

## SOUTH AFRICAN LAND REFORM

### BACKGROUND:

Despite the end of legal apartheid in the 1990s and the election of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994, racial economic inequality has been especially persistent in South Africa. The average income of white South Africans is approximately five times the average income of black South Africans (R444,446 to R92,893 according to Statistics South Africa). There is little question that this is largely due to conditions created during apartheid, but the ANC government has been criticized for not acting more aggressively to address those conditions.

In particular, the ANC has been criticized for its lack of success with land reform. During apartheid, land was systematically taken from black South Africans without just compensation. Despite the ANC's goal of 30% redistribution within five years, only 1% of land actually changed hands. According to a 2017 government audit, 72% of South Africa's farmland is controlled by white farmers, despite whites only making up 9% of South Africa's population.

Land reform continues to be a major political issue, with SA President Cyril Ramaphosa making it a central campaign issue (arguing for a more forceful policy of expropriation). However, it remains to be seen whether any significant land reform will actually occur in South Africa and, if so, how it will be achieved.

### RESOLUTION:

*The Republic of South Africa should adopt a policy to significantly increase the restoration of land to the indigenous peoples of South Africa.*

### AFFIRMATIVE GROUND:

The resolution offers some degree of flexibility for the affirmative as there are a number of ways to engage in land reform (while still providing a clear direction and offering stable ground to the negative). Land redistribution, restitution, and land tenure reform are all aspects of land reform as is the question of how current landowners should be compensated (or not).

In terms of advantage areas, there is ample research that suggests that unequal land distribution is a principal factor in South African poverty. The concentration of farmland into large commercial farms also encourages the production of food for sale and export, rather than serving the needs of South Africans.

There is also a lot of critical ground on this topic as land reform (especially the uncompensated type) is explicitly anti-capitalist and control of land is central to the continued dominance of white civil society in South Africa.

### NEGATIVE GROUND:

The biggest criticism of land reform tends to be economic. Neighboring Zimbabwe pursued a much more aggressive policy of land reform, which was blamed for Zimbabwe's economic failure (although Zimbabwe's economic mismanagement is probably due more to government corruption). In any case, expropriating large commercial farms to create smaller farms may significantly decrease agricultural production, which will affect food prices both within South Africa as well as the region.

Additionally, any significant effort at land reform will have international repercussions. Even a limited expropriation of two farms last summer led to a critical tweet from President Trump. It's likely that developed countries, particularly those with economic interests in South Africa, would retaliate in some capacity.

There is also plenty of critical ground on this topic as land reform is, almost by definition, a reformist solution to inequality.

#### **SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICS:**

Land reform is a popular issue and has been since the ANC was first elected in 1994. However, it also serves as a wedge issue, with some ANC members (like President Ramaphosa) supporting more aggressive land reform (without compensation) and others supporting a more restricted policy. Left parties, like the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), have seized on the ANC's failures on land reform to increase support for the EFF. It's also likely (though not certain) that the next parliamentary election will be August 4, 2019 – and that this will be a big issue. Thus, there are some important political implications to this issue that may be relevant to both the affirmative and negative.

#### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS:**

As previously mentioned, land reform has been attempted in other countries, like Zimbabwe, and the results have not always been promising. Other countries, Mauritius, have had much more success in both implementing land reform and enjoying positive outcomes. There is ample research on land reform in developing countries. This topic affords both the affirmative and negative teams the opportunity to do some comparative analysis of developing countries.

#### **SOURCES:**

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