

## Apartheid briefing paper

Whilst of course there is no moral ground for apartheid or racial segregation, it is important to understand how South Africa came to be this way even if we cannot comprehend it through our modern viewpoint. South Africa was a nation which was consistently controlled as a colony from roughly the 1650s, when the Dutch founded the Cape Colony which was eventually ceded to the British after a back-and-forth debate over who the land belonged to. South Africa was not a united country and it wasn't until the 1930s that all the individual lands and territories were unified. Due to all of this, there was now a country with multiple different races and nationalities – the native Africans who had their land taken, the white settlers and many South Asians who had been able to arrive through connections in the British empire.

In an ideal world, this diversity would have been embraced but due to the attitudes of the White settlers, policy which promoted white supremacy was put into place until the 1990s. Forms of segregation had been occurring in South Africa for many decades already but it was not until the 1948 election that it became serious. The Afrikaner National Party achieved a victory using the slogan 'Apartheid' – the Afrikaans word for apartness, which is the language spoken by the white South Africans. They only had one main goal and that was to separate the white population from the non-white majority, whilst also dividing the non-white population into their tribal and ethnic groups so that they were a less unified force. 2 years later their plan began with banning interracial marriage as well as publishing legal framework which set out the racial divides and where each race was placed in society.

There was no part of life which wasn't controlled by apartheid laws. The majority of the land in South Africa became reserved for the white population and the black population was forced to live in 'homelands'; if they needed to travel into a white 'zone' for work, a permit was needed to do so. Hospitals, public transport and public facilities were all separated, with the white facilities being better funded as the government was ultimately on their side. Whilst the black population could have some form of governmental control in their 'homelands', non whites weren't allowed to take part in national government, creating a country which was governed by a white majority until Nelson Mandela took power in the 90s. The ANP had tried to weaken any political power that the non-white people had – through creating a segregation system which split not only by race but by other ethnic groupings, it was harder for non white people to unify thus giving more power to the white minority.

Of course there was resistance to apartheid but it was frequently met with violence from the authorities. Multiple resistance groups formed to help in the fight with the most famous being the ANC due to its ties with Nelson Mandela, founder of the Umkhonto we Sizwe branch of the organisation. The members of these groups were often the victims of violence at the hands of the police – for example nearly 70 black people died at a shooting in the town of Sharpsville in 1960 as they were associated with the ANC and the PAC; none of them were armed. Resistance started to become more militant and eventually leading to leaders of resistance groups being incarcerated and often executed. Mandela was incarcerated in this period, serving 27 years in jail with him finally being released in 1990.

South Africa began to reverse Apartheid legislation in 1994 with the introduction of the new constitution – the election of the same year was the first election in which the non-white population was finally allowed to vote. The election produced a result which better reflected the population as the government created had a non-white majority coalition, with a black president at its forefront. Apartheid had come to an end in terms of the law yet in terms of the social and economic problems

it left behind, South Africa is still trying to recover and make amends with the communities shut out from everyday life.

**Side note:**

This is quite a sensitive topic so please be mindful of other delegates and of experiences that they may have faced personally. If you feel uncomfortable or unable to comment, please just send me a message and I'll try to accommodate any needs/requests you have.

For the purpose of debate, please try and refrain from referring to any events past **1990. – i.e. the year which Mandela gets released.** This debate will take the view that apartheid is still on going but is reaching its end – what would you do to make it end sooner?

**Points to consider:**

Should South Africa face sanctions for not ending apartheid earlier?

Should the UN have intervened due to violations of Human Rights such as people being blocked from voting?

Would it be fair for former colonial powers to be 'punished' due to their lasting impact on South African affairs even if they were involved hundreds of years ago?

The UN banned sale of arms to South Africa in this period and declared that Apartheid was unacceptable – do you believe this is really enough from an organisation such as the UN? Is the UN really a multinational body or is it just acting on behalf of the former colonialist founders?

**Useful links:**

<https://youtu.be/kJOU9YYMzpw>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/how-south-africa-changed-since-apartheid-born-free-generation>

[https://www.history.com/topics/africa/apartheid#section\\_2](https://www.history.com/topics/africa/apartheid#section_2)

<https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-apartheid-south-africa>

<https://www.apartheidmuseum.org/resources>