Past & Present Crime, Violence, Migration In South Africa

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I.   Introduction

It is widely recognised that defining ethnicity is not always easy. Peach (1996) noted while birthplace is an unambiguous category, ethnic identity is more mercurial. Critically ethnicity is contextual rather than absolute. One may be Black in England, British in Germany, and European in Thailand. A person may be South African by descent but British by upbringing so that his or her census category might be either Black-African or Black Other. Thus ethnicity is a situational rather than an independent category. (Madge, 2001)

While definitions of ethnicity are often intended as descriptors, they are sometimes employed for more political purposes. Richardson and Wood (1999) described use of the term 'Black' to refer to people targeted by racism, and to recall continually that race and racism are fundamental issues. To omit the word black here, would be to gloss over the realities of racism, and would in this way make the realities more difficult to address. (Cited in Madge, 2001)

Petty and Brown 1998 wrote on the analysis of crime in South Africa. They concluded that there are three fundamental facts that underpin this analysis of crime in South Africa: first, there are many different kinds of crime, requiring many different types of intervention. Second, there is no single cause of crime, so it is necessary to understand the linked to social, economic, political and psychological causes in order to prevent it and finally crime statistics are notoriously unreliable, so simple statistical analysis may hide as much as it reveals. To develop effective solutions, crime and its causes must be eliminated. (Petty & Brown 1998)

The level of crime in South Africa
Each day in South Africa more than 1900 severe crimes are reported. On average, these include:
(Figure 1)

50	Murder
88	Rapes
150	Cases of fraud
187	Aggravated robberies
216	Burglaries of businesses
260	Care thefts
431	Aggravated assaults
544	Burglaries of houses

(Petty and Brown 1998)

Inspired policy thoughts about migration in South Africa have been hampered by the country's unsavoury immigration history. Prior to 1994, immigration policy was a naked instrument of racial domination. Until 1991, the bureaucratic definition of a migrant was that he or she had to be able to assimilate into the white population. By definition, therefore, Africans were not considered immigrants. Rather, they came to South Africa as brief workers, entering through back-door channels as contract migrants under bilateral agreements between the apartheid government and its neighbours such as Lesotho, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. This gave rise to the infamous South African migrant labour system, a scheme still very much in place today. (Crush 2003)

II.   History of South Africa in the Apartheid Era.

Figure 2

The modern state of South Africa is comparatively new and only came into being in 1910. Both before and after this time, the region's history was dominated by political struggle, social upheaval and economic hardship. (Mason 2003) After the Second World War, the country was very much a world anomaly – a parish state that refused to bow to the pressures of the post-colonial world order. It is only in the last ten years that the white minority conceded to the inevitability of majority rule, a move which made all the remarkable because it was not accompanied by the often expected blood bath. Since then, South Africa has been established as a respectable member of the international community as a dedicated non-aligned state, and despite the persistence of political and social fractures at home, which are only slowly being overcome, South Africa is a regional super power. (Mason 2003)

Nelson Mandela in his autobiography once wrote that apartheid "represented the codification in one oppressive system of all the laws and regulations that had kept Africans in an inferior position to whites for centuries. The often haphazard segregation of the past three hundred years was to be consolidated into monolithic system that was diabolical in its detail, inescapable in its reach and overwhelming in its power" (Mason, 2003: 191).
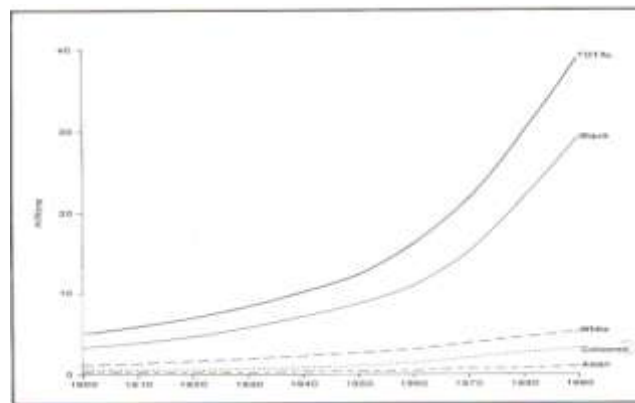

Figure 3 *Population of South Africa, 1900-90*

As the quote illustrates, the system of apartheid was not invented from scratch. It had been building for decades if not centuries, and had origins that were as deep-seated as they were complex. (Mason, 2003)

Figure 3 shows the population of South Africa, 1900-90 and also illustrates how white immigrant achieved demographic dominance; they retained power over the country in the face of rising demands for political rights by the black majority.

(Adam and Giliomee 1979; Kimberley 1880-1920 quoted in Christopher 1994)

The term apartheid (from the Afrikaans word for "apartness") was coined in the 1930s and used as a political motto of the 'national party' in the early 1940s, but the policy plan itself extends back to the start of white settlement in South Africa in 1652. Subsequently the primarily Afrikaner Nationalists came to authority in 1948, the social norm of apartheid was systematized underneath the law. (Robinson 1999)

III.   1976 Soweto riot

By 1976 the long period of apparent security force supremacy had begun to wane. The independence of Angola and Mozambique under Marxist governments and the increasing South African military involvement in both brought the prospects of Black empowerment closer. The authorities on the other hand pursued their policies with increasing insensitivity thereby breeding intense resentment. The point of conflict came over the imposition of new regulations attached to the Bantu Education programme, which sought to introduce the compulsory use of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction for mathematics, social studies, history and geography. (Christopher 1994)

The burden of this requirement, added to the perceived inferiority of the programme itself, resulted in protested and demonstrations, organized by the South African Students Movement. June 16th 1976 was chosen as a day for country-wide demonstrations against the imposition of Afrikaans in Black schools. (Christopher 1994).
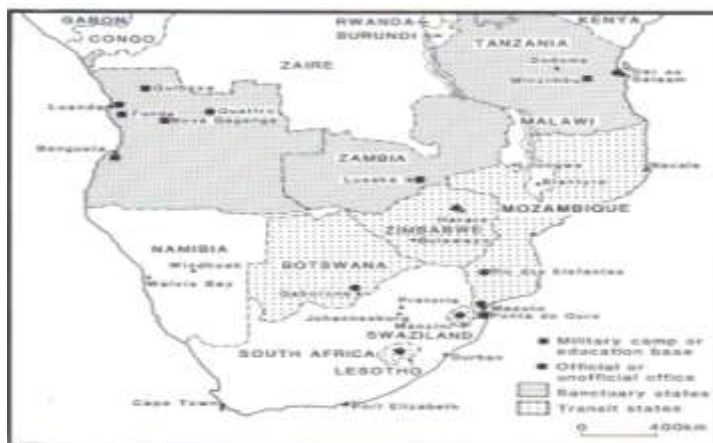
African National Congress Bases (Figure 4)

The involvement of many strands of discontent allowed the whole situation to lead to Riots (Davis 1987).A march by school children in Soweto ended in confrontation with the police as the necessary permission from the West Rand Bantu Affairs Administration Board had not been given. The police opened fire killing a number of young demonstrators. Serious riot broke out the following day with associated murder, arson and looting. The particular targets of the arsonists were government properties, notably those administered by the Bantu Affairs Administration Boards, including libraries, clinics and beer halls. Schools, shops and houses were also attacked. The riots spread from Soweto to other towns on the Witwatersrand as well as to Pretoria and its vicinity (Figure 4) (Christopher 1994).

Extensive damage was done to the universities of the North and Zululand. It was only in August that the major rioting began in the Western Cape, when it had largely died down on the Witwatersrand. The Black areas in Cape Town were affected in mid-August and the coloured areas in early September. Riots in Port Elizabeth in mid-August were similarly directed against Administration Board property (South Africa 1980). Sporadic outbreaks occurred elsewhere in the country but were not as sustained as those on the Witwatersrand and Cape Town. Almost half 575 deaths occurred in Soweto alone. Natal and the central areas of the country experienced little serious threat to the state. (Christopher 1994)
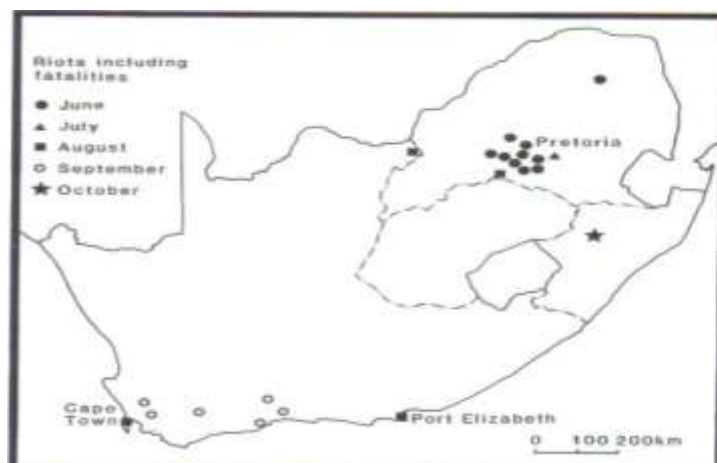
The Diffusion of Violence, 1976 (figure 5)

The government was able to restore its authority, and embarked on a limited reform policy. (Lemon 1976; Christopher 1994)*Extent of the state of emergency 1985*

The 1984 - 1990 States of Emergency

In September 1984 riots broke out in a number of Black townships in the southern Transvaal, notably in the Vaal Triangle. The death rates due to political violence increased sharply. In addition to the constitution, rent and transport increases, together with a school boycott, created an explosive environment (Lemon 1987 quoted in Christopher 1994). Discounted with the new structures of Black local government held responsible for many of the townships' ills, also provided a visible target for the riots. Funerals became the main outlet for political gatherings. (Christopher 1994)
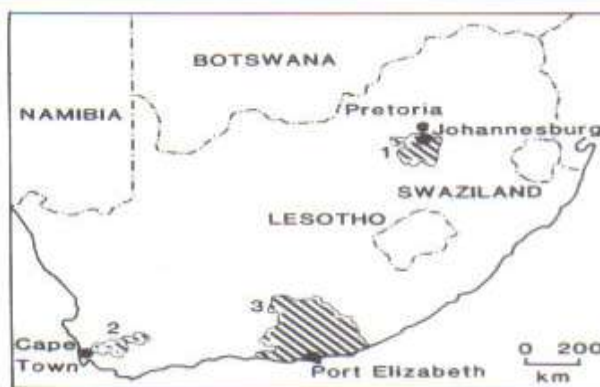

Figure 6

Boycotts and demonstrations spread to other parts of the country in early 1985, notably to the Eastern Cape. Furthermore, much of the unrest was experienced in the smaller towns, such as Cradock, Colesberg and Graaff-Reinet. On 21 March 1985, the twenty mourners in a funeral procession in Langa Township, Uitenhage. The incident was highly inflammatory both internally and internationally. Violence subsequently became particularly deadly in a number of centres on the East Rand (Lemon 1987).

*Extent/areas of the state of emergency 1985* figure 7

Figure 8

A state of emergency was declared in July 1985 in Eastern Cape and East Rand districts (figure 6, 7, & 8). Wide powers of arrest and detention were given to the police. Major drives against anyone suspected of violence or incitement ensured, although the majority so detained were released quite rapidly, owning to the exceptionally large numbers involved (Lemon 1987).
Press censorship was imposed, thereby hiding the activities of death squads with possible police and army connections, only now being revealed by the investigative journalism of the alternative press. (Christopher 1994).
The emergency was lifted in a number of districts in districts on October. However, violence spread to the Western Cape and a state of emergency was imposed there in the same month. The emergency was lifted in more districts in December and its entirety in March 1986. (Christopher 1994)
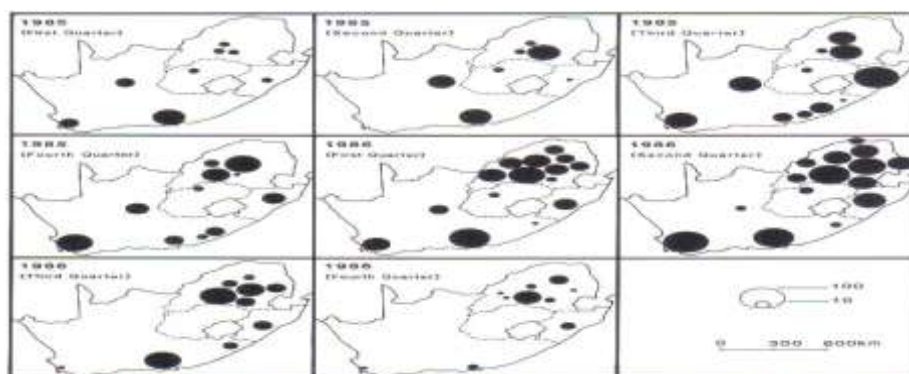
Figure 9

Levels of violence continued to be high and a further state of emergency was imposed on the entire country in June 1986 (figure 9) (Lemon 1987)
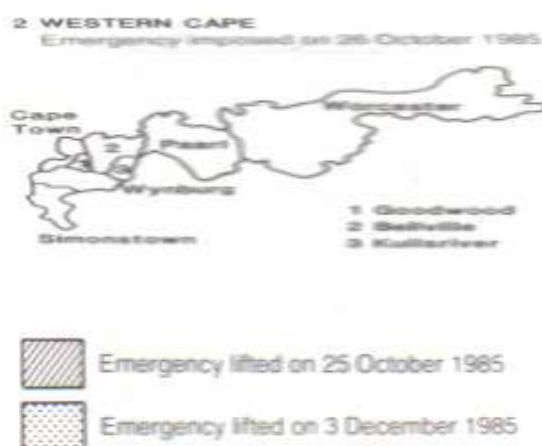

Deaths of political violence, 1985-6 (Figure 10)

The year 1987 was one of the more peaceful in recent South African history, apart from the start of the massive civil strife in Natal and KwaZulu, which began in the second quarter (figure 10). By 1989 the scale of the fighting and political murder in Natal exceeded that under the 1986 state of emergency for the country as a whole. (Figure 11) (Christopher 1994)

Death due to political violence, 1987-90 figure 11
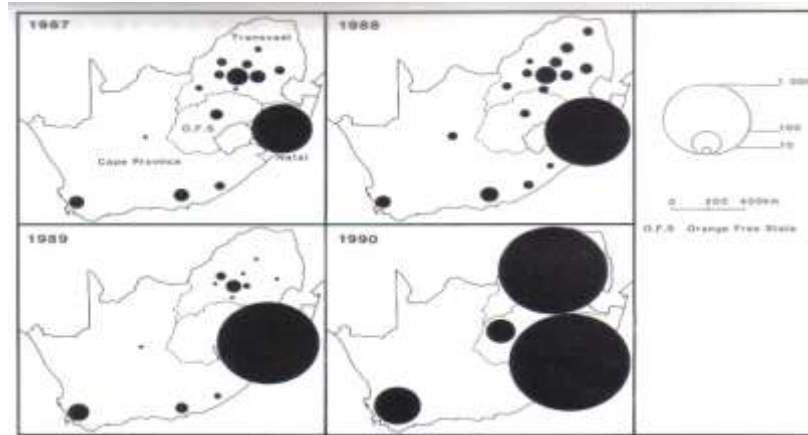
The wave of political turmoil associated with the removal of the ban on the African National Congress and the other movements, and the lifting of the state of emergency in 1990 resulted in an outburst of Violence, which exceeded anything previously experienced under National Party rule, culminating in the death of nearly 700 people in the month of August 1990. Riots and killings spread rapidly to other parts of the country, although Natal remained the single greatest source of political murders. (Christopher 1994; Rotberg and Barratt 1980).

Death in Detention in South Africa
As part of the State of Emergency, declared in 1960 following the Sharpeville killings, the government introduced detention without trial. (Meli 1988)

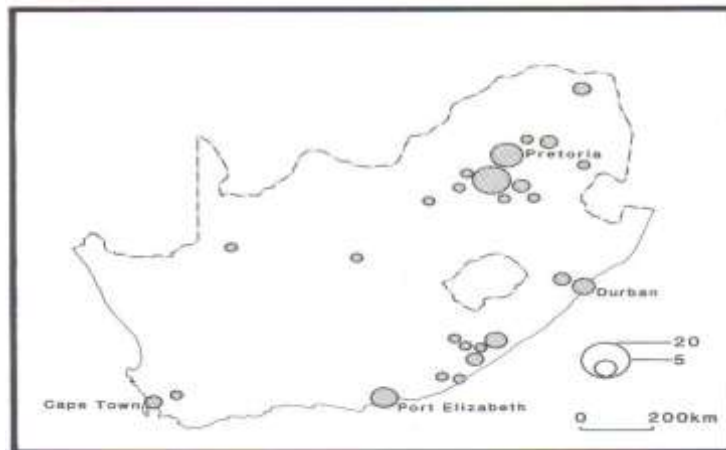*Death in Detention, 1963-90*

Figure 12

In 1963 under the General Laws Amendment Act, later expanded as the Internal Security Act, this power became permanent part of the state apparatus in fighting opposition. The period of detention was lengthened, and then made indefinite if sanctioned by a judge in 1966. The Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei governments introduced their own, often more draconian, legislation on attaining independence. In the course of the period from 1960 to 1990 some 78,000 people were detained without trial. One of the notable features of this legislation was a virtually unlimited power exerted by the security police over the detainees, and the consequent number of deaths in detention (figure 12). In the 1960s two or three detainees died each year, until the widely publicized death of Ahmead Timol in 1971. No more deaths were recorded until the Soweto riots of 1976. (Meli 1988; Christopher 1994)
Figure 13
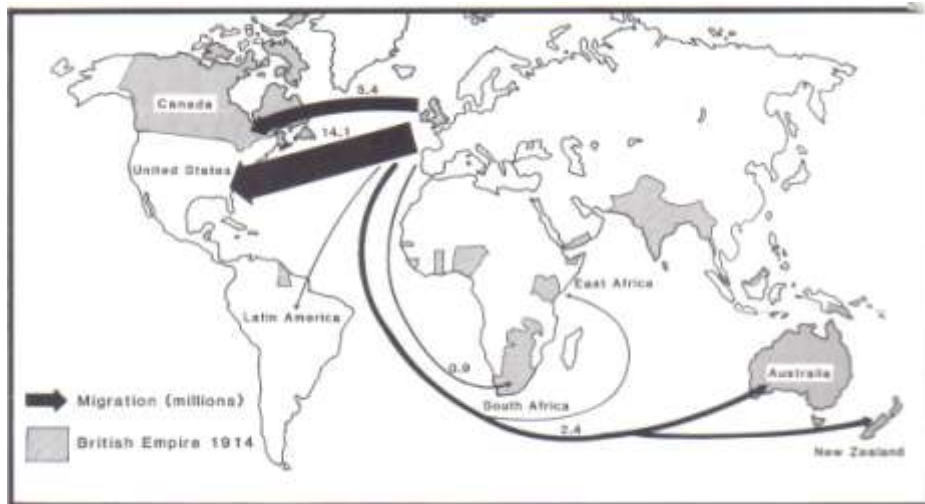
(*British emigration flows*, 1815-1914 Christopher 1988) Figure 14

South Africa, 1910 (Best and Young 1972)

Figure 15

Just recently an anti-crime petition with an estimated 200, 000 signatures and a memorandum demanding a crime-free and corruption-free South Africa were handed to officials by marchers in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban.   The National protest followed after the case of a man suspected of murdering a seven years old child (SA Times March 14, 2007).

IV.   Conclusion

In conclusion this source file, demonstrates the past and present crime and violence experienced in South Africa as well as the migration status before the immigration policy in 1994. Ethnic conflict within Blacks and Whites was also an issue as it leads to most of the violence suffered by South Africans. This source file reflects on the past present crime experienced in South Africa, violence and forced migration during the Apartheid Era. The history of South Africa in the Apartheid Era in no doubt can explain the course of crime and violence as it is explained in this source file. Some questions are still yet to be answered such as the tribal roles by the loyalties during this struggle and how Apartheid racialism and ethnic policies influence the violence as seen in the diagrams above. Some of the issues that prolonged the violence in South Africa during the Apartheid Era were the Apartheid racialism and ethnic disintegration. At the end of the fight most victims have been forced to migrate. While the migrated there future became uncertain.

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<u>INDEX</u>

[16]   Death in detention in South Africa 7
[17]   Death of Political violence 6, 7
[18]   Definition of ethnicity 1
[19]   Emergency imposed July 1985 5
[20]   Emergency imposed October 1985 6
[21]   Emergency lifted on 3 December 1985 6
[22]   Extent of the state of emergency 1985 4, 5
[23]   Figures1, 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,
[24]   Population description of South Arica 2
[25]   History of South Africa in the apartheid era 2
[26]   Introduction 1
[27]   Johannesburg region 5
[28]   Kimberley 1880-1920 2
[29]   Kinds of crime and intervention 1
[30]   Lemon 1987 5
[31]   Madge, 2001 1
[32]   Mason 2003 3
[33]   Meli 1988 7
[34]   Migration description 8
[35]   Nelson Mandela autobiography 3
[36]   Peach 1996 1
[37]   Petty and Brown 1998 1
[38]   Richardson Wood 1999 1
[39]   Robinson 1999 3
[40]   Reference list 10, 11
[41]   South Africa 1980 4
[42]   State of emergency (1984, 1985-90) 4,5,6,7
[43]   South Africa 1910 8
[44]   Soweto riots 1976 3
[45]   The diffusion of violence, 1976 4
[46]   Violence 3, 4, 5, 6,7,8,9
[47]   West Rand Bantu Affairs Administration Board 4