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# **South Africa: Afrikaner Pressure Groups and Racial Reform**

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**An Intelligence Assessment**

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*ALA 82-10037  
March 1982*

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# South Africa: Afrikaner Pressure Groups and Racial Reform

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## **An Intelligence Assessment**

*Information available as of 3 March 1982  
has been used in the preparation of this report.*

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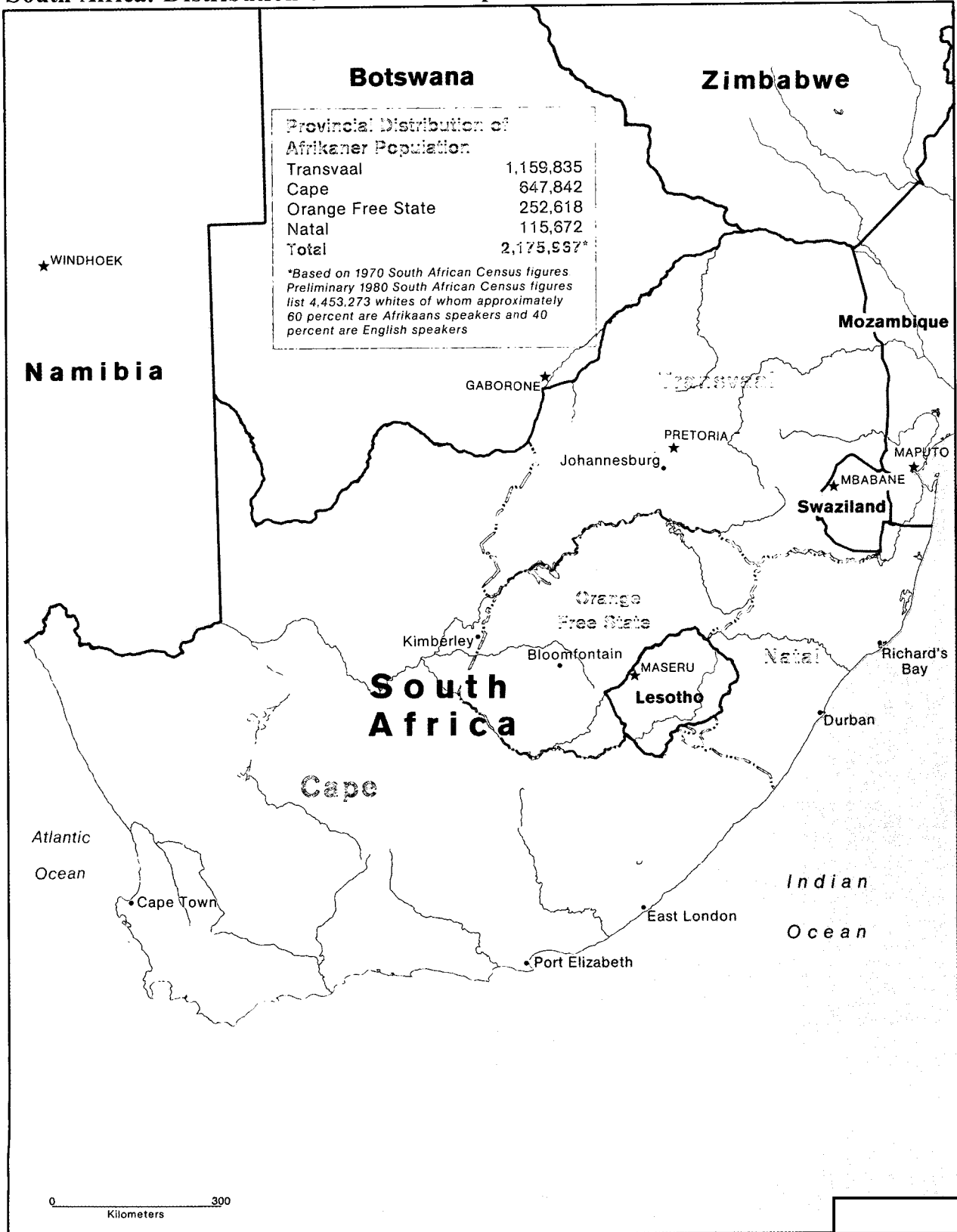
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### South Africa: Distribution of Afrikaner Population



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Afrikaner Pressure Groups  
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**Key Judgments**

South Africa's Afrikaans-speaking minority—almost two-thirds of its white population—has maintained unchallenged political control of the country for over a quarter of a century. It is one of the world's most unified, single-minded, ethnic groups. Afrikaner society and political life, however, are in flux and ferment, owing to a number of factors over which the traditionally self-contained Afrikaners have little or no control. These include the impact of the technological revolution, the rapid decolonialization of most of the territories along South Africa's borders, and the social and economic changes that political success has wrought on the Afrikaner community itself.

These changes have directly affected the most fundamental Afrikaner tenets, calling into question the apartheid doctrine's vision of harmonious racial coexistence in a white-ruled state. Few Afrikaners advocate surrendering white privileges and Afrikaner political dominance, but the murmur of concern over whether undiluted apartheid is conducive to these twin imperatives has over the past five years grown into a genuine debate.

A new generation of Afrikaner industrialists realize that rigid apartheid works against their economic interests. They argue that the economy cannot prosper and that the whites' way of life cannot be maintained without the underpinning of a better educated, better housed, better fed, and more mobile black labor force. A large and influential military establishment is realizing that to maintain white power requires changes that would make nonwhites feel they have a stake in the system. Afrikaner newspaper editors and academics have emerged as opinion leaders and are making suggestions meant to bend, though not break, the policy of "separate development."

Prime Minister Botha and his political allies are attuned to the need for racial reform, but their moves in this direction are limited by the tolerance of the Afrikaner electorate. Government initiatives must gain approval from both the ruling National Party and the Parliament as a whole. Few members of the newer and more progressive groups within the Afrikaner community have significant influence in either arena. It is the older entrenched conservative groups, such as farmers, bureaucrats, and trade unionists, who—though declining in number and social influence—retain a

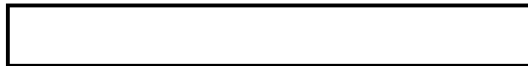
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disproportionate share of political power. To most of these conservatives, the very debate over the desirability of altering the status quo is anathema as many of them demonstrated by shifting their loyalties from the National Party to the ultraconservatives in the elections last April.

Despite his recent victory over the right wing of the ruling National Party, Botha and any reform-minded successor will be reluctant to push far-reaching racial reforms in the absence of fundamental shifts in Afrikaner attitudes. The recent history of the Afrikaners indicates that any such shifts will be evolutionary, reflecting the interplay of complex political, socioeconomic, and security factors.

Pressure for racial reform from the United States or other outside powers will have minimal effect over the short term. Any heavyhanded external pressures would strengthen rightwing Afrikaners and could cause progressives and conservatives to unite in the face of yet another threat to white rule and culture. Over the longer term, however, as South Africa's social, security, and economic problems compound, Afrikaners may begin to look to the outside world for fresh ideas to help solve their problems.

US relations with other African states will continue to be complicated by the slow progress of racial reform in South Africa. As long as South Africa does not develop effective ways to defuse the potential for violent racial confrontation, the neighboring black states—who perceive the United States as having leverage with Pretoria—will be drawn further into the fray. Many may turn to Moscow and its allies, who would welcome additional opportunities to exploit regional instability.



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## South Africa: Afrikaner Pressure Groups and Racial Reform

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### Introduction

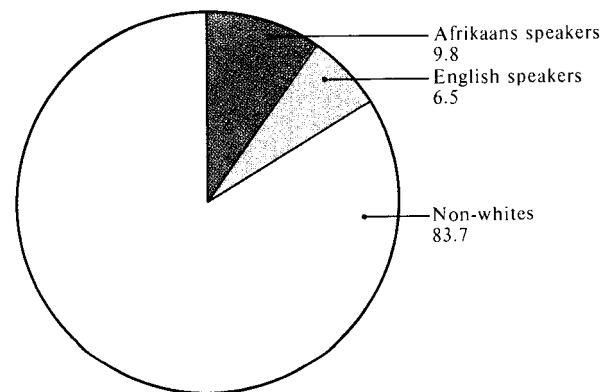
For over three-quarters of a century Afrikaner religious, cultural, and political organizations have worked with energy and skill to transform the Afrikaner people from a group of downtrodden farmers into a modern oligarchy. The National Party rose to power in 1948 on the appeal of its promise to promote and protect the basic interests of the Afrikaner community, and since then has single-mindedly catered to the material, social, and ideological well-being of the Afrikaners.

Success, however, has led to rapid social change. As the major beneficiaries of government education policies and of the expansion of the public sector of the economy, the Afrikaners have satisfied most of their material needs. Traditional institutions such as the church and cultural organizations, while still important, no longer play a dominating role in society. Politically, modernization has created new interest and pressure groups that are competing for the attention of Afrikaner leaders. Ideologically, the growing internal and external pressures for improvements in the economic, social, and political lot of the nonwhite majority has put strains on Afrikaner doctrines of racial exclusiveness, and a vanguard of the Afrikaner elite has come to recognize that traditional approaches toward race relations must be modified in the interest of Afrikaner survival.

Even progressive Afrikaners, however, are advocating only limited reform and, in trying to implement their cautious program, have been stymied by powerful conservative forces. Opposing Prime Minister Botha's modest plans for racial reform, the conservatives voted in large numbers for the ultraconservative *Herstigte Nasionale Party* (HNP) in the parliamentary election of April 1981. While the HNP gained no seats, it captured 13 percent of the popular vote—representing about one-third of the Afrikaner electorate. Since then, Botha has backed off from many of his plans for racial reform in an effort to woo back these Afrikaner voters.

**Figure 1**  
**South Africa: Population Estimates**  
**by Percent, July 1980**

Total: 28,468,000



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### Businessmen

Few Afrikaners are among the giants of South African industry, but those with power are exerting some pressure for limited racial reforms. The majority of Afrikaner businessmen, however, are in retail trade and smalltown businesses, and they hold traditional racial attitudes that are the bulwark of apartheid.

When the National Party took over the government in 1948, it actively encouraged Afrikaners to become involved in industry and commerce, which were monopolized by English-speaking whites. Even now Afrikaners control no more than 30 percent of nonagricultural private enterprise, although they make up 60 percent of the white population.

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During the 1950s and early 1960s the government created large state-controlled corporations to operate railroads, seaports, and other essential industries in an effort to reduce English predominance in the major industries and provide jobs for Afrikaners. Thus, a large portion of the growing Afrikaner managerial class was diverted from private enterprise into the public sector. This trend continued through the 1970s as the government established even more state-controlled corporations aimed at ensuring military and economic self-sufficiency.

**The Quiet Men.** For the first two decades of Nationalist rule, the party commanded the unquestioning loyalty of Afrikaner businessmen who were benefiting from its patronage. Businessmen concentrated on making money, however, and few were active in the party.

The economic slowdown in the early 1970s and the Soweto riots of 1976 awakened many businessmen to the danger apartheid posed to their economic future. Industry and business in South Africa has long been plagued by shortages of skilled labor. Restrictions on the mobility of blacks, the poor quality of their education, and laws prohibiting the hiring of blacks for certain jobs add to this problem. These factors contribute to high unemployment among blacks in urban areas, which is a source of growing discontent. The English-dominated business group, the Associated Chamber of Commerce, has taken the lead in recommending upgrading the lot of urban black workers. Although prominent Afrikaner businessmen agree with this goal, the *Afrikaanse Handelsinstuut*—the Afrikaner Chamber of Commerce—has avoided making public statements on racial issues.

Because of the Afrikaner inclination to maintain ethnic solidarity in the face of outside pressure, even those Afrikaner industrialists and financiers who want to phase out the aspects of apartheid that hinder economic growth refrain from public criticism of the government. Nonetheless, they obviously discuss problems related to such issues as black trade union rights and residency restrictions in behind-the-scenes sessions with the Prime Minister and key government officials.

**Growing Role in Policymaking.** Prime Minister Botha sees the economic leverage the South African corporate sector has over black African states as vital to Pretoria's efforts at restraining the support these states give to anti-South African insurgent groups. He also wants business to help in the economic development of black homelands inside South Africa.

Most Afrikaner businessmen seem satisfied with the Prime Minister's awareness of the need of private enterprise for some, albeit very cautious, labor reforms. These businessmen are unlikely to become more politically assertive as long as government policies are seen as responsive to their interests. Nonetheless, as Botha increasingly tries to forge a closer alliance with business, this handful of influential Afrikaner industrial figures will almost certainly play an increasing role in developing future racial policies.

#### **The Military**

The military officer corps has evolved in the past two decades into one of the most important Afrikaner interest groups. Career military officers occupy key positions in the inner sanctums of Prime Minister Botha's government and have a role in policymaking that extends well beyond purely military matters.

**Coming of Age.** From the end of the Boer war until South Africa left the British Commonwealth in 1960, the South African Defense Force was little more than an English-dominated home guard militia. The military began to increase in importance in the 1960s after black unrest began in South Africa and the UN called for a voluntary arms embargo against South Africa. By late 1977, the emergence of black Marxist regimes in Mozambique and Angola, the beginnings of an insurgency in Namibia, the Soweto riots, and the UN's imposition of a mandatory arms embargo had added momentum to the military buildup.

Growing white concern over internal and external security and pride in the military's growth into the strongest and best equipped force in Sub-Saharan Africa gave the defense establishment increased public stature. Moreover, the flourishing partnership that developed between the military and industry as a consequence of the drive toward military self-sufficiency contributed to a new rapport between business leaders and senior officers.

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***From the Barracks Into Politics.*** When Botha moved up to the premiership in 1978, he brought with him a number of officers to serve as aides and advisers. During his 12 years as Defense Minister, Botha had become accustomed to the military style, and as Prime Minister he moved quickly to mold government decisionmaking along military lines. The State Security Council, patterned after the US National Security Council, was upgraded, and representatives from the Ministry of Defense now sit on almost every important executive branch committee. Military leaders thus gained a direct say in policy matters.

The officer corps has acquired a reputation for being more racially liberal than most of the white society. Defense Minister Malan is often given credit for formulating the "80-20" theory, which holds that only 20 percent of the threat to South Africa's stability is external while 80 percent is internal, and that it is the result of legitimate nonwhite grievances. Malan and other senior officers also have pressed for increased recruitment of blacks and the reduction of regulations that make for racial discrimination in the services. There are sound, practical reasons for opening up the services to nonwhites: the number of draft-age whites is relatively small and the constant callups of white reservists have caused economic disruptions.

While the officer corps as a group is left of center on the white South African political spectrum, it is imbued with the same ethnic, historical, and cultural values as the white community as a whole. Afrikaners hold over 80 percent of the top positions in the Defense Force. Most senior officers have strong ties to the National Party and the Dutch Reformed Church. At least 143 senior members of the Defense Force, which carries fewer than 200 officers on its senior roster, are said to be members of the Broederbond, the Afrikaner secret society.

As South Africa has become alienated from most Western countries, the tradition of study abroad by military officers has mostly been abandoned. Thus, South African military professionals have had little exposure to other cultures or to a wide range of ideas. They often are uninformed on issues of international politics, and many of them tend to view South Africa's external relations solely in the light of a Communist threat.

In many ways the beliefs of the typical South African military officer appear contradictory, although no more so than the views of most white South Africans. While not willing to give up any of their privileges as whites, most officers see the necessity of sharing some of them in order to retain white control of the country. They are aware that there must be more economic and educational opportunities for nonwhites, and are willing to put this into practice by serving alongside blacks in combat. Most, however, are adamant on such issues as separate residential areas and separate schools for their children.

#### **The Press**

The Afrikaans-language newspapers, long a major buttress of Afrikaner nationalism, have moved away from slavish adherence to the line of the ruling National Party. The editors of the Afrikaner papers, while loyal to the party, are relatively liberal in the South African context. Even before Botha became Prime Minister, they were advocating substantial changes to accommodate black nationalism.

***Handmaidens to the National Party.*** Throughout most of their history, the Afrikaner press sought to deepen the ethnic consciousness of the Afrikaners and to represent their interests. Together with the Dutch Reformed Church, the Afrikaner universities, and the National Party, the Afrikaans-language press plays an essential role in the Afrikaner cultural-political network.

The Afrikaner newspapers had intimate ties with the National Party long before the Nationalists came to power. The newspapers saw it as a duty to promote the party and the cause of Afrikaner nationalism. After the National Party electoral victory in 1948, most Afrikaans-language newspapers tended to act as promoters of the new Afrikaner-dominated regime. They were uncritically supportive of government policies, including apartheid.

***A New Afrikaans Journalism.*** Several factors contributed to the growth of some journalistic independence from the party and government. In general, the change reflects increased self-confidence among Afrikaners. After 1958, with the third National Party

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The Afrikaner Language Monument was built in Cape Province in 1975 to commemorate the evolution of Afrikaans from a simple farm dialect to a recognized modern language

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electoral victory in 10 years and the decline of parties based in the English-speaking community, Afrikaner editors saw less need to parrot unquestioningly the party line and became more willing to discuss intra-party disputes. The newspapers remained generally supportive of the government, but after the Sharpeville "massacre" in 1960 some journalists began to write about the gap between the government's racial policies and reality.

Afrikaner editors set the style for the new Afrikaans journalism. Typical of the new editorial breed is Wimpie de Klerk, the editor of *Die Transvaler*, the main paper in the Johannesburg area, who first used

the term *verligte* (enlightened) and *verkrampte* (narrow minded) to define the growing progressive-conservative split, particularly over racial policy, among Afrikaner politicians. Articulate, well-educated editors like de Klerk support the National Party without reservation in elections, but they no longer feel the need to accept Nationalist policies unquestioningly. Most would define their role as that of loyal critics. Their views tend to be more pragmatic and moderate than either government policy or Afrikaner public opinion. For the most part they are solidly behind any government modifications of the apartheid system.

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Prime Minister Botha no doubt sees that the newspapers play a useful role in conditioning the public to accept change. He has longstanding ties to some of the most important Afrikaans press personalities and obviously sees them as valuable allies against ultra-conservatives who oppose his policies.

#### **Afrikaner Universities**

Afrikaner universities are deeply involved in the debate over racial reform, and academics can be found to support almost any position—*verkrampste* or *verligte*—in the debate. In the last several years, however, *verligte* intellectuals, particularly from prestigious institutions such as the University of Stellenbosch, have argued aggressively in favor of racial reform. These academics expose Afrikaner students to an awareness that peaceful political reform is necessary to forestall violent political change. They also have relatively easy access to members of Botha's government. While proposing a variety of solutions to South Africa's long-term problems, almost all academics favor the preservation of white control of the country's political institutions.

*An Indigenous Academe.* Until the 1920s much of the teaching staff of South African universities came from overseas, chiefly Britain. Since then South Africa has trained its own intellectual elite to staff its institutions of higher education. By the early 1960s the government had set up a system of separate universities for English and Afrikaans speakers, and had moved nonwhite university students into institutions of their own.

Little was heard from the Afrikaner academic community until the 1970 census showed an unexpectedly large growth in the black birth rate and the pace of black urbanization. Since then, numerous Afrikaner professors—aware of the need to rethink the future—have published research that has influenced government planning, and have taken part in the work of government commissions recommending adaptive changes.

Many recent government innovations in racial policy were conceived on the Afrikaner campuses:

- The multiracial President's Council, now drafting recommendations for limited political rights for

Coloreds and Asians, is the culmination of work begun 20 years ago by two Afrikaner sociologists.

- Several Afrikaner professors have surfaced plans for a federal framework that would include "independent" black homelands. Many of these have been floated with the private encouragement of government leaders to acquaint the public to the possibility of change and to gauge popular reaction.
- The two major pieces of legislation that have removed restrictions on the burgeoning black trade union movement came out of government-sponsored commissions chaired by prominent Afrikaner academics.

*Academics in Government.* With the exception of the late Prime Minister Verwoerd, Afrikaner academics traditionally stayed out of politics. Now, however, the career paths of academics and politicians are beginning to cross and many former academics are now in policy positions in the government.

Afrikaners are acutely aware of their rapid rise from poor farmers to ruling elite. The prestigious role of university professors in society thus makes them a strong influence in a country where the political leadership is small and easily accessible to prominent Afrikaners.

The governing elite's hostility to outside interference ensures that university professors who propose indigenous solutions to South African problems also have a receptive audience at the policy level. Although some Afrikaner intellectuals have offered radical solutions to the race problem, the most acceptable proposals have been adaptations of the status quo. As South Africa's social and economic problems become more complex, however, Afrikaner leaders may have to look to the outside world for new ideas to help solve the country's problems. In that event, the academic community, with its established contacts among foreign scholars, stands as a ready channel for an exchange of ideas.

*The Students.* Although Afrikaner university students have grown more receptive in recent years to the need for limited change, most still believe that continued

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white rule is essential to preserving their way of life. By and large, Afrikaner students continue to have traditional respect for authority and most still support the National Party.

Most students enter Afrikaner universities from secondary schools that emphasize the history and values of Afrikaner religion and culture. Although university education broadens the intellectual horizon of young Afrikaners, the learning experience is confined to an Afrikaner world isolated for the most part from English speakers and nonwhites. With the recent expansion of compulsory military service for all white males, many students are now completing their two years' service before entering a university. They thus bring to the campuses a more realistic awareness of some of the military and social problems facing South Africa.

The principal Afrikaner student organization is the *Afrikaanse Studentebond* (ASB), which was until the late 1970s often more conservative than the government. The ASB has become more moderate during the last few years. It has echoed government policy, calling for consultations with Asians and Coloreds on a new constitution and advocating the elimination of "unnecessary" racial discrimination.

There are some pockets of even more liberal attitudes within the student communities. In 1980 a small band of Afrikaner students broke from the ASB and formed a new student organization open to all races and committed to nonviolent racial reform. This group, the Political Student Society (POLSTU), has met with prominent blacks such as Chief Buthelezi of KwaZulu and Dr. Nthato Motlana, the Soweto leader. It also recently collected 2,500 signatures at Stellenbosch University to organize a debate on opening the university to all races. Government pressure, however, forced the group to back off.

The majority of students at Afrikaner universities probably support the scrapping of many of the social and economic aspects of apartheid. Afrikaner students, like their elders, want the pace and degree of change controlled by whites, however, and few would

want to see real political powersharing with blacks. Only a small, albeit active, minority will probably continue to participate in organizations like POLSTU that advocate fundamental racial reforms.

#### **The Broederbond**

During the period of British dominance when Afrikaners were excluded from power, the Broederbond was the principal mechanism by which Afrikaner nationalists reached decisions and thus was a critically important organization. Broederbond influence has waned as that of the Nationalist Party has waxed, although it still retains significant latent power, largely because of its elite membership.

The Broederbond's 12,000 active members are the elite of Afrikaner society. Forty percent of Broederbond members still work in the traditional Afrikaner fields of agriculture and education, but many are lawyers, bankers, and journalists. Prime Minister Botha and most of his cabinet members, including Minister of Defense Malan and National Education Minister Gerrit Viljoen, belong to the Broederbond, as do over 100 senior military officers, most top Afrikaner academics, and the chairmen of the South African Broadcasting Corporation and the SASOL synthetic fuel project.

Everything about the organization is secret, including its membership roster, monthly cell meetings, and national conventions. Leaks of its confidential records to English-language newspapers in recent years, however, have stripped away some of the mystery and the aura of power from the organization.

Local politics, school board appointments, and community affairs have been the traditional focus of Broederbond meetings. In recent years the group has broadened its scope, sponsoring studies of national problems. Study groups are often chaired by senior government officials with expertise in the field being investigated. Government leaders often use the Broederbond's annual national convention to test reactions to reform proposals before making them public.

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The Broederbond's exact position on the question of racial reform is not public knowledge. The Broederbond does not openly comment on national issues, and the political views of its leadership have varied. Gerrit Viljoen, who served three terms as Broederbond chairman before his appointment to the Cabinet, and Minister of Cooperation and Development Koornhof were two Broederbond executives who espoused *verligte* positions, but Andries Treurnicht, the recently ousted leader of the National Party's *verkrampte* faction, has also been a Broederbond chairman. The present chairman is a conservative academic who argues in favor of a separate white homeland.

The spectrum of views on racial reform that exists among Afrikaners in general almost certainly is prevalent among Broederbond members as well. The recent decision to readmit HNP members who were forced out of the organization in the early 1970s probably reflects the Broederbond's recognition of the deep-seated conservatism of the Afrikaner community. Nonetheless, the Broederbond probably has generally agreed with the cautious reform policies of the Botha government.

### **The Churches**

***The Religious Legacy.*** The Dutch Reformed Churches of South Africa are so closely identified with the rise of Afrikaner culture that they have been called the "National Party at prayer." The Dutch settlers of the Cape of Good Hope brought with them strict Calvinism, and for nearly 200 years the mother church in the Netherlands controlled religious life in the settler communities. When the British extended their authority over the Cape colony at the beginning of the 19th century, however, ties between the South African congregations and the Netherlands were cut.

By the end of the 19th century an indigenous generation of Afrikaner theologians emerged. They viewed church and state as inseparable and the different races as specific creations of God, each with their own God-given identity. These new ideas provided spiritual sustenance to the Afrikaners in the hard times that followed the Boer war. During this period the church became a source of strength for poor, backward Afrikaners who found themselves in economic competition with nonwhites. When apartheid became the

official Nationalist government policy in 1948, the Afrikaner churches sanctioned it, using selected biblical passages to justify black subjugation. The churches worked to build voter support for the National Party, particularly in the rural areas, and reached the peak of their political power during the 1950s.

***The Modern Church.*** As the Afrikaners prospered, the church's influence in society diminished, particularly among urban Afrikaners. Nevertheless, membership in the reformed churches remains high; over 90 percent of Afrikaners belong to one or another of the three branches of the Dutch Reformed Church. The strong residual influence of the church is reflected in government efforts to regulate public morality through censorship of books, magazines, and movies and to enforce strict observance of Sunday as a day of worship.

The majority of Dutch Reformed Church clergy still hold the conservative values of their rural heritage and either are comfortable with the pace of racial reform under the National Party or would prefer an even slower one. A small number of progressive theologians, however, favor major political and social change. Claiming a return to early theological principles, they argue that the separation of the races cannot be exclusively nor explicitly justified on strict Calvinist grounds. They have had little impact on Afrikaner society, although they have drawn government approbation. Nonetheless, the small, liberal, Christian Institute, which split from the South African Dutch Reformed Church in the mid-1960s, was banned in 1977 for its outspoken criticism of the government's apartheid policies.

The major impediment to change in the church and to calls for reform has been the Afrikaner himself and his strong conservative faith. In a period of declining church importance, those Afrikaners who remain most devout are, for the most part, those whose beliefs are conservative and who feel most threatened by modernization and its implications.

### **The Trade Unions**

***Easing of Racial Barriers.*** Afrikaner trade unions, which have traditionally used their influence within the ruling National Party to protect their members

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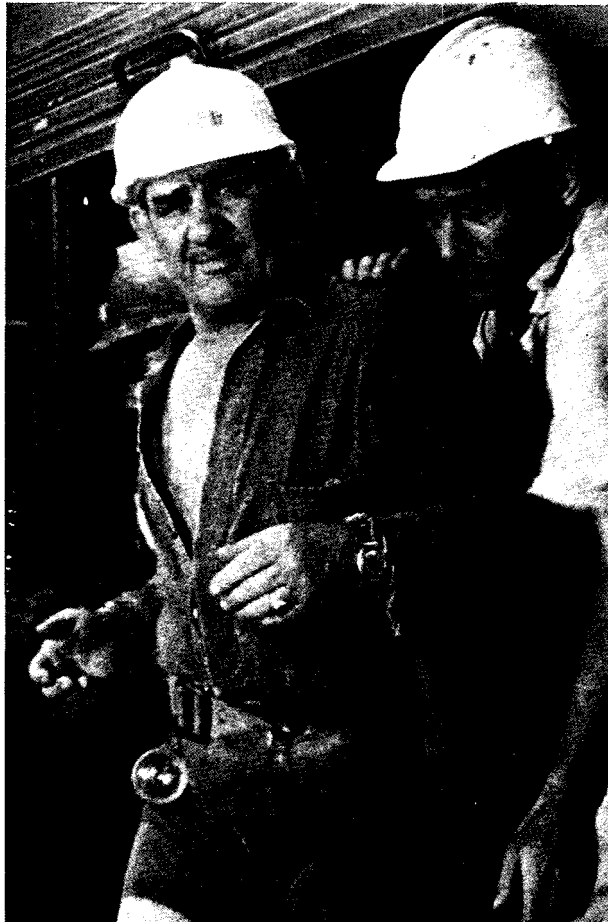
from nonwhite job competition, are declining in collective importance as a pressure group and as an impediment to the easing of economic apartheid.

The urban rioting of 1976 sensitized Pretoria to the need to upgrade the status of black labor, both to dampen discontent and to help the economy expand. In 1979 the Botha government passed legislation that ended the longstanding exclusion of blacks from registered trade unions and removed legal barriers to black employment in many skilled jobs. Although working conditions for most blacks have not improved significantly, the Prime Minister seems serious about following through with a gradual phasing out of discriminatory employment practices and an extension of collective bargaining rights to blacks.

Botha's ability to move ahead with labor reforms reflects the easing of white concern over job competition that has occurred as Afrikaners have moved up the economic and educational ladder. Indeed, because of the shrinking pool of white blue-collar workers, a growing number of Afrikaner trade union leaders now see no alternative to the removal of the job discrimination regulations. As a result, increasing numbers of Afrikaner unions are beginning to emulate non-Afrikaner unions in opening their ranks to blacks. The 25,000-member railway artisans' union, once the most sacrosanct haven of the Afrikaner working class, recently voted to admit black apprentices, and other railway unions are following suit.

**Mineworkers.** Despite the new mood among other trade unions, the powerful Mine Workers Union remains a bastion of conservatism. The Mine Workers Union threatened to strike in 1980 over the government intention to extend full legal trade union rights to black contract and migrant workers. The strike did not materialize because the mineworkers could not mobilize support from other unions.

The Mine Workers Union retains significant political leverage, however, in part because its membership is concentrated in key constituencies in the Transvaal. The Transvaal's seats in Parliament almost equal the combined total of the other three provinces, and the National Party's Transvaal party organization—which has close ties to the mineworkers—wields



Some of the most conservative Afrikaners belong to the 18,000-member Mine Workers Union [redacted]

considerable influence in the party's parliamentary caucus.<sup>1</sup> The results of the 1981 election may have magnified the miners' leverage. Miners were well represented among the blue-collar voters who deserted the Nationalists and cast their ballots for the HNP. Botha is paying special attention to the interests of these disaffected blue-collar groups in an effort to woo them back into the Nationalist fold.

#### **The Farmers**

The farmers, who together with their families represent little more than 10 percent of the Afrikaner population, also have a political impact out of proportion to their numbers, and their basic conservatism

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works as another natural brake on racial reform. Parliamentary districts are weighted in favor of rural areas, which can often have representation equal to urban areas with nearly twice the population. Farmers are active at the local level of the National Party and play an important role in the selection of candidates for Parliament, particularly in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

Since 1940, farmers have been the largest single occupational group among National Party members of Parliament; about one-third currently list themselves as farmers. Farmers have been well represented in the cabinet, although they have generally received the less important portfolios.

**The Farm Lobby.** For the most part, farmers have confined their active political lobbying to issues that affect agriculture and the rural communities. The South African Agricultural Union (SAAU), which claims to keep out of national politics, is the major national farm organization. SAAU leaders meet routinely with the Minister of Agriculture or his assistants while Parliament is in session.

Farmers are unavoidably involved in two of the most critical issues facing South Africa: border security and the homelands' consolidation policy. The security of border areas is central to government efforts to guard against black insurgent infiltration, and working farms form a natural deterrent to guerrilla activity. In recent years, Afrikaner farmers, concerned both with increasing security problems and the high cost of transporting goods from remote areas to urban markets, have been abandoning farms in the border regions, particularly in the northern Transvaal. In some of the border areas at least 25 percent of the farmland is unoccupied. The government has tried with little success to counter this migration by offering financial incentives—such as low interest loans—to those who agree to stay in strategic locations.

Farmers have been largely successful in preventing the government from consolidating the black homelands by turning Afrikaner farms into white spots inside the "independent" black states. Rural National Party strongholds in the eastern Cape Province have

successfully won their right to stay in South Africa instead of being incorporated into the Ciskei homeland.

**Beyond the Fringe.** Apartheid began as the political philosophy of poor rural Afrikaners and it provides farmers today with an abundant supply of cheap, docile labor. Some farmers may sense the need for change to reduce social tensions. Most, however, feel that better educational and economic conditions for their workers would only encourage social and political unrest. Thus, there is little likelihood that the farming community would push for a better deal for blacks.

In protecting their interests, farmers have had as a political champion Dr. Andries Treurnicht. Many farmers, however, are even further right than Treurnicht. In the April 1981 parliamentary election, farmers probably voted in large numbers for the HNP. Prime Minister Botha's general concern about winning back disaffected Afrikaners could magnify the farmers' already substantial leverage with the Nationalists.

#### **The Bureaucracy**

The Afrikaner-dominated bureaucracy, which the National Party built and which in turn has helped build the party, now acts as a significant obstacle to racial reform. Public service employment helped many Afrikaners rise from the poverty in which many of them lived during the first part of this century, and the expansion of government corporations under the Nationalists brought even more Afrikaners into the public sector. Moreover, when the National Party came to power in 1948, it created a huge bureaucracy to administer the web of apartheid legislation it enacted. As a result, over half the Afrikaner work force—including civil servants, teachers, transport and communications workers, the police, and workers in state industry—now hold government-associated jobs.

**Blocking Change.** The policy of padding the bureaucracy with Afrikaners paid handsome dividends for the National Party. Civil servants became one of the most important elements in the party electoral machine and helped increase and solidify the National Party parliamentary majority during the 1950s and 1960s.



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By the late 1970s, however, the government realized that in addition to being inefficient the bureaucracy was a large drain on government finances. In an effort to make the public service sector more responsive to control from the top, the Prime Minister made a sweeping consolidation of government departments and abolished about 12,000 jobs.

Because of their basic conservatism, the bureaucrats and other public-sector employees form a resident opposition within the party to the *verligte* reforms. The senior civil servants are able to exert direct influence on cabinet ministers and other political appointees, who must rely on the bureaucracy for advice and guidance.

Even more important is the role played by lower level bureaucrats, the police, and others involved in the workings of government at the grass-roots level. As administrators of apartheid, these members of the bureaucracy enforce the web of racial regulations; indeed they are dependent on doing so for their livelihood. Moreover, the mass of legislation that makes up the apartheid system effectively delegates to these lower level bureaucrats and government employees the power to choose how and when to implement change—and few of them favor change.

Civil servants and other public-sector workers were heavily represented among those who shifted loyalties from the National Party to the HNP in the last election as the HNP capitalized on the conservatism of the bureaucracy as well as on Botha's efforts to pare it down to size. The HNP, as part of its attack on Botha, charged him with deliberately holding down bureaucratic salaries to force out whites and bring in blacks. The National Party is now paying special attention to the public-sector employees as part of its broader effort to win back disaffected rightwing Afrikaners. The result is that the bureaucrats—like the miners and farmers—are, at least temporarily, looming larger as a pressure group.

### Outlook

Industrial modernization, economic advancement, and urbanization have given rise to new groups within the Afrikaner community that are competing with traditional ones. Afrikaner unity has been diluted by

this evolutionary process. Newer groups—businessmen, academics, editors and journalists, and military officers—have emerged since the Afrikaners rose to power in 1948 and are slowly coming to see that some racial reforms are necessary if only to preserve white privileges. Over time, the influence of these groups will grow and the influence of the traditional conservative groups will diminish. The pace, scope, and even the direction of this change will be influenced by a host of complex socioeconomic, security, and political factors.

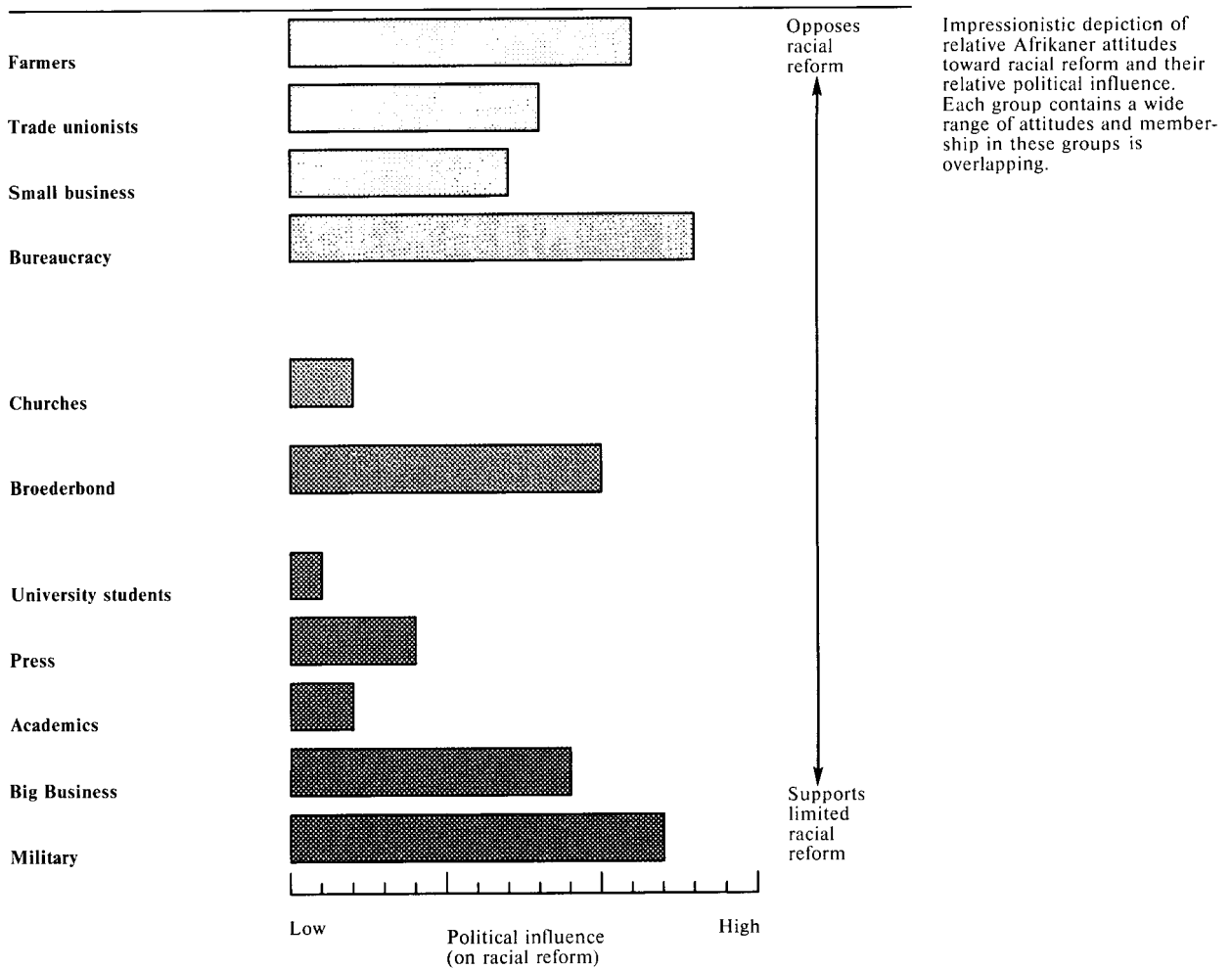
It will be a slow, painful, and uneven process, but the long-term trend seems clear. Traditional Afrikaner institutions such as the Church and the Broederbond, once the dominating influences in Afrikaner life, are losing ground and being supplanted by organizations catering to social, economic, occupational, and recreational interests. This evolutionary process will further divide Afrikaners along class lines, loosen ethnic cohesion, and allow wider diversity of thought and action. In this process the traditional groups will not disappear. They will retain the potential of appealing to the narrow ethnic nationalism that has served the Afrikaner well in gaining and maintaining power. Moreover, as a group, Afrikaners remain collectively committed to preserving white political dominance and protecting their privileges and culture.

Over the long run, farmers will gradually lose their entrenched hold on politics as the farm population ages, agribusiness grows, and younger and better educated Afrikaners become politically active. In the short term, however, despite recent redistricting, constituency boundaries still favor the rural population and add to their political clout. Moreover, reform-minded leaders like Prime Minister Botha will use tools like redistricting with extreme care so as not to lose control of a very gradual process of change.

The white bureaucracy will remain one of the largest pressure groups and is likely to continue to resist racial reform programs. If, however, the government pursues its present course of leaving vacant positions unfilled, the size and political power of the bureaucracy will be reduced. This will not lead to a backlash from the white community, because the coming generation of prospective civil servants can readily be

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**Figure 2**  
**Range of Afrikaner Attitudes Toward Racial Reform**



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absorbed in higher paying jobs in the private sector. Blacks may benefit because there will be fewer enforcers of apartheid laws and because they might eventually be able to advance into the lower ranks of the civil service.

Economic growth will affect the racial attitudes of trade unionists and blue-collar workers. An expanding

economy will reveal the shortage of skilled manpower and will provide both the climate and resources to upgrade black skills and education. Economic slowdowns would, however, generate competition among skilled labor of all races and lower income whites would work to block black advancement. In that case, other trade unions would join the mineworkers in pressing for white job protection.

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Those at the higher educational and economic levels of Afrikaner society tend to realize that racial discrimination serves no definable purpose in many situations. Businessmen and the new professional class—editors and journalists and academics—see an increasing mutuality of interest with senior military officers who want reforms to reduce internal security threats and gain black support against what they see as the coming Communist onslaught. As security issues begin to have a greater impact on both domestic and foreign policy, the military will become an even more powerful force within the government. An elitist coalition of businessmen, military officers, and politicians might then be able to exert far-reaching pressure for reforms as discussions crucial to security and survival move from the area of public scrutiny into the corridors of executive power, and decisions are made and carried out behind closed doors.

Prime Minister Botha has already begun this process of decisionmaking at the executive level. He has been quietly restructuring the government to make it more responsive to the executive than to Parliament. The office of the Prime Minister has been strengthened allowing the Prime Minister to implement some changes without waiting for the unwieldy process of formal political approval. Botha has upgraded the State Security Council, the government's chief decisionmaking body, and staffed it with personally loyal cabinet members and military officers. He has used the extensive network of advisory commissions, composed of eminent academics and professionals, to bypass the parliamentary caucus to introduce legislation such as the recent changes in labor laws allowing black trade unions.

In keeping with this trend toward executive management, Botha engineered the constitutional abolition of the conservative Senate and replaced it with a multi-racial consulting body now drafting plans for a new constitutional system which will give some political rights to Coloreds and Asians. The constitution that emerges is expected to provide for an executive presidency, giving the central government greater authority.

While the government is adapting to the future needs of South Africa, the National Party, Afrikanerdom's primary vehicle for political expression and focus of political pressure, has not yet changed. The structure and function of the party still reflects the political mission of the 1930s and 1940s—the mobilization and economic advancement of the Afrikaner people. Moreover, the party leadership has maintained a single-minded dedication to Afrikaner unity, while being pressured by a new set of complex and competing interests. By accommodating all points of view, the party provides an open forum for factional infighting between conservative and liberal forces within the Afrikaner community. As a result innovative political policies have been stymied.

Botha has recently won an overwhelming vote of political confidence over the extreme right wing of the National Party. He should now be able to move forward on racial reform albeit within limits circumscribed by what the Afrikaner electorate will tolerate. Botha or any like-minded successor will continue to have trouble controlling the National Party until the Afrikaner electorate's attitude toward racial reform changes and the power of those groups supporting the preservation of unaltered white supremacy can be reduced. Botha will, however, continue quietly building a strong executive branch of government which could promote beneficial change. This, of course, could have the opposite effect if the strong executive ended up in ultraconservative hands.

Against this backdrop, Afrikaner attitudes toward racial reform will continue to evolve as they debate their uncertain future, and some positive changes in South Africa's racial policies and practices will gradually occur. Racial reforms will not be easy to accomplish. They will exacerbate the emerging differences within the Afrikaner community and will be limited and scattered. Whatever steps are taken will result from Afrikaner perceptions of what has to be done at the time to ensure the community's survival. As a result, the pace and scope of reform will satisfy neither black South Africans nor the outside world. The debate over reform and those reforms that are actually implemented will, however, contain the seeds for further change and contribute to the evolution of Afrikaner attitudes.

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*Implications for the United States.* Over the short term, the ability of the United States and its allies to promote meaningful racial reform in South Africa will remain limited. Even the most progressive Afrikaners have not reached the point where they give serious consideration to anything but limited modifications of apartheid. Over the longer term, however, as South Africa's social, economic, and security problems worsen, these Afrikaners may begin to look beyond their own culture for new ways to deal with their country's dilemma. Should that occur, external influences might have some impact.

Nonetheless, aggressive advocacy of substantial reform by the United States or other outside powers would have little positive effect. Such pressure probably would strengthen the resistance of rightwing Afrikaners to change and might cause progressives and conservatives to unite in the face of what they would perceive as yet another threat to white rule and white culture.

In the meantime, the racial problems of South Africa will continue to have an impact on the United States, both domestically and in the foreign policy arena. Many of the 350 American companies doing business in South Africa have already been pressured by US shareholders, universities, and churches to divest themselves of their South African holdings. Most American companies in South Africa practice enlightened labor relations and are, therefore, a positive force in influencing change. Nevertheless, they are not immune to labor troubles that spotlight US involvement with South Africa and evoke calls for economic disengagement.

US relations with other African states will continue to be complicated by the slow progress of change in South Africa. Because most African states believe that the United States has leverage over the South African Government, they will view any US encouragement of incremental racial reform as approval of the apartheid system. They will also blame Washington for lack of initiative if no progress is seen.

More important, as long as South Africa does not rapidly develop policies and institutions that could defuse the potential for violence and racial confrontation, the neighboring black states will be drawn further into the fray and will see themselves as increasingly vulnerable to Pretoria's efforts to destabilize them. Many will turn for help to Moscow and its allies who, with a minimum of effort and expenditure, will be able to exploit regional instability in the name of South African "liberation."



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