Navigating Changing Tides: South Africa and the Government of National Unity
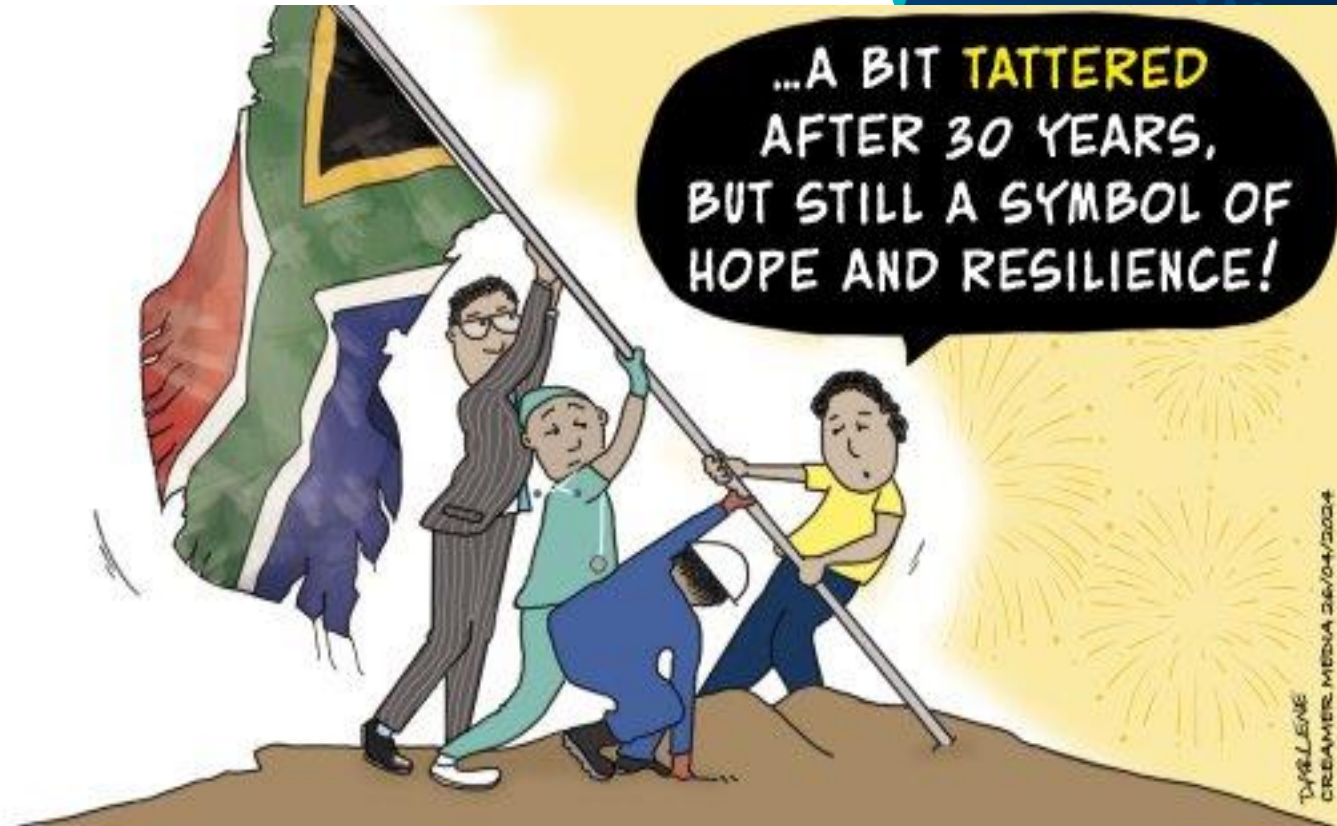
Dr Rekgotsofetse Chikane

Significance of this Moment

- The 2024 election results, which saw the African National Congress (ANC) decline from 57% in 2019 to 40%, mark a pivotal moment in South Africa's democratic history.

- This outcome signifies the maturation of the country's democratic dispensation, reinforcing the constitutional intent of broad-based representation in parliament.

- The ANC's historical dominance since 1994 inadvertently created a single-party state within a system intended for proportional, competitive multi-party democracy.

- The ANC's decline offers new opportunities for democratic engagement and governance reforms.

- **Question: Do you believe that the election outcomes were good for South Africa? (Yes/No)**

Understanding the Context of South Africa

- Eskom Energy Crisis

- Covid-19 Pandemic

- Democratic Decline
  - A growing majority (72%) of South Africans would be willing to forgo elections if a non-elected government could provide security, jobs, and housing (Afrobarometer, 2023)

- July Unrest in 2021

- State Capture

- Quadruple Threats in South Africa
  - Unemployment, Poverty, Inequality, GBV

...A BIT **TATTERED** AFTER 30 YEARS, BUT STILL A SYMBOL OF HOPE AND RESILIENCE!
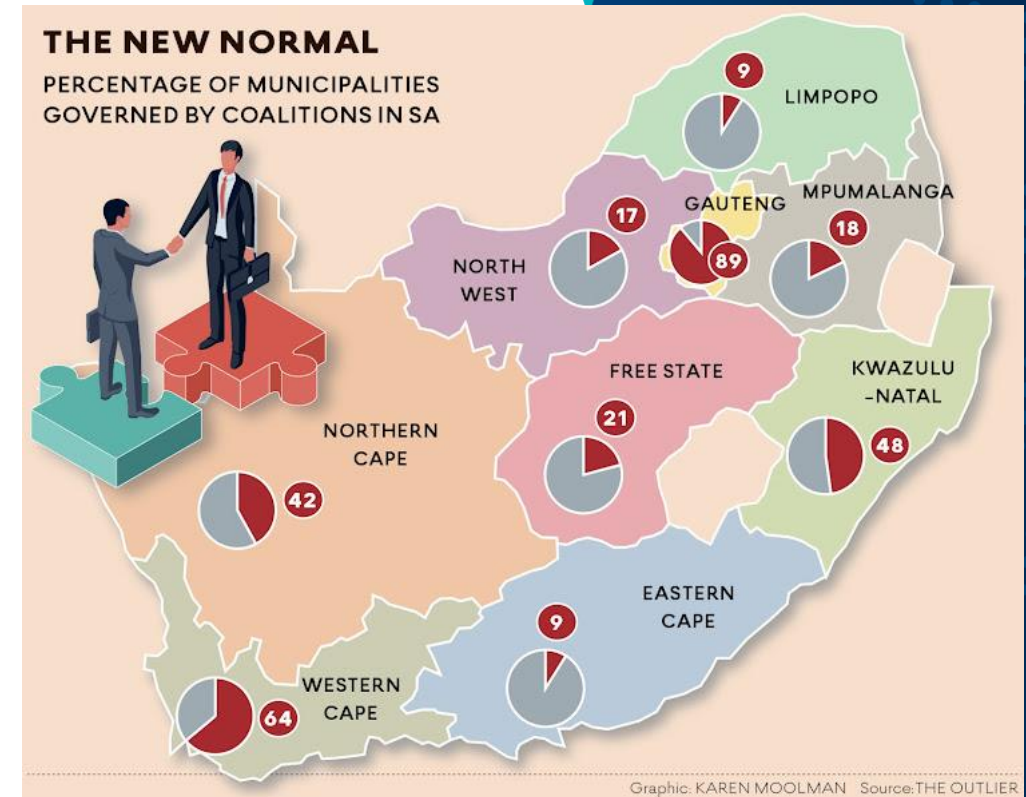
Voter Turnout

- **42 million* South Africans aged 18 years or older are eligible to vote**
  - IEC Registered Voters = 27.79 million
- **16.29 million voted = 58,64% turnout**
  - Down from 66% in 2019
- **11.5m <u>eligible voters</u> didn't vote + 14.21 million voters are <u>not registered</u>**
  - 25,71 million people (60%) in the country didn't participate in the elections

Rationale for Coalitions

- Coalitions are seen to create political stability and governability in areas with 'hung' legislatures

- Age of Coalitions
  - Shift from 26 hung municipalities in 2016 to 70 in 2021
  - Provincial Coalitions: KZN, NC, Gauteng

- Without party cooperation, whether formalised or not, the jurisdiction would effectively be ungovernable.

- Political parties have a responsibility to the electorate to ensure that a stable government can be formed to respond to the needs of the people (Law and Calland, 2018)

THE NEW NORMAL
PERCENTAGE OF MUNICIPALITIES GOVERNED BY COALITIONS IN SA

LIMPOPO 9
MPUMALANGA 18
GAUTENG 89
NORTH WEST 17
KWAZULU-NATAL 48
FREE STATE 21
NORTHERN CAPE 42
EASTERN CAPE 9
WESTERN CAPE 64

Graphic: KAREN MOOLMAN   Source: THE OUTLIER

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Rationale for Coalitions

- **Office-Seeking Rationale**
  - No need for ideological agreement and often minimum-winning in nature
- **Policy Rationale**
  - Largely ideologically connected and pursue particular policy reforms
  - Minimises ideological fluctuations on minor issues to ensure agreement on major issues
- **National Unity**
  - Though divided, parties come together to ensure the common good, e.g. GNU after 1994
- **Wield disproportionate power in relation to electoral share**
  - Role of Kingmakers

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Support and Opposition to Coalition Governments

Support

- Representation and Inclusivity
- Stability and Consensus
- Checks and Balances
- Negotiation and Compromise
- Policy-orientated theory

Opposition

- Instability and Gridlock
- Lack of Accountability
- Policy Compromise
- Minor Party Influence – Power Brokers and Makers
- Unfair Election Outcomes

Kikasu and Pillay, 2024

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	Party	2014 Votes	2014%	2019 Votes	2019%	2024 Votes (National and Regional)	2024%	Seats
Government of National Unity	**African National Congress (ANC)**	11 436 921	62,15%	10 026 475	57,50%	**12 698 759** (6 459 284 + 6 238 676)	**40,18%**	159
	Democratic Alliance (DA)	4 091 584	22,23%	3 622 531	20,77%	**6 961 361** (3 506 855 + 3 454 648)	**21,81%**	87
	Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)	441 854	2,40%	588 839	3,38%	**1 307 088** (616 208 + 688 878)	**3,85%**	17
	Patriotic Alliance (PA)	N/A	N/A	6 660	0,04%	**677 719** (330 416 + 347 287)	**2,06%**	9
	Freedom Front Plus (VF PLUS)	165 715	0,90%	414 864	2,38%	**455 657** (219 052 + 236 603)	**1,36%**	6
	United Democratic Movement (UDM)	184 636	1,00%	78 030	0,45%	**164 210** (78 444 + 85,764	**0,49%**	3
	Rise Mzanzi	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	**138 528** (67 970 + 70 538)	**0,42%**	2
	Al Jama-ah	25 976	14,00%	31 468	0,18%	**92 472** (53 404+ 39 068)	**0,24%**	2
	Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC)	37 784	0,21%	32 677	0,19%	**77 544** (36 710 + 40,831)	**0,23%**	1
	GOOD Party	N/A	N/A	70 408	0,40%	**65 814** (29 500 + 36 314)	**0.18%**	1
Progressive Caucus	**MK Party**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	**4 584 864** 2 344 291 + 2 240 537)	**14,58%**	58
	Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)	1 169 259	6,35%	1 882 480	10,80%	**3 090 020** (1 529 914 + 1 560 072)	**9,52%**	39
	African Transformation Movement (ATM)	N/A	N/A	76 830	0,44%	**130 466** (63 554 + 66 912)	**0,40%**	2
	National Coloured Congress (CCC)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	**84 611** (37,423 + 47,188)	**0,23%**	2
	United Africans Transformation (UAT)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	(35 678 + 32 267)	**0,22%**	1
Not Aligned	**Action SA**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	**413 239** (192 329 + 220 824)	**1,20%**	6
	African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP)	104 039	0,57%	146 262	0,84%	**190 460** (96 571 + 93 878)	**0,60%**	3
	Build One South Africa (BOSA)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	**135 413** (65 919 + 69 485)	**0.41%**	2

Government of National Unity

- **GNU Represents 70% of the vote**
- **Currently underpinned by the GNU Statement of Intent**
  - Focused on constitutionalism,
  - Economic reconstruction and recovery,
  - Workers' rights,
  - Social protection,
  - Redress and equity,
  - Community safety, a capable and ethical state with a professional bureaucracy,
  - Social cohesion
  - A just and equitable world order.

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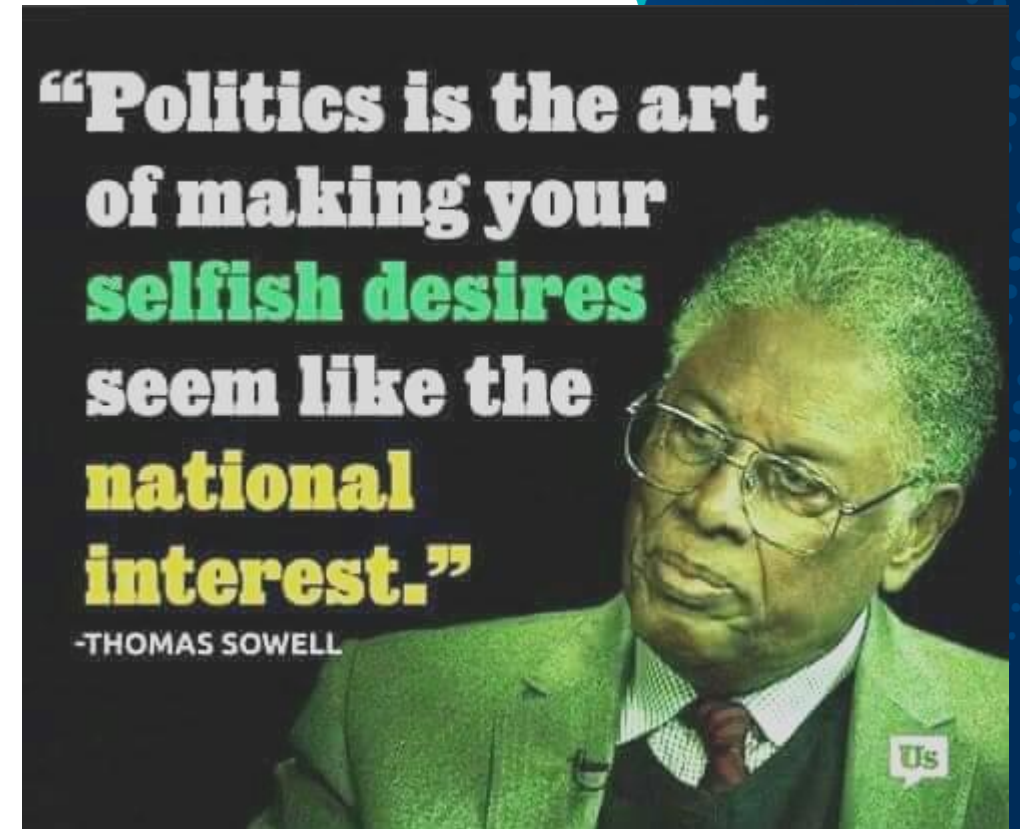UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Government of National Unity

- No clear policy direction has been articulated, but the President has indicated that the GNU is dedicated to:
  - Inclusive growth and job creation;
  - Reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living;
  - Building a capable, ethical and developmental state
- Expected to be clarified by the Budget Speech in 2025 and the development of the Medium-Term Development Plan
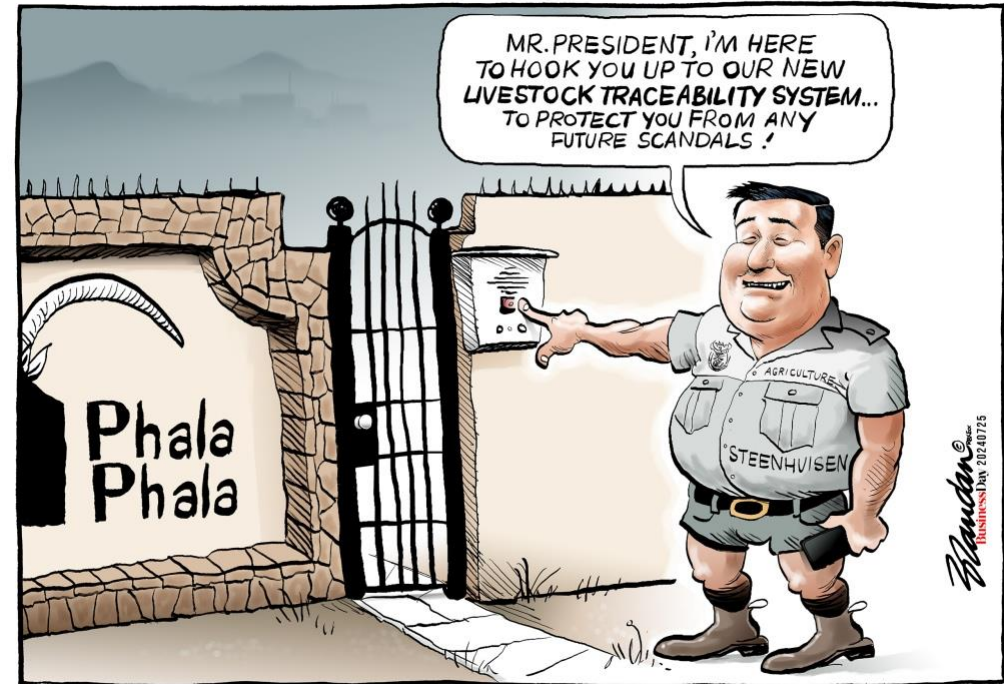
GNU – Will it hold?

- **Local Government coalitions have been seen to follow a series of "unwritten rules":**
  - Disregard for coalition agreements
  - Minimalist coalition agreements based on positional agreements
  - Amplification of divisions between the two biggest parties, with both frequently trying to enhance their power by jostling for alliances with smaller parties
  - Access to political power trumps party values and ideologies
  - Coalition relationships being based on mutual respect between coalition partners, but with racial/ethnic/class divisions
  - Cultural undertones shaping their engagement
    (MISTRA, 2024a)

"Politics is the art of making your selfish desires seem like the national interest."
-THOMAS SOWELL

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GNU – The Rhetoric and Activities to Expect

- GNU functions as a pact between the political elite and business
- Policy contestation over policy issues with high political salience
    - NHI, SOEs, Immigration, Land
    - Jostling for influence and authority across cross-departmental areas of concern
- Highlighting issues of corruption, cadre deployment and abuse of power allegedly committed by the ANC in the past
- Role of Parliament?
- Motion of No-Confidence in the President?

MR. PRESIDENT, I'M HERE TO HOOK YOU UP TO OUR NEW LIVESTOCK TRACEABILITY SYSTEM... TO PROTECT YOU FROM ANY FUTURE SCANDALS!

Phala Phala

Coalition types based on local government dynamics

COMPLEX COALITIONS CONSTITUTED THROUGH BIG PARTIES PLUS COMPLEX SUPPORT BLOCS	The largest party allies with smaller parties to secure a voting majority and establish a stable government. These coalitions, often involving confidence-and-supply arrangements, are sometimes associated with instability.
	Two big/relatively big parties unite and constitute an outright majority – such as the DA and IFP, the IFP and EFF, the ANC and EFF, forming comfortable or in some cases, oversized coalitions that may also be joined by a bloc of micro-party associates
	Grand coalitions, or coalitions of local unity, where ideologically diverse, incongruent parties coalesce and cooperate for diverse motivations but are **mostly anchored in unique local dynamics.**

(MISTRA, 2024a)

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Progressive Caucus
Rise of MKP and Fall (?) of the EFF

- **Believes that GNU is an outcome of White Monopoly Capital**
- **Advocate for more "progressive" policies**
  - Believes that the liberation movement of South Africa constitutes <u>70% of the vote</u>
    - (Alluding to ANC+MKP+EFF and other ANC breakaways)
  - Anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-imperialist
  - Land expropriation without compensation
  - Increased nationalisation (e.g. Banks – including the Reserve Bank - and Mines)
  - Corrupt free society
  - Decolonialisation of legal and cultural activities in South Africa
  - Free quality education, healthcare, housing, and water and sanitation
  - Industrial Development of the African economy

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United Africans Transformation	67 948	0,22%	1

Progressive Caucus
Rise of MKP and Fall (?) of the EFF

- The MK party became the largest party in KwaZulu-Natal, with support in Mpumalanga and Gauteng reflecting its leader's ethnic identity. With only four in the other provinces (MISTRA, 2024b)
- EFF faced a dramatic decline in its electoral outcomes, considering its relative growth in the preceding years
  - Subsequently lost its Deputy President to the MKP

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GNU vs Progressive Caucus
Areas of Divergence

GNU

- Focused on constitutionalism and rule of law
- Economic reconstruction and recovery,
- Redress and equity,
- Community safety, a capable and ethical state with a professional bureaucracy,
- Social cohesion
- A just and equitable world order.

Progressive Caucus

- Believe that the liberation movement of South Africa constitutes 70% of the vote (Alluding to ANC+MKP+EFF and other ANC breakaways)
  - Anti-Capitalist, anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-sexism. Anti-imperialist
- Land expropriation without compensation
- Increased nationalisation (e.g. Banks – including the Reserve Bank - and Mines)
- Corrupt free society
- Decolonialisation of legal and cultural activities in South Africa – Afrocentric legal philosophy
- Industrial Development of the African economy
- In favour of BRICS to alter geopolitical establishments
- Emphasis on traditional leadership and customs

GNU vs Progressive Caucus
Areas of Convergence

GNU

- Economic reconstruction and recovery,
- Workers' rights,
- Social protection,
- Community safety, a capable and ethical state with a professional bureaucracy,

Progressive Caucus

- Corrupt free society
- Free quality education, healthcare, housing, and water and sanitation
- Industrial Development of the African economy
- Protecting collective bargaining and workers' rights
- Emphasis on traditional leadership and customs

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Other Noticeable Trends

- **Rise of Coloured Nationalism?**
  - Patriotic Alliance (GNU) and National Coloured Congress (Progressive Caucus) = 2,29% of the vote (367 839 votes)
  - PA went from 6 660 in 2019 to 330 416 in 2024
- **Absolute Voter Decline by the DA**
  - Decrease of 584 729 votes since 2014
    - Initial loss attributed to the rise of FF+ in 2019 election
    - Subsequent loss potentially to PA and NCC
    - Currently in National Government for the first time
- **MKP is now the Official Opposition in Parliament**

Other Noticeable Trends

- **Is the left dead?**
  - Is MKP left?
    - Currently, one could view the MKP as ultra-conservative
    - Akin to the rise of the right globally
      - Conservative + Pro-poor social platforms
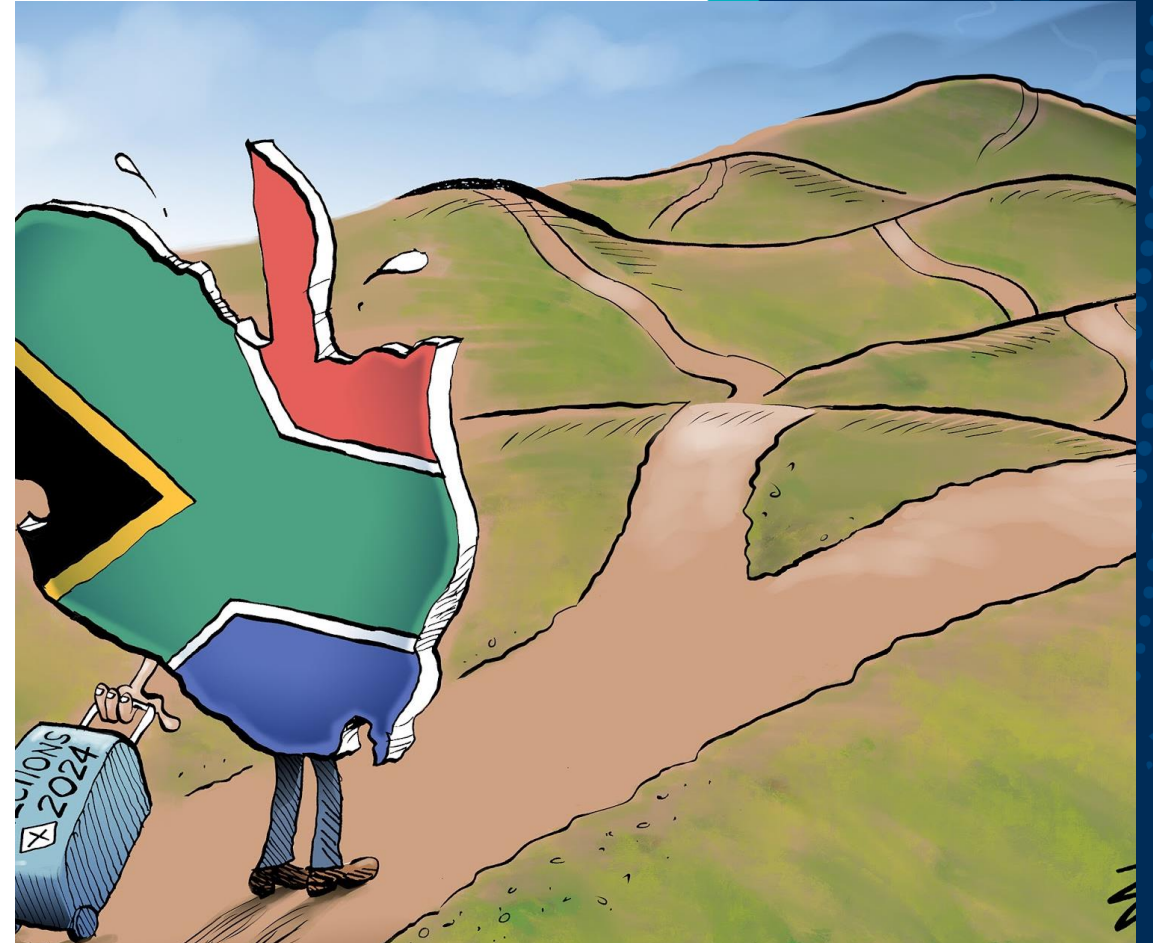 - Far-left consolidated around 24,33%
    - Excluding the MKP 9,75%
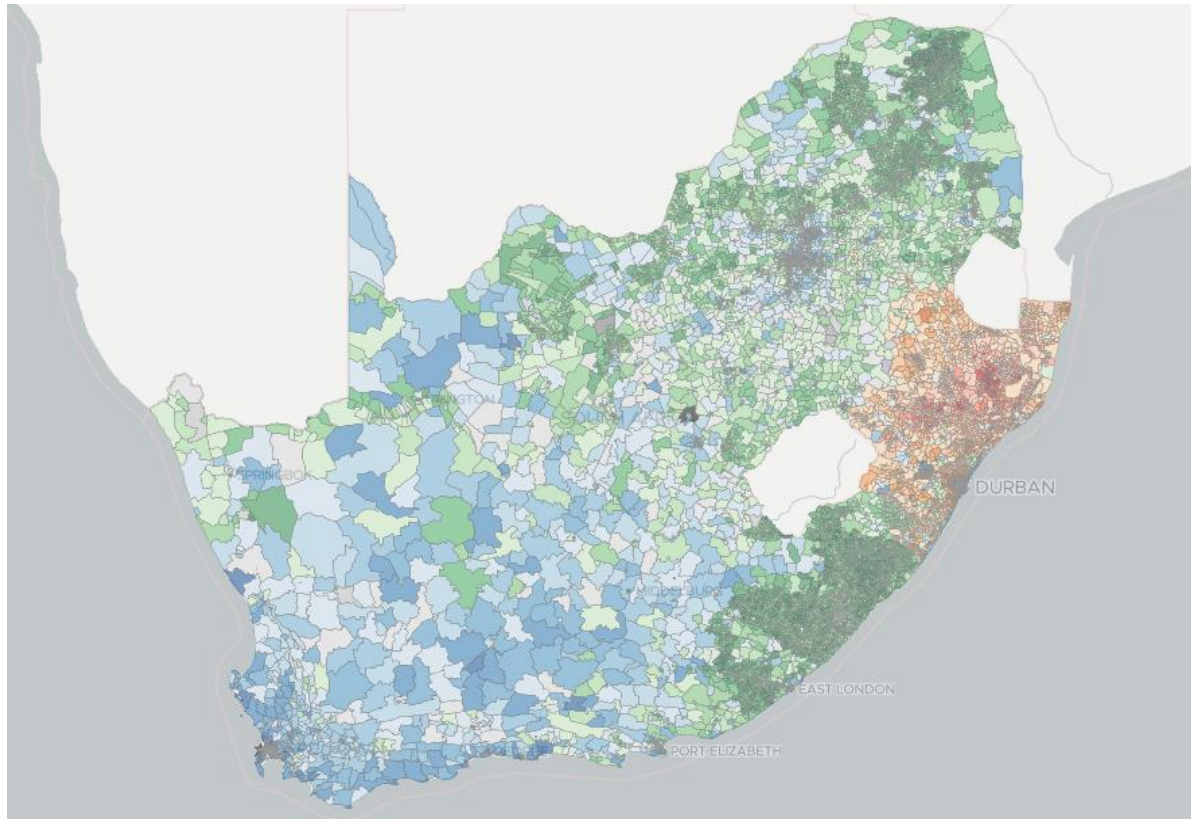- **Consolidation of the centre-right**
  - Politically favourable results for the DA, IFP, Action SA
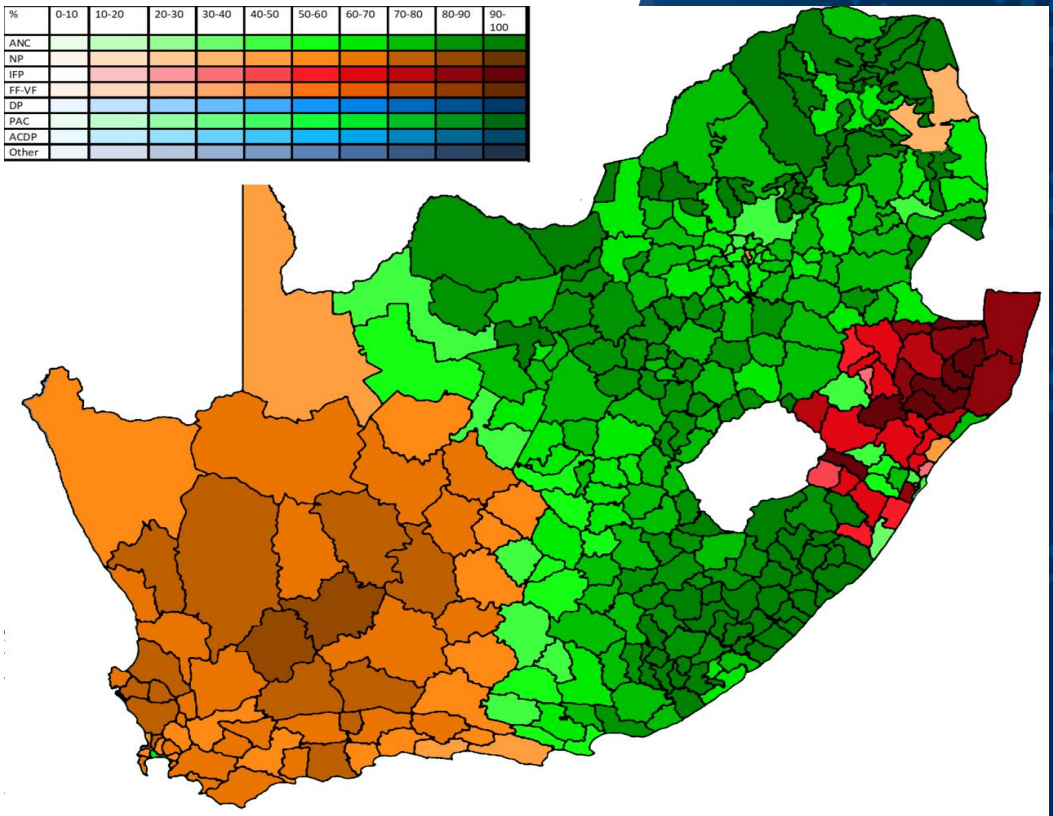- **Decline of the centre-left**
  - All centre-left parties experienced catastrophic declines (ANC, UDM*, GOOD and COPE)

The more things change,
the more they stay the same

%	0-10	10-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	60-70	70-80	80-90	90-100
ANC										
NP										
IFP										
FF-VF										
DP										
PAC										
ACDP										
Other										

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