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From Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa

In this discussion, I will investigation the democratic expectations and incomes in South African, specifically the expectation of the black South African population for democratic system. The following are the research questions: What were the expectations of black South Africans of democracy a decade during the Apartheid? What are their views of democracy in 2017? Did democracy as political system deliver on expectations and hopes of black South Africans? Finally, is democracy in South Africa consolidated or not? This study is a diachronic comparison of South African political landscape from 1990 and 2017. I will proceed with this exploration by briefly presenting the historical trajectory or background of South Africa, the all-important local and international actors—these can be nations, organizations, or individuals—who participated directly or indirectly in order to end the Apartheid, and the implementation of the democratic system in South Africa. Additionally, I will expound on the impetus of black South Africans' struggle for democracy during the Apartheid and their views of democracy in post-Apartheid 24 years later. Finally, I will evaluate the impact of democracy in the post-Apartheid South Africa and its accomplishments and limitations.

In order to fully comprehend the practice of Apartheid and the current democratic post-Apartheid South Africa political culture one has to look at historical trajectory and precedents of this dynamic nation. In 1652 the Dutch navigator and colonial administrator John Anthoniszoon Jan Van Riebeek received a commission from the Dutch East India Trading Company to establish a refreshment station at Table Bay—the Atlantic Ocean overlook by Cape Town—for passing ships. The station was created in order to supply the ships going East with fresh fruit, vegetables, and meat. The Dutch grew the vegetables and fruits themselves, however, they have to trade with the indigenous population to acquire meat. From the inception, the relationship of the Dutch settlers and native black population who lived in the area was antagonistic. The trade for slaughter stock to the Netherlands soon degenerated into raiding and warfare. In 1657 the fledgling colonial establishment started a process of allocating farms to the European settlers in the arable region in proximity to Cape Town. ("Sahistory.org.za.South African History Online-pagestudy," Publication Date April 02, 2018, and Date Accessed April 02, 2018; http://sahistory.org.za.pagestudy).

As the port developed and the need for workers increased, the Dutch East India Trading Company started importing slaves from East Africa, Madagascar, and its possessions in East India. Subsequently, more Dutch settlers arrived in Cape Town followed by other settlers from all over the European continent. This increased of European intrusions into the indigenous territories ultimately led to the complete colonization and occupation of South Africa by the Dutch. ("Sahistory.org.za. South African History Online-Pagestudy," Publication Date April 02, 2018, and Date Accessed April 02, 2018; http://sahistory.org.za.pagestudy).

In 1806 the British forces seized the Cape Colony from the Dutch settlers. In order to avoid living under the British rule or occupation, many Netherlands moved north of the country where there still unconquered lands. Nevertheless, with the increase British population in Cape Town, many of them also moved north. After a while,

the tension between the British and Dutch settlers in South African intensified, both groups have their own colonial administrative government and republics. However, the British were continuously encroaching and interfering in the prerogatives of the Dutch colonizers. After intermittent wars between the two colonial groups for many years, in 1902 they signed the Peace Treaty of Vereeniging, which unified them. For the British settlers, this peace treaty was a crucial victory because they got the control of gold mines of Transvaal. But for the Dutch it was the loss of their autonomy and economics interests. Nevertheless, the peace treaty allowed both groups to united and work for their common interests. ("Sahistory.org.za. South African History Online-Pagestudy," Publication Date April 02, 2018, and Date Accessed April 02, 2018; http://sahistory.org.za.pagestudy).

In order to best protect white interests, the colonial establishment in South Africa implemented policies and mechanism to exclude or to prevent non-white from participating in political and economic spheres. These pro-white discriminatory legislations passed by the colonial administrator Alfred Miler engendered considerable resistance from the black South African population and led to the creation and growth of new political entities. ("Sahistory.org.za. South African History Online-Pagestudy," Publication Date April 02, 2018, and Date Accessed April 02, 2018; http://sahistory.org.za.pagestudy.).

In 1902, the colored people in Cape Town created the African People's Organization to represent the interests of educated colors. This organization was led by Abdullah Abdurahman and Mohandas Gandhi, they had thousands of supporters with which they launch passive resistance campaign against the discretionary laws and establishment. Nonetheless, their struggles and efforts were unsuccessful. ("Sahistory.org.za. South African History Online-Pagestudy," Publication Date April 02, 2018, and Date Accessed April 02, 2018; http://sahistory.org.za.pagestudy).

Furthermore, in 1912 the African National Congress was created, it passed the Mines and Works Act. The Act indicated that the black workers could only be employed as cheap-semi skilled labors and it effectively prohibited the black population from seeking skilled employment. Additionally, the political environment created by the racist rule ensured that the so-called unskilled black labors work under difficult conditions. ("Sahistory.org.za. South African History Online-Pagestudy," Publication Date April 02, 2018, and Date Accessed April 02, 2018; http://sahistory.org.za.pagestudy).

In 1934 South Africa become an independent nation, it was no longer a part of the British empire. The Union of South Africa Parliament enacted the Status of the Union Act, which declared the country to be "a sovereign independent state." From then on, the white South African government was independent to pursuit any policy without being constrain by England. In 1948 the South Africa white government led by the Nation Party (NP) implemented the Apartheid laws, which were 148 in total. These laws were based on racial separation, hierarchical stratification, and republicanism—the idea that the supreme power of a country should be vested in an electorate. The population were categorized into four distinct groups: whites, blacks, and people of colors, meaning mixed race, and Indian. Apart from economic incentives, the racial separation laws had an undercurrent message, which was white people are a superior race ordained by God to rule the people of color and the world. Therefore, they

are the only one eligible to vote and directly participate in civic life, meanwhile the inferior race—blacks and people of color—perform menial tasks. In addition, black African population were separated based on their ethnic origins, they could not live together or how they wish. The apartheid government created ten homelands and placed blacks in according to the tribes. The implementation of the Apartheid laws really set the stage for radical transformation (good or bad depending on one's position) of South Africa as a nation in the following decades. ("Sahistory.org.za. South African History Online-Pagestudy," Publication Date April 02, 2018, and Date Accessed April 02, 2018; http: //sahistory.org.za. pagestudy).

In the 1950s, the Africa National Congress led by a new revolutionary black leadership—Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mendela, and Oliver Tambo—emerged in South Africa political scene. These three individuals played vital and influential roles for the dissolution of the Apartheid system and establishment of democracy in South Africa. They orchestrated civil disobedience and sabotage operations against the racist establishment. Mendela was sentence to life imprisonment for these seditious and subversive activities. ("Sahistory.org.za. South African History Online-Pagestudy," Publication Date April 02, 2018, and Date Accessed April 02, 2018; http: //sahistory.org.za. pagestudy).

By the end of 1960s, the Apartheid government of South Africa started facing international pressures to reform. In 1986, almost 40 years after the beginning of the Apartheid system, the United States, EC, and Japan imposed economic sanctions on South African. These are most important trading partners for South African, so in order survive it must make some concessions and compromises. ("BBC," South Africa-Timeline, Publication Date February 15, 2018, Date Accessed 02, 2018; http:// bbc.uk/news/world—Africa-14094918).

Correspondingly, the strategic shift in political ideology of the former Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev meant that the African National Control no longer had the ideological, military, and financial supporter and must and must found other alternative means to continue its struggle. Both, the National Party—the party that was governing South Africa at the time—and African National Congress had to negotiate and compromise in order to exist and bring about democracy in South Africa. Alexander, Neville. *An Ordinary Country*: Issues in The Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa. New York: Berghahn, 2003, 44.

Despite its unique historical trajectory and social-economic cleavages, South Africa's democratic transition is similar to other countries that made transition to democracy during the third wave of democratization that started in Portugal in the 1970s. It went through all the processes and procedures of mediation by honest and impartial entities or figures, negotiations and pacting between the old and the new elites, several types of truth deputations, and culminating in the inauguration of the new leadership, usually in the presence of highest representatives from the European Union or the United States of America. Alexander, Neville. *An Ordinary Country*: Issues in The Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa. New York: Berghahn, 2003, 44.

Now, let us probe at what exactly the African National Congress and the white minority political elites want, their incentives and motivations to struggle. Evidently, the National Party or the white South African elites want nothing to change; they want to maintain their prerogatives if possible. However, the pressure from the

international community and geopolitical transformation in the decade leading to the end of Apartheid compelled Pretoria to radically alter its racist political ideology in order to stay in the game. This means the National Party or the white minority elites must embrace the liberal democratic principle based upon fair, free, and competitive elections and political and economic freedoms for all people—white, black, people of color, and Indians. Alexander, Neville. *An Ordinary Country*: Issues in The Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa. New York: Berghahn, 2003, 45, 46.

Conversely, from its establishment in 1912, the African National Congress never been a revolutionary organization. Ideologically, its leadership—Sisulu, Tambo, Mendela, and others—was highly democratic. Despite their association with Soviet Communism and rhetoric, their aims were not to overthrow the Apartheid system through a military defeat and implant communism in South Africa. Nevertheless, the African National Congress leaders' main objectives were to pressure Pretoria to negotiation table. Most importantly, they want to deracialize the South African political system and society, and devise conditions in which the classical liberal democratic precept of equality of opportunity for all the citizens could be accomplish. For demonstration, I use Mandela's 1964 Rivonia speech excerpt:

> I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the idea of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is ideal for which I am prepared to die.

All of the three prominent African National congress leaders have made similar speeches or assertion. They have been determined and vocal about their democratic preference throughout their political activism career. Thus, negotiation with the political representatives of the white minority in South Africa is a victory for the African National Congress leadership. Alexander, Neville. *An Ordinary Country*: Issues in The Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa. New York: Berghahn, 2003, 46.

During the protracted negotiations and pacting processes, the National Party accepted a five-year period of power share with the African National Congress, followed by a gradual transfer of political office to a democratically elected candidate. But in economic sphere the white business or industrialist elites steadfastly refuse to make any type of concessions. Obviously, in majoritarian democratic system, the black South Africans being the majority of the population, they are going to control the political arena. However, the keys segments of the economic like the manufacturing, mining, agricultural, transportation, and technological sectors will stay under the control of the white minority business elites. Alexander, Neville. *An Ordinary Country*: Issues in The Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa. New York: Berghahn, 2003, 49, 50.

Similarly, majority of blacks and color population were enthusiastic about democracy, after many years of marginalization, discrimination, subjugation, and exclusion from political, economic, and many other aspects of civic life. They were expecting that the democratic system will rectify or alleviate their problems—mostly poverty,

economic inequality, equal opportunity for education, and inclusion in the civic life. In addition, they expected democracy to provide better housing, healthcare, and services to the people. In April 27, 1994 election, almost all adult black population voted for the African National Congress, which allowed the party to win with 62.7 percent vote. This crucial event for many black South Africans meant the end of suffering, humiliation, and exclusion and the commencement of economic development, growth, stability, or technological innovation. Their unrealistic expectation of what democracy can achieve substantively derived from the images they have of industrialized liberal democracy in the West. These views of democracy substantiate Professor Robert Alan Dahl's assertion that many people in developing countries are enthusiastic and receptive of democracy political system because they associate it with the economic success and the high levels of development of the west world. The mass in these nations just like the West, do not take into consideration the historical precedent, geopolitical constraints, internal social, regional, or linguistic cleavages. Nonetheless, these were the expectations and hopes of most black South African population during the decade leading to the defunct of the Apartheid system. ("Anshu, Padayachee," Post-Apartheid South Africa And The Crisis of Expectation—DPRN Four: RozenbergQuarterly. Accessed April 02, 2018. http://rozenbergquarterly.com/post-apartheid-south-africa-and-the-crisis-of-expectation-dprn-four/).

Now 23 years passed, let us investigate if democracy have delivered on what most black South Africans expected of it. The first African National Congress government led by democratically elect Nelson Mandela was government of transition and restructuring. Mandela's one term in office was largely focused in implanting democratic principles in the new government of South Africa, mainly development of the legislative branch with the aim of creating a deracialize, non-sexist, and unified democratic country. The government provided democratic policies and practices in order to ensure a checks and balances mechanism of powers relationship. This basically meant the independence of the judiciary, the promotion and protection of media freedom, and accountability of political institutions. In term of democratic transparency, South Africa seem to be doing well in comparison to other democracies in the continent or around the world. The procedural facets of democracy are in respectable degree fulfilled, no one can controvert this fact, 60 percent of South Africans are satisfied with the functioning of democracy in their country. Plus, South African political leadership have become democratic icons and spokespersons in Africa and worldwide. Even Mandela was very satisfied with South Africa's democratic system. In 2004, 10 years anniversary of democracy in South Africa, he said, "Being able in my lifetime to live a decade under a democratic regime in South Africa is an experience and a privileged profound beyond what words can capture and describe." ("Connolly, Lesley and John L. Hirsh." "South Africa Two Decade after Transition: From Apartheid to a Thriving Multi-Party Democracy." IPI Global Observatory. Accessed April 02, 2018. https://theglobalobservatory.org /2016/09/south-south-apartheid-to-democracy).

Additionally, the African National Congress leadership was cognizant that they inherited a country that was built based on racial discrimination and was under economic sanctions for almost a decade. These meant there is a large percentage of South African population in the poverty, and the country is also economically poor

from the economic sanctions. In order to resolve or alleviate these problems, Mandela implement a Reconstruction and Development program (RDP) policy which was aimed at addressing and redressing the inherited gross inequalities of the Apartheid era and the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) plan. The RDP policy was successful in some degree in delivering social security in which government established a very extensive welfare system. The policy was more effective in catering for the aged, disabled, orphans in need as well as foster parents and many others that were too poor to meet their fundamental social needs. ("Anshu, Padayachee," Post-Apartheid South Africa And The Crisis of Expectation—DPRN Four: RozenbergQuarterly. Accessed April 02, 2018. http://rozenbergquarterly.com/post-apartheid-south-africa-and-the-crisis-of-expectation-dprn-four/).

Since 1994 spending on social services has increased from 44.4 percent of the general government expenditure to 56.7 percent in 2003. The government has built 1.6 million new houses, supplied water to nine million households, and sanitation to 6.4 million people, and created two million new jobs. However, a majority of what black South Africans were expecting from the new democratic government have not been delivered. Many of them still live in shanty towns due to unemployment and lack of housing. And, crime and violence have been sharply increasing in South Africa since 1990s. ("Anshu, Padayachee," Post-Apartheid South Africa And The Crisis of Expectation—DPRN Four: RozenbergQuarterly. Accessed April 02, 2018. http://rozenbergquarterly.com/post-apartheid-south-africa-and-the-crisis-of-expectation-dprn-four/).

Moreover, the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) policy had not been efficient and successful in creating jobs and wealth redistribution. This economic policy appears to favor the wealthy, industrialists, bankers, and the rest of business elite. The commercial elite of Apartheid system still hold on to their means of production and loyal to their modus operandi. Some black South Africans have ascended to this wealthy stratum of the society, class division is no longer based on racial origin, but money. Class struggle has been introduced within black population too. Black brotherhood was a mechanism for struggle against the racist Apartheid government, in capitalist South Africa solidarity is based on money and interests. Alexander, Neville. *An Ordinary Country*: Issues in The Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa. New York: Berghahn, 2003, 67, 68, 69, and 70.

Evidently, substantive aspects of democracy have not been fully met or delivered in South Africa, democracy still has a lot to improve on it in terms of jobs creation, housing, healthcare, reduction of criminality, modernization of the countryside area, and so forth. Substantives measures of democracy have made the democratic system last and endure, Seymour Martin Lipset greatly expound on this in his 1959 articles "Some Social Requisites of Democracy." He holds that a country that is economically affluent and well-developed has a better chance of maintaining and sustaining a democratic political system than a poor and less developed nation.

Correspondingly, procedural facets of democracy have been met in greater degree in South Africa, there have three free and fair elections and peaceful turnover of power. Also, in regard of leader accountability, South African democracy seems to be effective. Jacob Zuma's corruption allegation propelled his resignation and is the testament of leadership accountability in South African democratic system. Of course, there are still more to improve, for instance, transparency in governance and restructuring of the political culture. No one can refute that the flaggingly South African democracy has potential to improve or consolidate. South Africa with its semi-industrialized economy and natural resources is the most hospitable place for democracy in sub-Sahara Africa.

In conclusion, in order to fully understand the Apartheid system and the current South African democratic political system one has to probe into its history. This discourse has demonstrated that a decade leading to the end of Apartheid regime, black South Africans were enthusiastic and receptive of democratic political system. This was because they were expecting democracy to provide healthcare, housing, employments, and other governmental services. However, 23 years post-Apartheid they are disillusion and disappoint on how democracy is not delivering on their expectations and hopes on haste fashion. Nevertheless, majority of South African population are happy with their democratic system, even though it still has more to work on and improve. Finally, the historical trajectory of democratic implantation and transition in South Africa can be used around the world as an example to other bitterly divided societies in order to bring about democracy.

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