movement in Britain promoted a series of ameliorative measures, imposed on the colonies in the 1820s, and the proclamation of emancipation, which came into force in 1834. The slaves were subject to a four-year period of apprenticeship with their former owners, on the grounds that they must be prepared for freedom, which came on 1 December 1838.

Although slavery had become less profitable because of a depression in the wine industry, Cape slave-owners rallied to oppose emancipation. The compensation money, which the British treasury paid out to sweeten the pill, injected unprecedented liquidity into the stagnant local economy. This brought a spurt of company formation, such as banks and insurance companies, as well as a surge of investment in land and wool sheep in the drier regions of the colony, in the late 1830s.³

Wool became a staple export on which the Cape economy depended for its further development in the middle decades of the century. For the ex-slaves, as for the Khoisan servants, the reality of freedom was very different from the promise. As a wage-based economy developed, they remained dispossessed and exploited, with little opportunity to escape their servile lot. Increasingly, they were lumped together as the coloured people, a group which included the descendants of unions between indigenous and European peoples, and a substantial Muslim minority who became known as the Cape Malays (misleadingly, as they mostly came from the Indonesian archipelago).
The coloured people were discriminated against on account of their working-class status as well as their racial identity. Among the poor, especially in and around Cape Town, there continued to be a great deal of racial mixing and intermarriage throughout the 1800s. In 1820, several thousand British settlers, who were swept up by a scheme to relieve Britain of its unemployed, were placed in the eastern Cape frontier zone as a buffer against the Xhosa chiefdoms. The vision of a dense settlement of small farmers was, however, ill-conceived and many of the settlers became artisans and traders. The more successful became an entrepreneurial class of merchants, large-scale sheep farmers and speculators with an insatiable demand for land.

Some became fierce warmongers who pressed for the military dispossession of the chiefdoms. They coveted Xhosa land and welcomed the prospect of war involving large-scale military expenditure by the imperial authorities. The Xhosa engaged in raiding as a means of asserting their prior claims to the land. Racial paranoia became integral to white frontier politics. The result was that frontier warfare became endemic through much of the 19th century, during which Xhosa war leaders such as Chief Maqoma became heroic figures to their people.

By the mid-1800s, British settlers of similar persuasion were to be found in Natal. They too called for imperial expansion in support of their land claims and trading enterprises. Meanwhile, large numbers of the original colonists, the Boers, were greatly extending white occupation beyond the Cape’s borders to the north, in the movement that became known as the Great Trek, in the mid-1830s. Alienated by British liberalism, and with their economic enterprise usurped by British settlers,
several thousand Boers from the interior districts, accompanied by a number of Khoisan servants, began a series of migrations northwards. They moved to the Highveld and Natal, skirting the great concentrations of black farmers on the way by taking advantage of the areas disrupted during the Mfecane.

When the British, who were concerned about controlling the traffic through Port Natal (Durban), annexed the territory of Natal in 1843, those emigrant Boers who had hoped to settle there returned inland. These Voortrekkers (as they were later called) coalesced in two land-locked republics, the South African Republic (Transvaal) and the Orange Free State. There, the principles of racially exclusive citizenship were absolute, despite the trekkers’ reliance on black labour. With limited coercive power, the Boer communities had to establish relations and develop alliances with some black chiefdoms, neutralising those who obstructed their intrusion or who posed a threat to their security.

Only after the mineral discoveries of the late 1800s did the balance of power swing decisively towards the colonists. The Boer republics then took on the trappings of real statehood and imposed their authority within the territorial borders that they had notionally claimed for themselves.

The Colony of Natal, situated to the south of the mighty Zulu State, developed along very different lines from the original colony of settlement, the Cape. The size of the black population left no room for the assimilationist vision of race domination embraced in the Cape. Chiefdoms consisting mainly of refugee groups in the aftermath of the Mfecane were persuaded to accept colonial protection in return for reserved land and the freedom to govern themselves in accordance with their own
customs. These chiefdoms were established in the heart of an expanding colonial territory.

Natal developed a system of political and legal dualism, whereby chiefly rule was entrenched and customary law was codified. Although exemptions from customary law could be granted to the educated products of the missions, in practice they were rare. Urban residence was strictly controlled and political rights outside the reserves were effectively limited to whites. This system is widely regarded as having provided a model for the segregationism that would prevail in the 20th century.

Natal’s economy was boosted by the development of sugar plantations in the subtropical coastal lowlands. Indian-indentured labourers were imported from 1860 to work the plantations, and many Indian traders and market gardeners followed. These Indians, who were segregated and discriminated against from the start, became a further important element in South Africa’s population. It was in South Africa that Indian activist and leader, Mohandas Gandhi refined, from the mid-1890s, the techniques of passive resistance, which he later effectively practised in India. Although Indians gradually moved into the Transvaal and elsewhere, they remain concentrated in Natal.

In 1853, the Cape Colony was granted a representative legislature in keeping with British policy, followed in 1872 by self-government. The franchise was formally non-racial, but also based on income and property qualifications. The result was that Africans and coloured people formed a minority of voters – although in certain places a substantial one.
What became known as the liberal tradition in the Cape depended on the fact that the great mass of Bantu-speaking farmers remained outside its colonial borders until late in the 19th century. Non-racialism could thus be embraced without posing a threat to white supremacy. Numbers of Africans within the Cape Colony had sufficient formal education or owned enough property to qualify for the franchise. Political alliances across racial lines were common in the eastern Cape constituencies. It is therefore not surprising that the eastern Cape became a seedbed of African nationalism, once the ideal and promise of inclusion in the common society had been so starkly violated by later racial policies.

By the late 19th century, the limitations of the Cape’s liberal tradition were becoming apparent. The hardening of racial attitudes that accompanied the rise of a more militant imperialist spirit coincided locally with the watershed discovery of mineral riches in the interior of southern Africa. In a developing economy, cheap labour was at a premium, and the claims of educated Africans for equality met with increasingly fierce resistance. At the same time, the large numbers of Africans in the chiefdoms beyond the Kei River and north of the Gariep (Orange River), then being incorporated into the Cape Colony, posed new threats to racial supremacy and white security, increasing segregationist pressures.

Alluvial diamonds were discovered on the Vaal River in the late 1860s. The subsequent discovery of dry deposits at what became the city of Kimberley drew tens of thousands of people, black and white, to the first great industrial hub in Africa, and the largest diamond deposit in the world. In 1871, the British, who ousted several rival claimants, annexed the diamond fields.
The Colony of Griqualand West thus created was incorporated into the Cape Colony in 1880. By 1888, the consolidation of diamond claims had led to the creation of the huge De Beers monopoly under the control of Cecil Rhodes. He used his power and wealth to become prime minister of the Cape Colony (from 1890 to 1896) and, through his chartered British South Africa Company, conqueror and ruler of modern-day Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The mineral discoveries had a major impact on the subcontinent as a whole. A railway network linking the interior to the coastal ports revolutionised transportation and energised agriculture. Coastal cities such as modern-day Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban experienced an economic boom as port facilities were upgraded. “The fact that the mineral discoveries coincided with a new era of imperialism and the scramble for Africa, brought imperial power and influence to bear in southern Africa as never before.”

Independent African chiefdoms were systematically subjugated and incorporated by their white-rulled neighbours. In 1897, Zululand was incorporated into Natal. The South African Republic (Transvaal) was annexed by Britain in 1877. Boer resistance led to British withdrawal in 1881, but not before the Pedi (northern Sotho) state, which fell within the republic’s borders, had been subjugated. The indications were that, having once been asserted, British hegemony was likely to be reasserted.

The southern Sotho and Swazi territories were also brought under British rule but maintained their status as imperial dependencies, so that both the current Lesotho and Swaziland escaped the rule of local white regimes. The discovery of the
Witwatersrand goldfields in 1886 was a turning point in the history of South Africa. It presaged the emergence of the modern South African industrial state. Once the extent of the reefs had been established, and deep-level mining had proved to be a viable investment, it was only a matter of time before Britain and its local representatives again found a pretext for war against the Boer republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

The demand for franchise rights for English-speaking immigrants on the goldfields (known as uitlanders) provided a lever for applying pressure on the government of President Paul Kruger. Egged on by the deep-level mining magnates, to whom the Boer government seemed obstructive and inefficient, and by the expectation of an uitlander uprising, Rhodes launched a raid into the Transvaal in late December 1895. The raid’s failure saw the end of Rhodes’ political career, but Sir Alfred Milner, British high commissioner in South Africa from 1897, was determined to overthrow Kruger’s government and establish British rule throughout the subcontinent. The Boer government was eventually forced into a declaration of war in October 1899.

The mineral discoveries had a radical impact on every sphere of society. Labour was required on a massive scale and could only be provided by Africans, who had to be drawn away from the land. Many Africans responded with alacrity to the opportunities presented by wage labour, travelling long distances to earn money to supplement rural enterprise in the homestead economy. In response to the expansion of internal markets, Africans exploited their farming skills and family labour to good
effect to increase production for sale. A substantial black peasantry arose, often by means of share-cropping or labour tenantry on white-owned farms.

For the white authorities, however, the chief consideration was ensuring a labour supply and undermining black competition on the land. Conquest, land dispossession, taxation and pass laws were designed to force black people off the land and channel them into labour markets, especially to meet the needs of the mines.

Gradually, the alternatives available to Africans were closed, and the decline of the homestead economy made wage labour increasingly essential for survival. The integration of Africans into the emerging urban and industrial society of South Africa should have followed these developments, but short-term, recurrent labour migrancy suited employers and the authorities, which sought to entrench the system. The closed compounds pioneered on the diamond fields, as a means of migrant labour control, were replicated at the gold mines. The preservation of communal areas from which migrants could be drawn had the effect of lowering wages, by denying Africans rights within the urban areas and keeping their families and dependants on subsistence plots in the reserves.

Africans could be denied basic rights if the fiction could be maintained that they did not belong in white South Africa, but to tribal societies from which they came to service the white man’s needs. Where black families secured a toehold in the urban areas, local authorities confined them to segregated locations. This set of assumptions and policies informed the development of segregationist ideology and, later (from 1948), apartheid.
British Colonialism in Nigeria

Nigeria contains more historic cultures and empires than any other other nation in Africa. They date back as far as the 5th century BC, when communities living around the southern slopes of the Jos plateau made wonderfully expressive terracotta figures, in a tradition known now as the Nok culture, from the Nigerian village where these sculptures were first unearthed. The Nok people were neolithic tribes who had recently acquired the iron technology spreading southwards through Africa.

The Jos plateau is in the centre of Nigeria, but the first extensive kingdoms of the region - more than a millennium after the Nok people - were in the north and northeast, deriving their wealth from trade north through the Sahara and east into the Sudan.

During the 9th century AD a trading empire grew up around Lake Chad. Its original centre was east of the lake, in the Kanem region, but it soon extended to Bornu on the western side. In the 11th century the ruler of Kanem-Bornu converted to Islam. West of Bornu, along the northern frontier of Nigeria, was the land of the Hausa people. Well placed to control trade with the forest regions to the south, the Hausa developed a number of small but stable kingdoms, each ruled from a strong walled city. They were often threatened by larger neighbours (Mali and Gao to the west, Bornu to the east). But the Hausa traders benefitted also from being on the route between these empires. By the 14th century they too were Muslim.

In the savanna grasslands and the forest regions west of the Niger, between the Hausa kingdoms and the coast, the Yoruba people were the dominant tribes. Here
they established two powerful states. The first was Ife, on the border between forest and savanna. Famous now for its sculpture, Ife flourished from the 11th to 15th century. In the 16th century a larger Yoruba empire developed, based slightly further from the forest at Oyo. Using the profits of trade to develop a forceful cavalry, Oyo grew in strength during the 16th century. By the end of the 18th century the rulers of Oyo were controlling a region from the Niger to the west of Dahomey.

Meanwhile, firmly within the forest, the best known of all the Nigerian kingdoms established itself in the 15th century. Benin became a name internationally known for its cast-metal sculpture, in a tradition inherited from the Ife.

In terms of extent Benin was no match for Oyo, its contemporary to the north. In the 15th century the region brought under central control was a mere seventy-miles across (people and places being harder to subdue in the tropical forest than on the savanna), though a century later Benin stretched from the Niger delta in the east to Lagos in the west.

But Benin's fame was based on factors other than power. This was the coastal kingdom which the Portuguese discovered when they reached the mouth of the Niger in the 1470s, bringing back to Europe the first news of superb African artifacts and of the ceremonial splendour of Benin's oba or king.

The kings of Benin were a story in themselves. In the 19th century they scandalized the west by their use of human sacrifice in court rituals. At the end of the 20th century the original dynasty was still in place, though without political power. All in all, among Nigeria's many historic kingdoms, Benin has earned its widespread renown. Living among the Hausa in the northern regions of Nigeria are a tribe, the
Fulani, whose leaders in the early 19th century became passionate advocates of strict Islam. From 1804 sheikh Usman dan Fodio and his two sons led the Fulani in an immensely successful holy war against the lax Muslim rulers of the Hausa kingdoms.

The result was the establishment in 1809 of a Fulani capital at Sokoto, from which the centre and north of Nigeria was effectively ruled for the rest of the 19th century. But during this same period there was steady encroachment on the region by British interests. From the death of Mungo Park near Bussa in 1806 to the end of the century, there was continuing interest in Nigeria on the part of British explorers, anti-slavery activists, missionaries and traders.

In 1821 the British government sponsored an expedition south through the Sahara to reach the kingdom of Bornu. Its members became the first Europeans to reach Lake Chad, in 1823. One of the group, Hugh Clapperton, explored further west through Kano and the Hausa territory to reach Sokoto. Clapperton was only back in England for a few months, in 1825, before he set off again for the Nigerian coast at Lagos.

On this expedition, with his servant Richard Lander, he traveled on trade routes north from the coast to Kano and then west again to Sokoto. Here Clapperton died. But Lander made his way back to London, where he was commissioned by the government to explore the lower reaches of the Niger.

Accompanied in 1830 by his brother John, Lander made his way north from the coast near Lagos to reach the great river at Bussa - the furthest point of Mungo Park's journey downstream. With considerable difficulty the brothers made a canoe trip downstream, among hostile Ibo tribesmen, to reach the sea at the Niger delta.
This region had long been familiar to European traders, but its link to the interior was now charted. All seemed set for serious trade.

After Lander's second return to England a company was formed by a group of Liverpool merchants, including Macgregor Laird, to trade on the lower Niger. Laird was also a pioneer in the shipping industry. For the present purpose, an expedition to the Niger, he designed an iron paddle-steamer, the 55-ton Alburkah.5

The Alburkah steamed south from Milford Haven in July 1832 with forty-eight on board. She reached the mouth of the Niger three months later, entering history as the first ocean-going iron ship. After making her way up one of the many streams of the Niger delta, the Alburkah progressed upstream on the main river as far as Lokoja, the junction with the Benue. The expedition demonstrated that the Niger offers a highway into the continent for ocean vessels. And the performance of the iron steamer was a triumph. But medicine was not yet as far advanced as technology. When the Alburkah returned to Liverpool, in 1834, only nine of the original crew of forty-eight were alive. They included a much weakened Macgregor Laird.

The next British expedition to the Niger was almost equally disastrous in terms of loss of life. Four ships under naval command were sent out in 1841, with instructions to steam up the Niger and make treaties with local kings to prevent the slave trade. The enterprise was abandoned when 48 of the 145 Europeans in the crews died of fever.

Malaria was the cause of the trouble, but major progress was made when a doctor, William Baikie, led an expedition up the Niger in 1854. He administered quinine to his men and suffered no loss of life. Extracted from the bark of the
cinchona tree, quinine has long been used in medicine. But its proven efficacy against malaria was a turning point in the European penetration of Africa.

The British anti-slavery policy in the region involved boosting the trade in palm oil (a valuable product which gives the name Oil Rivers to the Niger delta) to replace the dependence on income from the slave trade. It transpired later that this was somewhat counter-productive, causing the upriver chieftains to acquire more slaves to meet the increased demand for palm oil. But it was nevertheless the philanthropic principle behind much of the effort to set up trading stations.

At the same time the British navy patrolled the coast to liberate captives from slave ships of other nations and to settle them at Freetown in Sierra Leone. “From 1849 the British government accepts a more direct involvement. A consul, based in Fernando Po, is appointed to take responsibility for the Bights of Biafra and Benin. He undertakes direct negotiations with the king of Lagos, the principal port from which slaves are shipped. When these break down, in 1851, Lagos is attacked and captured by a British force.”

Another member of the Lagos royal family was placed on the throne, after guaranteeing to put an end to the slave trade and to human sacrifice. When he and his successor failed to fulfill these terms, Lagos was annexed in 1861 as a British colony.

During the remainder of the century the consolidation of British trade and British political control went hand in hand. In 1879 George Goldie persuaded the British trading enterprises on the Niger to merge their interests in a single United African Company, later granted a charter as the Royal Niger Company.
In 1893 the delta region was organized as the Niger Coast Protectorate. In 1897 the campaign against unacceptable local practices reached a climax in Benin - notorious by this time both for slave trading and for human sacrifice. The members of a British delegation to the oba of Benin were massacred in that year. In the reprisals Benin City was partly burnt by British troops.

In 1900 the company's charter was revoked. Britain assumed direct responsibility for the region from the coast to Sokoto and Bornu in the north. Given the existing degree of British involvement, this entire area had been readily accepted at the Berlin conference in 1884 as falling to Britain in the scramble for Africa - though in the late 1890s there remained dangerous tension between Britain and France, the colonial power in neighbouring Dahomey, over drawing Nigeria's western boundary.

The sixty years of Britain's colonial rule in Nigeria were characterized by frequent reclassifying of different regions for administrative purposes. They were symptomatic of the problem of uniting the country as a single state.

In the early years the Niger Coast Protectorate was expanded to become Southern Nigeria, with its seat of government at Lagos. At this time the rulers in the north (the emir of Kano and the sultan of Sokoto) were very far from accepting British rule. To deal with the situation Frederick Lugard was appointed high commissioner and commander-in-chief of the protectorate of northern Nigeria.

Lugard had already been much involved in the colony, commanding troops from 1894 on behalf of the Royal Niger Company to oppose French claims on Borgu (a border region, divided in 1898 between Nigeria and Dahomey). Between 1903 and
1906 he subdued Kano and Sokoto and finally put an end to their rulers' slave-raiding expeditions.

Lugard pacified northern Nigeria by ensuring that in each territory, however small, the throne was won and retained by a chief willing to cooperate. Lugard then allowed these client rulers considerable power - in the technique, soon to be known as 'indirect rule', which in Africa was particularly associated with his name (though it has been a familiar aspect of British colonial policy in India). In 1912 Lugard was appointed governor of both northern and southern Nigeria and was given the task of merging them. He did so by 1914, when the entire region became the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria.

The First World War brought a combined British and French invasion of German Cameroon (a campaign not completed until early in 1916). In 1922 the League of Nations grants mandated to the two nations to administer the former German colony. The British mandate consisted of two thin strips on the eastern border of Nigeria.

The rival claims of Nigeria's various regions became most evident after World War II when Britain was attempting to find a structure to meet African demands for political power. By 1951 the country had been divided into Northern, Eastern and Western regions, each with its own house of assembly. In addition there was a separate house of chiefs for the Northern province, to reflect the strong tradition there of tribal authority. And there is an overall legislative council for the whole of Nigeria.

But even this was not enough to reflect the complexity of the situation. In 1954 a new constitution (the third in eight years) established the Federation of
Nigeria and added the Federal Territory of Lagos. During the later 1950s an African political structure was gradually achieved. From 1957 there was a federal prime minister. In the same year the Western and Eastern regions were granted internal self-government, to be followed by the Northern region in 1959. Full independence follows rapidly, in October 1960. The tensions between the country's communities now became Nigeria's own concern.

Regional hostilities were a feature of independent Nigeria from the start, partly due to an imbalance of population. More than half the nation's people were in the Fulani and Hausa territories of the Northern region. Northerners therefore controlled not only their own regional assembly but also the federal government in Lagos.

From 1962 to 1964 there was almost continuous anti-northern unrest elsewhere in the nation, coming to a climax in a rebellion in 1966 by officers from the Eastern region, the homeland of the Ibo. They assassinated both the federal prime minister and the premiers of the Northern and Western regions. In the ensuing chaos many Ibos living in the north were massacred. In July a northern officer, Yakubu Gowon, emerged as the country's leader. His response to Nigeria's warring tribal factions was to subdivide the four regions, rearranging them into twelve states.

This device further inflamed Ibo hostility, for one of the new states cuts their territory off from the sea. The senior Ibo officer, Odumegwu Ojukwu, took the drastic step in May 1967 of declaring the Eastern region an independent nation, calling it the republic of Biafra.
The result was bitter and intense civil war, with the federal army (increasing during the conflict from 10,000 to 200,000 men) meeting powerful resistance from the secessionist region. The issue split the west, where it was the first post-independence African war to receive widespread coverage. The US and Britain supplied arms to the federal government. France extended the same facilities to Biafra.

In any civil war ordinary people suffered most, and in small land-locked Biafra this was even more true than usual. By January 1970 they were starving. Biafra surrendered and ceased to exist. Ojukwu escaped across the border and was granted asylum in the Ivory Coast.

General Gowon achieved an impressive degree of reconciliation in the country after the traumas of 1967-70. Nigeria now became one of the wealthiest countries in Africa thanks to its large reserves of oil. In the mid-1970s the output was more than two million barrels a day, the value of which was boosted by the high prices achieved during the oil crisis of 1973-4.

There were even more coups and several other reversals, with corruption emerging as one of the most dangerous problems facing the country. The future of Nigeria is problematic but of considerable importance to Africa. The nation's potential remains vast. With at least 115 million people (comprising some 200 tribes) it is the continent's most populous country. And as the world's fifth largest oil producer, it has the wherewithal to be one of the richest. This is the Nigeria of Achebe.
Apartheid in South Africa

The modern nation, culture and history of South Africa is colored by the memories and impact of the apartheid regime which lasted till just a little more than two decades ago. Although British overcame the Dutch Boer settlers at the beginning of the 21st century and established their control over the entire territory of South Africa, some tendencies from the Boer rule endured.

In 1900 after a large expeditionary force under lords Roberts and Kitchener arrived, the British advance was rapid. Kruger fled the Transvaal shortly before Pretoria fell in June 1900. The formal conquest of the two Boer republics was followed by a prolonged guerrilla campaign. Small, mobile groups of Boers denied the imperial forces their victory by disrupting rail links and supply lines.

Commandos swept deep into colonial territory, rousing rebellion wherever they went. The British were at a disadvantage, owing to their lack of familiarity with the terrain and the Boers’ superior skills as horsemen and sharpshooters. The British responded with a scorched-earth policy which included farm burnings, looting and the setting-up of concentration camps for non-combatants, in which some 26 000 Boer women and children died from disease. The incarceration of black (including coloured) people in the path of the war in racially segregated camps has been absent in conventional accounts of the war and has only recently been acknowledged.

They too suffered appalling conditions and some 14 000 (perhaps many more) are estimated to have died. At the same time, many black farmers were in a position to meet the demand for produce created by the military, or to avail themselves for employment opportunities at good wages. Some 10 000 black servants accompanied
the Boer commandos, and the British used Africans as labourers, scouts, dispatch riders, drivers and guards.

The war also taught many Africans that the forces of dispossession could be rolled back if the circumstances were right. It gave black communities the opportunity to recolonise land lost in conquest, which enabled them to withhold their labour after the war. Most Africans supported the British in the belief that Britain was committed to extending civil and political rights to black people. In this they were to be disappointed, as in the Treaty of Vereeniging that ended the war, the British agreed to leave the issue of rights for Africans to be decided by a future self-governing (white) authority. All in all, the Anglo-Boer/South African War was a radicalising experience for Africans.

Britain’s reconstruction regime set about creating a white-ruled dominion by uniting the former Boer republics (both by then British colonies) with Natal and the Cape.

The most important priority was to re-establish white control over the land and force the Africans back to wage labour. The labour-recruiting system was improved, both internally and externally. Recruiting agreements were reached with the Portuguese authorities in Mozambique, from where much mine labour came.

When, by 1904, African resources still proved inadequate to get the mines working at pre-war levels, over 60 000 indentured Chinese were brought in. This precipitated a vociferous outcry from proponents of white supremacy in South Africa and liberals in Britain.
By 1910, all had been repatriated, a step made easier when a surge of Africans came forward from areas such as the Transkeian territories and the northern Transvaal, which had not previously been large-scale suppliers of migrants. This was the heyday of the private recruiters, who exploited families’ indebtedness to procure young men to labour in the mines. The Africans’ post-war ability to withhold their labour was undercut by government action, abetted by drought and stock disease.

The impact of the Anglo-Boer/South African War as a seminal influence on the development of Afrikaner nationalist politics became apparent in subsequent years. The Boer leaders – most notably Louis Botha, Jan Smuts and JBM Hertzog – played a dominant role in the country’s politics for the next half century. After initial plans for anglicisation of the defeated Afrikaners were abandoned as impractical, the British looked to the Afrikaners as collaborators in securing imperial political and economic interests.

During 1907 and 1908, the two former Boer republics were granted self-government but, crucially, with a whites-only franchise. Despite promises to the contrary, black interests were sacrificed in the interest of white nation-building across the white language divide. The National Convention drew up a constitution and the four colonies became an independent dominion called the Union of South Africa on 31 May 1910. “The 19th century formally non-racial franchise was retained in the Cape but was not extended elsewhere, where rights of citizenship were confined to whites alone. It was clear from the start that segregation was the conventional wisdom of the new rulers. Black people were defined as outsiders, without rights or claims on the common society that their labour had helped to create.”
Government policy in the Union of South Africa did not develop in isolation, but against the backdrop of black political initiatives. Segregation and apartheid assumed their shape, in part, as a white response to Africans’ increasing participation in the country’s economic life and their assertion of political rights. Despite the government’s efforts to shore up traditionalism and retribalise them, black people became more fully integrated into the urban and industrial society of 20th-century South Africa than elsewhere on the continent. An educated élite of clerics, teachers, business people, journalists and professionals grew to be a major force in black politics. Mission Christianity and its associated educational institutions exerted a profound influence on African political life, and separatist churches were early vehicles for African political assertion. The experiences of studying abroad, and in particular, interaction with black people struggling for their rights elsewhere in Africa, the United States of America and the Caribbean, played an important part. A vigorous black press arose, associated in its early years with such pioneer editors as JT Jabavu, Pixley Seme, Dr Abdullah Abdurahman, Sol Plaatje and John Dube, served the black reading public.

At the same time, African communal struggles to maintain access to the land in rural areas posed a powerful challenge to the white state. Traditional authorities often led popular struggles against intrusive and manipulative policies. Government attempts to control and co-opt the chiefs often failed. Steps towards the formation of a national political organisation of coloureds began around the turn of the century, with the formation of the African Political Organisation in 1902 by Dr Abdurahman, mainly in the Cape Province.
The African National Congress (ANC), founded in 1912, became the most important black organisation drawing together traditional authorities and the educated African élite in common causes.

Worker militancy emerged in the wake of the First World War and continued through the 1920s. It included strikes and an anti-pass campaign given impetus by women, particularly in the Free State, resisting extension of the pass laws to them. The Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union, under the leadership of Clements Kadalie, was (despite its name) the first populist, nationwide organisation representing blacks in rural as well as urban areas. But it was short-lived.

The Communist Party, formed in 1921 and since then a force for both non-racialism and worker organisation, was to prove far longer-lasting. In other sections of the black population too, the turn of the century saw organised opposition emerging. Gandhi’s leadership of protest against discriminatory laws gave impetus to the formation of provincial Indian congresses, including the Natal Indian Congress formed by Gandhi in 1894.

The principles of segregationist thinking were laid down in a 1905 report by the South African Native Affairs Commission and continued to evolve in response to these economic, social and political pressures. In keeping with its recommendations, the first union government enacted the seminal Natives Land Act in 1913. This defined the remnants of their ancestral lands after conquest for African occupation, and declared illegal all land purchases or rent tenancy outside these reserves.

The reserves (homelands as they were subsequently called) eventually comprised about 13% of South Africa’s land surface. Administrative and legal
dualism reinforced the division between white citizen and black non-citizen, a dispensation personified by the governor-general who, as supreme chief over the country’s African majority, was empowered to rule them by administrative fiat and decree.

The government also regularised the job colour bar, reserving skilled work for whites and denying African workers the right to organise. Legislation, which was consolidated in the Natives (Urban Areas) Act, 1923, entrenched urban segregation and controlled African mobility by means of pass laws. The pass laws were designed to force Africans into labour and to keep them there under conditions and at wage levels that suited white employers, and to deny them any bargaining power. In these and other ways, the foundations of apartheid were laid by successive governments representing the compromises hammered out by the National Convention of 1908 to 1909 to effect the union of English- and Afrikaans-speaking whites. However, divisions within the white community remained significant. Afrikaner nationalism grew as a factor in the years after union.

It was given impetus in 1914, both by the formation of the National Party (NP), in a breakaway from the ruling South African Party, and by a rebellion of Afrikaners who could not reconcile themselves with the decision to join the First World War against Germany. In part, the NP spoke for Afrikaners impoverished by the Anglo-Boer/South African War and dislodged from the land by the development of capitalist farming. An Afrikaner underclass was emerging in the towns, which found itself uncompetitive in the labour market, as white workers demanded higher wages than those paid to blacks.
Soon, labour issues came to the fore. In 1920, some 71 000 black mineworkers went on strike in protest against the spiralling cost of living, but the strike was quickly put down by isolating the compounds where the migrant workers were housed. Another threat to government came from white workers. Immigrant white workers with mining experience abroad performed much of the skilled and semi-skilled work on the mines. As mine owners tried to cut costs by using lower-wage black labour in semi-skilled jobs, white labour became increasingly militant. These tensions culminated in a bloody and dramatic rebellion on the goldfields in 1922, which the Smuts government put down with military force. In 1924, a pact government under Hertzog, comprising Afrikaner nationalists and representatives of immigrant labour, ousted the Smuts regime.

The Pact was based on a common suspicion of the dominance of mining capital, and a determination to protect the interests of white labour by intensifying discrimination against blacks. The commitment to white labour policies in government employment, such as the railways and postal service was intensified, and the job colour bar was reinforced, with a key objective being to address what was known as the poor-white problem. “In 1934, the main white parties fused to combat the local effects of a worldwide depression.”

This was followed by a new Afrikaner nationalist breakaway under Dr DF Malan. In 1936, white supremacy was further entrenched by the United Party with the removal of the Africans of the Cape Province who qualified, from the common voters’ roll. Meanwhile, Malan’s breakaway NP was greatly augmented by an Afrikaner cultural revival spearheaded by the secret white male Afrikaner
Broederbond and other cultural organisations during the year of the Voortrekker centenary celebrations (1938), as well as by anti-war sentiment from 1939.

After the Second World War in 1948, the NP, with its ideology of apartheid that brought an even more rigorous and authoritarian approach than the segregationist policies of previous governments, won the general election. It did so against the background of a revival of mass militancy during the 1940s, after a period of relative quiescence in the 1930s when black groups attempted to foster unity among themselves.

The change was marked by the formation of the ANC Youth League in 1943, fostering the leadership of figures such as Anton Lembede, AP Mda, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu, who were to inspire the struggle for decades to come. In the 1940s, squatter movements in peri-urban areas brought mass politics back to the urban centres. The 1946 Mineworkers’ Strike was a turning point in the emergence of a politics of mass mobilisation.

Like the First World War, the experience of the Second World War and post-war economic difficulties enhanced discontent. For those who supported the NP, its primary appeal lay in its determination to maintain white domination in the face of rising mass resistance; uplift poor Afrikaners; challenge the pre-eminence of English-speaking whites in public life, the professions and business; and abolish the remaining imperial ties. The state became an engine of patronage for Afrikaner employment. The Afrikaner Broederbond co-ordinated the party’s programme, ensuring that Afrikaner nationalist interests and policies attained ascendancy throughout civil society.
In 1961, the NP Government under Prime Minister HF Verwoerd declared South Africa a republic, after winning a whites-only referendum on the issue. A new currency, the Rand, and a new flag, anthem and coat of arms were formally introduced.

South Africa, having become a republic, had to apply for continued membership of the Commonwealth. In the face of demands for an end to apartheid, South Africa withdrew its application and a figurehead president replaced the British queen (represented locally by the governor-general) as head of state. In most respects, apartheid was a continuation, in more systematic and brutal form, of the segregationist policies of previous governments. A new concern with racial purity was apparent in laws prohibiting interracial sexual activities and provisions for population registration requiring that every South African be assigned to one discrete racial category or another.

For the first time, the coloured people, who had always been subjected to informal discrimination, were brought within the ambit of discriminatory laws. In the mid-1950s, government took the drastic step of overriding an entrenched clause in the 1910 Constitution of the Union so as to be able to remove coloured voters from the common voters’ roll. It also enforced residential segregation, expropriating homes where necessary and policing massive forced removals into coloured group areas.

Until the 1940s, South Africa’s racial policies had not been entirely out of step with those to be found in the colonial world. But by the 1950s, which saw decolonisation and a global backlash against racism gather pace, the country was dramatically opposed to world opinion on questions of human rights. The architects
of apartheid, among whom Dr Verwoerd was pre-eminent, responded by elaborating a theory of multinationalism. Their policy, which they termed separate development, divided the African population into artificial ethnic nations, each with its own homeland and the prospect of independence, supposedly in keeping with trends elsewhere on the continent.

This divide-and-rule strategy was designed to disguise the racial basis of official policy-making by the substitution of the language of ethnicity. This was accompanied by much ethnographic engineering as efforts were made to resurrect tribal structures. In the process, the government sought to create a significant collaborating class.

The truth was that the rural reserves were by this time thoroughly degraded by overpopulation and soil erosion. This did not prevent four of the homeland structures (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei) being declared independent, a status which the vast majority of South Africans, and therefore also the international community, declined to recognise. In each case, the process involved the repression of opposition and the use by the government of the power to nominate and thereby pad elected assemblies with a quota of compliant figures.

Forced removals from white areas affected some 3.5 million people and vast rural slums were created in the homelands, which were used as dumping grounds. The pass laws and influx control were extended and harshly enforced, and labour bureaux were set up to channel labour to where it was needed. Hundreds of thousands of people were arrested or prosecuted under the pass laws each year, reaching over half a million a year from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. Industrial decentralisation
to growth points on the borders of (but not inside) the homelands was promoted as a means of keeping blacks out of white South Africa.

In virtually every sphere, from housing to education to healthcare, central government took control over black people’s lives with a view to reinforcing their allotted role as temporary sojourners, welcome in white South Africa solely to serve the needs of the employers of labour. However, these same programmes of control became the focus of resistance. In particular, the campaign against the pass laws formed a cornerstone of the struggle.

The introduction of apartheid policies coincided with the adoption by the ANC in 1949 of its programme of action, expressing the renewed militancy of the 1940s. The programme embodied the rejection of white domination and a call for action in the form of protests, strikes and demonstrations. There followed a decade of turbulent mass action in resistance to the imposition of still harsher forms of segregation and oppression.

A critical step in the emergence of non-racialism was the formation of the Congress Alliance, including the ANC; South African Indian Congress; the Coloured People’s Congress; a small white congress organisation (the Congress of Democrats); and the South African Congress of Trade Unions.

The alliance gave formal expression to an emerging unity across racial and class lines that was manifested in the Defiance Campaign and other mass protests, including against the Bantu education of this period, which also saw women’s resistance take a more organised character with the formation of the Federation of South African Women.
In 1955, the Freedom Charter was drawn up at the Congress of the People in Soweto. The charter enunciated the principles of the struggle, binding the movement to a culture of human rights and non-racialism. Over the next few decades, the Freedom Charter was elevated to an important symbol of the freedom struggle.

The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), founded by Robert Sobukwe and based on the philosophies of Africanism and anti-communism, broke away from the Congress Alliance in 1959. The state’s initial response, harsh as it was, was not yet as draconian as it was to become. Its attempt to prosecute more than 150 anti-apartheid leaders for treason, in a trial that began in 1956, ended in acquittals in 1961. But by that time, mass organised opposition had been banned.

Matters came to a head at Sharpeville in March 1960, when 69 anti-pass demonstrators were killed when police fired on a demonstration called by the PAC. A state of emergency was imposed and detention without trial was introduced. The black political organisations were banned and their leaders went into exile or were arrested. In this climate, the ANC and PAC abandoned their long-standing commitment to non-violent resistance and turned to armed struggle, combined with underground organisation and mobilisation as well as mobilisation of international solidarity. Top leaders, including members of the newly formed military wing Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) (Spear of the Nation), were arrested in 1963. In the Rivonia Trial, eight ANC leaders, including Nelson Mandela, were convicted of sabotage (instead of treason, the original charge) and sentenced to life imprisonment.

In this period, leaders of other organisations, including the PAC and the New Unity Movement, were also sentenced to long terms of imprisonment and/or banned.
The 1960s was a decade of overwhelming repression and relative political disarray among blacks in the country. Armed action was contained by the state. State repression played a central role in containing internal resistance, and the leadership of the struggle shifted increasingly to the missions in exile. At the same time, the ANC leadership embarked on a campaign to infiltrate the country through what was then Rhodesia.

In August 1967, a joint force of MK and the Zimbabwean People’s Revolutionary Army (Zipra) of the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (Zapu) entered Zimbabwe, and over a two-month period engaged the joint Rhodesian and South African security forces. Although the joint MK-Zipra force failed to reach South Africa, this was the first military confrontation between the military forces of the ANC-led alliance and white security forces.

The resurgence of resistance politics from the early 1970s was dramatic. The Black Consciousness Movement, led by Steve Biko (who was killed in detention in 1977), reawakened a sense of pride and self-esteem in black people. News of the brutal death of Biko reverberated around the globe and led to unprecedented outrage. As capitalist economies sputtered with the oil crisis of 1973, black trade unions revived.

A wave of strikes reflected a new militancy that involved better organisation and was drawing new sectors, in particular intellectuals and the student movement, into mass struggle and debate over the principles informing it. Rallies at black universities in support of Frelimo, the Mozambican liberation movement, also gave expression to the growing militancy. The year 1976 marked the beginning of a
sustained anti-apartheid revolt. In June, school pupils of Soweto rose up against apartheid education, followed by youth uprisings all around the country. Despite the harsh repression that followed, students continued to organise, with the formation in 1979 of organisations for school students (Congress of South African Students) and college and university students (Azanian Students Organisation). By the 1980s, the different forms of struggle – armed struggle, mass mobilisation and international solidarity – were beginning to integrate and coalesce.

The United Democratic Front and the informal umbrella, the Mass Democratic Movement, emerged as legal vehicles of democratic forces struggling for liberation. Clerics played a prominent public role in these movements. The involvement of workers in resistance took on a new dimension with the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the National Council of Trade Unions. Popular anger was directed against all those who were deemed to be collaborating with the government in the pursuit of its objectives, and the black townships became virtually ungovernable. From the mid-1980s, regional and national states of emergency were enforced.

Developments in neighbouring states, where mass resistance to white minority and colonial rule led to Portuguese decolonisation in the mid-1970s and the abdication of Zimbabwe’s minority regime in 1980, left South Africa exposed as the last bastion of white supremacy.

Under growing pressure and increasingly isolated internationally, the government embarked on a dual strategy, introducing limited reform coupled with intensifying repression and militarisation of society, with the objective of containing
the pressures and increasing its support base while crushing organised resistance. An early example of reform was the recognition of black trade unions to try to stabilise labour relations. In 1983, the Constitution was reformed to allow the coloured and Indian minorities limited participation in separate and subordinate houses of Parliament.

The vast majority of these groups demonstrated their rejection of the tricameral dispensation through massive boycotts of elections, but it was kept in place by the apartheid regime despite its visible lack of legitimacy. Attempts to legitimise community councils as vehicles for the participation of Africans outside the Bantustans in local government met a similar fate. Militarisation included the ascendancy of the State Security Council, which usurped the role of the executive in crucial respects, and a succession of states of emergency as part of the implementation of a comprehensive counter-insurgency strategy to combat what, by the mid-1980s, was an endemic insurrectionary spirit in the land.

However, by the late 1980s, popular resistance was taking the form of mass defiance campaigns, while struggles over more localised issues saw broad sections of communities mobilised in united action. Popular support for released political prisoners and for the armed struggle was being openly expressed. In response to the rising tide of resistance, the international community strengthened its support for the anti-apartheid cause. Sanctions and boycotts were instituted, both unilaterally by countries across the world and through the United Nations (UN). These sanctions were called for in a co-ordinated strategy by the internal and external anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.
FW de Klerk, who replaced PW Botha as State President in 1989, announced at the opening of Parliament in February 1990 the unbanning of the liberation movements and release of political prisoners, among them, Nelson Mandela. A number of factors led to this step. International financial, trade, sport and cultural sanctions were clearly biting.

Above all, even if South Africa was nowhere near collapse, either militarily or economically, several years of emergency rule and ruthless repression had clearly neither destroyed the structures of organised resistance, nor helped establish legitimacy for the apartheid regime or its collaborators. Instead, popular resistance, including mass and armed action, was intensifying. The ANC, enjoying popular recognition and legitimacy as the foremost liberation organisation, was increasingly regarded as a government-in-waiting. International support for the liberation movement came from various countries around the globe, particularly from former socialist countries and Nordic countries as well as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The other liberation organisations increasingly experienced various internal and external pressures and did not enjoy much popular support. To outside observers, and also in the eyes of growing numbers of white South Africans, apartheid stood exposed as morally bankrupt, indefensible and impervious to reforms.

The collapse of global communism, the negotiated withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola, and the culmination of the South-West African People’s Organisation’s liberation struggle in the negotiated independence of Namibia – formerly South-West Africa, administered by South Africa as a League of Nations
mandate since 1919 – did much to change the mindset of white people. No longer could they demonise the ANC and PAC as fronts for international communism.

White South Africa had also changed in deeper ways. Afrikaner nationalism had lost much of its raison d’être. Many Afrikaners had become urban, middle class and relatively prosperous. Their ethnic grievances and attachment to ethnic causes and symbols had diminished. A large part of the NP’s core constituency was ready to explore larger national identities, even across racial divides, and yearned for international respectability. In 1982, disenchanted hardliners split from the NP to form the Conservative Party, leaving the NP open to more flexible and modernising influences.

After this split, factions within the Afrikaner élite openly started to pronounce in favour of a more inclusive society, causing more friction with the NP government, which became increasingly militaristic and authoritarian. A number of business students and academic Afrikaners held meetings publicly and privately with the ANC in exile. Secret talks were held between the imprisoned Mandela and government ministers about a new dispensation for South Africa, with blacks forming a major part of it.

Inside the country, mass action became the order of the day. Petty apartheid laws and symbols were openly challenged and removed. Together with a sliding economy and increasing international pressure, these developments made historic changes inevitable.9

After a long negotiation process, sustained despite much opportunistic violence from the right wing and its surrogates, and in some instances sanctioned by
elements of the state, South Africa’s first democratic election was held in April 1994 under an interim Constitution. The interim Constitution divided South Africa into nine new provinces in place of the previous four provinces and 10 homelands, and provided for the Government of National Unity to be constituted by all parties with at least 20 seats in the National Assembly.

The ANC emerged from the election with a 62% majority. The main opposition came from the NP, which gained 20% of the vote nationally, and a majority in the Western Cape. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) received 10% of the vote, mainly in its KwaZulu-Natal base. The NP and the IFP formed part of the Government of National Unity until 1996, when the NP withdrew. The ANC-led Government embarked on a programme to promote the reconstruction and development of the country and its institutions.

This called for the simultaneous pursuit of democratisation and socio-economic change, as well as reconciliation and the building of consensus founded on the commitment to improve the lives of all South Africans, in particular the poor. It required the integration of South Africa into a rapidly changing global environment. Pursuit of these objectives was a consistent focus of government during the First Decade of Freedom, seeking the unity of a previously divided society in working together to overcome the legacy of a history of division, exclusion and neglect.

Converting democratic ideals into practice required, among other things, initiating a radical overhaul of the machinery of government at every level, working towards service delivery, openness, and a culture of human rights. It has required a more integrated approach to planning and implementation to ensure that the many
different aspects of transformation and socio-economic upliftment cohere with maximum impact.

A significant milestone in the democratisation of South Africa was the exemplary Constitution-making process, which in 1996 delivered a document that has evoked worldwide admiration. So too have been the elections subsequent to 1994 – all conducted peacefully, with high levels of participation compared with the norm in most democracies, and accepted by all as free and fair in their conduct and results. Local government elections during 1995 and 1996, and then again in 2000 after the transformation of the municipal system, gave the country its first democratically elected non-racial municipal authorities.

The second democratic national election in 1999 saw the ANC majority increase to just short of two thirds and the election of Mr Thabo Mbeki as president and successor to Mr Mandela. It saw a sharp decline of the NP (then the New National Party [NNP]) and its replacement by the Democratic Party, led by Mr Tony Leon, as the official opposition in Parliament. These two parties formed the Democratic Alliance, which the NNP left in 2001. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, helped inculcate a commitment to accountability and transparency in South Africa’s public life, at the same time helping to heal wounds inflicted by the inhumanities of the apartheid era.

During 2003, Parliament accepted the Government’s response to the final report of the TRC. Out of 22 000 individuals or surviving families appearing before the commission, 19 000 were identified as needing urgent reparation assistance –
virtually all, where the necessary information was available, received interim reparations.

The ethos of partnership informed the establishment of the National Economic Development and Labour Council. It brought together government, business, organised labour and development organisations to confront the challenges of growth and development for South Africa in a turbulent and globalising international economy. The Presidential Jobs Summit in 1998 and the Growth and Development Summit (GDS) in June 2003 brought these sectors together to collectively take advantage of the conditions in South Africa for faster growth and development. At the GDS, a comprehensive set of agreements was concluded to address urgent challenges in a practical way and to speed up job-creating growth and development.

Partnership between government and civil society was further strengthened by the creation of a number of working groups through which sectors of society – business, organised labour, higher education, religious leaders, youth and women – engage regularly with the President.

In the First Decade of Freedom, government placed emphasis on meeting basic needs through programmes for socio-economic development such as the provision of housing, piped water, electricity, education and healthcare, as well as social grants for those in need.

Another priority was the safety and security of citizens, which required both transforming the police into a service working with the community, and overcoming grave problems of criminality and a culture of violence posed by the social dislocations inherited from the past.
Key economic objectives included job creation, poverty eradication, reduction of inequality and overall growth. There was much progress in rebuilding the economy, in particular with the achievement of macroeconomic stability and the initiation of programmes of microeconomic reform. By the end of 2004, growth was accelerating and there were signs of the beginnings of a reduction in unemployment.

The integration of South Africa into the global political, economic and social system has been a priority for democratic South Africa. As a country isolated during the apartheid period, an African country, a developing country, and a country whose liberation was achieved with the support of the international community, it remains of critical importance to build political and economic links with the countries and regions of the world, and to work with others for an international environment more favourable to development across the world, and in Africa and South Africa in particular.

South Africa hosted the launch in 2002 of the African Union (AU), a step towards further unification of Africa in pursuit of socio-economic development, the Organisation of African Unity having fulfilled its mandate to liberate Africa. President Mbeki chaired the AU for its founding year, handing over the chair to President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique in July 2003.

In 2004, the AU decided that South Africa should host the Pan-African Parliament and it met for its second session in South Africa, the first time on South African soil, in September of that year. By participating in UN and AU initiatives to resolve conflict and promote peace and security on the continent – in among other countries, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi and Sudan – South
Africa has contributed to the achievement of conditions conducive to the entrenchment of stability, democracy and faster development.

Democratic South Africa played an active role in international and multilateral organisations. During the First Decade of Freedom, it acted at various times as chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), NAM, AU and the Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings. It played host to several international conferences, including the UN Conference on Trade and Development in 1996, the 2000 World AIDS Congress, World Conference Against Racism in 2001, World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, and the World Parks Congress in 2003. The country was represented on international forums such as the International Monetary Fund’s Development Committee and Interpol.

Through the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (Nepad), the development programme of the AU, South Africa continued to work with the rest of the continent and its partners in the industrialised world for the development and regeneration of the African continent.

When South Africa celebrated 10 years of freedom in 2004, there were celebrations across the world in countries whose peoples had helped to bring freedom to South Africa through their solidarity, and who today are partners in reconstruction and development. As government took stock of the First Decade of Freedom in Towards a Ten Year Review, it was able to document great progress by South Africans in pursuit of their goals, as well as the challenges that face the nation as it traverses the second decade of its freedom towards 2014.
In its third democratic elections, in April 2004, the country gave an increased mandate to the Government’s programme for reconstruction and development and for the entrenchment of the rights inscribed in the Constitution. It mandated government specifically to create the conditions for halving unemployment and poverty by 2014. Following these elections, Thabo Mbeki was appointed to a second term of office as President of South Africa – a position he relinquished in September 2008, following the decision of the National Executive Committee of the ANC to recall him. Parliament elected Kgalema Motlanthe as President of South Africa on 25 September 2008.

Local government elections in 2006, following a long period of civic unrest as communities protested against a mixed record of service delivery, saw increased participation compared with the previous local elections, as well as increased support for the ruling party based on a manifesto for a concerted effort, in partnership with communities, to make local government work better. Just like the Nigeria of Achebe, the South Africa of Coetzee has also been a place of turmoil.

**Ethno-Religious Civil War in Nigeria**

In July 1966 northern officers and army units staged a coup. The Muslim officers named thirty-one-year-old Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) Yakubu Jack Gowon, a Christian from a small ethnic group (the Anga) in the middle belt, as a compromise candidate to head the Federal Military Government (FMG). A young and relatively obscure officer serving as army chief of staff, Gowon had not been involved in the coup, but he enjoyed wide
support among northern troops who subsequently insisted that he be given a position in the ruling body.

Throughout the remainder of 1966 and into 1967, the FMG sought to convene a constituent assembly for revision of the constitution that might enable an early return to civilian rule. Nonetheless, the tempo of violence increased. In September attacks on Igbo in the north were renewed with unprecedented ferocity, stirred up by Muslim traditionalists with the connivance, Eastern Region leaders believed, of northern political leaders. The army was sharply divided along regional lines. Reports circulated that troops from the Northern Region had participated in the mayhem. The estimated number of deaths ranged as high as 30,000, although the figure was probably closer to 8,000 to 10,000. More than 1 million Igbo returned to the Eastern Region. In retaliation, some northerners were massacred in Port Harcourt and other eastern cities, and a counterexodus of non-Igbo was under way.

The Eastern Region's military governor, Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, was under pressure from Igbo officers to assert greater independence from the FMG. Indeed, the eastern military government refused to recognize Gowon's legitimacy on the ground that he was not the most senior officer in the chain of command. Some of Ojukwu's colleagues questioned whether the country could be reunited amicably after the outrages committed against the Igbo in the Northern Region. Ironically, many responsible easterners who had advocated a unitary state now called for looser ties with the other regions.

The military commanders and governors, including Ojukwu, met in Lagos to consider solutions to the regional strife. But they failed to reach a settlement, despite
concessions offered by the northerners, because it proved impossible to guarantee the security of Igbo outside the Eastern Region. The military conferees reached a consensus only in the contempt they expressed for civilian politicians. Fearing for his safety, Ojukwu refused invitations to attend subsequent meetings in Lagos.

In January 1967, the military leaders and senior police officials met at Aburi, Ghana, at the invitation of the Ghanaian military government. By now the Eastern Region was threatening secession. In a last-minute effort to hold Nigeria together, the military reached an accord that provided for a loose confederation of regions. The federal civil service vigorously opposed the Aburi Agreement, however. Awolowo, regrouping his supporters, demanded the removal of all northern troops garrisoned in the Western Region and warned that if the Eastern Region left the federation, the Western Region would follow. The FMG agreed to the troop withdrawal.

In May Gowon issued a decree implementing the Aburi Agreement. Even the Northern Region leaders, who had been the first to threaten secession, now favored the formation of a multistate federation. Meanwhile, the military governor of the Midwestern Region announced that his region must be considered neutral in the event of civil war.

The Ojukwu government rejected the plan for reconciliation and made known its intention to retain all revenues collected in the Eastern Region in reparation for the cost of resettling Igbo refugees. The eastern leaders had reached the point of ruptive in their relations with Lagos and the rest of Nigeria. Despite offers made by the FMG that met many of Ojukwu's demands, the Eastern Region Consultative Assembly voted May 26 to secede from Nigeria. In Lagos Gowon proclaimed a state of
emergency and unveiled plans for abolition of the regions and for redivision of the country into twelve states. This provision broke up the Northern Region, undermining the possibility of continued northern domination and offering a major concession to the Eastern Region. It was also a strategic move, which won over eastern minorities and deprived the rebellious Igbo heartland of its control over the oil fields and access to the sea. Gowon also appointed prominent civilians, including Awolowo, as commissioners in the federal and new state governments, thus broadening his political support.

On May 30, Ojukwu answered the federal decree with the proclamation of the independent Republic of Biafra, named after the Bight of Biafra. He cited as the principal cause for this action the Nigerian government's inability to protect the lives of easterners and suggested its culpability in genocide, depicting secession as a measure taken reluctantly after all efforts to safeguard the Igbo people in other regions had failed.

Initially the FMG launched police measures to restore the authority of Lagos in the Eastern Region. Army units attempted to advance into secessionist territory in July, but rebel troops easily stopped them. The Biafrans retaliated with a surprise thrust into the Midwestern Region, where they seized strategic points. However, effective control of the delta region remained under federal control despite several rebel attempts to take the non-Igbo area. The federal government began to mobilize large numbers of recruits to supplement its 10,000-member army.

By the end of 1967, federal forces had regained the Midwestern Region and secured the delta region, which was reorganized as the Rivers State and Southeastern
State, cutting off Biafra from direct access to the sea. But a proposed invasion of the rebel-held territory, now confined to the Igbo heartland, stalled along the stiffened Biafran defense perimeter.  

A stalemate developed as federal attacks on key towns broke down in the face of stubborn Biafran resistance. Ill-armed and trained under fire, rebel troops nonetheless had the benefit of superior leadership and superb morale. Although vastly outnumbered and outgunned, the Biafrans probed weak points in the federal lines, making lightning tactical gains, cutting off and encircling advancing columns, and launching commando raids behind federal lines. Biafran strikes across the Niger managed to pin down large concentrations of federal troops on the west bank.  

In September 1968, Owerri was captured by federal troops advancing from the south, and early in 1969 the federal army, expanded to nearly 250,000 men, opened three fronts in what Gowon touted as the final offensive. Although federal forces flanked the rebels by crossing the Niger at Onitsha, they failed to break through. The Biafrans subsequently retook Owerri in fierce fighting and threatened to push on to Port Harcourt until thwarted by a renewed federal offensive in the south. That offensive tightened the noose around the rebel enclave without choking it into submission.  

Biafran propaganda, which stressed the threat of genocide to the Igbo people, was extremely effective abroad in winning sympathy for the secessionist movement. Food and medical supplies were scarce in Biafra. Humanitarian aid, as well as arms and munitions, reached the embattled region from international relief organizations and from private and religious groups in the United States and Western Europe by
way of nighttime airlifts over the war zone. The bulk of Biafra's military supplies was purchased on the international arms market with unofficial assistance provided by France through former West African colonies. In one of the most dramatic episodes of the civil war, Carl Gustav von Rosen, a Swedish count who at one time commanded the Ethiopian air force, and several other Swedish pilots flew five jet trainers modified for combat in successful strikes against Nigerian military installations.

Biafra's independence was recognized by Tanzania, Zambia, Gabon, and the Ivory Coast, but it was compromised in the eyes of most African states by the approval of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and Portugal. Britain extended diplomatic support and limited military assistance to the federal government. The Soviet Union became an important source of military equipment for Nigeria. Modern Soviet-built warplanes, flown by Egyptian and British pilots, interdicted supply flights and inflicted heavy casualties during raids on Biafran urban centers. In line with its policy of noninvolvement, the United States prohibited the sale of military goods to either side while continuing to recognize the FMG.

In October 1969, Ojukwu appealed for United Nations (UN) mediation for a cease-fire as a prelude to peace negotiations. But the federal government insisted on Biafra's surrender, and Gowon observed that rebel leaders had made it clear that this is a fight to the finish and that no concession will ever satisfy them. In December federal forces opened a four-pronged offensive, involving 120,000 troops, that sliced Biafra in half. When Owerri fell on January 6, 1970, Biafran resistance collapsed. Ojukwu fled to the Ivory Coast, leaving his chief of staff, Philip Effiong, behind as
officer administering the government. Effiong called for an immediate, unconditional cease-fire January 12 and submitted to the authority of the federal government at ceremonies in Lagos.

Estimates in the former Eastern Region of the number of dead from hostilities, disease, and starvation during the thirty-month civil war are estimated at between 1 million and 3 million. The end of the fighting found more than 3 million Igbo refugees crowded into a 2,500-square-kilometer enclave. Prospects for the survival of many of them and for the future of the region were dim. There were severe shortages of food, medicine, clothing, and housing. The economy of the region was shattered. Cities were in ruins; schools, hospitals, utilities, and transportation facilities were destroyed or inoperative. Overseas groups instituted a major relief effort, but the FMG insisted on directing all assistance and recovery operations and barred some agencies that had supplied aid to Biafra.

Because charges of genocide had fueled international sympathy for Biafra, the FMG allowed a team of international experts to observe the surrender and to look for evidence. Subsequently, the observers testified that they found no evidence of genocide or systematic destruction of property, although there was considerable evidence of famine and death as a result of the war. Furthermore, under Gowon's close supervision, the federal government ensured that Igbo civilians would not be treated as defeated enemies. A program was launched to reintegrate the Biafran rebels into a unified Nigeria. A number of public officials who had actively counselled, aided, or abetted secession were dismissed, but a clear distinction was made between them and those who had simply carried out their duties. Igbo personnel soon were
being reenlisted in the federal armed forces. There were no trials and few people were imprisoned. Ojukwu, in exile, was made the scapegoat, but efforts to have him extradited failed.

An Igbo official, Ukapi Tony Asika, was named administrator of the new East Central State, comprising the Igbo heartland. Asika had remained loyal to the federal government during the civil war, but as a further act of conciliation, his all-Igbo cabinet included members who had served under the secessionist regime.¹¹

Asika was unpopular with many Igbo, who considered him a traitor, and his administration was characterized as inept and corrupt. In three years under his direction, however, the state government achieved the rehabilitation of 70 percent of the industry incapacitated during the war. The federal government granted funds to cover the state's operating expenses for an interim period, and much of the war damage was repaired. Social services and public utilities slowly were reinstated, although not to the prewar levels.
References

4 Ibid. p. 66.
6 Ibid. p. 137.
8 Ibid. p. 267.
11 Ibid. p. 141.