



# **Government of National Unity: A catalyst for South Africa's socio-economic development**

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## DECLARATION

I, Nthabiseng Princess Mokhatla, solemnly declare that the dissertation entitled “Government of National Unity: A Catalyst for South Africa’s Socio-Economic Development” is the product of my independent research and intellectual effort. All sources of information, whether published or unpublished, that have been consulted or quoted in the study have been appropriately acknowledged through accurate in-text citations and a comprehensive reference list. Furthermore, I affirm that this dissertation has not been submitted, in whole or in part, to any other university or institution for the purpose of obtaining a degree or any other academic qualification.

N.Mokhatla

October 2025

Signature

Date

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to me, my loving son Khumo, and the Mokhatla family at large. Your steadfast support and encouragement have served as pillars of strength, inspiring me to persevere throughout this academic journey. May this work stand as a testament to the power of resilience, determination, and the pursuit of knowledge.

## **Preface**

The result of a demanding and intellectually stimulating research process is this report, "Government of National Unity: A Catalyst for South Africa's Socio-Economic Development." A strong desire to comprehend the workings of inclusive governance and how it might promote sustainable socioeconomic development in South Africa served as the impetus for this study.

Completing my dissertation was a demanding and educational experience. It offered a chance to critically interact with the body of existing literature, examine historical and modern advancements, and participate in scholarly discussions in the areas of political and socioeconomic studies. In addition to demonstrating my scholarly curiosity, this effort demonstrates my dedication to conducting research that will benefit scholars, policymakers, and society at large.

I have encountered and conquered many obstacles along the way, which have improved my tenacity, critical thinking, and intellectual maturity. Both my comprehension of the topic and my development as a researcher have been significantly shaped by the experience.

In addition to encouraging more research in this crucial field, my goal is for this study to make a substantial contribution to our comprehension of coalition governance in South Africa and its capacity to promote socioeconomic development.

## **Acknowledgements**

I begin by giving thanks to Almighty God whose wisdom, guidance, and unwavering support have sustained me throughout this journey. It is through His strength and provision that I have been able to persevere and bring this study to completion.

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I wish to acknowledge my own perseverance, discipline, and commitment to this research. The dedication to maintain focus, overcome challenges, and continue striving for excellence has been an essential factor in completing this study.

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## **Abstract**

With special focus on the post-apartheid GNU (1994–1999) and the present 2024 GNU, this study investigated the role of the Government of National Unity (GNU) as a catalyst of South Africa's socioeconomic development. The GNU was first embraced to advance political stability, inclusion, and egalitarian governance after South Africa's transition from apartheid. The study investigated the ways that the GNU has influenced policymaking, resource distribution, and socioeconomic change both historically and currently. The analysis is grounded in good governance theory, which provided the theoretical lens for evaluating the extent to which the GNU promotes accountability, transparency, institutional effectiveness, and inclusive development. Based on secondary data from government reports, academic journals, and archival records, the study employed a qualitative research design and historical research approach. To find trends, accomplishments, and difficulties related to GNU governance, thematic analysis was used. The results have shown that although the GNU has traditionally helped to build institutions and maintain political stability, nevertheless it faces issues such as balancing conflicting party interests, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and policy coherence. According to the study's findings, knowledge gained from both past and present GNU frameworks is crucial for coalition governance, inclusive decision-making, and coordinating political agendas with socioeconomic goals. To optimise developmental outcomes, recommendations place a strong emphasis on institutional framework strengthening, fair political position allocation, and strategic planning.

**Key terms: Government of National Unity (GNU), South Africa, Socio-economic development, Inclusive governance, Policy coherence, Political coalitions**

## Opsomming

Sleuteltermes: Regering van Nasionale Eenheid (GNU), Suid-Afrika, Sosio-ekonomiese ontwikkeling, Inklusiewe bestuur, Beleidskoherensie, Politieke koalisië

Met spesiale fokus op die post-apartheid GNU (1994–1999) en die huidige 2024 GNU, het hierdie studie die rol van die Regering van Nasionale Eenheid (GNU) as 'n katalisator vir Suid-Afrika se sosio-ekonomiese ontwikkeling ondersoek. Die GNU is aanvanklik omarm om politieke stabiliteit, insluiting en egalitêre regering te bevorder ná Suid-Afrika se oorgang vanaf apartheid. Die studie het die ondersoek ingestel na die maniere waarop die GNU beleidsvorming, hulpbronverdeling en sosio-ekonomiese verandering, beide histories en tans, beïnvloed het.

Die ontleding is gegrond op goeie bestuursteorie, wat as die teoretiese lens gedien het om die mate te evalueer waarin die GNU aanspreeklikheid, deursigtigheid, institusionele doeltreffendheid en inklusiewe ontwikkeling bevorder. Op grond van sekondêre data uit regeringsverslae, akademiese joernale en argivale rekords, het die studie 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp en 'n historiese navorsingsbenadering gebruik. Om tendense, prestasies en uitdagings wat met GNU-regering verband hou te identifiseer, is tematiese ontleding toegepas.

Die resultate toon dat, hoewel die GNU tradisioneel bygedra het tot institusiebou en die handhawing van politieke stabiliteit, dit steeds uitdagings in die gesig staar, soos die balansering van botsende partybelange, burokratiese ondoeltreffendhede en beleidsamehang. Volgens die bevindings van die studie is die kennis wat uit beide vorige en huidige GNU-raamwerke verkry is, van kardinale belang vir koalisieregering, inklusiewe besluitneming en die belyning van politieke agendas met sosio-ekonomiese doelwitte.

Om ontwikkelingsuitkomstes te optimaliseer, plaas die aanbevelings 'n sterk klem op die versterking van institusionele raamwerke, billike politieke posverdeling en strategiese beplanning.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AG</b>	<b>Auditor General</b>
<b>ANC</b>	<b>African National Congress</b>
<b>ASGISA</b>	<b>Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa</b>
<b>BEE</b>	<b>Black Economic Empowerment</b>
<b>COSATU</b>	<b>Congress of South African Trade Unions</b>
<b>DA</b>	<b>Democratic Alliance</b>
<b>DP</b>	<b>Democratic Party</b>
<b>EFF</b>	<b>Economic Freedom Fighters</b>
<b>FF+</b>	<b>Freedom/Vryheids Front Plus</b>
<b>GEAR</b>	<b>Growth Employment and Redistribution</b>
<b>GNU</b>	<b>Government of National Unity</b>
<b>IFP</b>	<b>Inkatha Freedom Party</b>
<b>IMF</b>	<b>International Monetary Fund</b>
<b>MDC-T</b>	<b>Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai</b>
<b>NDP</b>	<b>National Development Plan</b>
<b>NGP</b>	<b>New Growth Path</b>
<b>NP</b>	<b>National Party</b>
<b>NPC</b>	<b>National Planning Commission</b>
<b>NUM</b>	<b>National Union of Mineworkers</b>
<b>PA</b>	<b>Patriotic Alliance</b>

<b>PAC</b>	<b>Pan Africanist Congress of Azania</b>
<b>RDP</b>	<b>Reconstruction and Development Programme</b>
<b>RISE</b>	<b>Rise Mzansi</b>
<b>SA</b>	<b>South Africa/South African</b>
<b>SACP</b>	<b>South African Communist Party</b>
<b>SAPs</b>	<b>Structural Adjustment Policies</b>
<b>SAF</b>	<b>South African Foundation</b>
<b>SDGs</b>	<b>Sustainable Development Goals</b>
<b>TRC</b>	<b>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</b>
<b>UDM</b>	<b>United Democratic Movement</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>
<b>USAID</b>	<b>United States Agency for International Development</b>
<b>ZANU-PF</b>	<b>Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front</b>

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction and background

### 1.1. Introduction

In 1994, following South Africa's shift from apartheid to democracy, the African National Congress (ANC), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), and National Party (NP) collaborated to establish the Government of National Unity (GNU). It is crucial to note that South Africa was not the first country to acknowledge a GNU, and that GNU was made up of delegates from many political parties working close to a similar objective (Mpanza, 2014). The GNU brings together several political parties that cooperate to share power for the purpose of running a country (Maleka, 2024). In complex political environments where no single political party achieves an absolute majority, the idea of a GNU has grown in relevance. The GNU formations typically aim to unite diverse political interests in response to a crisis. The primary objectives of GNUs include promoting national interests, such as fostering national unity, social cohesion and peace. Negotiations within GNUs are usually conducted by the national leadership of participating political parties, with agreements often having far-reaching implications for governance at political and local levels (Beukes, Chigwata & Visser, 2024). A comprehensive approach to strategic planning is required by this arrangement to ensure social cohesion, sustainable development, and effective government.

From the middle of the 2000s, South Africa appears to be at a crossroads. Despite numerous measures targeted at socio-economic development being pursued since 1994, socio-economic progress has lagged under the democratic dispensation (Gumede 2021). 1994 saw a transformation in the balance of power in politics, but the fight for social and economic advancement was far from over (Luiz, 2007). The complicated socioeconomic history of South Africa had ingrained the country's pervasive poverty, inequality, unemployment, and lack of competitiveness, and the volatile 1980s had further damaged the economy (Venter et al, 2017). As a result, the new administration faced significant development hurdles.

The country's first democratic elections gave birth to the establishment of the 1994 GNU, which served as the end of apartheid. This GNU was a mandatory coalition, comprising

the ANC, the NP, and the IFP. The primary goal was to foster reconciliation and stability during the transition to democracy. In contrast, the 2024 GNU is a voluntary grand coalition, formed after the national elections in May 2024. This GNU is a grand coalition of 11 parties, including the ANC, Democratic Alliance (DA), Patriotic Alliance PA, Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), GOOD, Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), Vryheidsfront Plus FF+, United Democratic Movement (UDM), Rise Mzansi, and Al Jama-ah. The 2024 GNU aim to promote national unity, stability, and effective governance, despite the diverse interests and ideologies of its member parties. This study aimed to examine the GNU's potential as a transformational catalyst while examining the necessity of such a government for promoting socioeconomic growth in South Africa. The present investigation utilises the good governance theory as a theoretical framework and then applies a qualitative research approach. According to Ekundayo (2017), good governance theory establishes a few fundamental guidelines for how any type of government should be administered.

## **1.2. Unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis, as noted by Muhammad (2021), refers to the specific entity being examined in a study, providing a framework for comparing similar entities and facilitating a deeper understanding of the research subject. It represents the specific subject or object from which data is collected and analysed to address the research question.

In this study, the unit of analysis is the GNU in the context of South Africa. Examining the GNU in South Africa allows people to understand the history and future of GNUs in South Africa. Focusing on the GNU helps see which parties are willing to set aside their disagreements and collaborate with others for the benefit and progress of South Africa.

## **1.3. Rationale of Study**

The rationale of a study provides the reasoning behind the research, explaining why the study is necessary and what it hopes to achieve.

In April 1994, after almost three years of extensive peace talks and a ten-year struggle for democracy, Nelson Mandela's ANC established a power-sharing government with its rivals, the IFP and the NP. Political leaders assigned ministers from all three parties to

the new government and distributed cabinet positions dependent on the results of an election and an interim constitution passed the previous year. Subsequently, they endeavoured to devise methods that would facilitate effective governance and they presented novel ideas that served as templates for other nations. To resolve policy conflicts, they either formed ad hoc committees to look for mutuality or looked for forums beyond the cabinet to hear the arguments (Schreiber, 2016).

South Africa has experienced single-party dominance since gaining democracy in 1994, with the ANC ruling the country until the general elections of 2024. The ANC had two choices when it came to economic challenges as the government: either cling to the “colonialist economic system,” which would in due course lead to the expansion of the neo-liberal economy starting in 1994, marked by various economic policies, or the push for radical nationalisation and redistribution to challenge existing economic ownership (Venter, Mosala & Bain, 2017).

No party in South Africa’s opposition history has ever had a realistic opportunity to unseat the powerful ANC. It has ruled for the last thirty years. To overthrow it, parties have even begun to form coalitions, especially at the local (municipal) level. The development of their coalitions is as a result of their incapacity or failure to overthrow the ANC independently. However, no alliance has ever been formed at the national level to overthrow the ANC.

The study is necessary because South Africa continues to face deep socioeconomic challenges, including inequality, unemployment, and poverty, despite democratic governance since 1994. Understanding the role of a Government of National Unity (GNU) as a potential catalyst for development can provide critical insights for policymakers, scholars, and political actors seeking to promote inclusive governance and effective socioeconomic interventions. By examining historical and contemporary GNU frameworks, the study contributes to the literature on coalition governance and explores mechanisms through which political collaboration can drive transformative socioeconomic change.

## **1.4. Problem Statement**

South Africa, since the end of apartheid, has made notable strides in building a democratic society. However, the socioeconomic situation in the country continues to worsen with each passing year. Many South Africans still experience inequality (Gini coefficient of around 0.63), high unemployment (31.9% in the 2024 fourth quarter), extreme poverty (13,2 million people as of 2024), and restricted access to public services even after the country gained democracy in 1994. Many hold the ANC responsible for the problems for the socioeconomic problems that they are facing and believe that the ANC does not have solutions to the socioeconomic problems.

The current political environment in South Africa is characterised by increased polarisation, which hampers effective governance and policy implementation. This fragmentation raises questions about the ability of the existing political structures to foster inclusive socioeconomic development. A GNU, which brings together diverse political factions in a collaborative governance model, has been proposed as a potential solution to overcome these challenges.

However, the effectiveness of a GNU in fostering socio-economic development in the context of South Africa is not well understood. While coalition governments have been proposed as mechanisms for promoting inclusive governance, the effectiveness of a GNU in fostering socioeconomic development in South Africa remains underexplored. Despite political developments and the emergence of multiple parties, there is limited empirical analysis on whether a power-sharing arrangement at the national level can address pressing issues such as inequality, unemployment, and restricted access to public services. This gap in understanding forms the basis of the study, which seeks to critically analyse the potential of a GNU as a catalyst for socioeconomic development.

## **1.5. Research Aim and Objectives**

Research aim and objectives outline what the study seeks to achieve and the specific steps or goals necessary to fulfil the broader aim. They help guide the research process and keep the study focused.

### **1.5.1. Research aim**

To analyse the potential of a GNU in catalysing socio-economic development in South Africa.

### **1.5.2. Research Objectives**

- To assess the performance of the 1994-1999 GNU in South Africa.
- To identify key factors deterring GNU in promoting socioeconomic development in the country.
- To provide interventions that can stimulate the GNU towards South Africa's socio-economic development.

### **1.6. Research Questions**

Research questions are queries the study specifically seeks to answer. They guide the research by focusing on particular aspects of the topic and help in gathering relevant data.

#### **1.6.1. Main Question**

- How could a government of national unity be utilised as a catalyst for fostering socioeconomic development in South Africa?

#### **1.6.2. Sub-Questions**

- How can the performance of the 1994-1999 GNU in South Africa be assessed?
- What are the internal and external factors hindering the GNU from effectively promoting socioeconomic development in South Africa?
- What policy reforms and interventions can be implemented to strengthen the GNUs capacity for socioeconomic development?

### **1.7. Scope and delimitation of study**

This study examines the role of the Government of National Unity (GNU) as a catalyst for socioeconomic development in South Africa. The scope of the study focuses specifically on two periods in South Africa's democratic history: the post-apartheid GNU established after the 1994 democratic elections, which governed from 1994 to 1999, and the contemporary GNU formed following the 2024 general elections. These two periods are

analysed to understand how coalition governance structures influence policymaking, institutional development, and socioeconomic transformation.

Geographically, the study is limited to South Africa and does not extend to comparative analyses with other countries that have implemented similar power-sharing or coalition arrangements. The research focuses primarily on national-level governance and policy dynamics within the GNU framework, particularly in relation to socioeconomic development outcomes such as institutional stability, policy coordination, and governance effectiveness. Methodologically, the study is limited to a qualitative research design and adopts a historical research approach. Data for the study is drawn exclusively from secondary sources, including government reports, academic journals, policy documents, and archival materials. As a result, the study does not include primary data collection methods such as interviews or surveys.

In addition, the study concentrates on the broader governance and developmental implications of the GNU rather than analysing specific sectoral policies in depth. Issues such as municipal coalition governance, foreign policy, and other political dynamics that fall outside the direct scope of GNU-driven socioeconomic development are not examined in detail. These delimitations allow the study to maintain a clear analytical focus on the role of the GNU in shaping South Africa's socioeconomic development within the specified historical periods.

## **1.8. Conclusion**

Considering South Africa's declining socioeconomic progress, the legitimacy of the ruling party is frequently called into question. South Africans see first-hand how their nation's socioeconomic development is waning, and they are undoubtedly unhappy about this. People are starting to doubt the ANC's legitimacy, and it's continued right to hold political power. We witness the emergence of alliances, especially locally, as a result of the opposition parties' inability to overthrow the ANC on their own. Given these coalitions' achievements, one would question if SA truly needed them to succeed. If SA requires a unity government in order to boost growth and development. This study has investigated

if a GNU could be utilized as a catalyst for fostering socio-economic development in South Africa.

## **1.9. Chapter Outline**

This section lays out a brief overview of the specific topics discussed under each chapter of the study.

### **Chapter 1**

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and explain the title of the study. It discusses the rationale of study, problem statement, research aim and objectives, research questions, research design and methodology, data collection and analysis, scope and limitations of study, ethical considerations and lastly, the conclusion.

### **Chapter 2**

Provides the theoretical framework and literature review of the study. Its purpose is to explain the theoretical framework used to conduct the study and the literature used.

### **Chapter 3**

Provides the research design, research methodology, data collection and analysis of the study in detail. The purpose of the chapter is to clearly explain the research methodology, design and data collection used to conduct the study and obtain the findings.

### **Chapter 4**

Discusses the findings and discussions of the study, also touching on how the objectives of the study were met.

### **Chapter 5**

Provides the recommendations and conclusion of the study. The purpose of this chapter is to provide recommendations for the findings of the study.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.1. Introduction

Chapter 1 presented the background and rationale for this study, highlighting the importance of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in South Africa as a potential catalyst for socioeconomic development. The chapter outlined the research problem, objectives, and questions, emphasizing the need to understand how coalition-based governance can influence policy coherence, social transformation, and inclusive economic growth. Building on this foundation, Chapter 2 reviews existing literature on GNUs, exploring theoretical perspectives, historical contexts, and empirical findings relevant to South Africa and comparable political settings. The discussion begins by examining the concept of good governance as the theoretical framework underpinning the study, followed by an overview of coalition and unity governments in comparative contexts. It then contextualises South Africa's GNU experiences—particularly the 1994–1999 and 2024 formations—highlighting their role in shaping the country's political stability, policy coherence, and development trajectory.

The good governance theory is used in this study to make it easier. This study's application of the good governance theory offers a more comprehensive framework for investigating how a GNU may enhance South African governance procedures and promote socioeconomic growth. In 1994, the ANC, NP, and IFP formed the first GNU in South Africa. Despite this unique characteristic, virtually little research is done on GNUs. There has not been much published works about GNUs, especially in South Africa. Many people frequently use the terms interchangeably or confuse a GNU with a coalition government. The good governance theory is explained in this chapter along with its components and tenets. Good governance theory is a conceptual framework known that places special emphasis on the systems and procedures that govern political and socioeconomic interactions, especially when it comes to the administration of public funds, decision-making, and service provision. The history, origins, and establishment of the 1994 GNU in South Africa are then briefly discussed. Finally, the history and effectiveness of coalitions in South African municipalities are covered.

## **2.2. Good Governance Theory**

One could assert that the idea of governance is the foundation of good government. However, the term "governance" itself lacks a clear definition. However, in its expansive definition, can be comprehended as the procedures or way a nation is led or guided to accomplish social objectives (Gregory, 2014). Sahni and Uma (2003) assert that effective governance involves being accountable, transparent, participatory, open, and adhering to the rule of law. This concept suggests a high degree of organisational efficiency in both the creation and implementation of policies, especially regarding economic policy and its role in fostering growth, stability, and public welfare. According to Jeffrey, Christopher, and Nnamdi (2019), strong governance implicitly reflects good management, good performance, and good stewardship of public funds.

Development scholars and practitioners have concentrated on "good governance" as a strategy for attaining development and as a goal in and of itself to prevent bad governance. According to the World Bank (1994:12) good governance is epitomized by "predictable, open, and enlightened policy making: a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos: an executive arm of government accountable for its actions: and a strong civil society participating in public affairs: and all behaving under one rule of law,".

Good governance theory serves as the foundation for the study's investigation. This theory was chosen to better comprehend whether or not the South African government has been adhering to the ideals of good governance, as well as how a GNU might encourage socioeconomic progress and pinpoint areas in need of repair. According to Jeffrey et al. (2019), the significance of good governance stems from its connection to a nation's development, and particularly the alleviation of poverty. Despite governments' claims to adhere to good governance principles and elements, cultural differences can and do lead to conflict, specifically in heterogeneous societies characterized by diverse religions, languages, cultures, histories, and beliefs (Grindle, 2004). This is because setting an agenda for achieving good governance is both a highly desirable and complex task.

### **2.2.1. What constitutes good governance?**

### **2.2.1.1. Characteristics of a leader**

It is difficult to determine what good governance is without looking at the traits of the society's leader. This claim is consistent with the idea that "good governance" is a metric for assessing public performance; implicitly, the leader establishes the parameters of the assessment, occasionally avoiding criticism and siding with the political insiders who bestow praise on him (Jeffrey et al, 2019).

### **2.2.1.2. The political party's ideology**

According to Jeffrey et al. (2019), the wellbeing of the populace is the primary concern of governance, and good governance is characterised by the government's dedication to its own vision of public welfare. Both have to do with governance and politics. Political leaders must have both personal and universal justifications for their policies, and they must be concerned with persuading the public that they are the appropriate ones. Political ideology enters the picture here. Political parties around the world are distinguished by their ideology, which establishes the policies and initiatives they support when in power (Proshare, 2014). Since each person's thoughts and views are unique, ideologies are structured collections of concepts that influence political party's perceptions. In the realm of politics, ideas are inherently interrelated; they influence, reinforce, and evolve alongside one another, collectively shaping ideological frameworks, informing policy development, and guiding political action.

The governing party's ideologies aim to protect and regulate the governed as much as possible. Accordingly, a political party that aspires to power develops a set of ideas that it believes will benefit everyone and provide the necessary support and benefits of good governance (Jeffrey et al, 2019). It is the responsibility of leaders and politicians to formulate ideologies that address personal lives, guide actions, and align with prevailing needs and preferences.

### **2.2.1.3. Expectations of donor agencies**

Expectations for development are closely linked to good governance, particularly when considering donor agencies. One obvious aspect of these donor agencies' definitions of good governance is that they are establishing the benchmark for what is considered as a

good governance in the recipient states—that is, the nations or governments where they provide funding for any kind of development.

One obvious aspect of donor agencies' promotion of “good governance” is that they act as the definers and enforcers of what qualifies as acceptable governance in the Global South. Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and bilateral donors like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have historically used their financial leverage to set the terms of political and economic reforms in recipient countries. While the IMF officially focuses on macroeconomic stability, it often imposes structural adjustment policies (SAPs) that require not only economic liberalisation but also the institutionalisation of political reforms, including multiparty systems, rule of law, and reduction of state control over the economy (Abrahamsen, 2000).

These reforms are typically framed under the umbrella of “good governance,” a concept that has increasingly been standardised by these international institutions. This implies that the definition of good governance is not locally derived but rather imposed through donor conditionalities that align with Western liberal democratic ideals (Brown, 2013). For instance, following the Cold War, many African countries were required to transition from one-party states to multiparty democracies as a precondition for continued aid and debt relief. The IMF and World Bank, while traditionally apolitical, began conditioning loans on governance indicators such as transparency, accountability, and democratic participation—principles inherently tied to a multiparty political system (Harrison, 2004).

### **2.2.2. Good governance principles/characteristics**



Figure 1: Good Governance Characteristics Source: School of political science <https://schoolofpoliticalscience.com/what-is-good-governance/>

### 2.2.2.1. Participation

Engagement is an essential element of effective governance. All individuals impacted by or interested in a decision should have the opportunity to engage in the decision-making process. A core aspect of good governance is the active involvement of both genders. This involvement can happen directly or through credible and reliable representatives or institutions. It is important to acknowledge, however, that representative democracy does not inherently guarantee that the needs of society's most vulnerable groups are considered in decision-making processes. Participation needs planning through political education. This entails both an organized civil society and freedom of association and expression (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2009).

### 2.2.2.2. Rule of law

The rule of law serves as the cornerstone of good governance, ensuring that all decisions align with established legal frameworks and principles. As noted by UNESCAP (2009), effective governance requires the fair and consistent enforcement of just laws. It also demands the full protection of human rights, particularly those of minority groups.

Upholding the rule of law further depends on the presence of an independent judiciary and a police force that operates with integrity and without corruption.

### **2.2.2.3. Transparency**

Transparency, a key principle of good governance, ensures that the decision-making process is open and understandable to the public. It involves making and executing decisions in accordance with established laws and regulations. Transparency also means that individuals affected by these decisions have prompt and unrestricted access to relevant information, which must be provided clearly and in easily understandable formats and media (UNESCAP, 2009).

The Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA), introduced by the South African parliament in 2000, and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996) both uphold the right to access information in that country. According to Government Communication and Information (2000), the purpose of this act is to "promote a society in which the people of South Africa have effective access to information to enable them more fully to exercise and protect all of their rights, and foster a culture of transparency and accountability in public and private bodies by giving effect to the right to access information."

### **2.2.2.4. Responsiveness**

Because good governance is responsive, all stakeholders are to be served by institutions and procedures in a timely manner. It is therefore necessary for the government to constantly strive to meet the needs of the whole society while balancing conflicting interests promptly, appropriately, and responsively in order to ensure effective governance (UNESCAP, 2009). The fundamental tenet of democracy is that governments ought to be at least somewhat receptive to the wishes of the majority. Democratic governments are meant to be run by and for the people, and they may be seen favorably when their policies are perceived to represent the opinions and preferences of the populace (Linde & Peter, 2018).

#### **2.2.2.5. Consensus orientated**

In a particular civilization, there are various actors and equally various points of view. Good governance requires the mediation of various interests in society to come to a broad consensus on what's best for the public. Understanding the historical, cultural, and social settings of a particular civilization or group is the only way to do this (UNESCAP, 2009).

Kariuki and Ofusori (2024) assert that reaching a consensus is a dynamic and intricate process that is impacted by the political, social, and historical circumstances of the nation. It is a conflict resolution procedure that ensures the interests of all parties are safeguarded and is mostly used to resolve complicated multiparty disputes. In South Africa, reaching a consensus has been crucial to the political and social climate of the nation, especially throughout the transition from apartheid to democracy. For businesses, attempting to resolve contentious issues on their own is challenging and frequently unsuccessful. Building consensus provides a means for organizations and individual citizens to work together to solve complicated issues in ways that are acceptable to everyone (Kariuki & Ofusori, 2024).

#### **2.2.2.6. Inclusivity and Equity**

Ensuring that all members of a society feel involved and not estranged from the society at large is crucial to its well-being. This requires providing chances for all groups, but specifically the most vulnerable, to magnify or maintain their well-being (UNESCAP, 2009). In order to address historical injustices and create a more inclusive society, the South African government is dedicated to advancing equity and inclusivity through a number of policies and programs, such as employment equity plans, preferential procurement, and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) initiatives. This commitment is guided by the country's constitution.

#### **2.2.2.7. Efficiency and Effectiveness**

Effective management of institutions and processes ensures that resources are utilized efficiently to meet the needs of society. Governments can achieve optimal results by making well-informed decisions and implementing procedures that maximize the use of

available people, resources, and time. In the context of good governance, efficiency also involves safeguarding the environment and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources (UNESCAP, 2009). The government of South Africa faces difficulties in guaranteeing that services are delivered effectively and efficiently, while also being responsive and engaging with the public.

**a) Obstacles to efficacy and efficiency:**

Access to services, openness, attention to citizen concerns, and polite staff are all viewed as inadequate in South Africa's public sector. Understanding of broader contextual issues and sectoral performance is hampered by a propensity to place more emphasis on policies and programs than on sectors (National Evaluation Policy Framework, 2019).

Outsourcing evaluations has been promoted by the National Evaluation Policy Framework (2019), which may hinder the state's ability to carry them out internally. SOEs are frequently left out of evaluations, which causes these organizations to lag behind in incorporating evaluations into their monitoring and assessment procedures (NEPF, 2019). According to some research, South Africa has difficulties with efficient governance, including a decline in public confidence in the government and issues with accountability and transparency (Masuku, 2019).

**2.2.2.8. Accountability**

Government accountability is a fundamental democratic value in South Africa that is incorporated in the constitution. It requires officials to answer for their decisions and acts, and the Auditor-General (AG), the Public Protector (PP), and parliament all play important roles in making sure of this. Accountability is a vital aspect of good governance and should extend beyond government institutions to encompass the private sector and civil society organizations. These entities are responsible not only to their internal stakeholders but also to the broader public. This is because every institution or organization has an obligation to be answerable to those who may be affected by its decisions or actions (UNESCAP, 2009).

### **2.3. Historical development of the 1994 GNU in South Africa**

Since 2007, GNUs have emerged as a popular solution for Africa's contentious and undecided elections. They are not, however, a novel institutional experiment. GNUs have been established for several reasons and in a range of contexts. They are ad hoc solutions in some situations, but they have become a permanent aspect of the political landscape in others, such as the Netherlands and Scandinavia (Masunungure & Mutasa, 2011).

To have the status of an absolute majority with authority and control in parliamentary or semi-legislative nations, political parties must obtain at least 51% of the parliamentary seats (Thinane, 2023). In South Africa, the ANC has maintained its position as the dominant party with control over national governance, especially since winning almost 63% of the vote in the country's first democratic elections in 1994. Coalition governance has also become a prevalent trend in provincial and local politics. The fragile situation in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) during the early 1990s played a pivotal role in shaping political decisions around the GNU, not only at a regional but also at a national level. Extensive local violence—fuelled by identity-based rivalries, economic inequality, and generational tensions—led to competing ANC and IFP factions mobilizing along autochthony lines, with youth-aligned sections often sparking deadly clashes (Münz, 2023). The threat of secession or widespread collapse in KZN posed not just a regional crisis but raised concerns about the stability of the entire emerging democracy. For many white South Africans, especially those aligned with the National Party or security apparatuses, there existed acute anxieties about exclusion or loss of influence in this new system. The ANC's strategic inclusion of the IFP in the GNU thus served to stabilize the election process in KZN and projected an inclusive national transition that reassured white constituencies that the post-apartheid state would be negotiated, non-revolutionary, and legitimacy based.

While the conflict in KZN was primarily between Black political factions, its destabilising effects had nationwide implications, particularly for white South Africans aligned with the National Party (NP), who were already anxious about their future under ANC leadership. For many, the violent uncertainty in KZN reflected broader concerns about whether South Africa could transition peacefully to majority rule. In this context, the ANC's decision to

include the IFP in the GNU was not only a peacebuilding effort but also a strategic signal that the new government would be inclusive, negotiated, and non-revolutionary. This helped reassure white South Africans that their identity, property, and political voice would not be erased in the post-apartheid order. Scholars argue that the GNU, by embracing even opposing forces like the IFP and NP, promoted a shared sense of belonging and national unity at a critical moment in the country's transition (Giliomee, 2003; van Zyl-Hermann, 2023). Therefore, the crisis in KZN contributed not only to regional instability but also indirectly fostered white inclusion by compelling the ANC to adopt a broader, more reconciliatory form of governance.

As a bridge from an enormously split up past to reasonably stable governance, or as a broad coalition made up of all engaging political parties in parliament, Thinane (2023) defines a GNU as "a key player in the transition from a national political crisis, such as war or oppressive systems." To terminate the unfavourable political situation and improve the chances of national stability, such group actions are justified by the need to guarantee inclusive involvement in the process.

South Africans' hopes for an economic recovery and a better life were bolstered by the country's democratic transition and the lifting of international sanctions against apartheid (Schreiber, 2016). The 1994 GNU was established during South Africa's democratic transition, when the country was constantly threatened by violence and chaos and had to undertake the enormous task of reorganizing its society. Following the 1994 elections, a coalition known as the Government of National Unity was established as the nation's first democratic government. According to the 1993 transitional constitution, any party that won 20 seats in the National Assembly was eligible to join the GNU based on how many seats it had overall compared to other political parties. The first five years of democracy would be governed by this structure (Bosman, Rubidge & Grudz, 2024).

### National Results

Party	E. Cape	E. TVL	Kwazulu Natal	N. Cape	N. TVL	North West	OFS	PWV	W. Cape	Total Valid Votes	Seats Allocated
PAC	56,891	17,800	23,098	3,941	20,295	24,233	23,310	52,557	21,353	243,478	5
SOCCER	918	636	2,311	245	666	959	857	2,953	1,030	10,575	
KISS	900	415	1,010	293	365	548	403	1,107	875	5,918	
VV-FF	18,656	45,964	17,092	17,480	29,000	49,175	50,386	154,878	41,924	424,555	9
WRPP	524	311	955	151	273	568	398	1,850	1,404	6,434	
WLP	374	309	1,193	167	259	331	258	554	724	4,169	
XPP	574	416	1,501	113	1,354	578	683	828	272	6,320	
AMP	1,235	906	6,790	320	437	1,386	324	7,413	15,655	34,466	
ACDP	10,879	4,474	17,122	1,294	5,042	3,901	4,523	20,329	20,540	88,104	2
ADM	1,869	611	3,819	189	597	701	553	1,062	485	9,886	
AMCP	4,919	2,625	3,305	864	3,168	3,244	2,644	5,635	1,286	27,690	
ANC	2,411,695	1,072,518	1,185,669	201,515	1,780,177	1,325,559	1,059,313	2,486,938	714,271	12,237,655	252
DP	35,435	5,492	60,499	5,235	3,402	5,826	7,365	126,368	88,804	338,426	7
DPSA	1,098	834	1,927	415	722	2,088	8,796	2,424	1,147	19,451	
FP	750	527	3,347	162	310	500	519	6,844	4,704	17,663	
LUSAP	263	269	961	138	253	252	203	490	464	3,293	
MF	981	503	6,410	494	662	772	490	1,575	1,546	13,433	
NP	302,951	134,511	591,212	169,661	69,870	160,479	198,780	1,160,593	1,195,633	3,983,690	82
IFP	6,798	20,872	1,822,385	1,902	2,938	7,155	8,446	173,903	13,895	2,058,294	43
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,857,710</b>	<b>1,309,993</b>	<b>3,750,606</b>	<b>404,579</b>	<b>1,919,790</b>	<b>1,588,255</b>	<b>1,368,251</b>	<b>4,208,301</b>	<b>2,126,013</b>	<b>19,533,498</b>	<b>400</b>

Figure 2: 1994 National elections results Source: Independent Electoral Commission <https://www.elections.org.za>

Only three of the nineteen parties had more than 20 seats in the national legislature, as seen in Figure 2 above. 252 seats were won by the ANC, 82 by the NP, and 43 by the IFP. The ANC President Nelson Mandela led the 1994 GNU, which included these three parties. FW De Klerk served as his second deputy president. Members of the NP and IFP were part of Mandela's cabinet, together with ministers from other political parties.

The ANC made it plain that it favours the establishment of an interim GNU to govern South Africa until the new constitution is adopted, as this would promote peace and prosperity. To keep the parties that lost the elections from endangering its operations, a GNU may need to be established to maintain the balance of power and the interests of the entire nation (Mpanza, 2014). This inclusion prevented potential sabotage or withdrawal from the democratic process by powerful former adversaries. "The GNU was a compromise to avoid political polarisation and encourage cooperation across historical divides" (Southall, 1994).

Mpanza (2014) asserts that the government and the ANC had somewhat different interpretations of the agreements on an interim GNU; the government saw them as equivalent to power-sharing, while the ANC saw them as merely a temporary solution to bring the nation together and establish stability. At this point, most South Africans

believed that a coalition government was the best way to establish stability in the nation because neither the ANC nor the NP could rule South Africa on their own as none of their members had previously served in government. Before 1994, apartheid legislation prohibited Black South Africans from holding public office beyond the boundaries of the so-called “homelands,” which made up only 13% of South Africa’s land. Additionally, the African National Congress (ANC) was banned by the apartheid regime between 1960 and 1990, effectively excluding it from formal political participation (Schreiber, 2016).

As part of several tools to ensure inclusivity during the 1990-1994 transition from apartheid to democracy, the ANC proposed a GNU that would include all political parties with at least 10% of the vote. According to the Constitution of South Africa (Thusi, 2024) the GNU is based on inclusiveness, proportional representation, and cooperative governance. At its federal executive committee meeting, the NP resolved to leave the GNU, effective June 30, 1996 (Bosman et al, 2024). Under the direction of F.W. De Klerk, who was the nation's second deputy president at the time, the NP declared its intention to leave the GNU on June 3, 1996. De Klerk argued that the final constitution failed to provide mechanisms for joint decision-making and excluded the National Party (NP) from influencing government policy. He further noted that, following his retirement from politics in August 1996, the NP had transitioned into its new role as a fully-fledged opposition party.

The ANC enthusiastically embraced the NP's declaration that it would leave the GNU. A stagnating economy, significant levels of inequality within and between racial groups, and pervasive poverty were among the major issues facing the new government at the time. The government launched the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1996 to address these issues; it was primarily social democratic in nature and sought to empower the underprivileged (SA History, 2014). The government later dropped the RDP in favour of the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) program, which focused on neo-liberal principles of economic structural transformation, trade liberalization, privatization, and luring foreign investment in order to create jobs. But after the conclusion of the first parliament in 1999, the GNU expired (SA History, 2014).

## **2.4. South Africa's socio-economic development**

The legacy of colonialism and apartheid continues to shape the South African economy, giving it a unique character (Habiyaemye, King & Tregenna, 2022). The country's persistent "triple challenges" of poverty, unemployment, and inequality are exacerbated by the economy's sluggish growth. In 1994, the South African government faced significant obstacles in reforming the economy and boosting growth while tackling the high levels of unemployment, poverty, and inequality (Tregenna et al, 2021). Although South Africa is classified as an upper middle-income country based on GDP per capita or average national income per person, this designation masks the high unemployment rates, which are deeply rooted in widespread poverty and stark income and opportunity inequality (RSA, 2011). Despite the growth of South Africa's economy and the steady increase in fiscal spending aimed at reducing poverty and fostering development, the education system has struggled to ensure that equal public investment in education translates into improved educational outcomes for low-income black children. Additionally, the economy has not generated jobs at a pace sufficient to significantly reduce the country's very high unemployment rate (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 2008).

While race remains the primary separating line, other significant characteristics that explain disparities in opportunity, which are exacerbated by inequality, include gender and location, whether a person is from a rural or urban area (Lombard, 2011). The expansion of opportunities required to lessen inequality and mend historical divisions is hampered by the upper end of the income range, subpar education, and high rates of youth unemployment. There was little change in the income distribution between 1995 and 2005 between the wealthiest and lowest segments of society. Between 1995 and 2009, the percentage of Africans in the top 20 percent of earners rose from 39 to 48 percent (RSA, 2011). The level of inequality among Africans has significantly increased. Although the gap in years of schooling has shrunk, women still earn less than men, and poverty rates are greater than the national average among households headed by women (Lombard, 2011).

Since transitioning to democracy in the mid-1990s, South Africa has significantly improved its citizens' quality of life. However, over the last decade, this progress has slowed. In upper-middle-income nations, the proportion of individuals living below the poverty line decreased from 68% to 56% between 2005 and 2010. Yet, this figure has slightly increased, reaching 57% in 2015 and is projected to rise to 62.6% by 2023 (World Bank, 2024). The economy was affected by structural issues during the COVID-19 crisis that began in March 2020. In every area of the South African economy, capacity utilisation has suffered significantly because of the crisis. Even though the nation is rich in natural resources, it still struggles with socioeconomic issues, such as social inequality, poverty, high unemployment, and restricted access to public services (Hlongwane, 2023). These issues still affect South Africans and influence the country's economy and general standard of living.

#### **2.4.1. Development and Reconstruction**

The ANC eventually devised a plan to address all the issues raised above; it was used as the party's economic platform in the 1994 elections and was also embraced by the succeeding Government of National Unity. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was the platform's name (ANC, 1994). In essence, it was a basic-needs program that focused on giving the impoverished access to land, infrastructure, free and mandatory education, power, running water, toilets, healthcare, and housing (Lundahl et al, 2009).

Regular budget funds were to be used to fund the RDP. Through trade liberalization, technical advancement, improved competition, education, and assistance for small and medium-sized business enterprises, it sought to create about 300,000 new employments annually and achieve a growth rate of 5% by the year 2000 (Lundahl et al, 2009). The RDP encountered difficulties; out of the 2.5 billion rands that were supposed to be spent in 1994–2005, 1.7 billion had to be carried over to the following fiscal year due to administrative, institutional, and capacity-related challenges (many newly formed or restructured government departments lacked the administrative capacity to absorb and manage large-scale project funding effectively) that hindered the effective rollout of the programme (Lundahl, 1996,96). Delays persisted over the ensuing years, and the

administrative framework required for effective implementation was still absent. It was also found in 1996 that the RDP was based on several irrational assumptions. One key assumption was that rapid economic growth and large-scale redistribution could be pursued simultaneously without causing macroeconomic instability. The programme also assumed that the newly democratic state possessed the institutional and administrative capacity to plan and implement complex development projects, when in fact the government was still grappling with post-apartheid restructuring and lacked skilled personnel (Lundahl, 1996).

#### **2.4.2. Growth, Employment and Redistribution**

The growth rate was the most important component of the RDP. This was insufficient to provide the required public investment (1.4 percent in 1993, 3.0 percent in 1994, and 3.0 percent in 1995) (SARB, 2000). The Nationalists departed the government, the ANC was left to fend for itself, and the RDP office was shut down after failing to spend enough of the money allocated to the program (Lundahl & Petterson, 2009).

At this moment, the private think tank, South African Foundation (1996) released its "Growth for All" report, which called for economic change that would boost employment by 3.5–4% annually and boost growth from 3% to above 5%. The labour market and investment were the two main pillars of the Growth for All initiative (Lundahl & Petterson, 2009). The largest economic concern was thought to be employment. The statement emphasized the need to implement downward flexibility in low-skill salaries and considered the collective bargaining system as a barrier. Private sector growth would need to be bolstered by the "right" policy cues from the government, such as those listed in the Growth for All document (Lundahl & Petterson, 2009).

The South African Foundation was an association of the business community. Naturally, a trade union movement paper called Social Equity and Job Creation (1996) quickly adopted its recommendations. This was very different from what the corporate community thought. Both agreements placed a strong emphasis on creating jobs, but the trade union recipe gave the state a considerably more active, Keynesian role—public works, housing programs, and demand expansion—while downplaying the role of private industry (Lundahl & Petterson, 2009). The Keynesian theory is an economic theory that stress the

role of government intervention in stabilising the economy, especially during periods of recession or low demand. It speaks about a need for government to create job and spend on sectors that will promote the same.

The trade unions' and the South African Foundation's analyses were nearly completely at odds with one another. They were only in agreement about the need to create jobs. The two texts were followed by the drafting of a new macroeconomic plan for 1996–2000 called Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) (Department of Finance, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c). This mostly supported the South African Foundation's conclusion, which was somewhat unexpected considering the ANC's political stance.

GEAR emerged after the GNU era ended (1994–1996), under Thabo Mbeki's leadership. It signalled a shift away from the more inclusive, socially oriented RDP, which had been symbolic of the GNU's early efforts at transformation. Thus, GEAR marked a departure from the spirit of the GNU, focusing more on economic efficiency than on broad-based transformation. GEAR was South Africa's attempt to follow global economic norms through structural adjustment-like reforms. While it brought economic stability, it failed to tackle deep-rooted social and economic inequalities. From a good governance perspective, GEAR improved fiscal management but weakened participation and equity. Its adoption also reflected a shift away from the inclusive development goals of the GNU, raising questions about whether the transition from GNU to GEAR undermined socioeconomic transformation. Out of the four main initiatives, only two had been put into effect: the budget deficit reduction and the liberalization of international trade; neither labour market reforms nor privatization had been carried out (Seekings and Natrass 2005). According to Hirsch (2005), the GEAR model sought to reduce government consumption to 18.15 percent of GDP, the fiscal deficit to 3% of GDP [in 2000], and the annual CPI to 6%. With respective percentages of 2.2%, 18%, and 5.4%, all of these goals were exceeded.

When it came to growth and development, South Africa was hardly a success around the year 2000. All that had been accomplished were the stabilizing goals. Growth was

noticeably better than it was in the decade prior to the democratic transition, mostly because the later decade was appallingly poor. It was far from outstanding, both in absolute terms and in comparison, to the objectives that had been established in the RDP and in GEAR. Due in part to exogenous factors but also to the inherent trade-off between stabilization and growth in the GEAR strategy, the growth target had not been reached, and employment numbers remained as low as ever (Lundahl & Petterson, 2009).

No new significant policy paper was created until 2006, following the conclusion of the GEAR phase in 2000. In October 1998, there was a Jobs Summit, but it produced very little in the way of a coordinated action plan (Lundahl & Petterson, 2009). There were a Growth and Development Summit in June 2003, five years later. It focused on promoting and mobilizing investment, creating jobs, developing skills, organising production, empowering underprivileged groups.

Although there were far too many decisions from the summit to provide useful advice, it did affirm that the main players in the South African economy were committed to fostering economic growth (South African Government Information, 2003). More specifically, the ANC pledged in its 2004 election campaign and manifesto to cut unemployment and poverty by half in 2014. To that goal, the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA), another growth strategy, was introduced in 2006.

### **2.4.3. Accelerated and Shared Growth**

It appears that South Africa has witnessed a decrease in poverty in the first part of the new millennium. One point of debate among analysts is the extent of this decline. The administration has, understandably, decided to accept the most optimistic projections, but it also understands that much more work needs to be done. Both the unemployment rate and the percentage of the population living in poverty are to be reduced by half by 2014, from 30% to 15% and from one-third to one-sixth of the population, respectively, in accordance with the 2006 ASGISA plan (RoSA 2006). The long-term growth rate must rise to 6% to achieve this. There will be two stages to this: an increase from 3 percent to at least 4.5 percent between 2005 and 2009, followed by a rise to 6 percent or higher between 2010 and 2014.

ASGISA aimed to speed up wealth distribution and the expansion of the South African economy. ASGISA did not last long, though, as the New Growth Path (NGP) quickly took its place.

#### **2.4.4. New Growth Path**

A lack of national economic direction necessitated the creation of the NGP as a national economic policy intervention. October 2010 saw the publication of the NGP policy in South Africa (Patel 2010). Additionally, it adheres to earlier economic programs including ASGISA, GEAR, and the RDP. The NGP's primary goal is to create jobs, with a secondary focus on reducing poverty, improving coordination, planning, and implementing economic policies across all three branches of government, as well as improving inequality levels (Meyer, 2013). The NGP promotes better collaboration with other African nations and the other BRICS nations, as well as solid alliances between the public and private sectors.

The NGP aimed to reduce narrow unemployment by 10% and boost employment by 5 million people by 2020 through a public infrastructure project (Gumede, 2014). The NGP's primary drivers are investment and infrastructure development, and the government plays a critical role in both. The Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC) had almost 200 large projects scheduled. Water projects, road building, railway maintenance and enhancement, harbour facility upgrades, inland transport hub construction, energy projects, and social infrastructure including schools and hospitals were among the projects that were to be initiated nationwide (Meyer, 2013).

Although the NGP was successful in shifting the focus of policy discussions to industrialization and employment, its overall results were not up to par. Between 2010 and 2019, economic growth averaged just 1.5%, far less than the 7% goal needed to create significant jobs (World Bank, 2020). Implementation was hampered by enduring structural issues such as low investor confidence, policy uncertainty, and electricity shortages (National Treasury, 2021). According to Statistics South Africa (2020), the unemployment rate increased from 24% in 2010 to above 30% by 2020. Deindustrialization persisted, and inequality remained among the highest in the world, with a Gini index of roughly 0.63, despite significant progress being made thanks to programs like the Green Economy Accord (2011) and the National Infrastructure Plan

(2012) (World Bank, 2021). Although the NGP's lofty goals were only partially achieved overall, it set the groundwork for later frameworks like the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (2020) and the National Development Plan (NDP 2030).

Next is the National Planning Commission's (NPC) Vision 2030 or the 2012 National Development Plan (NDP). Since the NDP is a policy statement, it serves more as a means of fostering consensus toward a desired end goal, when unemployment, inequality, and poverty would have been significantly decreased. It is challenging to evaluate the efficacy of ASGISA and the NPC since policy implementation takes time (Gumede, 2014).

#### **2.4.5. National Development Plan**

The South African government's long-term strategy framework for eradicating poverty and lowering inequality by 2030 is the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, which was approved in 2012. The National Planning Commission created the plan, which aims to create a South Africa where everyone has access to essential amenities, healthcare, education, and good jobs. Its main goals are to ensure that no household lives below the poverty line, lower the Gini coefficient from 0.69 to 0.6, and increase employment from 13 million in 2010 to 24 million by 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2012). The NDP is based on the idea of inclusive growth and seeks to change the economy by establishing a more capable developmental state, better infrastructure, and a more effective public sector. It gives South Africa's socioeconomic policies coherence by integrating and aligning with earlier frameworks like the National Infrastructure Plan and the New Growth Path.

Notwithstanding its lofty goals, the NDP's implementation has encountered several obstacles, such as sluggish economic expansion, ineffective institutional design, and inadequate policy coordination across government branches. Progress toward reaching its employment and inequality targets has been hampered by structural issues such as ongoing energy shortages, low investment confidence, and skills mismatches (National Treasury, 2021). The government acknowledged that the majority of the NDP's goals are unlikely to be met by 2030 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic's continued negative effects on fiscal capacity and job development (BusinessLive, 2022). However, the NDP continues to be an essential framework for national planning, providing a common

development goal and a standard for policy coherence, accountability, and long-term socioeconomic change.

## **2.6. Conclusion**

By using the good governance theory as the main analytical framework, this chapter expanded on the theoretical underpinnings. A GNU might improve government procedures and advance socioeconomic growth in South Africa, according to the notion. The chapter started out by outlining the tenets and elements of the philosophy of good government. After that, it gave a brief history of the 1994 formation of South Africa's first GNU, which comprised the IFP, NP and the ANC. In evaluating how governance forms impact development, the chapter also looked at South Africa's socioeconomic environment. Finally, it provided a comparative viewpoint on governance models by examining the performance and history of coalition administrations in South African towns.

## Chapter 3

### Research methodology

#### 3.1. Introduction

The study's theoretical framework and literature review were briefly discussed in the previous chapter. It covered socioeconomic development, the history of South African GNUs, and the good governance ideology. In order to investigate the function of the Government of National Unity as a catalyst for South Africa's socioeconomic development, it covers the research design, methodology, data sources, data collection methodologies, and analytical methods. A thorough and historically informed knowledge of the GNU's influence is guaranteed by the methods selected as discussed below.

#### 3.2. Research design

Thomas, Nelson, and Silverman (2011) define research as “a methodical and meticulous approach to problem-solving and knowledge acquisition.” As far as current knowledge is concerned, it should address an issue or add something new (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Asenahabi (2019) states that research must adhere to relevant norms and standards, as well as be methodical and systematic in its approach. As Hakim (2000) argues, design is primarily concerned with the goals, purposes, intentions, and plans, as well as the practical constraints of time, money, location, and the researcher's availability. A researcher's ideas are shown in their research design. Dissatisfaction can be avoided by demonstrating how all the main components of the study cooperate to answer the research questions.

The greater research format and plan, known as the "research plan" or "research design," haunts the researcher's thoughts once the subject has been chosen and the pertinent literature has been looked up, claims Thakur (2021). Essentially, the research design is the way you combine the various study components in a logical and coherent manner, ensuring that your research problem is addressed successfully. For a study to be successful, a suitable research design is required, claims Asenahabi (2019). This is a tactic a researcher does before beginning data collection to legitimately achieve the

research objective. To answer research questions at the lowest feasible cost, research design endeavours to transform study topics into data for analysis.

Creswell (2014) emphasizes that researchers should reflect on the new data and theoretical insights their study contributes to the field. Their planned research methods are shaped by these considerations, along with decisions on how data will be gathered and analyzed. As Jongbo (2014) notes, understanding the nature of research is essential for determining which methods and techniques to apply, how to implement them, and how they align with the overall research process. Similarly, Asenahabi (2019) highlights that a strong understanding of research design and its importance enables researchers to navigate the challenges of selecting appropriate methods and approaches.

The research design used in this study is qualitative. A type of socially responsive action, qualitative research pivots on how people comprehend and make sense of their expertise in order to fathom the social reality of individuals and to better comprehend the circumstances that surround them (Flick, 2014). The natural environment serves as the primary source of data for qualitative study. The experience of the 1994–1999 GNU and the current real-life experience of the new GNU in South Africa are the subjects of this study, which focuses on lived and real-life circumstances and experiences as they are formed in the course of daily events (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

This study uses the historical research design method. The qualitative historical research design employed in this study is ideally suited for exploring the influence of the Government of National Unity (GNU) as a catalyst for South Africa's socioeconomic progress. By prioritizing meanings, interpretations, and contextual insights over numerical analysis, this qualitative approach facilitates an in-depth examination of complex political and socioeconomic issues. This design enables the researcher to analyze existing literature, policy documents, government reports, and academic sources to comprehend the GNU's impact on national development outcomes.

### **3.2.1. Research methodology**

Research can be defined as a quest for knowledge, a journey, an attitude, an experience, a way of thinking dangerously, or an action motivated by a passion to learn new things, get answers to questions, or gather data. The study of how research is executed

scientifically is known as research methodology. A methodical approach that employs a number of sensible procedures to discuss the study challenge (Swarooprani, 2022). Finding the truth that is hidden and hasn't been found yet is the primary goal of study. This study has employed the historical research approach to conduct its investigation.

The process of methodically looking into past events to give a description of what happened in the past is known as historical research. The goal of historical research is to use scientific methods to confirm and explain the past of any field of human activities, subjects, or events (Špiláčková, 2012). Identifying and revealing the unknown, answering unanswered questions, determining the connections between past events and the present, documenting and evaluating past actions and accomplishments of people, organizations, and institutions, and, finally, aiding in the comprehension of human culture are the main goals of historical research (Berg, 2001).

Why utilize previous data to forecast the future, one could wonder. The philosopher George Santayana's well-known statement, "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," holds the key to the solution. According to Wyche, Sengers, and Grinter (2006), this quote is frequently cited to support the claim that understanding the past helps us comprehend who we are now and where we are headed. Understanding a government's past and present is crucial for forecasting its future while conducting study on it.

In order to ascertain whether or not a GNU is what South Africa needs in the present era to enhance socioeconomic development, this study employed the historical research approach to learn more about what transpired during the 1994 GNU in South Africa and how it affected socioeconomic development. Learning from the past is facilitated by historical research, which can aid in decision-making. Information for this study was acquired from secondary sources, including reputable websites, government papers, scholarly publications, journals, and articles. All of these aided in gathering information that was previously accessible and trustworthy, in understanding the past and its effects, in analysing trends throughout time, and in making well-informed judgments.

### **3.3. Data Collection**

The process of getting information from all pertinent sources in order to address the study challenge is known as data collection. Assessing the problem's outcome is beneficial (Sharma, 2013). One can arrive at a response to the relevant question using the data collection methods. Data collecting can help organizations expand and keep consumers, better comprehend customer wants, improve services, and even make money by selling the data to other companies as second-party data. Choosing what information to collect is the first step in the data collection process, according to Sharma (2013). The topics they will cover, the sources they will use to get the data, and the amount of information needed must all be decided.

One is tasked with gathering the greatest, most accurate, and most significant data possible (while abiding by ethical standards) and presenting the data in a way that will be most helpful to the decision maker (the person who requested the data). An aspect of the truth that one is attempting to find, or expose is represented by the data that will be gathered. Taherdoost (2021) states that gathering data that allows the researcher to answer research questions is one of the key phases of a study. Different data kinds correspond to different data collection techniques. Nevertheless, it may be demanding for researchers to choose the most suitable type of data collection based on the type of data that is used in the research.

#### **3.3.1. Data collection method**

Before selecting a method for data collection, it is essential to identify the type of data needed for the study (Kabir, 2016). Data collection techniques are generally divided into two main categories: primary and secondary methods. This study employed the secondary data collection method to gather information and acquire necessary insights. Secondary data refers to information obtained from published sources, which has been previously collected by someone else for a different purpose and can be used for additional research goals (Taherdoost, 2021). The entire component of the research is made up of information from secondary data, which can help in gathering material from earlier studies to use as a starting point for doing new research or as the necessary background knowledge.

Various sources, including books, research articles, documents, and online publications, can supply secondary data. In this field of study, the secondary data is as reliable as primary information. One does not really need examiners to question the reliability of this study. It is quicker and more economical to obtain than primary data, and since it is only published in the study, there is no responsibility for the data's quality.

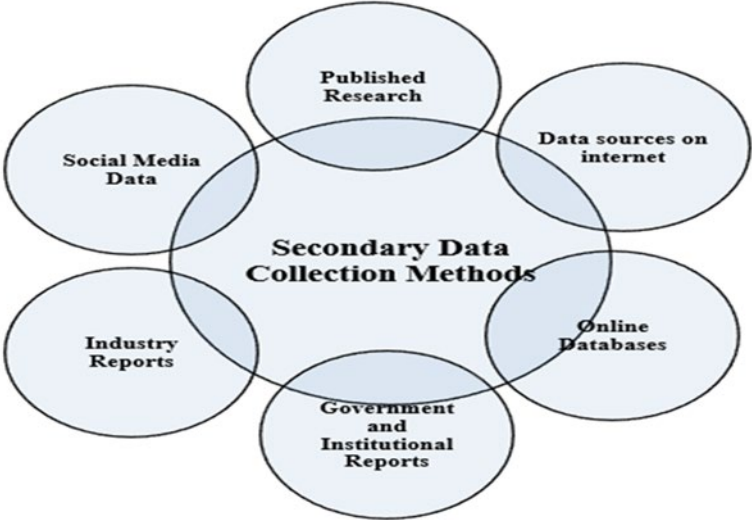


Figure 3: Secondary data collection methods Source:

<https://www.tutorialspoint.com/business-analytics/business-analytics-data-collection-methods.htm>

Secondary Data Collection Methods	Description and Credibility Points
Published Printed Sources	In these types, the writer, publication, and publishing time are important.
Books	The most authentic ones among the secondary sources.
Journals/Periodicals	The most important methods as they are up-to-date and provide data and information about very specific subjects.
Magazines/Newspapers	Not highly reliable but can be effective in your research as well.
Published Electronic Sources	Very fast and accessible.
E-Journals	Very available compared to the printed ones. Nowadays these types are very credible as well
General Websites	Not very reliable.
Weblogs	Commonly used methods and provide reliable diaries.
Unpublished Personal Records	Useful in some cases.
Diaries	Useful in descriptive methods, although they can be not very accessible.
Letters	Must be checked in terms of reliability before using.
Government Records	Very useful in different subjects such as human research, social sciences, etc.
Census Data/Population Statistics	Include educational and health records.
Public Sector Records	Provided by private companies and NGO surveys.

Table 1: Types of Secondary data methods Source: Kabir (2016) *Methods of Data Collection Basic Guidelines for Research: An Introductory Approach for All Disciplines* (first ed., pp. 201-275).

The many kinds of secondary data collection techniques are depicted in Figure 4 and Table 1 above. Academic journal articles, books, government papers, policy documents, media reports, and archive materials have all been used in this study. Based on their credibility, applicability to the study topic, and ability to advance knowledge of South Africa's political and economic environment both during and after the GNU era, these sources were chosen. Because they give access to a variety of viewpoints and factual documents, secondary data is a suitable tool for historical study. The use of secondary data has made it possible to analyse the policies, events, and results that took place throughout the GNU period (1994–1999).

Sisira (2022) asserts that any researcher who makes use of secondary data can profit from a plethora of hitherto collected knowledge, and that using them to develop pertinent policy variables is simple. Research can be done quickly since the researcher does not have to wait for a longer period of time to collect data. To maintain academic integrity and to recognize the contributions of the original authors, all data sources have been appropriately attributed. Since there were no human participants, ethical considerations mostly centred on accurate citation, reliable sources, and avoiding plagiarism.

### **3.3.2. Data analysis**

In the fields of business, science, and social science, data analysis encompasses a wide range of methods and approaches that go by numerous names. Both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used (Alem, 2020). The primary phase in both qualitative and quantitative research is data analysis. The results of the research are mostly determined by the examination of the data, regardless of its kind. The goal of data analysis is to produce information that can be put to use. The process of gathering, converting, cleansing, and modelling data in order to get the necessary information is known as data analysis (Alem, 2020). It aids the researcher in coming to a conclusion during research.

Making sense of non-numerical data, such as field notes, interview transcripts, or documents, in order to identify themes, trends, and insights is known as qualitative data analysis, or QDA. It's an interpretive process that prioritizes comprehension and meaning over measurement. Thematic analysis, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative analysis, and content analysis are popular methods.

In order to analyse secondary data about the GNU and its effects on the socioeconomic development of South Africa, this study used qualitative data analysis, more especially thematic analysis. Because it makes it easier to analyse non-numerical data—like text, speeches, historical documents, and reports—qualitative analysis is appropriate for this study. To find and examine patterns (themes) in the gathered data, thematic analysis was employed. The intricacies of governance, policy change, and transformation during the GNU era (1994–1999) are especially well captured by this approach. Thematic analysis is one qualitative research technique that researchers use to methodically organize and examine large, complex data sets. It includes looking for themes that can convey the stories found in the data sets (Dawadi, 2020).

The highly significant element of thematic analysis is that the analysis procedure must be methodical in order to produce a high-quality final output. Thematic analysis is a constant-comparative method that entails reading and rereading the transcripts in a methodical manner (Cavendish, 2011). A study can use the six-phase process suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), each of which is covered below, to preserve the required rigor in the analytic process.

- Phase One: Familiarisation with the Data

As the name says, the first phase (familiarization with the data) begins with the researchers' desire to become acquainted with their data. They can determine the kind (and quantity) of themes that could come out from the data with the aid of this step. To better grasp the material, I have read academic literature, journal articles, reports, and open data several times in order to immerse myself in the data for this project.

- Phase Two: Generating Initial Codes

The first stage of the data analysis made possible the richness of the preliminary findings, which involved becoming acquainted with the data. Nevertheless, the importance of re-checking the transcripts again before coming up with codes was taken into account. To arrange the data into digestible categories, key phrases, concepts, and recurrent ideas were manually coded.

- Phase Three: Searching for Themes

Major aspects of the GNU's impact on socioeconomic growth were reflected in the grouping of related codes into more general categories.

- Phase Four: Reviewing Themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) state that “themes should be examined for exterior heterogeneity (differences between themes) and internal homogeneity (coherence and consistency).” To make sure the themes appropriately reflected the data and the goals of the study, they were compared to the entire dataset. During this process, several motifs were improved, integrated, or eliminated.

- Phase Five: Defining and Naming Themes

Every theme was elucidated, emphasizing its pertinence to the study inquiries. The names of the themes were chosen to highlight important facets of the GNU's development function.

- Phase Six: Writing Report

In the analysis process, writing up the report on the results was the last step. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme analysis report needs to convince the audience of the analysis's value and soundness. The final themes were thoroughly examined and interpreted in light of the goals of the study. To maintain academic integrity and to recognize the contributions of the original authors, all data sources have been appropriately attributed.

### **3.4. Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

The study used particular inclusion and exclusion criteria for choosing secondary sources for analysis in order to guarantee data selection that was consistent, credible, and relevant. These standards were crucial to preserving a methodologically sound and targeted approach to assessing the Government of National Unity and its effects on the socioeconomic development of South Africa. Patino and Ferreira (2018) contend that when creating high-quality research protocols, establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria for study participants is a regular necessary approach. Inclusion criteria are the primary characteristics of the target population that researchers will use to address their study topic. The exclusion criteria, however, refer to characteristics of potential study participants who meet the inclusion criteria but exhibit extra traits that can compromise the study's effectiveness.

The study's inclusion criteria included documents, studies, and literature that particularly covered the 1994–1999 GNU period as well as post-GNU analyses that evaluate the legacy and results of that time period. Included were publications from reputable organizations, such as scholarly journals, government agencies, and research institutes. Documents and resources that are publicly available or accessible through scholarly databases and institutional repositories were used in this investigation.

Materials that did not directly connect to the GNU or South Africa's socioeconomic progress during or after the transition period, as well as works published in languages other than English because to translation limitations and the possibility of misunderstanding, were removed from this study. Additionally, YouTube channels, personal blogs, and opinion writings that might not be accurate or credible from an academic standpoint were not included. These inclusion and exclusion criteria made it possible to guarantee that the study's data analysis was both of the highest calibre and closely related to its goals.

### **3.5. Quality criteria**

Regardless of whether a study is qualitative or quantitative, quality criteria are the standards and principles used to evaluate its rigor and reliability. These standards aid in guaranteeing the credibility, reliability, and confirmability of the study's conclusions.

Credibility, reliability, and confirmability are important factors for qualitative research. Data triangulation, which uses several data sources to confirm findings, and peer debriefing, which involves talking with peers to get new perspectives and confirm interpretations, was used in this study to build credibility, reliability and confirmability.

According to Korstjens and Moser (2021), confirmability is the degree to which the research findings may be independently confirmed and duplicated by other researchers, guaranteeing the study's dependability and objectivity. This study will put a high priority on transparency in order to achieve confirmability by giving thorough explanations of the data collection procedure and clearly, objectively, and explicitly presenting the findings.

### **3.6. Ethical considerations**

Ethics address virtuous issues relating to research activity. Ethics, according to Bos (2020), is the study of good and bad as well as what researchers should do. According to Bellalem, Mirza, and Mirza (2023), ethics in research refers to “the standards and principles that direct choices about data collection, analysis, and distribution.” The researcher should place the participant's safety and protection from needless stress at the top of their priority. According to Cacciattolo (2015), this is the ethical field. In light of this, this study complies with all ethical standards set forth by North-West University. The thesis also conscious of the Northwest University ethical positions.

#### **3.6.1. Confidentiality**

On the other hand, "confidentiality" describes how data is handled and kept. This associates with who can access the information put together and how much information is shared with others outside the research project (Cacciattolo, 2015). This study makes use of previously published documents, publicly available data, and online sources. Since the materials are authorized and accessible, secrecy is not required.

#### **3.6.2. Avoidance of academic fraud**

An objective research methodology, a concise description of the results, and a precise citation of all relevant literature are all used in this study to give the authors due credit. The integrity of the original writers will be preserved at all costs through the interpretation of the quotations that will be used.

### **3.7. Conclusion**

This chapter has laid out the methodological framework used to explore the role of the GNU in shaping South Africa's socioeconomic development. A qualitative research design, grounded in historical research methodology, was adopted to enable an in-depth and contextual analysis of the GNU's contributions during the transitional period from apartheid to democracy. Secondary data was collected from credible and diverse sources, including government documents, academic publications, and institutional reports, and was analysed using thematic analysis.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria ensured the selection of relevant, authoritative, and context-specific data, while thematic analysis provided a structured way to identify patterns and draw meaningful insights. Measures to ensure trustworthiness, such as triangulation and source credibility, further strengthened the reliability of the findings. The methodology presented in this chapter lays the foundation for the next stage of the study, where the collected data is analysed and interpreted to understand the GNU's impact on key areas such as nation-building, economic reform, institutional transformation, and reconciliation. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this analysis in alignment with the research objectives.

## Chapter 4

### Discussion of findings and/or results

#### 4.1. Introduction

The research approach for the study was discussed in the previous chapter. In order to investigate how the GNU contributes to the socio-economic growth of South Africa, it covered the study's research design, methodology, data sources, data collection strategies, and analytical approaches. This chapter examines the 1994–1999 GNU's performance, the 2024 GNU's performance, the obstacles to its success, and the internal and external factors that still impact the viability of a GNU today, all while drawing on secondary data from sources such as academic literature, policy reports, and institutional analyses. The results are further evaluated using the study's theoretical framework after being thematically arranged to correspond with the research objectives.

#### 4.2. Overview of the GNU in South Africa

Coalition administrations are not foreign to South Africa; during its 30 years of democracy, they have existed at several levels (national, provincial, and local) at some point (Bosman, Rubidge & Grudz, 2024). The GNU was established in 1994 following decades of racial segregation and violence during the apartheid era (Makhanya, 2025). The unified government brought together a number of political groups, including the ANC, NP and IFP, in an effort to foster collaboration and reconciliation. Nelson Mandela (Former President of South Africa)'s visionary leadership and the political parties' commitment to putting aside their differences for the good of the nation were demonstrated in 1994 with the formation of the GNU.

This historic event symbolised a commitment to shared governance and the principles of inclusivity, representation, and togetherness in a country still plagued by historical injustices (Jolobe, 2018). Through its inclusive policies, the government showed that it was prepared to repair the nation's divisions, promote historical reconciliation, and establish a democratic society that values variety and unity (South African History Online, 2024). Through shared governance and collaborative decision-making, the GNU sought

to resolve post-apartheid issues in South Africa and pave the way for a more equitable and inclusive society (South African History Online, 2024).

Table 2: 1994 South African Election Results Source:

Political party	Number of votes	% of votes	Seats allocated
<b>ANC</b>	12 237 655	62,65%	252
<b>IFP</b>	2 058 294	10,54%	43
<b>DP</b>	338 426	1,73%	7
<b>VV-FF</b>	424 555	2,17%	9
<b>NP</b>	3 983 690	20,39%	82
<b>PAC</b>	243 478	1,25%	5
<b>ACDP</b>	88 104	0,45%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>			400

Sources: Own representation with data from the IEC <https://www.elections.org.za/content/uploadedfiles/NPE%201994.pdf>

The creation of a GNU shows that political parties want to set aside their distinction and work together to achieve shared objectives for the benefit of the nation. Parties that pledge to form a GNU show that they recognize the importance of social cohesion, national unity, and reconciliation in building a more just and inclusive society. This cooperative strategy might promote discussion and understanding, close political divides, and put the interests of all South Africans ahead of party agendas (South African Government, 2024).

Coalition parties in South Africa's GNU in 1994 were marked by continuous disagreements notwithstanding their power-sharing arrangement. These conflicts were exacerbated by long-standing political convictions, unresolved grievances, and differing perspectives on South Africa following apartheid (Zacarias, 1996; Maswanganyi, 2025).

By passing legislation that addressed the socioeconomic disparities brought about by apartheid, the ANC, the ruling party, sought to create a democratic, non-racial society. In order to advance equity and correct historical injustices, the passed legislation include reforms in the areas of work, healthcare, education, and land ownership (Ruiters, 2021). However, stability, minority rights, and maintaining aspects of the current economic structure were given more importance by the NP (Rubin & Soest, 2024). The IFP, which had a strong regional foundation in KwaZulu-Natal, rejected centralisation and favoured provincial autonomy under ANC leadership.

While under the presidency of F.W. de Klerk, who was also the Deputy President of the country at the time (1996), the NP declared its intention to leave the GNU on June 3, 1996. During his budget vote speech in Parliament that same day, F.W. de Klerk gave a number of reasons for this decision, including the NP's determination to become a legitimate opposition party, the exclusion of joint decision making in the final constitution, his lack of influence over government policies, and his retirement from politics in August 1996 (Mbandlwa, 2023). Without protest, the ANC agreed with the NP's decision to leave the GNU. A stalled economy with high unemployment, stark racial inequality, and pervasive poverty were among the major obstacles the new government had to overcome during this time (Graham, 2014). At the end of the first Parliament in 1999, the Government of National Unity finally came to an end (Southall, 1999).

### **4.3. Presentation of findings**

#### **4.3.1. Performance of the 1994-1999 South African GNU**

With 31 ministers in Mandela's cabinet, the GNU, which was originally formed following the historic democratic elections held on April 26, 1994, has served as the cornerstone of South Africa's political change (Tshishonga, 2024; Vilakati & Bentley, 2024). As South Africa moved from an apartheid system to a democratically elected government, it established its renowned GNU. As a result, the GNU was a multiparty government rooted in the Republic of South Africa's 1993 transitional Constitution and determined by the parties' results in the national and local elections of 1994. Any party that received at least 5% of the national vote (20 seats) was eligible to join the GNU, which would rule the nation for the first five years of democracy, according to the 1993 South African

Transitional Constitution, which was negotiated at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) (Jolobe, 2018).

Mandela led the GNU, which also comprised members of the Zulu-based IFP and the former ruling NP. The Constitution's tenets of inclusivity, proportional representation, and cooperative governance form the cornerstone of the GNU's legal framework in South Africa (Thusi, 2024). In order to ease the transition from apartheid by permitting various parties to share power, the idea was initially presented in the 1993 Interim Constitution (Kotzé, 2006).

With limited time, the GNU had a lot of work to accomplish. Dealing with an agenda that was partially dictated by the peace talks and the interim constitution required the cabinet to be operationally ready as soon as possible (Schreiber, 2016). In addition to overseeing a new South African Constitution, the GNU's goals were to significantly raise everyone's standard of living in the country (SA History, 2014). South Africans' aspirations for an economic recovery and a better life were fuelled by the country's democratic transition and the lifting of international sanctions against apartheid (Schreiber, 2016).

The 1996 Constitution, which is considered to be among the most progressive in the world, was successfully adopted, making it one of the GNU's most noteworthy accomplishments (Klug, 2010). It established autonomous institutions like the Constitutional Court and the Public Protector, solidified constitutional supremacy, and established a justiciable Bill of Rights. After the Constitutional Court ordered amendments, the Constitutional Assembly finalised the text in May 1996. Mandela then promulgated it in December 1996, and it became operative in February 1997 (De Vos et al., 2018).

In 1995, the GNU also created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which was charged with looking into human rights abuses that occurred between 1960 and 1994, offering amnesty under certain restrictions, and suggesting reparations (TRC, 1998). During the precarious post-apartheid transition, the TRC's report, which was turned in in October 1998, played a crucial role in advancing a narrative of restorative justice as opposed to retributive justice (Gibson, 2004).

RDP was the GNU's initial economic plan; however, in 1996, the GEAR policy took its place. The budget deficit decreased from more than 5% of GDP in the early 1990s to roughly 2.6% of GDP by 1999 thanks to GEAR's emphasis on macroeconomic stability, fiscal restraint, and market-oriented reforms (Department of Finance, 1999). Investor confidence increased when inflation, which had previously averaged double digits, dropped to single digits (Gelb, 2005). Although GEAR achieved its financial goals, it had little effect on inequality and employment; structural imbalances and high unemployment persisted (Marais, 2011).

There was a notable advancement in the provision of services. Over 750,000 homes were delivered between 1994 and 1999 thanks to the national housing initiative, which sped up the construction of affordable housing (Rust & Rubin, 2009). Like this, the national electrification program significantly increased access in rural and previously underserved areas by connecting an estimated 2.5–2.8 million homes to the grid during the same time period (Eskom, 1999). However, worries about housing quality and service delivery sustainability remained.

Since its founding, the GNU has faced numerous difficulties (Mpanza, 2014). The difficulties faced by the GNU were a reflection of the inherent difficulties of governing during a time of change characterised by conflicting goals, institutional reorganization, and elevated public expectations. The ANC, NP, and IFP coalition parties in South Africa's GNU in 1994 were marked by continuous disagreements notwithstanding their power-sharing arrangement (Maswanganyi, 2025). By passing legislation that addressed the socioeconomic disparities brought about by apartheid, the ANC, the ruling party, sought to create a democratic, non-racial society. However, stability, minority rights, and maintaining aspects of the current economic structure were given more importance by the NP (Rubin & Soest, 2024). With a strong regional foundation in KwaZulu-Natal, the IFP promoted provincial autonomy and opposed centralization (Maswanganyi, 2025).

Socioeconomic gaps continued to exist, with official unemployment rates ranging from 22 to 25 percent and inequality, as determined by the Gini coefficient, continuing to rank among the highest in the world (Marais, 2011). GEAR's market-oriented approach, according to critics, reduced social spending and the state's capacity to combat poverty on the scale that the RDP called for (SA History, 2023). Another issue was institutional

capability. Severe skills shortages, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and unequal governance capabilities across provinces were revealed by the merging of disjointed apartheid-era administrations (O'Malley Archives, 2023). In terms of security, the reconciliation process's vulnerability was brought to light by the continuous violence in KwaZulu-Natal and intermittent township unrest (SA History, 2023).

Both the potential and constraints of transitional governance in a post-conflict country are demonstrated by the GNU's performance from 1994 to 1999. The institutional and financial foundation for democratic consolidation was established by its accomplishments in basic service delivery, macroeconomic stabilization, and constitution-making. However, the breadth and speed of socioeconomic change were limited by structural inequality, political fragmentation, and deficits in governance capacity.

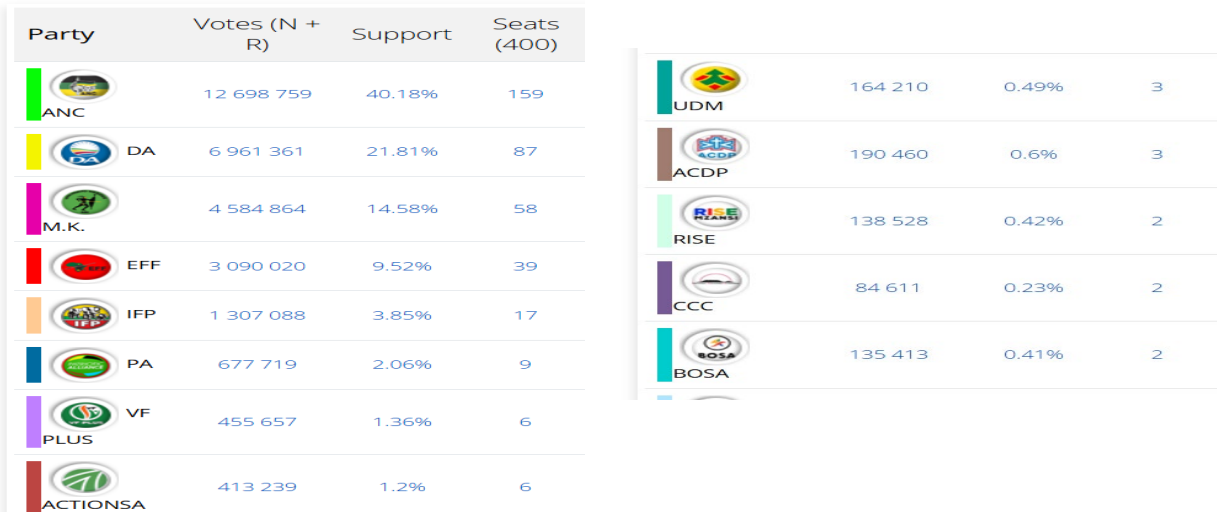
#### **4.3.2. Current calls for a GNU**

In 2023, as South Africa's growing socioeconomic and governance challenges brought to light the constraints of single-party domination, calls for a multiparty system gained momentum. The leader of the EFF, Julius Malema, demanded in May 2023 that a GNU be established in order to tackle pressing problems like the energy crisis and economic stagnation. Malema said that national interests should take precedence above party aspirations (Pindula, 2023). In order to present a unified front against the ANC and left-wing forces like the EFF, a number of opposition parties, including the DA, IFP, Freedom Front Plus, and ActionSA, formed the Multi-Party Charter at about the same time.

For the first time since 1994, the ANC did not win an outright majority in the national elections, which created the backdrop for the 2024 GNU (Ragolane and Khoza, 2024; ANC, 2024). Negotiations among various political parties, such as the ANC, Democratic Alliance, and other political organisations, based on a negotiated agreement outlining combined priorities and cabinet positions, were necessary in order to ensure political stability (Ragolane and Khoza, 2024). Even while the ANC's electoral slide began in 2004, the 17.3 percentage point collapse in 2024 is a severe blow. Elite leaders created a narrative implying that voters want a GNU rather than acknowledge that the ANC's shortcomings and corruption scandals had damaged the party's reputation (Sebola & Tsheola, 2014).

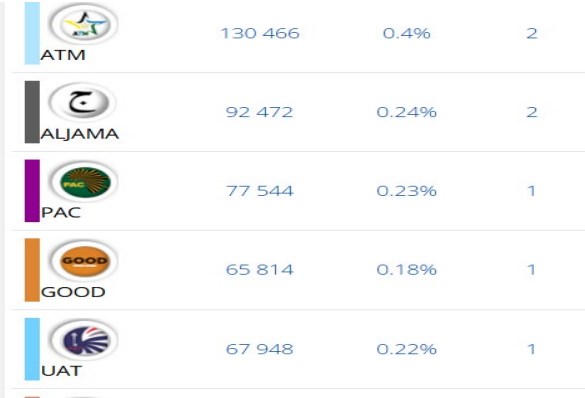
An economic growth that is accelerated, equitable, and sustainable; an industrialization and fixed capital investment that creates jobs and improves livelihoods; infrastructure development; structural reforms; transformational change; fiscal sustainability; land reform; and wise use of national resources and endowments are among the main objectives of the 2024 GNU's mandate (ANC, 2024). In order to improve service delivery, it is necessary to stabilise local government, implement efficient cooperative governance, assign appropriate responsibilities to different levels of government, and reevaluate the role of traditional leadership within the governance framework. These actions are intended to realise African Agenda 2063, foster South-South, North-South, and African cooperation, promote multilateralism, and work toward a just, peaceful, and equitable world. Additionally, it seeks to increase public confidence in the political parties (ANC, 2024; Ragolane & Khoza, 2024).

Figure 4: The South African 2024 National Elections outcome.



Source: IEC

<https://results.elections.org.za/dashboards/npe/>



The above figure displays the 2024 South African National election results. It depicts that no party managed to secure 50% of votes therefore winning the outright majority. 15+ parties managed to get seats in the National Assembly (NA) even if it is

one. This was the first time in South Africa that more than 10 parties had secured seats in the NA.

A shift toward greater cooperation, consensus-building, and inclusive governance in the nation may be represented by the ANC, DA, IFP, Patriotic Alliance, The Good Party, United Democratic Movement, Rise Mzansi, Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, Freedom Front Plus, and Al-Jama-ah's declaration of intent to establish a GNU in 2024. The will of political parties to cooperate in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation shows that they understand the value of group effort and shared accountability in tackling South Africa's significant problems (African National Congress, 2024).

Figure 5: 2024 GNU PARTIES

Political Party	Votes	Supports %	No. of seats
African National Congress (ANC)	12 698 759	40,18%	159
Democratic Alliance (DA)	6 961 361	21,81%	87
Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)	1 307 088	3,85%	17
Patriotic Alliance (PA)	677 719	2,06%	9
Freedom Front Plus (VF+)	455 657	1,36%	6
United Democratic Movement (UDM)	164 210	0,49%	3
Rise Mzansi	138 528	0,42%	2
AL - JAMA - AH	94 472	0,24%	2
PAC	77 544	0,23%	1
GOOD	65 1814	0,18%	1
<b>Total</b>			<b>287</b>

Source: Curated by Makhanya (2025) with data from the IEC (2024)

The creation of a GNU shows that political parties want to set aside their differences and work together to achieve shared objectives for the benefit of the nation. Parties that pledge to form a GNU show that they recognise the importance of social cohesion, national unity, and reconciliation in building a more just and inclusive society (Makhanya, 2025). Furthermore, the establishment of the GNU by South African political parties might be seen as an active move to advance accountability, transparency, and good governance. Parties can enhance service delivery, fortify monitoring protocols, and boost public trust in the political system by uniting into a single government. The parties'

commitment to advancing the nation's development plan and serving the interests of the people is made abundantly evident to the public by their promise to cooperate in a spirit of unity (South African Government, 2024).

Though the GNU's creation is a start in the right direction, political parties' ability to handle the challenges and complexities of collaborative governance will determine how successful such a government is (Makhanya, 2025). Strong leadership, political will, and dedication to the values of inclusivity and diversity are necessary in such a framework in order to effectively implement policies, manage conflicting interests, and build agreement. The legitimacy and effectiveness of the South African GNU are severely lacking because it is composed of just ten political parties. Some contend that rather than being a true GNU, the administration is best characterised as a coalition of parties. Makhanya (2025) says that this distinction is important since a GNU is frequently established to ensure inclusive governance and reconciliation during periods of national crisis or transition. Others, on the other hand, believe that GNU's modern viewpoint is seen as a way to promote peace and reconciliation in sharply divided or post-conflict communities by fostering consensus-building and bridging gaps.

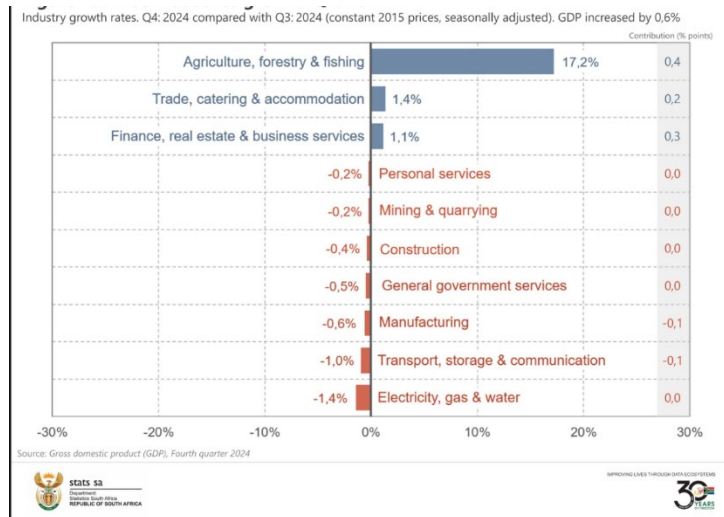
#### **4.3.3. Performance of the 2024 GNU**

On June 6, 2024, the Cyril Ramaphosa (President of South Africa) declared that the party was sending an invitation to all political parties to take part in talks to create a GNU. With the formation of a GNU, where the ANC collaborates with the DA and other political parties, the ANC has succeeded in dispersing the kingmaker status of smaller parties. Therefore, just before the election of the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and President at the first parliamentary sitting, the GNU, which at the time consisted of the DA, ANC, and PA, released the Statement of Intent of the 2024 Government of National Unity on June 14, 2024 (Beukes, Chigwata & De Visser, 2024).

South Africa's first post-apartheid coalition government, the 2024 GNU, came into power with a lot of hope but has since had a mixed record. The South African gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 0.6% in the fourth quarter (October–December) of 2024 after contracting by 0.1% in the third quarter. On the supply (producing) side of the economy, trade, finance, and agriculture drove growth. On the demand (expenditure) side,

household spending drove growth (Stats SA, 2024). In comparison to 2023, the GDP increased by 0.6% annually in 2024.

Figure 6: Industry Growth Rates Source: Stats SA (2024)



Sources:

<https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=18124#:~:text=2024%20in%20review&text=The%20South%20African%20economy%20was,mining%20also%20expanded%20in%202024>

In the fourth quarter of 2024, three industries experienced growth. On the economy's supply side, agriculture had the biggest beneficial influence on GDP growth. The industry recovered 17.2% after a steep drop in the third quarter, increasing GDP growth by 0.4 percentage points (Figure 7). The primary cause of this was an increase in the output of animal products and field crops. Financial intermediation, real estate activities, and other business services were the biggest drivers of growth in the finance, real estate, and business services sector, which expanded for the ninth consecutive quarter (Stats SA, 2024).

Increased sales in the retail, wholesale, and motor trade sectors supported the growth of the trade sector. The demand side of the economy benefited from this, as seen by the fourth quarter's increase in household consumption spending (Stats SA, 2024). Manufacturing and transportation, storage, and communication were the two industries that did the worst in terms of growth out of the seven that did well. Weaker production levels in the automotive and metals & industrial divisions were the primary factors pulling manufacturing lower. Communication, storage, and transportation had a drop for the

fourth quarter in a row. Land transportation and transport support services saw a decline in the industry (Stats SA, 2024). Due to lower output levels of manganese ore, iron ore, gold, chromium ore, nickel, and copper, mining activity decreased. Although they were helpful, coal and platinum group metals were insufficient to keep the industry afloat.

There has been some noticeable progress on the delivery front. According to Central News (2024), the GNU has reported measurable improvements in infrastructure, logistics, reducing crime, and stabilizing the power grid, reaching up to 280 days in a row without load shedding. Despite an initial improvement in public opinion, with only 14% believing the country was moving in the right way prior to the election and 39% after the creation of the GNU, unemployment is still persistently high at almost one-third, undermining the coalition's developmental mandate (Polity, 2025).

#### **4.4. Key factors deterring GNU in promoting socioeconomic development in the country.**

##### **4.4.1. Ideological differences**

Each political party has its own set of guiding principles. Since not all parties hold the same beliefs, they typically disagree from one another. The ideological traditions that have historically separated South African political parties have made it difficult for them to collaborate in a way that is stable and long-lasting. As a liberation organization that later became a ruling party, the ANC has long promoted a developmental state model that places a strong focus on social justice, redistribution, and state-led intervention to address disparities from the apartheid era. But because of pressure from both domestic elites and international markets, it has frequently wavered between this redistributive agenda and more neoliberal economic policies, such those represented in the GEAR strategy (Marais, 2011; Gumede, 2023). The biggest opposition party in South Africa, the DA, on the other hand, has liberal democratic roots and supports market liberalisation, less government intervention, and a greater focus on private enterprise and individual liberties (Booyesen, 2021). It is very challenging to reach an agreement on matters like social provision, land reform, and public ownership of businesses because of this ideological gap.

Similar to the ANC and DA, the EFF advocate for the expropriation of land without compensation and the nationalisation of banks, important businesses, and mines. Its ideological position stems from Pan-Africanist and Marxist-Leninist traditions, which are in direct opposition to the ANC's more moderate redistributive policies as well as the DA's liberal economic outlook (BTI, 2024). The ANC's penchant for centralised governance frequently clashes with regional parties like the IFP, who add another layer of complication by stressing federalism, provincial autonomy, and the maintenance of traditional authority systems (Southall, 2022).

Attempts at collaboration have always been thwarted by these conflicting perspectives on the state, economics, and society. Such ideological differences led to compromises and policy gridlock during the GNU (1994–1999), which undermined transformational socioeconomic programs. Similar trends may be seen in current coalition trials at the municipal level, where conflicts over priorities for governance, corruption, and service delivery have frequently resulted in coalition collapses, instability, and eroded public trust (Powell, 2023; SAIIA, 2023). Therefore, the persistent lack of ideological convergence implies that although tactical alliances could form in response to political pressure, long-term collaboration is extremely brittle and unsustainable due to the fundamentally different worldviews of South African parties.

#### **4.4.2. Policy priorities**

A GNU's capacity to promote socioeconomic development might be seriously hampered by competing policy agendas. The NP supported economic liberalization, property rights, and fiscal restraint, the IFP placed a strong emphasis on provincial autonomy and traditional authority, and the ANC prioritized redistribution and transformation through the RDP in South Africa's 1994–1999 GNU. The adoption of the more market-oriented GEAR policy, which stabilized macroeconomic indicators but had a limited redistributive impact, was one compromise forced by these conflicting agendas, which hindered consensus (Marais, 2011; Gumede, 2023).

More generally, policy incoherence and implementation paralysis frequently emerge when coalition partners promote competing agendas, whether on welfare spending, industrial policy, or land reform. Divergent party agendas have resulted in unstable alliances, frequent leadership changes, and the stalling of municipal service delivery and

development efforts, according to recent evaluations of South Africa's coalition politics since 2016 (Powell, 2023; SAIIA, 2023). The national coalition arrangements for 2024 have rekindled worries that, in the absence of a clearly negotiated common policy platform, long-standing disputes over fundamental topics like social spending, state ownership, and provincial authority will recur and create the same kinds of impasse that threatened the original GNU (BTI, 2024). Therefore, unaligned policy agendas run the risk of slowing down development rather than promoting inclusive governance since they focus more on resolving internal conflicts than on putting transformative programs into action.

#### **4.4.3. Governance issues**

A GNU's ability to govern effectively is crucial, but South Africa's history shows how poor administration can impede socioeconomic growth. The alliance suffered from overlapping mandates, ministerial rivalries, and unclear accountability mechanisms during the 1994–1999 GNU, which hindered policy implementation and undermined cohesion (Southall, 2014; Marais, 2011). Although the GNU was successful in stabilizing the political transition, inefficiencies in administration resulted in the uneven achievement of developmental objectives like equitable service delivery and quick poverty alleviation. This demonstrates the paradox of coalition governance: although it might increase legitimacy and inclusion, it frequently makes executive decision-making and policy implementation more difficult.

Corruption and inadequate accountability systems, which have permeated South Africa's public sector since the democratic transition, are a significant governance concern. According to studies, the effectiveness of the state was weakened by patronage networks, cadre deployment, and institutional capture, making the government susceptible to inefficiency and poor management (Gumede, 2023; BTI, 2024). Such flaws are exacerbated in a GNU setting because coalition partners may put safeguarding their supporters and constituents ahead of group accountability, which erodes confidence and reduces scrutiny. In addition to upsetting cogent governance, this takes funds away from development initiatives, which severely limits the state's capacity to deal with issues like unemployment, inequality, and backlogs in services.

Governing is made more difficult by coalition structure instability. Since 2016, local government coalitions have served as a warning: shaky alliances devoid of legally enforceable agreements have resulted in unstable mayoral tenures, frequent leadership changes, and a halt in the provision of municipal services (Powell, 2023; SAIIA, 2023). The post-2024 GNU arrangements at the national level carry comparable risks, since concerns about executive churn and decision-making paralysis are raised by conflicting party interests and the lack of official coalition contracts. Policy uncertainty rises when elite negotiating takes precedence over developmental planning in government, discouraging investment and threatening sustained economic growth.

#### **4.4.4. Public participation**

A fundamental component of democratic governance and the formulation of developmental policies is public participation. In order to legitimize the new democratic rule and guarantee that a variety of voices influenced the RDP, the GNU (1994–1999) was entrusted with expanding participation in South Africa. Although this inclusive strategy increased legitimacy, it also led to conflict since different interest groups with competing agendas made policymaking more difficult, which frequently slowed down decision-making and diluted implementation (Marais, 2011; Southall, 2014). Broad engagement occasionally resulted in compromise approaches that were less successful in meeting pressing socioeconomic needs rather than simplifying developmental policy.

The quality of involvement, not the amount, has been a recurring problem. Even while the South African Constitution provides for a wide range of rights related to participation, in reality, elite actors or politicised organizations have dominated numerous engagement methods, marginalising grassroots voices (Gumede, 2023). As coalition partners may use participation methods to achieve their party agendas rather than advance shared developmental aims, this runs the risk of further entrenching factional politics in a GNU framework. The legitimacy of state institutions is weakened, public cooperation with developmental projects is decreased, and citizen-government trust is eroded.

Additionally, poorly managed participation might postpone developmental outcomes and hinder the implementation of policies. For instance, when communities feel disregarded or excluded, contestation in participatory platforms like municipal-level Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) frequently leads to disagreements, demonstrations, and legal

action (Powell, 2023). These disputes take resources and focus away from building infrastructure and providing services. Increased discontent among the community runs the risk of escalating instability and causing more policy impasse in a GNU context, where agreement is already brittle.

#### **4.5. Interventions that can stimulate the GNU towards South Africa's socio-economic development.**

Large socioeconomic gaps were brought about by South Africa's history of apartheid (Mbandlwa, 2023). In South Africa, addressing social and economic inequality is a major issue that calls for inclusive decision-making processes and cooperative governance (Makhanya, 2025). Reforms that tackle institutional flaws as well as more general developmental issues are necessary to increase the GNU's ability to support socioeconomic development in South Africa (Maleka, 2024).

A GNU's strategic planning is complex and multidimensional, needing a balance among various political agendas and beliefs. In order to create policies that are not only triumphant but also broadly embraced and supported by people of all political persuasions, this balance is crucial. One of the most crucial strategies coalition governments and governments of national unity use to address social and economic injustices is to prioritize participatory decision-making and collaborative governance. According to Makhanya (2025), these models of governance guarantee that a wide range of viewpoints are taken into account and marginalised voices are heard by including participants from numerous political parties and social groups in policy discussions and decision-making processes.

##### **4.5.1. Policy stability and continuity**

The stability and continuity of policy can be greatly impacted by a GNU's dynamics. Although greater representation might increase a policy's credibility and longevity, instability within the coalition may jeopardize its ability to be implemented consistently and sustainably (Maleka, 2024). In South Africa, policymaking has a big socioeconomic impact. To redress historical disparities, promote economic growth, and enhance social circumstances, a number of policies have been put into place, including BEE, BBBEE, Land Redistribution, Social Grants, NDP, IPAP, and Skills Development (Mbandlwa,

2023). GNU and coalitions are also crucial in promoting transparency and accountability in the fight against social and economic inequality. By ensuring inclusive and transparent decision-making processes, these forms of governance help hold leaders and policymakers accountable for their actions and words (Makhanya, 2025).

The probability for enhanced policy stability is one of a GNU's main benefits. The policies enacted by a government formed by several political parties typically represent a wider consensus (Berliner, 2016). The different economic philosophies of the coalition members influence the economic policies of a GNU, which can both add depth to the policy discussion and raise doubts among investors (Maleka, 2024). Similar to this, the requirement for collaborative decision-making can impact administrative effectiveness and the operation of governmental institutions. This can both increase institutional capacity and add bureaucratic complications. Predictability, which is essential for investor confidence and economic planning, is also improved by policy stability under a GNU. A stable and predictable policy environment with constant laws and regulations across time is preferred by firms and investors (Patel, 2019).

Consensus among coalition partners during the development and implementation of policies and reforms increases the likelihood that they will last past the expiration of a single administration. This is due to the fact that these policies have already been the subject of intense negotiation and have garnered the backing of a wider range of political figures (Mthembu, 2020). A GNU can facilitate the stability needed for long-term implementation of healthcare initiatives or comprehensive educational changes. Once approved, these reforms are unlikely to be reversed or drastically changed, guaranteeing that they eventually provide the desired results (Soko, 2015).

#### **4.5.2. Inclusive governance**

A key tenet of a GNU is inclusive governance, which guarantees that the many viewpoints within a coalition are acknowledged and reflected. This inclusivity encourages a sense of participation and belonging across diverse society groups and has an impact on policymaking, implementation, and the broader governance structure (Maleka, 2024). Public trust is raised, and the government's legitimacy is strengthened through inclusive governance. People are more inclined to support and trust the government when they

perceive that its policies represent their interests and concerns. Maintaining social order and successfully implementing policies depend on this support (Patel, 2019).

More people from a wider range of political backgrounds are likely to support policies developed through inclusive governance. Over time, this widespread support may facilitate the implementation and maintenance of policies. Because a GNU requires consensus, policies are frequently the product of protracted discussion and compromise, taking into account a variety of opinions (Naidoo, 2021).

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

This chapter has presented and analysed the findings of the study in relation to the role of the GNU in promoting South Africa's socio-economic development. The evidence shows that while the GNU model has the potential to foster inclusivity, political stability, and shared governance, its performance has been constrained by several internal and external challenges. Key issues such as ideological differences among coalition partners, divergent policy priorities, governance inefficiencies, and limited public participation have hampered its effectiveness in addressing core socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, inequality, and poor service delivery.

The findings further reveal that while the GNU has been successful in creating a platform for multi-party collaboration and temporarily stabilising the political environment, its socio-economic impact remains limited. The analysis demonstrated that without clear policy alignment, coherent governance structures, and stronger citizen engagement, the GNU struggles to move from symbolic unity to tangible developmental outcomes. Overall, the chapter highlights a mixed performance of the GNU, revealing both its promise as a democratic experiment and its pitfalls as a mechanism for socio-economic transformation. These insights provide a foundation for the next chapter, which will present conclusions drawn from the study and propose recommendations aimed at strengthening the GNU's capacity to function as a genuine catalyst for South Africa's socio-economic development.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### 5.1. Introduction

Chapter five summarises the main findings, makes general conclusions, and lists policy recommendations based on the findings of the study. The inclusion of recommendations demonstrates the researcher's critical engagement with the subject and provides intellectual and practical contributions towards potential answers by highlighting potential interventions and tactics.

#### 5.2. Summary of findings

According to the report, GNUs are not new in South Africa; the first one was established in 1994, and the second one took effect following the 2024 elections. Despite having two GNUs, it has formed numerous coalitions, particularly at the local level. According to the report, the 2024 GNU was established to maintain governance continuity, promote inclusion, and restore confidence in South Africa's democracy and economy. The 1994 GNU was put into place to promote unity and inclusivity following the end of the apartheid era.

According to the study, throughout South Africa's transition from apartheid, the GNU of 1994–1999 played a crucial role in maintaining political stability and setting the stage for the consolidation of democracy. It oversaw the ratification of the 1996 Constitution, which continues to be the pillar of South Africa's democracy, and institutionalized inclusive governance through coalition agreements. The GNU did not, however, make a significant contribution to socioeconomic progress. Financial limitations, governance flaws, and ideological differences among coalition members hindered the implementation of programs like the RDP, which sought to address poverty, inequality, and service delivery.

A further indication of a move toward market-oriented policies that put macroeconomic stability ahead of redistributive justice was the 1996 adoption of the GEAR policy. Parts of the populace who had anticipated more drastic socioeconomic reforms were alienated, and tensions within the GNU increased as a result. The GNU's ability to bring about revolutionary development was further undermined by external pressures from

international financial institutions as well as internal issues including factionalism, policy incoherence, and governance inefficiencies.

The unexpected result of the May 2024 general elections, which witnessed the ANC lose its legislative majority for the first time since 1994, prompted the creation of the 2024 GNU, according to the findings. This resulted in a hung parliament, which made coalition building necessary to maintain political stability and the continuity of government. In order to reflect inclusivity and avoid political impasse, the GNU was formed, bringing together the ANC, DA, IFP, PA, Good Party, PAC, FF+ and the UDM including Al Jama-ah, and Rise Mzansi.

The study also found that although the GNU was successful in establishing a functioning government, it has encountered serious policy and ideological conflicts. Affirmative action policies, state economic intervention, and land reform disagreements between the ANC and DA have hampered the implementation of cogent socioeconomic changes and slowed decision-making. This supports past research on South African coalition administrations, which emphasizes how efficiency is frequently harmed by conflicting policy agendas.

The GNU has temporarily increased political stability and investor confidence, especially by lowering the risk of policy uncertainty that would have come with a weak minority government. Nonetheless, enduring governance problems such institutional inefficiency, poor service delivery, and corruption continue to be significant challenges. Although the GNU has established a forum for more extensive discussion on structural reforms, it has not yet produced appreciable gains in employment, poverty alleviation, or inequality.

Lastly, the results show that the GNU's success depends on continued compromise and collaboration between the parties, efficient dispute resolution procedures, and more public involvement. Without these, the GNU runs the risk of reproducing the shortcomings of previous municipal coalition systems, which were frequently precarious and unsustainable. Therefore, although while the 2024 GNU mark a turning point in South Africa's democratic progress, its long-term impact on socioeconomic growth is still undetermined and largely depends on its capacity to overcome obstacles relating to governance, ideology, and policy.

### **5.3. Policy Recommendations**

The GNU serves as an example of coalition governance's potential and drawbacks in transitional democracies. Its ability to transition from symbolic unity to inclusive, effective, and cogent policy implementation will determine its viability as a developmental vehicle. The report makes the following recommendations in light of its findings:

#### **5.3.1. Fair distribution of political positions**

Political positions ought to be apportioned equitably among all parties, regardless of size. No matter what proportion they received in the elections, all parties are important to the GNU since they depend on one another to function. When distributing political seats, large parties shouldn't intimidate smaller ones. This enables parties to function from a position of trust and significance, since people perform at their best and with purpose when they feel valued.

Representation in proportion to electoral support is guaranteed via equitable distribution. Naturally, larger parties—like the ANC in the 2024 GNU—claim a larger portion of cabinet posts, but to avoid marginalization, smaller coalition partners must also be assigned significant roles. Smaller parties run the risk of being seen as symbolic rather than significant decision-makers in the absence of fair allocation, which could weaken coalition cohesion.

Coalition members are more likely to trust and work together when allocation is balanced. The GNU lessens rivalry and resentment by negotiating positions fairly and openly, freeing parties to concentrate on government rather than internal conflicts. To improve policy coherence and prevent fragmentation, this can promote a culture of shared ownership of policies.

Public trust in the GNU can be increased through equitable distribution. If important ministries, including public works, education, health, and finance, are shared among coalition partners rather than being controlled by the ruling party, the public is more likely to see the government as inclusive and representative. A dedication to multiparty democracy and shared responsibility is demonstrated by this inclusivity.

#### **5.3.2. Inclusive governance**

The GNU unites the various political parties, hues, and resources of South Africa. Uncertainty is mitigated by diversity. But in order to be successful, the GNU needs to be fully inclusive, include non-ANC partners in the formulation of policies, ideas, and decisions. Only through its diversity will South Africa thrive, reduce poverty, and create jobs. In addition to being politically required, inclusivity is also morally required. In societies themselves, inclusive governance is crucial, especially when increased engagement is promoted irrespective of variations in age, economic status, gender, religion, ethnicity, and geography. Improving local governance's ability and inclusion also clearly benefits regional trends in political stability and economic growth.

Encourage inclusive public involvement by giving local communities, civil society, and citizens a voice in determining policies. Marginalizing some individuals runs the risk of ignoring crucial aspects of the issue and its possible solution, which is why inclusion is a crucial component of government. Therefore, governments need to interact with people more, particularly by utilizing and releasing the youth's full potential. Reassuring the public to participate significantly to the decision-making process is the primary goal of public involvement. A GNU can increase mutual trust and understanding by encouraging candid and helpful communication between coalition members and the general public. Addressing controversial topics and establishing consensus on policy issues require this conversation. Such communication can serve as an early alert system for public issues, provide a channel for sharing accurate and timely information, and support informed and sustainable decision-making.

### **5.3.3. Strengthen policy coherence (neutral programme of action/ideology)**

By establishing an inclusive decision-making platform that unites many political players to discuss and coordinate their policy agendas, a GNU can improve policy coherence. Coherence is frequently weakened by ideological disagreements and conflicting party goals in fractured political situations, such as the post-2024 election environment in South Africa. The GNU encourages policy harmonisation across sectors and lowers the possibility of unilateral or inconsistent policymaking by incorporating various parties within the administration. To reduce program duplication and guarantee that several ministries are working toward common national goals, the GNU offers chances for cross-party discussion and consensus-building.

A GNU should create a cohesive socioeconomic plan that considers the participants' varying ideologies. When all parties join to form a GNU, they bring with them a variety of different views and ideals, which is often one of the reasons why they fight over them. Parties should develop philosophies and visions that the GNU will pursue regardless of their party affiliation, much like they should with the statement of intent. The GNU may create more thorough and flexible plans by cooperating and utilizing each party's advantages.

#### **5.3.4. Prior planning for a GNU**

Because it allows for the creation of distinct frameworks, institutional procedures, and common agendas prior to the start of government, pre-planning is essential for a GNU. Coalition governments frequently paralyze without organized planning, as demonstrated by South Africa's disjointed local councils with unclear power-sharing arrangements.

Firstly, forethought guarantees that roles, duties, and policy priorities are clear. Participating parties might lessen uncertainty and avoid disagreements over ministerial mandates by drafting a unified program of action beforehand. Decision-making becomes more stable as a result, and the government can concentrate on implementing policies rather than resolving disputes all the time.

Second, preparation enables the GNU to set up dispute resolution procedures in advance of disputes. The GNU can resolve conflicts in a constructive manner instead of letting them turn into political impasse, which threatens socioeconomic development, by incorporating processes for mediation, voting thresholds, or rotating leadership posts.

Thirdly, preparing forward improves the continuity and consistency of policies. To integrate short-term governance priorities with long-term developmental ambitions, the parties might harmonize their manifestos into a single policy agenda. As opposed to using disjointed initiatives, this facilitates the coordination of efforts to address South Africa's structural issues, including unemployment, inequality, and service delivery.

Lastly, planning boosts investor and public confidence. Stability and predictability are shown by a GNU that positions itself as a well-thought-out governance system as opposed to a hurriedly constructed compromise. This can promote donor support, public

buy-in, and foreign direct investment—all of which are necessary for a long-term socioeconomic recovery.

### **5.3.5. Institutional and administrative efficiency**

Invest in capacity building, fight corruption, and bolster national and local oversight systems to increase institutional resilience. The ability of governmental structures to carry out policies, provide services, and efficiently coordinate amongst ministries and agencies is referred to as institutional and administrative efficiency. For a GNU, this efficiency presents both a problem and a chance. Efficiency is dependent on how well institutions can handle accountability, coordination, and policy execution because authority is shared by various parties.

Diverse political parties, each with unique administrative backgrounds and areas of skill, come together in a GNU. By adding a variety of viewpoints, abilities, and information to the governance process, this diversity can improve the institution's overall capacity. Additionally, by introducing best practices from various administrative and political traditions, coalition partners can promote innovation and increase the effectiveness of public institutions. A GNU can improve institutions' ability to provide public services efficiently by combining resources and expertise.

In order to preserve administrative effectiveness and public confidence in a GNU, accountability and transparency are crucial. Several coalition partners working together can improve oversight and lower the likelihood of corruption and poor management. By serving as a check on one another, each party may encourage openness and guarantee the efficient use of public funds. Maintaining efficiency in a GNU requires striking a balance between political and administrative responsibilities. While professional civil workers oversee the daily administration and execution of policies, political leaders are responsible for providing strategic direction and oversight. Another crucial component of a GNU's effectiveness is institutional resilience. Stable and efficient governance depends on institutions' capacity to adjust to shifting political conditions and continue operating in the face of difficulties. To achieve institutional and administrative efficiency in a Government of National Unity, it is necessary to overcome the difficulties of coordination and complexity while utilizing the many viewpoints and areas of expertise of coalition members.

### **5.3.6. Social cohesion and national unity**

For a GNU to be successful, social cohesiveness and national unity are essential. By guaranteeing that various political, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups are represented, and their interests are taken into consideration, a GNU in South Africa could heal social divisions and promote a more accepting and peaceful society.

Through equitable representation, discourse, and policies that address socioeconomic inequities, a GNU can promote social cohesion and national unity—two crucial objectives. A GNU can foster a more peaceful and cohesive society by resolving social injustices, fostering inclusive discourse, bolstering national identity, reducing political polarization, and fostering institutional trust. These efforts are essential for the stability and prosperity of South Africa, ensuring that all citizens feel valued and included in the national fabric.

## **5.4. Recommendations for future work**

### **5.4.1. Longitudinal Assessments of the 2024 GNU**

Future research should use a longitudinal approach to evaluate the 2024 GNU's performance over time, as it is currently in its early phases of development. This would make it possible for researchers to monitor whether the GNU mimics the instability observed in local government coalitions or if it produces long-lasting socioeconomic advantages.

### **5.4.2. Institutional and Administrative Capacity**

The potential of GNUs to improve bureaucratic professionalism and institutional capacity should be assessed in future research. Given South Africa's history of state control and cadre deployment, this is particularly pertinent. To improve efficiency in unity, research could look toward methods for depoliticizing the public sector.

### **5.4.3. Implementation and Coherence of Policies**

Mechanisms to improve policy coherence within GNUs should be the focus of future studies. Negotiation procedures, dispute resolution techniques, and frameworks that can strike a balance between inclusion and efficient governance should receive special attention.

#### **5.4.4. Appropriate GNU planning**

To ensure the success of GNUs, researchers can investigate more how governments can get down and properly prepare them. Hastily constituted GNUs frequently fall short of its duties, which causes the public to lose faith in political parties and coalitions.

#### **5.4.5. Views and Involvement of the Public**

Lastly, additional studies on how the public views the GNU and how civil society influences its legitimacy are required. Examining the experiences of common South Africans under GNU governance can help determine whether power-sharing agreements promote inclusion or increase political disenchantment.

### **5.5 Conclusion**

Based on an examination of the GNU as a possible driver of socioeconomic development in South Africa, this chapter has offered the study's findings and suggestions. The results showed that although the GNU was created in response to the historic democratic transition of 1994 and the 2024 election results that prevented the ANC from gaining a parliamentary majority, its ability to further development is still dependent on several internal and external factors.

The study concludes that by uniting various political players behind a common governance framework, the GNU can increase political stability, improve policy coherence, and encourage inclusivity. Its developmental potential is still being hampered by issues including ideological disagreements, ineffective governance, corruption, and low public participation. The example of South Africa demonstrates that, despite their symbolic strength, unity governments need rigorous preparation, equitable political position distribution, and robust institutional structures to operate successfully.

The report also emphasises that the GNU should be seen as a transitory instrument to handle crises and promote cooperation during times of political division, rather than as a long-term governing solution. Its ability to overcome partisanship, carry out cogent reforms, and restore public confidence in state institutions will determine its long-term effects on socioeconomic progress.

In the end, South Africa has both opportunities and challenges because of the GNU. It can act as a forum for group problem-solving and structural change if it is run with accountability, inclusivity, and administrative effectiveness. However, it runs the risk of turning into another shaky coalition agreement that exacerbates rather than remedies the nation's socioeconomic challenges in the absence of intentional changes and a greater dedication to effective administration.

This study used a qualitative, and historical research design to investigate the GNU as a possible driver of South Africa's socioeconomic progress. According to the study, the GNU was established in 1994 and 2024 to address political fragmentation after the ANC lost its parliamentary majority and to guarantee a peaceful democratic transition, respectively. The GNU represented inclusion, stability, and healing in both situations.

According to the study's findings, the GNU has significant limitations even though it presents significant opportunities for promoting political stability, improving policy coherence, and expanding democratic participation. Its effectiveness is hampered by internal issues like ideological disagreements, ineffective governance, and policy incoherence, while external factors like public mistrust, corruption legacies, and global economic constraints further reduce its developmental impact. As a result, the GNU as it currently exists is still a significant but insufficient tool for bringing about revolutionary socioeconomic change.

The study concludes that the GNU needs intentional reforms in order to be a successful development driver. These reforms should include enhancing institutional capacity, guaranteeing equitable political position distribution, encouraging meritocratic appointments, and increasing citizen participation in governance. The GNU offers a vital transitional platform for various political players to negotiate common goals and restore the legitimacy of the state, even though it is not a long-term solution to South Africa's problems. The GNU's success ultimately rests on its ability to transcend political compromise and achieve true governance innovation, turning South Africa's fractured political landscape into a basis for social justice, inclusive growth, and long-term stability.

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