**Chapter Fourteen**

**Symbolism, Patronage, and the Beginning of Crony Capitalism:**

**The Mythology of Mandela and the GNU**

**Joint Governance and The Final Lap**

**The Historic Compromise**

On September 26, 1992, the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party government signed a Record of Understanding. An event that led to non-racial elections and the establishment of a Government of National Unity (GNU). On May 9, 1996, F.W. De Klerk resigned from the GNU. In this chapter, we examine the process of transition during the period from 1992 to 1996, sometimes referred to as the Mandela years. The final South African constitution came into effect on February 4, 1997. Though Nelson Mandela remained President of South Africa for another two years, after 1997, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki effectively took over the reins of power.

The 1992 agreement dealt with the nature of a constitutional assembly, the parameters of an interim government, the release of political prisoners, the problems of violence, dangerous weapons, and the hostels, the limits on mass action, and the restarting of the negotiations process. Despite various hiccups, this marked the beginning of a joint governance arrangement in South Africa that led into the GNU in June 1994. The two key negotiators of this agreement were Cyril Ramaphosa of the ANC, and Roelf Meyer of the National Party. On April 1, 1993, the Multiparty Negotiations Forum, successor to Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), met for the first time.

Full scale negotiation issues ultimately included: (1) the concept of group rights (the National Party has not yet completely abandoned this); (2) the political structures that would make up South Africa's political system, and, specifically the nature of the executive and the constitutional arrangements between the central authority and regional and local governments; (3) the nature of the economy and the role that the public sector would play in it; and (4) the make-up and scope of the public service and the role of affirmative action in making the bureaucracy (and the private sector) more representative.

Compromise to some suggested that after non-racial elections, the ANC and the National Party (or Nationalists) would create some form of coalition government, or post-election pact. This would allow governance to occur with the combined ANC/Nationalist seats in a second chamber that would be available to pass necessary legislation. According to Stephen Friedman, there was now considerable talk among ANC activists about a “consociationalism period” in which there would be joint rule by the ANC and the Nationalists for a specified interim period (Friedman 1990, p. 6). This would fit in with the Nationalist Party demand that there should be power sharing and a role for minorities in a non-racial government.

Negotiations required decision-making among a small group of elites (elitist politics) on both sides that ignored constituency demands (Rantete 1998).The dynamics of change in South Africa occurred as a result of interactions between the government and the National Party and the ANC on the one side and other members of the Mass Democratic Movement and other conservative groups on the other. By the end, neither the ANC nor the government had any place else to go other than the negotiations table. There would be a period of transition in which a GNU, or a grand coalition, was in place. By 1993, the stage was set for non-racial majority rule. Given the realities of a need for a grand coalition under a government of national unity, debate over the institutional framework for the post-apartheid state was largely over.

Negotiations were easier than one would have thought from this point in time on because there was a fair degree of consensus between big business, many in government, and the centrist group in the United Democratic Front (UDF/ANC**)**, who, along with most in the National Party, were committed to compromise. The compromises were made more difficult by the continuing violence in the country. However, the negotiations process would not stop.

Despite the violence, it was preconditions for the negotiations process and the political rules of the game that were more difficult to negotiate than the compromises themselves. Selling the compromise to their followers, however, would be difficult for both sets of elites, the leadership of the ANC and the National Party. Ultimately, the agreement on the compromises in 1993 and 1994 was approved by elites. The basis of the agreement was to ensure that Afrikaners could continue to live in South Africa and that white South Africans could continue to live in a capitalist economic system that “would carry the black elite along with it” (Johnson 2004, p. 210).

Elite transformation was at the heart of the negotiated settlement. In one sense, it was all about access to jobs. As one regional administrator put it: [Why do] all the important civil service jobs go to whites?” (Lodge 1999a, p. 143). Middle class and professional blacks benefited from affirmative action programs with many of those benefiting being those who had cooperated with and worked as a part of the apartheid regime (Waddy 2004). This middle class would over the next decade increasingly be “courted by clothiers, restaurant chains and supermarkets” (Timberg 2006c, p. A4). The South African township of Soweto, within a few years of the transition, would have sections such as Diepkloof and Pimville which were upper middle class income areas (Wines 2005).

The negotiated political institutions were such that they limited external pressures on the ANC. Elections were based on party lists, members could not cross the floor to join an opposition group without losing their seats. The final constitution was more centralizing than the interim arrangements, ensuring that all lines of authority and leadership moved upward to the national ANC leadership.

The nature of the "grand compromise" evolving in South Africa was in large part dependent upon an increasing understanding between President F.W. De Klerk and Nelson Mandela, despite their increasing personal difficulties in dealing with each other. There was considerable speculation about a possible joint administration of South Africa either during the negotiations process or for a period of time after the first non-racial elections. When tension between the Mandela and DeKlerk increased as a result of the violence, both sides worried about the loss of the Mandela-De Klerk special relationship.

**The Sunset Clauses**

When civil service issues surfaced at the end stages of the negotiations, they took center stage because of ANC fears that white administrators favored the National Party. During the debate on group rights, the National Party demanded minority representation within the bureaucracy, the security forces, and the military (Adam 1990).This was in line with their demands for a consociational style political arrangement after majority rule. To the National Party, consociationalism meant that the allocation of civil service positions should be proportional and public funds should be allocated in a similar manner to significant groups (Horowitz 1992).

A breakthrough on the civil service issue became the first significant factor that led to the compromise between the ANC and the National Party, and led to the interim constitution agreement, and the April 1994 elections. In October 1992, Joe Slovo,[[1]](#footnote-1) in a major article in *African Communist,* proposed his famous "sunset clause," his compromise formula over civil service transition. Slovo, in a move to end the negotiations impasse proposed a five-year transition that would guarantee the jobs of white civil servants, at central, provincial or loal government level, and suggested that the interim consitution provide entrenched powers for provinces, as well as governance mechanisms as part of the interim constitution. The final constitution would be prepared after non-racial elections. The proposal also provided power-sharing for a fixed period of five years until the second non-racial elections.

By the time the sunset compromise was reached, Slovo had acknowledged the failure of communism internationally and looked to a negotiated settlement to begin a process of redefining socialism in South Africa. The *African Communist* article placed on the table the compromise that broke the final deadlock between the ANC and the National Party government. Power sharing was to include job protection and the guarantee of pensions for the civil service, the police, and the military. Joe Slovo specifically proposed giving ground on regional government, accepting the need for amnesty for security officials, and the need to honor the contracts of all civil servants (Meredith 1998). In his article, Slovo noted that government was negotiating because of the stalemate in power relations between the ANC and the National Party and that the government had not been defeated militarily on the ground by the ANC. The ANC could not, according to Slovo "gain state power in the sense of having a complete transformation on day one of the police, the armed forces, the judiciary and the civil service" (Waldmeir 1997, p. 231). The ANC had to make significant compromises in order to reach a settlement (Rantete 1998).

In his article, Slovo distinguished between quantitative and qualitative compromises. The former referred to delayed goals, the latter to core concerns such as no minority veto, non-ending power sharing, restrictions on government economic policy, and the boundary definition of the country's regions. The former could be compromised, and should. The latter should not (Rantete 1998). Slovo called his “sunset clause” essay "shock therapy" for the negotiations. The goal was to get white soldiers, police, and the civil service on the side of a negotiated settlement (Waldemeir 1997).

In order to break the deadlock, the ANC needed to consider the acceptance of a “sunset clause” period of power sharing for a fixed period of five years, ending after the ratification of the new and final constitution (Meredith 1994). This meant South Africa would have only reached pure majority rule after the 1999 elections and after local government elections in 2000.[[2]](#footnote-2) As a result of the compromise, the ANC agreed to guarantee jobs, but not necessarily particular positions, for the existing civil service and amnesty for government officials for offenses occurring during the apartheid period. Amnesty was to be granted through the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Finally, the ANC confirmed that concrete decentralized power to the new provinces was to be in place in the final constitution to be negotiated after non-racial elections.

Along with compulsory power-sharing, the sunset clause also accepted the restructuring of the civil service, the South African Police, and the South African Defense Forces in a way which took into account existing contracts and/or provided for retirement compensation (“Sunset Debate” 1992). The importance of the "sunset clause" according to a contemporary observer was that

[t]hese were measures to protect the vested interests of whites: job guarantees for white civil servants and security force members; pension protection; amnesty for apartheid crimes; and most of all, compulsory power sharing for a fixed number of years after the adoption of the interim constitution, including a coalition cabinet enforced by law (Waldemeir 1997, p. 213).

Slovo argued that without civil service guarantees, the capacity of the white civil service, the army, and the police to destabilize a newly born democracy was enormous (Meredith 1994). He went on to suggest that institutional change could not be negotiated. To Slovo, the key to the transition was to get rapid change, to break the deadlock, and go to elections. Institutional change could only come after the end of a process of negotiations and political change.

The “sunset clauses” helped the National Party "to retain the support of white civil servants and members of the security forces" (De Klerk 1999, p. 257). The agreement seemed to safeguard the jobs of white civil servants and allow for a coalition government between Afrikaner nationalists and the ANC for at least a five-year period. This allowed Afrikaners in the civil service, the contracting private sector, and the security forces to pull themselves into the new government systems after 1994 (Sampson 1999).

The Slovo package was accepted and promoted by the ANC in its magazine, *Mayibuye*. In a publication entitled *Negotiations: A Strategic Perspective*, the ANC leadership committed itself to the Slovo compromises. With regard to public service employees, guarantees of job security, and pensions, "would not preclude an aggressive programme of affirmative action" as new positions open up naturally (Meredith 1994, p. 100). In his compromise package, "[t]he hard truth Slovo had recognized was that the ANC had no civil service waiting in the wings to take over the running of the country" (Sparks 1995b, p. 181).

President De Klerk and the National Party agreed to the Slovo compromise proposal because De Klerk felt certain "that in practice the indispensable role played by whites in the civil service, the security forces and the economy would provide the National Party, as the representative of their interests, with far more leverage over a new government than mere constitutional clauses" (Meredith 1994, p. 103).

In early 1993, there continued to be gaps in the agreement between the ANC and the government on future state structures. Mutual suspicion and the vagueness of the negotiations had left room for differing interpretations of what was to be allowed and what was not (Friedman 1994). Moderates within the ANC were only able to consolidate their position in February of 1993 when the ANC endorsed the idea of the resumption of the multilateral all-party conference, CODESA, though the name was no longer used. The resolution met with stiff resistance, particularly from delegates from Natal (after 1994 renamed KwaZulu-Natal) (Evans & Stober 1993).

The assassination of ANC leader Chris Hani on April 27, 1993 marked a turning point in the transfer of authority as Nelson Mandela took temporary control of the process of mediation with the public at the request of the South African government and the South African Broadcasting Company (SABC). Mandela delivered a peace-making speech on television that dampened the anger within his own movement. By mid-1993, both sides were ready for the historic compromise that would lead to non-racial elections and the GNU.

**Angst and Criticism**

The major problem with the kind of pacts that developed during the negotiations was that they could cost both political movements considerable support among their constituencies over a compromise that fell short of past promises and were negotiated in secret. The nature of the negotiations contributed little to democratic culture in South Africa and may have hardened some activists against participatory governance. There was pressure for both sides, prior to the beginning of negotiations, to come forward with bottom line positions that might scuttle the compromise. There was also so much opposition from one side or the other that the creation of the final pact after all side issues were worked out was very difficult to consummate.

It must be remembered that for many in South Africa, the negotiations that had begun in CODESA, and were completed in the Multi-party Negotiations Forum in 1992-93, were the model for future negotiations on the transformation of the public sector and on local government (Rezelman 1992). The call for a negotiations forum became standard whenever there was a crisis. The settlement set up a form of dual-power responsibility or diarchy during the transitional period from 1994 through 1999 (Maphai 1991).

Though the GNU could not be described as a diarchy, the bimodal format developed in CODESA and the multi-party talks was used in forums throughout the country to negotiate a variety of issues. By early 1994, there were a total of 22 national and regional forums focusing on a variety of negotiations issues. Multi-party control of policy began in these forums even before negotiations had defined a non-racial settlement (Rantete 1998).

The compromise would not be without its critics, both left and right. Among the supporters of the ANC, there continued to be “a great deal of blame placed upon the previous administration” (Interview with Greville-Evans, 1998). To those on the left, new patterns of inequity were dangerous. A concerned Joe Slovo put it this way: “A different style of life for the leadership is fatal. If the leadership is living as a privileged elite, you can hardly expect the broad masses of people to accept the objective necessity of transitional hardships on the way to real redistribution and transformation” (“Interview with Joe Slovo” 1990, pp. 35-36). The fear was best expressed by J.E. Spence (1994, p. 21); after the non-racial elections South Africa would become “just another country.”

During the negotiations, the ANC, according to its left-wing critics, laid the groundwork for institutionalizing a "historic strategy of incorporation and accommodation" (McKinley 1997b, p. 103). According to one observer, the compromise ensured that "European managers and bureaucrats would run the business end and the blacks would retain political power" (Boynton 1997, p. 270). In the end, the South African deal was struck between those who were in possession of material wealth and expertise and those who commanded the political numbers. Because of this, many left-wing whites became disillusioned with the new South Africa after 1994 (Interview with Brutus, 1997; Cartwright 1996).

**Kempton Park and the Inkatha Hiccup**

The parties signed the transitional mechanisms agreement at Kempton Park on November 18, 1993. These arrangements were then ratified by a special session of the Tricameral Parliament that also put the apartheid legislature out of existence and, in effect, provided a legal continuity for the country. With a settlement reached with the National Party by the end of 1993, the next step was to try to incorporate the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), which had threatened to boycott the elections, into the negotiations process. This process continued almost to the day the elections had been scheduled to begin.

Because of the ANC's commitment to a strong central government, focus throughout the negotiations was also on the power of the new provinces. Homelands bureaucrats, a very large percentage of the civil service, under the sunset agreement were included in the transitional negotiations as part of the regional bureaucracies, thus guaranteeing jobs for the hundreds of thousands of black civil servants working in the homelands (FitzGerald 1991). Provincial autonomy was at the heart of the negotiations between the new ANC/National Party coalition and the IFP.

The issue of provincial autonomy remained at the center of Mangosutho Buthelezi's opposition to the transition process and was in large part related to the nature of the violence in Natal and on the Reef (Sparks 1995a). One thesis on the negotiations was that the mutual pain on both sides led the ANC and the IFP to accept elements of consociationalism and devolved governance through the negotiated settlement. From this perspective, a social contract/institutional choice view of negotiations, and the ultimate reforms that led to a constitutional settlement, occurred as a result of a series of social pacts negotiated by local, regional, and ultimately national group representatives (Sisk 1995).

Despite the on-going violence, the ANC and the National Party grew closer together in 1993 and 1994. As this happened, the IFP sought new allies and in 1993 formed an alliance with a number of right wing white organizations and with the governments of Ciskei and Bophuthatswana. The political alliance between the far right, the IFP, and several homelands’ political organizations became significant in late 1993. With the formation of the right wing alliance (the Concerned South African Group or COSAG), only GaZankulu, among the ten homelands, remained in an alliance with the National Party. In the end, the National Party lost almost all homeland support either to the ANC or the right-wing conservative alliance.

As tensions increased between the ANC and the IFP, during the course of the negotiations, the ANC developed a strong respect for some in the far right political leaders, particularly after General Constance Viljoen became involved in its leadership. General Viljoen, (who led the South African forces in the Namibia/Angola war) in part because of his party’s (Freedom Front or FF) group perspective on public policy issues (and having been stung by the fiasco at the siege of Bophuthatswana in March of 1994[[3]](#footnote-3)), developed some sympathy for affirmative action demands. As a result his right wing party, the Freedom Front, would informally cooperate with the ANC at the national level and the participation of the Freedom Front in several coalition governments at the provincial level. The ANC was able to play off its increasing relationship with the far right coalition (COSAG, later to be called the Freedom Alliance) against the National Party's concern for white civil service demands.

The ANC, in 1992-1993, treated the “white” far right in a much more conciliatory manner than they treated the IFP. ANC policy-makers knew that the far right had considerable support in the army, the police, the public service, and other strategic organizations (Meredith 1994). As has been noted in Meredith’s 1994 book, the ANC recognized that the white civil service and security forces could destabilize any settlement and the negotiations included protection of existing jobs and pensions, generous retrenchment packages, and a general amnesty for all civil servants, police, and military under the GNU. However, it was the IFP that presented a political threat to a non-racial government with its power bases in Natal and in the Witwatersrand area.

In late 1993 and early 1994, religious leaders played a significant role in attempts to bring the two sides together. The South African business community through the Consultative Business Movement (CBM) also played a mediating role in negotiations over the political transition (Cassidy 1995). The CBM supported the bilateral negotiations between the National Party and the ANC and more importantly facilitated in bringing the IFP into the elections. The CBM also provided important financial support for the negotiations. Ultimately, negotiations were facilitated by a series of rural retreats, many of which were sponsored by religious organizations in South Africa. In early 1994, the ANC was able to coax the National Party and De Klerk to accede to ANC demands over imposition of a state of emergency in Natal (“De Klerk Bows” 1994).Then both turned to the Inkatha problem.

At the same time (March 1994), a coalition of groups finally brought Chief Buthelezi, with his Zulu base, and the IFP into the negotiations process. The ANC, as part of the compromise, recognized the special status of KwaZulu and the Zulu monarchy. This eased tension prior to the vote and opened the way for a pre and post-election pact signed between the ANC and the IFP. Bringing the IFP into the negotiations process was critical and difficult. Facing a stalemate with the IFP after the ANC and the National Party had reached agreement, and it being the final days of the negotiations between the ANC and the IFP and just prior to elections, it was necessary to turn to a mediator, Prof. Washington Nkomo of Kenya. Nkomo a former student of Henry Kissinger, was brought very late into the process (Cassidy 1995). It was the KwaZulu-Natal Land Deal, giving the Zulu king significant control over traditional land and brokered by Nkomo, that in large part brought Buthelezi (widely seen as the Zulu political leader) and the IFP into the electoral process.

The KwaZulu-Natal Land Deal defined the 1994 non-racial election. On the eve of the election, with only a few days to go, 1.2 million hectares of land, the bulk of the Bantustan, were handed over to a trust administered under King Goodwill Zwelethini. This reassured Zulu traditionalists and led to the bargain that allowed IFP participation in the elections. In effect, as part of the compromise, half of KwaZulu-Natal's population remained under the hegemonic control of the IFP and the region's chiefs. The problems that remained in KwaZulu-Natal were those of "intrusive and intimidating community pressures, of no-go areas, and a high degree of insecurity and fear" (Johnson 1996, p. 348).The way was set for the establishment of a Transitional Executive Council and elections.

**The Transitional Executive Council**

The National Party buzzword throughout the negotiations was “elite pacting,” a form of consociationalism (Barber 1999). In fact, as has been noted above, there was also considerable talk among ANC activists about a consociationalism period in which there would be joint rule by the ANC and the Nationalists for a specified interim period. This fit in with the National Party demand that there should be power sharing and a role for minorities in a non-racial government. Even after the National Party formally withdrew from the GNU, elements of co-governance remained up to 1999.

Pre-transition negotiations ran from 1985 to April of 1994. The last six months of this period were dominated by the activities of the Transitional Executive Council (TEC). The institutional transition in South Africa began with the establishment of the TEC, along with the Independent Electoral Council and the Independent Media Council, and specifically by actions of the TEC sub-councils on finance and on local and regional government. The parties signed the transitional mechanisms agreement at Kempton Park on November 18, 1993.

Ultimately, a period of joint administration was built into both the TEC and the GNU. Joint administration, followed by non-racial elections, would in effect extend co-governance for a five-year period during the GNU. An ANC goal in the TEC, was to ensure that it would not be run by government employees alone. The problem was that the TEC, to be successful, depended upon organizational machinery within the civil service that would be able to perform efficiently (“The ANC’s TEC Blues” 1993). The ANC did not have a large enough pool of skilled professionals to draw from to provide staff for the TEC.

The post-apartheid state in large part evolved out of the administrative capacity set up to serve the negotiations process during the multi-party talks. By the middle of 1993, the ANC was in effect co-managing the country. By the end of that year, President De Klerk was damaged politically by the revelation of a variety of scandals. These included large-scale corruption in the homelands, corruption related to the avoidance of sanctions, the activities of the “Third Force” and the use of so-called "dirty tricks," (to use the Watergate phrase) and the assassination of political opponents, which were used by all parties to the conflict between 1960 and 1990 (Welsh 1994c). It was this damage that prevented the National Party from being able to capture the opposition vote after 1994 and ultimately led to the rise of the Democratic Alliance (DA) as the major opposition party in South Africa.

During the TEC period, the National Party continued to fear the challenge of extra-parliamentary parties. National Party critics of the TEC noted that much of the leadership came from the underground resistance group, labeled Operation Vula, many of whom later worked in the TEC bureaucracy (Kasrils 1993). This was no doubt because they were some of the most talented people available to the ANC. The period between mid-1993 and April 1994 was described by press accounts as an "era of transocrats, the interim civil servants of the transitional authorities" (Harber 1994, p. 16). The establishment of the TEC in December 1993 merely gave this pattern statutory form. The establishment of the TEC had political and administrative implications for the transition process as a whole during the GNU (FitzGerald 1991).

The TEC was given the task of initiating the reconstruction and rationalization of the public service while ensuring that all police, army, and public servants' jobs, salaries and pensions were guaranteed. The TEC and its finance sub-committee carried oversight responsibility for public sector management during the transition. One of the TEC’s functions was to monitor what the government did financially and to ensure that it did not sell off public resources during the interim period.

The TEC monitored negotiations with international lending agencies and ensured that the government did not increase pension or other benefits of the civil service so that one of the contending parties could use patronage to increase its electoral support. The TEC also had responsibility for the establishment and staffing of regional institutions, formulating future defense and police policy and the 1994/95 budget (Sarakinsky 1994). The financial sub-council also was to develop a comprehensive strategy to meet civil service concerns and begin civil service reform. One of the TEC’s focuses was to recruit heads of departments by merit and to define the role of the public service in the reconstruction process (Waugh 1994).

For public relations and political reasons, members of the TEC were paid by their organizations rather than government. The TEC was largely advisory but could mandate action in areas where there was a consensus between the government and the ANC (Nyatzumba 1993b; “South Africa’s First” 1993). The TEC eventually employed 330 full-time people with hundreds of part-time people working as advisors and consultants. It was a "bureaucratic colossus," according to one journalist (Hartley 1993, p. 4). Some critics feared that joint authority would encourage the development of an authoritarian government (Breier 1993).

Initially, the TEC lacked administrative capability, though it had political power. In theory, TEC power was "more authoritative than Parliament" (Louw 1994c, p. 10). However, at the beginning, TEC members were often ignored by the white bureaucracy. As one report noted, the TEC ran "into the brick wall of unsympathetic bureaucrats" (Louw 1994a, p. 11). The body also had internal problems. The TEC faced serious, potentially disruptive challenges during the interregnum. Pensions for both white and homelands civil servants were a knotty early issue faced by the TEC during its less than six months of influence (Adair & Nyembe 1995). In January of 1994, it overrode the South African government and ordered a freeze on civil service pay increases and the government reluctantly obeyed (Sarakinsky 1994). An immediate concern for the TEC was to assuage uncertainty and end strikes in the public sector.

In February 1994, the country's trade unions accused the TEC management of incompetence (Golding 1994). The TEC also received allegations of corruption, mismanagement, poor industrial relations, and substandard building maintenance in provincial hospitals and scandal proliferated throughout the homelands (Hadland 1994a). The TEC was only partly successful in trying to reassure public servants and South African citizens that their interests would be protected in a post-apartheid South Africa (“TEC Reassures Public Servants” 1994). More importantly, the patterns of crisis, uncertainty, and reaction that characterized the TEC period, continued into the GNU. This said, as the election approached, there was increasing acceptance of an ANC role in the co-management of public sector issues.

The post-electoral transition period began with the non-racial national elections from April 26-28, 1994 (April 27 is considered the official election day) and the coming to power of the GNU on May 10, 1994. The GNU ran from May 10, 1994 through June 1, 1996, when F.W. De Klerk announced that the National Party would withdraw from government after the promulgation of the final constitution. Technically, the transitional period did not end until non-racial local government elections were held in December of 2000. It is to the 1994 elections and the post-election transition that we now turn.

**The End of the Beginning**

**The 1994 Elections**

Given the likely size of the ANC mandate, much of the debate in the run-up to the 1994 election centered on the commitment of the ANC leadership to pluralism, both within the country and within its own ranks. Liberals opposed proportional representation, and instead favored constituency voting, first past the post (along Anglo-American lines), and decentralized government. The National Party favored a federal system with strong quasi-federal provinces. They hoped to appeal to non-white voters, Indians in Natal and people of mixed race in the Eastern and Western Cape. In areas such as the Northern Transvaal, before 1994, the National Party had hoped to generate support from conservative, rural blacks (Van Niekerk 1993).

As the ANC moved toward elections in 1994, it established links with black homeland parties in an attempt to garner black votes (Trench 1994). The ANC electoral list contained a number of political leaders from the former homelands, particularly those who opposed “independence’ during the apartheid period (Lodge 1999a). Alliances with those co-opted by apartheid were criticized by many within the movement. However, through this, the ANC was able to neutralize many potential opponents. Significant numbers of homeland leaders appeared on election ballots in national and local elections in 1994, 1995, and 1999. These political alliances, however, in part led to the development of the corrupt, patronage based systems of provincial government during the GNU.

Evidence from the 1994 elections suggested that respect for majority rule and accountability remained weak in parts of South Africa. There was "an uglier underside" to the 1994 ANC election campaign, which demonstrated some of the authoritarian tendencies within the Mass Democratic Movement and the National Party (Lodge 1994). Opposition parties were kept out of many of the townships and had problems operating in the Transkei. The ANC in turn could not campaign in parts of Natal and the Western Cape (where the National Party and its allies had effective political control). The Democratic Party (DP) claimed to have been denied access to two thirds of the electorate. More than half of all Africans effectively lived in de facto one-party areas. When asked, 20 percent of Africans felt they were under pressure to vote for a party that they did not particularly support and 25 percent said their neighbors were difficult on people who did not support the right party (Giliomee 1994).

A significant problem in the 1994 elections was the extent of the use by all parties of threatening pressures and the creation of high levels of fear among supporters of other parties (Johnson 1996). Critics charged that the strategy of the ANC, as well as other parties, became one of territorial politics, thus not allowing other parties to canvas in their areas. Overall, during the 1994 campaign, there were at least 165 "no-go” zones across the country that were exclusively one-party area. Four main culprits contributed to the "no-go” zones: (1) white farmers, (2) IFP chiefs and Indian South African residents in Natal, (3) ANC aligned civics and street committees, and (4) the National Party and its allies (Frost 1996).

Abuses in voting were particularly acute in the Transkei (an ANC stronghold) and the rural areas of KwaZulu, where a single political party (IFP) controlled the local administration. Interviews in Gauteng confirmed these patterns and showed a mixture of coercion and voluntary allegiance in urban areas as well (Frost 1996). People on the Reef had to learn what "was ordained as permissible to say, even if one disagreed substantively with the weight of community consensus" (Gotz & Shaw 1996, p. 224). One ANC leader in Johannesburg, Dan Mofokeng, openly declared that it was an objective of the South African National Civics Organization to prevent free campaigning in areas under its control (Johnson 1996).

One fear was that, despite the concessions made during the negotiations, the de facto one party outcome at both the national and regional level meant that "the racial and political ‘communities’ [would turn] inward for self-protection and were seeking to isolate themselves from their fellow South Africans" (Ottaway 1993, p. 271). This supported Pogrund’s (1990, p. 45) view that, “generally in black politics, if you expressed misgivings or [criticized], you were either howled down or accused of being quisling[[4]](#footnote-4) or something.”

Administrative problems in 1994 relating to the elections have been well documented. Prior to the 1994 election, controversy had brewed for weeks over the registration process and the fear that “administrative chaos could keep millions from voting" (Daley 1998, p. 12). Throughout South Africa during the April elections, election staff were often of "lower quality, one party and untrained" (Johnson 1996 pp. 327-328). In most parts of South Africa, elections followed the tradition of most of the rest of Africa. To a large extent they were a racial census. "Race," according to David Welsh (1994a, p. 113), "was the basis of voter choice." However, the results were considered to be substantially valid by voters of all races in spite of not being substantially free and fair, to use the words of the Independent Electoral Commission.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Opposition politicians argued that the ANC had one-party tendencies that could lead to the development of a dominant one-party political culture, fostered by the internal political instincts of the movement’s leadership. Beyond the obvious propaganda value such accusations provided (particularly for the National Party), there was significant concern, among both journalists and academics, about one-party tendencies within the ANC after its legalization. This was not surprising after the ANC spent 30 years underground supported by Organization of African Unity leaders who themselves operated out of a one-party framework.

The difficulties inherent in the development of democracy and civil society came out during the 1994 general election and later, in 1995 and 1996, during local government elections. Given the one party dominant system evolving in South Africa, institutional patterns of countervailing power did not come through political parties but through alternative links between government and society, especially at the local government level and through civil society organizations (Schwella 1998). Organizational weakness in government, in political organizations, and in NGOs exacerbated these problems.

In the end, it was the ANC that could deliver the votes of the vast majority of Africans in South Africa and that defined the transition. Prior to the 1994 elections, public opinion polling evidence suggested that the ANC would take 60 percent of the overall vote in a free election and at least 85 percent of the African vote. To the average black voter, Nelson Mandela and the ANC “would find them all jobs, houses, cars, and at last, a sense of security” (Woods 2000, p. 136). The ANC’s primary constituency was the black lower middle class and urban working class, especially that sector of the working class that belonged to organized labor. For partly ethnic and historical reasons, the ANC also had considerable strength in the rural, Xhosa speaking areas of the Eastern Cape and in the Pedi speaking areas in Northern (now Limpopo) Province.

Directly following the elections were several chaotic days between April 29 and May 7. Then, in a somewhat anticlimactic fashion, the ANC was declared the victor. Smaller towns and townships played a major role in determining the outcome of the non-racial election. None defected to the National Party. The ANC received just under 63 percent of the votes. The National Party came in second with 20 percent of the vote. The IFP received almost 11 percent, the Freedom Front just over 2 percent, and the DP and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) under 2 percent. All other parties received less than 1 percent of the vote. Because of the GNU coalition, the small DP in effect led the opposition in Parliament.

Formally, the period of the transition went from May 10, 1994 to April 30, 1999, since the interim constitution remained in place until then. Moreover, it was only with local government elections on December 4, 2000 that the final constitutional principles came into place with the election of democratic and non-weighted local government councils. December 2000, thus, marked the formal end of white political privilege in South Africa (Guelke 1999).

**The Government of National Unity**

Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the country's President on May 10, 1994 in a colorful celebration televised around the world. May 10, 1994, according to no less a source than F.W. de Klerk, "was a day of joy-a day of liberation-not only for black South Africans but also for... white South Africans" (De Klerk 1999, p. xix). The GNU, and especially President Nelson Mandela, dedicated the non-racial administration to reconciliation in what Bishop Tutu called the “Rainbow nation.” As Tutu (1999, p. 164) has pointed out:

We should all be filled to overflowing with immense gratitude that things turned out differently, that there was a peaceful transition, that we have been blessed to have as President someone who has become an international icon of forgiveness and reconciliation, and that so many in our land have emulated their President.

After the drama of non-racial elections and the pomp and circumstance of the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the country's President, the real transformation of state and society could begin. In May 1994, a GNU was formed including the ANC, the National Party, and the IFP, with representation based on their electoral representation in the National Assembly. The GNU operated on the basis of consensus and was expected to function unchanged throughout the five-year period given it by the electorate. In actuality, the GNU really only lasted two years and, for all practical purposes, ended on June 1, 1996 when the National Party withdrew from government.

An important factor in the evolving political culture in South Africa was that the UDF had promoted individual rights, a constitutional democracy, and a pluralist political system throughout their campaign in the 1980s. The ANC, after it was unbanned in 1990, based its organizational structure on the UDF’s grassroots affiliates. As a result, political pluralism became a dominant if not a fundamental principle in South Africa after 1994. During the early years at least the impact of the UDF remained visible within the ANC since it had absorbed most of the leadership of the former. In later years, many of the UDF cadres dropped out of the ANC, particularly after Jacob Zuma came to power.

There were countervailing forces within South African society and within the ANC and the Mass Democratic Movement. Overall, South Africa was better equipped in terms of the countervailing forces than most other countries in Africa and could counteract the tendency towards authoritarianism, a patronage based civil service, and a centralized but soft state. However, these were early times in South Africa and, to the ANC’s critics, these things could change. The institutional framework for long-term governance remained fragile. In the long term, the organizational characteristics of the movement would have a profound effect on decision-making and the institutional culture in the new South Africa.

There was openness about the way things were done in the new South Africa during the GNU (Goodman 1999). The country was no longer a surveillance society. The GNU, between 1994 and 1999, became a “huge laboratory, with an array of exciting institutional and other experiments” (Calland 1999, p. 1). Three elections occurred (at both national and local levels) in the first five years of a non-racial South Africa. In all cases, democratic procedures (broadly defined) were followed. Some of the political leadership, particularly at the provincial level, had become intolerant of inefficiency and impatient for service delivery and this was reflected in the national debate.

During the GNU, the ANC demonstrated non-racialism in terms of leadership positions. ANC party lists in the second non-racial election included 68 non-Africans (whites, Indians, and Coloureds) and 18 of the top 50 on the list were not African (Lodge 1999a). This was so, despite the fact that its supporters were overwhelmingly African. In 1999, in terms of the symbols of politics it was “a well-established fact that Mandela’s presidency was characterized by a remarkable period of reconciliation in South Africa” (Steyn & Patta 2000, p. 23).

The transition in South Africa must be seen within the “wider context of the triumph of liberal-democratic forms of government around the world in the 1990s” (Guelke 1999, p. 1). As a *Mail and Guardian* editorial put it in May of 1999, the ANC “has made a contribution second to none in creating and safe guarding the political peace in South Africa” (“Yes, Mbeki’s ANC” p. 24). Despite criticism from the right and the left, South Africa in the year 2000 was “patently,… a far better place than it used to be” (Bloch 2000, p. 29). South Africa, by the year 2000, had established itself as a stable, liberal democracy, at least briefly.

South Africa now had freedom of speech, open discussion of sensitive political issues, and a free press, though the press system was largely oligarchic and in large part foreign owned. The few historically counter-establishment papers such as the *Nation* and the *Weekly Mail* met with financial difficulty after 1994. The former closed, and an international Group purchased the latter*.* Moreover, like the rest of the economy, much of the press that was not internationally controlled was owned and dominated by white South Africans.

Politically, in terms of the media, there were major reductions in terms of official secrets and the almost total abolition of media censorship (Gottschalk 1998). There were many in the ANC who were concerned with social liberalism. Some were pro-life and others favor legalized abortion. Others advocated tolerance of gays and lesbians and opposed any and all censorship. Others have a more collectivist view of society and would ban much that they would define as western decadence. On sexual mores, the South African Press was more tolerant than any other country in the world, except for the Scandinavian countries.

It is important to reiterate that South Africa had developed one of the most liberal constitutions in the world on issues of gender, the tolerance of homosexuals, and other social policies. Guarantees of civil liberties were some of the broadest in the world at the time. President Mandela himself defined the role of criticism: "If patriotism means that the opposition must stop scrutinizing the activities of the government, and that the press must publish only officially sanctioned news, then I am not a patriot" (“Sometimes Mandela Sounds” 1998, p. 11). The ANC, despite its dislike of criticism, had become used to it after 1990 and according to Patrick FitzGerald, even came to “thrive on it” (Picard, Research Diary, June 10, 1996).

By 2000, the level of abuse and threats against other parties had lessened. The level of violence had also decreased over the five years of the GNU (Lodge 1999a). The 1999 elections were devoid of any significant political violence and bloodshed. The country had a second national election largely peacefully and with no charges of irregularities. South Africa, in the year 2000, at the end of the GNU, appeared to be a normal country with a variety of organs of civil society (Lewis 1999). Most observers gave the ANC credit for the relative social stability the country enjoyed since 1994 and for maintaining fiscal discipline.

During the GNU, there were even discussions of cooperation and merger between the ANC and the New National Party (NNP) in the Western Cape and they formed a coalition government in the province during the Mbeki administration. When the NNP disbanded, some of the leadership joined the ANC while most joined the DA. The ANC until 1999 had a President, Nelson Mandela, who was selected on the basis of a popular, if somewhat flawed, non-racial vote. He was a worldwide icon. The country was ruled through one of the most democratic constitutions in the world. There was judicial review, through the Constitutional Court, and a legal order that included the rule of law and the freedom of expression. The country had a dynamic civil society and a vast number of interest organizations and civic associations, totaling over 11,000.

The principle of power sharing did not apply to the National Party, however. During the negotiations for the final constitution, the National Party wanted to keep the GNU in place as part of the final constitutional guarantees. The ANC vetoed this, despite having no differences with the National Party. The grand coalition between the ANC and the National Party lasted only two years. When the final constitution came into place in 1996, F.W. de Klerk pulled the National Party out of the GNU in the hope that opposition politics would shore up the party’s dwindling constituency. This was not to be. Many in the National Party, and even some right-wing Afrikaners, including Freedom Front supporters in the rural areas, shifted to the DP (now the Democratic Alliance) after 1999 (Barrell 1999b). With the end of local government elections in 1996, South Africa faced over three years without elections. The second national elections were held in June 1999 and local elections in December 2000. It was during this period, that the institutional transition that would define the post-apartheid state took place.

South Africa represented a social experiment, or as Richard Calland (1999) has put it, a mosaic of experiments in social and political activity, available for the world to see. The ANC eradicated racism and oppression, at least in a political sense, and replaced it with a non-racial, nondiscriminatory, democracy. South Africa was moving towards a set of “overarching and transcending values, to which most people in South Africa [felt] connected, despite their diversity and cultural differences” (Van zyl Slabbert 2000, p. 82). As Donald Woods pointed out, internationally “there was inadequate perception...of the scale and scope of the miracle that was taking shape there” (Woods 2000, p. 139).

During the initial period of Nelson Mandela’s Presidency South Africa was not governed by the final constitution but under the more liberal and federally arranged interim basic document (Van zyl Slabbert 2006a). Politically, South Africa was a thriving constitutional democracy and had one of the world’s most liberal and tolerant constitutions. The country maintained an independent judiciary system. Mandela had promoted a non-racial socially based nationalism for South Africa where all South Africans could join and share in its values. Overall, President Nelson Mandela strengthened the institutional bases of power within central government and the ANC’s control over that base (Lodge 2006b). The next twenty years would show the strengths and limitations of post-apartheid South Africa.

**The 1996 Constitution**

Both the 1994 and the final, 1996 constitutions were classic liberal documents (with the exception of the racially defined transitional arrangements embedded into the GNU and the local government systems) (Van zyl Slabbert 2006a). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission established by the Mandela government was essentially a liberal instrument (Lodge 2006b). Procedurally, the 1999 and 2004 elections were technically very successful. By 1999, even in KwaZulu-Natal, political violence had leveled off and even begun to decline (Lodge 1999a).

The final constitution, adopted in October of 1996, however, was much more centralized and majoritarian than the interim constitution had been. The relationship between the political leadership and the state machinery, and the neutrality of the civil service was much more vaguely formulated. In 1997, the ANC government adopted a policy that Myburgh (2003) has labeled “demographic representivity.” The ANC also began openly appointing ANC cadres to key positions in the state in order to bring the central levels of authority under ANC control.

There was evidence of a growing middle class and a growing middle ground politically, with the development of a strong, articulate opposition party, the Democratic Alliance. There was an established culture of negotiations (Woods 2000). There were a number of basic changes that affected the organizational capacity of the public sector in South Africa as a result of the negotiated settlement and the non-racial elections. Yet, within the first few years, there was a sense of anti-climax within the electorate as the “1994 honeymoon had turned stone cold by three years later” (Beckett 1998, p. 79).

There was a dramatic increase in black participation in elected and appointed government at all levels. As a result, there was a rapid change in a wide range of political, economic, and social practices and institutions.[[6]](#footnote-6) This involved increased community conflict and lack of consensus, both within the African community, between the majority community and Indians, Coloureds and whites, and between different politically-defined factions within the ANC. These conflicts over public policy priorities were most often bureaucratically defined.

The ANC, down to the end of the GNU in 1996, continued to rule in coalition with the “entire white power structure. The ANC [at that point oversaw] a military who’s top officers [were] largely holdovers from a defense force that hunted them as criminals. Its policies [were] implemented by a mostly white civil service” (Beinart 1997, p. 25). Despite this, the country was stable politically throughout the five years of the Mandela administration (“Mbecki’s South Africa” 1999).

Despite the cooperation of the other parties, the ANC disliked the GNU structure. The ANC wanted full authority over government because it won the election (Giliomee 1995). Ironically, after the National Party left the GNU, the ANC felt more comfortable with the NNP (the architects of apartheid) than the DP and tried, sometimes successfully, to co-opt the former (Breytenbach 1999).

In the formation of the GNU, the IFP received three ministers and two deputy ministers. Between 1994 and 1999, the ANC was able to co-opt the IFP so that by the time of the 1999 elections, the IFP had become to a great extent indistinguishable from the ANC, at least in national government terms. Despite the better relations with the IFP, however, tensions between the IFP and the ANC in Kwa Zulu-Natal went up and down during the GNU. Surprisingly, throughout the GNU, the IFP cooperated with the ANC at the national level while continuing to dangle threats of violence and secession at the provincial level (Mbhele 1999).

The alliance with the IFP was in line with ANC thinking; and seen as very different from the coalition with the NP. Power-sharing during the GNU was seen by Mandela and many other ANC leaders as "harmonious with African tradition" and desirable for peace and nation building (Thompson 1995, p. 269). The ANC itself was “like other political collectives of its kind... really a huge coalition of different political philosophies, views, and attitudes... all sorts of personalities and affiliations and organizations [were] contained within it, from hard core Marxists to the most outright libertarians” (Tutu 1999, p. 40). Critics saw this collectivism as corrupting. By 1995, newspapers complained of corruption within the government, both at national and provincial levels, and of authoritarian trends within the ANC (Thompson 1995).Corruption became satire during the GNU, with the comment that the “government stopped the gravy train long enough to get on it” (Sampson 1999, p. 517).

Between 1994 and 1999, there were rumors of secret understandings between the ANC and the IFP at both provincial and national levels (Powell 1999). Within this context, in early 1999, there were discussions of new amnesties for all of the major political movements by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Daley 1999b). Some speculated that the two political groups might merge. There may have been some truth to this since, to the surprise of many, the IFP stayed on as an alliance partner throughout in the GNU, through the 1999 elections, and into the Mbeki administration.

**The Nature of the Political Transition**

Despite the end of the ANC/National Party coalition that existed throughout the GNU, South Africa's two opposition parties, the DP and the NNP,[[7]](#footnote-7) did not want to be put in a position where they had to vote against legislation that, even symbolically, made apartheid discrimination a thing of the past. Therefore, the two parties fought to negotiate changes to the initial draft of the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Bill.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The ANC was happy to make changes in the bill. There remained differences, however, between the ANC, DP and NNP over the Access to Information Bill, which provided for greater access by public bodies and individuals to information held in the public and private sectors, and the bill came under fierce attack from opposition parties. Only the ANC and the IFP voted for the bill (“DP, NNP Caucuses” 2000).

By 1999, there was less evidence of attempts to deny opposition parties access to certain areas of the country. In post-apartheid South Africa,

Our apartheid society [had] become integrated across the board, from schools to workplaces to boardrooms and even bedrooms. We have a functioning multi-party democracy with regular free, fair and peaceful elections underpinned by the world’s most progressive Constitution and protected by perhaps the world’s finest panel of judges in the Constitutional Court (Sparks 2003, pp. 330-331).

Historically, the ANC had evolved as a very diverse organization with a broad tent that tolerated capitalists and socialists, non-racialists and Africanists, and just about every other political ideology that existed in South Africa. The ANC has tendencies towards social liberalism, and even libertarianism as well as centralizing authoritarianism. The purpose in this chapter and the next has been to weigh the various tendencies that exist within the organization.

In examining issues of organizational and political culture within South Africa and the ANC, it is important to begin with a disclaimer. The goal of the ANC from the beginning was to create a democratic South Africa. In this, it was successful in 1994. It had the support of the vast majority of South Africans in 1994, as the elections in that year demonstrated. South Africa has become one of the post-conflict success stories of the late twentieth century; this remains true despite the travails of former President Jacob Zuma. This means that any discussion of the organizational characteristics of the ANC must be seen within the contexts of its strength and the strength of its aspirations.

During the negotiations that led up to the 1994 transitional election, and in the debate over a post-apartheid society that characterized the negotiations, splits developed or deepened within the ANC between those who advocated non-racialism and those who saw South Africa as an African country where Africanist perspectives should predominate. There were also differences between socialists and free market advocates. Non-racialism tended to be important to white, Indian, and Coloured South Africans within the ANC and was often identified with the South African Communist Party (SACP). Within the ANC, there have been debates about devolution of authority, with those in leadership positions at the national level believing in centralized governance, rejecting federalism and even decentralization of authority as potentially divisive.

Many Africans within the organization have tended to be Africanist and many came to favor affirmative action as a program and a form of black capitalism as a policy. Black capitalists came to be an increasingly important part of the party. Socialists within the organization have tended to take a non-racial position. Since the ANC has had such a broad tent, it housed people with different economic views, both socialists, Africanists, and economic liberals. However, a clear division of values within the organization is not easy and categorizations of values have been difficult. An emphasis on the individual rights, as opposed to the collective, within the organization has also not been entirely consistent over time.

As this book argues, at the heart of the debate over liberalism in post-apartheid South Africa, remains a conflict between individual and collective rights (“Affirmative Action” 1996). While some in the ANC saw the reform process in South Africa as manifesting itself in a formal process of constitutional change, others viewed reform as reflected in terms of shifting ideological stances and the redistribution of wealth. Reformers, Joe Slovo (1997) argued, sometimes lost sight of the ANC's true objective, that of economic equity. It is social and economic objectives that should have been the source of political debate in South Africa since 1994 rather than patronage and corruption.

The UDF, also a coalition, had a tendency to look to the middle ground in terms of social and economic ideologies, though it tended towards grass roots mobilization. Between 1990 and 1994, the ANC, by incorporating the UDF, was able to create a mass based organization in South Africa which could both win the 1994 election and could establish and manage the government which came into power afterwards. The ANC as an organization was self-critical, and it was able to address many of its organizational problems over time. The movement was able to function in and stimulate a culture of democracy after 1994 (Breytenbach 1999). While the ANC leadership emphasized “unity, nation building and reconciliation; divisive ideologies, including those focused on class, were down-played” (Seekings 2000, p. 321).

**Organizational Weaknesses in the ANC**

As it moved into government in 1994, the ANC would often stumble and lose opportunities to make policy particularly during the GNU. One critic of the ANC described it as being confused and a bit muddled in its decision-making processes in the late 1990s (Sparks 2003). Many within the ANC found it difficult to master “the routines and conventions of decision making in a complex political system” (Davenport 1998b, p. 91).

Nor was the ANC able to deal with the severe corruption and, more importantly from a political perspective, the public’s perception of routine civil service bribery and bureaucratic misbehavior that it faced, some of which it had inherited from the apartheid system. If apartheid was the problem, one could, thus, never be exposed to charges of corruption. Corruption, however was partly, but only partly, a legacy of the apartheid period (Davenport 1998b; Lodge 1999a; Lodge 1999b). There is evidence of a number of white businessmen with shady economic relationships with ANC officials from the beginning of the GNU (LaFraniere & Wines 2005).

The 1994 post-electoral transition was difficult according to Nelson Mandela since “We were taken from the bush or from the underground outside of the country, or from prisons to come and take charge. We were suddenly thrown into this immense responsibility of running a highly developed country” (as quoted in Lodge 1999b, p. 11). The GNU was a fragile coalition. After it came into power as part of the GNU alliance, the ANC sent out very mixed signals in a number of areas from social policy, to debt reduction, to the cutback of the military. The government feared that changes in policy would weaken the government and any downsizing could have a negative impact upon the economy (Devereaux 1991a).

Entry into government contributed to both weakness and a sense of insecurity within the ANC. In mid-1994, several hundred ANC employees in Shell House and throughout the country were told they would lose their jobs due to restructuring. They demanded that they be reemployed in the civil service (Louw 1994b). Perceiving the need to provide jobs for ANC cadres, the ANC eyed "the top 500 top civil servant positions, of which a number would be director generals of government departments, positions in regional governments and government posts on the board of parastatals" (“ANC Leaders Jostle” 1993, p. 4). Party cadres needed government positions to survive.

There were reports of several different schisms within the ANC after 1994. There continued to be differences between socialists and marketers, and between non-racialists and Africanists. There was a new political divide between the ANC in government versus the ANC outside of government, with the ANC in Parliament in the middle (Greybe 1994a). The divide focused on the public service. Tensions developed between government officials and ANC cadres out of government. To those on the outside, those in government were not supposed to run the political movement (Davis 1994).

Throughout the GNU, there was discord between Members of Parliament and Cabinet and between the provinces and the center. Shell House employees (of the ANC) were particularly discontented. The ANC needed to manage and balance all of these tensions (“The ANC Has Work” 1994). There also was conflict within the ANC between the legislative and executive branch over the protection of ANC elites, such as the often maligned then Minister of Health, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma (Davis 1996). As a result of these tensions, the ANC established a high-powered committee to create discipline within the organization (Koch 1995; Makhanya 1995).

The ANC reputation for inefficiency expanded during the post-1994 period. When it entered government in May of 1994, its "branches were in a weak state, characterized by inexperienced cadreship, a lack of understanding of the new challenges, inactive membership, lack of political programmes, poor communication and administration and ongoing internal conflicts" (“The ANC Triumphs” 1998, p. 4). For the ANC, the answer to organizational weakness often seemed to be further centrifugal forces.

Within government, the ANC continued to project an image of disorganization and incompetence not, according to its sympathizers, always fairly or accurately portrayed in the press. During the GNU, the new government faced a myriad of problems. The GNU under Nelson Mandela administratively seemed weak, often unable to coordinate its various elements, unsystematic and eclectic in its policy formulation, slow to act against corruption, and disorganized internally (Van zyl Slabbert 2000). Mandela’s charisma however often made up for this.

Structurally, the government had some resemblance to the latter part of the P.W. Botha administration. Images of paralysis in South Africa, while overdrawn after 1994, were in part directly related to the ANC led government "trying to do too much" (Van zyl Slabbert 1998, p. 15). As Nelson Mandela put it in 1994, “We hoisted the flag of political power, thinking that was all we needed for freedom. But that was only half the struggle. [There was this romantic image that] [w]ithout economic power freedom is worthless" (as quoted in Edwards 1997, p. 126).

The ANC in 1994 was still more of a revolutionary movement than a political party and faced a number of the organizational challenges normally identified with revolutionary movements. While some of the weakness of the ANC between 1990 and 1994 were more imagined than real, the ANC was not well equipped to make policy decisions or to defend itself prior to the 1994 elections.

It was often remarked between 1994 and 1997, both within and outside of government, that the new GNU had immense capacity to produce sophisticated policy documents, but much less ability to implement them. A key problem was a tendency to draft policy that reflected the concern of the intellectual elite “with little regard for the match between plans and capacity to implement them or citizen preferences" (Johnson 1996, p. 11). Implementation often became the weak link in the GNU policy process.

The ANC as a movement and the GNU as a government suffered from a shortage of skilled policy analysts, sector specialists, and even skilled administrative and clerical staff. This had become apparent as early as 1990. As one observer noted, "During the exile period the ANC has had it easy. They had no policy. That makes things tough now. Their team is scattered… Various units are still floating" (Interview with Davis, 1990). A sympathetic ANC watcher noted that policy, planning, and implementation "hasn't caught up with this [the unbanning] yet especially in the economic area" (Interview with Coetzee, 1990). Prior to 1994, it seemed that "on the ANC side, Mandela was in command. But there [was] no structure. No one [was] beholden to Mandela for position. The problem [was] that there [was] constant turmoil in the country" (Picard, Research Diary, Anonymous Interview, August 14, 1991).

During the five years of the Mandela administration, the ANC government did not develop a system of administrative accountability. Moreover, the ANC often defended those who perpetuated corruption in large part because they were a part of the Mass Democratic Movement. With the significant loss of capacity within the departments of government, they increasingly looked to consultants to perform essential services (Johnson 2004). There were significant shortages of skilled personnel particularly in the financial management areas (Lodge 1999b). The result was an increasing gap between the government’s developmental aspirations and the state’s capacity to implement its programs (Mattes 2002).

The ANC’s critics accused the organization of being anti-democratic, intolerant, non-accountable, soft on corruption, concerned about power, and most cutting, inefficient (Uys 1999). By 1998, even many in the ANC had concluded that it had failed to deliver on election promises. The ANC's goal was to avoid discussions of jobs in the 1999 elections, either in terms of the public services or the loss of 500,000 jobs in the 1994-1999 period (“ANC Mute on Jobs” 1999).At the end of the GNU, many in the ANC concluded that it had failed to deliver on election promises. Despite this there was no electoral punishment. In the run up to the elections, despite polls which suggested that the ANC would win the 1999 elections handily (though perhaps with a lower percentage than at the 1994 level) the ANC and its candidates won an overwhelming victory at the polls, gaining two thirds of the votes.

Hierarchical tendencies continued to be accompanied by organizational weakness. By 1996, "[t]he ANC [was] in dire financial straits, owing R41-million to various banks, according to the party's treasurer-general, Arnold Stofile" (Kanhema 1997).By 1997, critics concluded that that the ANC rank and file were the "ugly ducklings" of the transition and the non-racial period. According to one press report, "With the ANC itself in shambles--subscriptions go unpaid, some branches barely function, even head office cannot pay its costs--the party needs someone to sort out the mess" (“South Africa’s New Men” 1997, p. 55).A year before the 1999 elections, the ANC's organizational structures were largely in disarray and paid up membership had significantly declined (Paton 1998a).

By 1999, the ANC appeared to be a soft organization or a weak alliance of factions, unions, and clashing ideologies no longer united by a single cause, and was leading an increasingly soft state (Venter 1997). Thus, at the time of the second national elections, the ANC led government’s

…administrative abilities [had been] already severely tested, partly due to the inheritance of apartheid: corruption, financial mismanagement, and an overstaffed and under-motivated civil service. Its financial base for this commitment is strained by the extraordinary costs of civil service pay and benefits and by continued difficulties in securing payment of local service charges and national taxes by both blacks and whites (Seiler & Seiler, unpublished manuscript, n.d.).

**Conclusion:** **Iconic Myths**

In a 1994 "Madame and Eve" cartoon,[[9]](#footnote-9) Madame blamed President Mandela for the proliferation of praise singers throughout the country. Madame had it partly right. Hastings Banda had praise singers; so did Kenya’s Jomo Kenyatta and Uganda’s Idi Amin.[[10]](#footnote-10) Indeed, since independence, the mass media, and especially the SABC and the legislative assemblies of country after country in Africa became little more than praise singers for the ANC and especially Nelson Mandela. On the 100th anniversary of his birth praise singers continue to abound.

During the GNU, the ANC leadership started using praise singers during President Mandela’s public appearances. It is unfair to compare the ANC in power in South Africa with African despots, as the very openness of South African society made criticism of the new government inevitable. But, ANC concern with the need to control public opinion increased throughout the five-year GNU.

In South Africa, the presence of praise singers after May 10, 1994 did not, of course, appreciably tone down the press. The press remained openly critical even of President Mandela. The caustic and acerbic Jon Qwelane, a black journalist and radio personality, demonstrated the openness of public debate early into the GNU (Qwelane 1996). The radio talk show host called President Mandela and his government "wimps" because they had not declared June 16, Soweto Day, a holiday (Picard, Research Diary, from *Talk at Nine,* Radio 702, June 15, 1994).

South Africa had inherited patterns of patriarchal leadership from the apartheid period. P.W. Botha and Nelson Mandela were both strong willed “Big Men”[[11]](#footnote-11) in the grand tradition of African politics. Both were men of principle and stubborn, to the point of personal sacrifice. It is this “Big Men” image which has dominated leadership in South Africa since the 1940s. As we have noted, Mandela was sometimes criticized by many for his autocratic style (Barber 1999). According to Remer Tyson (1999), Mandela was no democrat and Tyson accused him of being very partisan. In addition, Mandela often accepted the principles of the Xhosa “old boy” network, which was confirmed when he rejected the candidacy of Cyril Ramaphosa as his heir apparent at the request of the Xhosa leadership turning instead to Thabo Mbeki.

The contradictions were often visible during the transition. The reformism of Albert Lutuli and Oliver Tambo[[12]](#footnote-12) came into conflict with the radical activism and revolutionism of Chris Hani[[13]](#footnote-13) and his followers as 1994 approached. According to liberal opposition leader, Wynand Malan (Interview, 1990):

Likewise the ANC has high nationalists and low level nationalists including fanatic black consciousness thinking. The high nationalists on both sides are aware that the umbrella of the ANC needs to stay open to include the radical populists. The high nationalists of the NP [National Party] know this but the middle class fears the rhetoric of Chris Hani and Winnie Mandela. The rhetoric is important. We must have it. The ANC cannot be a binding element otherwise.

After his release from prison, Nelson Mandela quickly became close to the old guard in exile led by his old friend Oliver Tambo. Mandela himself was said to be "very stubborn, [and occasionally] very arrogant" and was the target of sustained criticism from within the ANC over his autocratic style (Meredith 1998, pp. 71). On more than one occasion, President Mandela, reprimanded “executive members of the African National Congress, saying he [had] their files and [knew] who among them [were] spies" (Mbhele 1997a, p. 5). Periodically, Mandela would lash out at the press for its criticism of the ANC and the press became sensitive to ANC criticism. The media and all others who criticized government risked being accused by Mandela and others in the ANC of being disloyal to the country (Seiler 1997b). As his period in office came to an end, increasing criticism was directed at President Mandela himself over the intolerance of the ANC to criticism.

Despite his icon status, Nelson Mandela was not free of criticism with regard to the use of authoritarian methods. After 1994, there were allegations of beatings and mistreatments at grassroots levels between 1990 and 1994 that were leveled at Mandela (Duffy 1997). Authoritarian tendencies within the ANC were said to have been deepened by Nelson Mandela's own authoritarian streak (Ottaway 1993). Because of these assertions, the period with Mandela as head of the ANC (1991-1996) has been characterized as one of "rigid patriarchy" (Venter 1997, p. 70).

Despite the give and take of the negotiations process, there were patterns of secrecy both within the ANC and the National Party that had their origins during the apartheid period and continued through to the end of the negotiations period. Under apartheid there had been a “culture of secrecy that [pervaded] public and private sector institutions” (Badibe 1999, pp. A16-17). Administratively, on the eve of the transition in 1993, according to press reports:

Government departments have been ordered to destroy classified documents - especially those relating to security matters. The order - which appears to have been designed to obliterate the awkward secrets of the National Party rule - instructs state departments to go through classified information and destroy everything that does not have an immediate administrative purpose (“Destroy Your Files” p. 1).

Secrecy, patronage, authoritarian tendencies would not be fully wiped out with the new government. Nor would the coming to power of the ANC spell overnight economic success for historically disadvantaged South Africans. It is to the institutions of democracy and the development challenges faced in the “new” South Africa that we now turn.

1. Slovo was the longtime head of the South African Communist Party and head of the ANC’s military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In fact, it was only with local government elections in late 2000 that full majority rule at all levels of government came into place. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bophuthatswana collapsed after three days of occupation by former South African Defense Force commandos led by far right political parties including General Constand Viljoen and Eugene Terre’blanche. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Quisling is the international term for traitor, from the Norwegian Prime Minister who cooperated with the Germans in World War II. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. One of the structures created by the negotiated settlement. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See the companion books to this one: Picard 2006; Picard & Mogale 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. After it withdrew from the GNU, the National Party re-styled itself the “New National Party.” In mid-2000 the NNP united with the DP to form the Democratic Alliance. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. A bill that tried to define affirmative action in 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. A popular political cartoon, (based somewhat on Doonsebury) in the 1990s. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Hastings Banda was the life President of Malawi, Jomo Kenyatta was the first President of Kenya and Idi Amin was the long-time military dictator of Uganda. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The term is related to Hoyt Alverson’s “Big Stomachs,” which Tswana culture refer to important men, Alverson, 1978, p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Albert Lithuli was President of the ANC throughout the 1950s and until it went underground in 1963. Oliver Tambo led the ANC in exile from 1963 to 1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Chris Hani led the SACP and served on the National Executive Committee of the ANC both in exile and after 1990 until his death on April 27, 1993. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)