

How the South African government waste resources on Deputy Ministers and unnecessary deployments

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Abstract: Background: The South African government has faced persistent scrutiny regarding its allocation of resources, particularly concerning the proliferation of Deputy Ministers and unnecessary deployments within various departments. Despite ongoing efforts to streamline governmental operations and optimize resource utilization, concerns persist regarding the efficacy of these measures.

Purpose: This study aims to analyse the allocation of resources by the South African government, specifically focusing on the roles and responsibilities of Deputy Ministers and instances of unnecessary deployments. By examining these practices, the study seeks to highlight potential areas for improvement in resource allocation and governance efficiency.

Objectives: To assess the roles and functions of Deputy Ministers within the South African government. To identify instances of unnecessary deployments and their impact on resource utilization. To evaluate the effectiveness of current measures aimed at optimizing resource allocation. To propose recommendations for improving efficiency in governmental resource allocation and deployment practices.

Findings: The analysis reveals that the proliferation of Deputy Ministers often leads to duplication of roles and functions, resulting in inefficient use of resources. Additionally, instances of unnecessary deployments, driven by political considerations rather than operational necessity, further strain governmental resources and impede effective service delivery. Despite efforts to address these challenges, systemic issues persist, hindering progress in optimizing resource allocation within the South African government.

Conclusion: Inefficiencies in resource allocation, particularly regarding Deputy Ministers and unnecessary deployments, remain significant challenges facing the South African government. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that involves reevaluating the roles and functions of Deputy Ministers, implementing stricter criteria for deployments, and fostering a culture of accountability and transparency in governmental operations. By prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness in resource allocation, the government can better fulfil its mandate and deliver improved services to its citizens.

Keywords: Resource Allocation, Deputy Ministers, South African Government, Inefficiency, Unnecessary Deployments

Introduction

While deputy ministers are not members of the cabinet, they are required to assist relevant ministers in the execution of their duties. A member of the Cabinet is appointed by the president to be the leader of government business in the National Assembly.

The president appoints the deputy president and ministers; assigns their powers and functions, and may dismiss them. The president may select any number of ministers from the members of the National Assembly and may select no more than two ministers from outside the assembly. As of 2023 Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Minister Thembu Nkandimeng and Electricity Minister Kgosiengso Ramokgopa are the two cabinet ministers who are not members of the National Assembly. While deputy ministers are not members of the cabinet, they are required to assist relevant ministers in the execution of their duties. (Reddy 2016)

On 31 May 1910, former Boer military general and the former prime minister of the Transvaal Colony Louis Botha became the first prime minister of the newly established Union of South Africa the forerunner of the modern South African state. He appointed the first cabinet of the Union of South Africa after the general election held on 15 September 1910. It consisted of members of the now-defunct South African Party. For the next fourteen years, it only consisted of members of the SAP. Botha died in 1919 and was replaced with another Boer general and SAP member, Jan Smuts.

In 1924, J. B. M. Hertzog of the National Party became prime minister through a coalition with the Labour Party and appointed a cabinet that consisted of National Party and Labour Party members. In 1934, the Hertzog's National Party and the South African Party merged to form the United Party. Hertzog won the 1938 general election, but in 1939 the United Party was divided between supporters of Hertzog and those of his Justice Minister Jan Smuts because of the question of South Africa's role in the Second World War. Hertzog was voted out in the United Party and resigned as prime minister, which allowed Jan Smuts to form a government in coalition with the Dominion Party and the Labour

Party. The 1948 general election was won outright by D. F. Malan's Herenigde Nasionale Party and Malan appointed his first cabinet composed of National Party members. For the next forty-six years, South Africa would be governed by the National Party. (Magomane 2012)

On 31 May 1961, South Africa became a republic and Queen Elizabeth II was replaced as head of state with a state president with largely ceremonial powers. The Prime Minister was still head of government and appointed/dismissed members of the cabinet. In 1984, the constitution was amended, and the office of prime minister was abolished while the office of state president was given more responsibilities. State president P. W. Botha was now the head of state and head of government. In the 1984 tricameral parliamentary elections, Allan Hendrickse's Labour Party won a majority of seats in the coloured House of Representatives, while Amichand Rajbansi's National People's Party won a plurality of seats in the Indian House of Delegates. Hendrickse and Rajbansi were appointed to serve in Botha's second cabinet as Minister of Coloureds' Affairs and Minister of Indian Affairs, respectively, becoming the first non-white members of the South African cabinet. (Managa 2012)

In 1989, Rina Venter became the first woman to hold a cabinet post in South African history. Following the end of apartheid and the first multi-racial elections in 1994, Nelson Mandela became the first black president of South Africa and appointed a Government of National Unity consisting of African National Congress, National Party, and Inkatha Freedom Party members. In 1996, the National Party withdrew from the GNU and the cabinet's composition has been dominated by ANC members since then. The Inkatha Freedom Party continued to hold seats in the government, as minority partners, until the elections of 2004. In 2014, Lynne Brown became the first openly LGBT person to serve as a cabinet minister in South Africa and Africa. (Mutula and Mostert 2010)

Cyril Ramaphosa was appointed president of South Africa by parliament on 15 February 2018. On 26 February, he announced a major Cabinet reshuffle, including the appointment of David Mabuza as deputy president. The president announced a cabinet reshuffle on 22 November 2018, following the death of Minister Edna Molewa and the resignation of Malusi Gigaba. On 29 May 2019, following the 2019 general election, President Ramaphosa announced a new cabinet in which the number of ministers was reduced from 36 to 28. On 5 August 2021, Cyril Ramaphosa announced another major Cabinet Reshuffle following the resignation of Minister Zweli Mkhize and Minister Tito Mboweni. The reshuffle also comes after the death of Minister Jackson Mthembu and deputy minister Bavelile Hlongwa. On 6 March 2023, Ramaphosa announced a major cabinet reshuffle following the resignation of David Mabuza as deputy president. (Habib 2013)

Research Methodology

A systematic literature review (SLR) was applied as a research methodology for this article. This chosen research methodology was more relevant for investigating the topic of how the South African government allocates resources to Deputy Ministers and unnecessary deployments. The first step in an SLR is to define the research question clearly. In this case, the author focused on what is the existing literature on resource allocation to Deputy Ministers and unnecessary deployments in the South African government. The researcher then conducted a comprehensive search of academic databases, government reports, policy documents, and other relevant sources to identify existing studies and literature on the topic. (Dziopa and Ahern 2011)

The researcher established specific criteria for including or excluding studies from the review. For example, the focus was on studies conducted within a certain timeframe, studies that examine resource allocation in the South African government context, and studies that specifically address Deputy Ministers and unnecessary deployments.

The relevant studies were identified, researcher extracted data from these studies, such as key findings, methodologies used, and conclusions drawn. The researcher then analysed this data to identify common themes, trends, and gaps in the literature related to resource allocation to Deputy Ministers and unnecessary deployments in the South African government. (Torres-Carrión, González-González, Aciar and Rodríguez-Morales 2018)

The researcher synthesized the findings from the selected studies to provide a comprehensive overview of what the existing literature says about the topic. This synthesis includes summarizing key findings, identifying areas of consensus or disagreement among studies, and highlighting any gaps or areas for further research. Finally, based on the findings of the SLR, researcher discussed the implications for policy and practice. The paper recommend changes to the way resources are

allocated within the South African government to minimize waste on Deputy Ministers and unnecessary deployments (Lame 2019).

Excessive Expenditure on Deputy Ministers: A Drain on Resources

Democratic Alliance (DA) Presents Cut Cabinet Perks Bill Issued by Dr. Leon Schreiber Member of Parliament (MP). DA Shadow Minister for Public Service and Administration May 3, 2023, in Press Releases. The DA's Cut Cabinet Perks Bill aims to standardize the Ministerial Handbook. The Constitution of South Africa mandate the President to promptly revise the Handbook and subsequently review it every five years. President conducts comprehensive cost assessments, consider the economic climate, and seek recommendations from the Independent Commission for the Remuneration of Public Office-Bearers before suggesting any benefits, privileges, and tools of trade for Ministers and Deputy Ministers. The Constitution further mandate the President to openly report proposed benefit alterations to Parliament; and authorize Parliament to approve or reject any privileges for the President, Deputy President, Ministers, and Deputy Ministers (Lodge 1998).

The DA has formally presented Cut Cabinet Perks Bill in Parliament. The complete text of the Bill is accessible in the government website. The Bill, which proposes various modifications to the Remuneration of Public Office-Bearers Act, aims to curb the extravagant misuse of valuable public funds currently financing the lavish lifestyles of the 30 ANC Ministers and 34 Deputy Ministers. According to data obtained through a series of DA parliamentary inquiries, South African taxpayers are compelled to allocate nearly R1 billion annually to cover privileges such as VIP security, support staff, luxury vehicles, as well as complimentary water and electricity for Cabinet members. This is in addition to the respective R2.4 million and R2 million annual salaries paid to Ministers and Deputy Ministers. (Managa 2012).

Over the past six months, the DA has collected data on the costs of various privileges outlined in the Ministerial Handbook borne by South African taxpayers. The author findings indicate the following primary expenditures:

Period Average per Year VIP protection R2,048,000,000 R512,000,000 Support staff salaries R1,548,000,000 R387,000,000 International travel R81,108,884 R20,277,221 Vehicle expenses R25,287,064 R6,231,766 Alternative utility and security costs R58,000,000 R14,500,000 Total R940,008,987. These privileges are on top of the 97 luxury residences occupied by Ministers and Deputy Ministers in Pretoria and Cape Town, collectively valued at an additional R1 billion. This figure also excludes expenditures on Ministerial salaries (R2.4 million annually) and Deputy Minister salaries (R2 million annually), adding a further R144 million to the total yearly expense. In summary, the South African Cabinet costs taxpayers nearly R1 billion annually. (Karodia, Rehman and Soni 2016).

In addition to tackling the extravagant spending outlined in the Ministerial Handbook, the Cut Cabinet Perks Bill also aims to eliminate the secrecy surrounding the Handbook. In 2023, the DA exposed President Cyril Ramaphosa's secretive amendments to the Handbook, which increased staff allocations to Ministers and Deputy Ministers and removed the cap on complimentary water and electricity. (Whyle and Olivier 2023).

Only through the diligence of the DA was this revealed, prompting public outcry and ultimately leading to Ramaphosa rescinding the changes. The DA's Bill seeks to end this secrecy by requiring the President to report any proposed amendments to Parliament and disclose the costs associated with all privileges.

Furthermore, the DA has identified a potential absence of legislation governing the privileges dispensed by the President via the Ministerial Handbook. DA is currently seeking legal advice on this matter. Nonetheless, the Cut Cabinet Perks Bill aims to address this potential illegality by subjecting the Handbook to full parliamentary oversight and approval. To this end, the Bill seeks to limit the President's unilateral authority over the Handbook. The President's current unrestricted ability to introduce additional benefits for himself and his Cabinet colleagues poses an obvious conflict of interest (McKenzie and Marx 2024).

The Bill aims to rectify this by compelling Ramaphosa to first seek recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Commission, conduct thorough cost assessments, and consider the broader economic context before proposing any new privileges. Moreover, it empowers Parliament

to fulfil its rightful role by voting on appropriate privileges for the President, Deputy President, Ministers, and Deputy Ministers. Lastly, the Bill mandates the President and Parliament to review the entire Ministerial Handbook within 12 months and undergo regular reviews every five years thereafter (Sachs, Abdullah, Madonko, Jonas, Slingers and Zwawada 2023).

Unnecessary Deployments: Burdening the South African Government's Budget

In the midst of tough economic times, decreasing living standards, and a government struggling to fulfil the basic needs of a society deeply affected by systemic poverty, inequality, and unemployment, the legitimacy of the South African state is being seriously questioned. Confidence in key government institutions is at an all-time low, with those who can afford it turning to more expensive private sector alternatives (Sibeko and Isaacs 2019).

Similar to other developing economies, South Africa's economy is facing growing uncertainty and volatility globally. Due to its own weaknesses, it lacks the financial and institutional strength demonstrated by many of its counterparts in dealing with these challenges. Over time, the merging of the ruling party with the state has weakened institutional checks and balances. Consequently, resources are being wasted, and many state institutions lack the capacity to fulfil their mandates. The decline of state-owned enterprises is particularly concerning as it hampers economic growth (Soni 2015).

In 2020, South Africa lost its international investment-grade credit rating, and in 2023, its financial system was grey-listed by the Financial Action Task Force for inadequate measures against money laundering. When Cyril Ramaphosa took office in 2018, succeeding the problematic administration of Jacob Zuma, he was widely welcomed as a practical reformer. However, his presidency has left many disappointed. Despite initial hope, he is now criticized for indecisiveness, ineffectiveness, and failure to address underlying governance issues.

Ramaphosa's tenure has been marked by missed opportunities. The Zondo Commission's report in June 2022 implicated several senior members of the ANC in corruption, but Ramaphosa has failed to decisively act against them. Despite his re-election as party president in December 2022, his lack of decisive leadership has puzzled many (Bougardt 2011).

As governance failures persist, early polls suggested the ruling ANC was about to lose its parliamentary majority in the 2024 elections. This could have significant implications for governance, as many senior public officials are ANC members. The 2024 elections were under a new Electoral Law allowing independent candidates at the national level. Given these challenges, there's an urgent need for governance reform to strengthen constitutional checks and balances and restore trust in the state's capacity and independence (Koelble and Siddle 2018).

The formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 marked a pivotal moment following the conclusion of the South African War, also known as the Peace of Vereeniging. This conflict pitted the Boer republics against British colonial territories, resulting in significant devastation, including the use of scorched earth tactics and concentration camps. Political rights were largely denied to Black South Africans, and the Union upheld discriminatory colonial policies. The Land Act of 1913 exemplified this by forcibly taking land from indigenous owners, perpetuating intergenerational poverty. Resistance movements like the African National Congress (ANC) emerged to combat this oppression (Magomane 2012).

The introduction of apartheid in 1948 by the National Party entrenched segregation and limited the rights of Black South Africans while allocating land to different cultural groups. Despite resistance and international condemnation, apartheid persisted, escalating in the 1980s with heightened internal resistance and economic sanctions. The fall of the Eastern Bloc, a key supporter of the ANC, contributed to the eventual negotiation for a settlement. This culminated in the lifting of bans on liberation movements and the release of political prisoners in 1990, paving the way for democratic elections in 1994, which saw the ANC win decisively, with Nelson Mandela becoming the first democratically elected president (Turok 2012).

Following political liberation, economic disparities became a significant challenge, with structural barriers hindering progress. While basic services and social grants have been extended to disadvantaged communities, unemployment remains high, perpetuating poverty and inequality.

While the South African state maintains a monopoly on the use of force, challenges such as maladministration, corruption, and organized crime influence its effectiveness. State capture during Jacob Zuma's presidency exacerbated these issues, impacting the state's legitimacy and leading to public reliance on private security. Urban areas often see control by gangs, while rural areas may be influenced by tribal leaders. Though rare, there have been suggestions of secession in some regions. (Delobelle 2013).

South Africa maintains a secular culture despite high levels of religiosity. The rule of law is independent of religious affiliations, allowing for diverse practices. However, religious groups still influence public life and policymaking, with politically conservative values often aligning with predominant Christian beliefs, including seeking endorsement from influential religious communities like the Zionist Christian Church. (Kanyane 2016).

Misallocation of Resources: The Cost of Overstaffing Deputy Minister Positions

Ensuring fair competition in South Africa encompasses two crucial aspects. Firstly, it aims at fostering a diverse economy where dominant players don't hinder market access. Historically, the country's markets were tightly controlled by a few conglomerates until the early 1990s. These conglomerates had interests spanning various sectors, consolidating power and limiting market entry. Secondly, there's a concerted effort to address racial disparities in ownership and control, a legacy of apartheid that marginalized the Black majority from economic participation (Som 2022).

While strides have been made through competition legislation and enforcement, concentration of power persists in certain sectors due to interconnectedness among major corporate entities. Industries like mining, insurance, banking, and media still bear the marks of historical dominance. State-owned enterprises (SOEs) also wield significant influence, particularly in sectors like energy and transport. However, mismanagement and financial strain, especially evident in entities like Eskom and Transnet, pose substantial risks to the economy (Walsh, Schrage and Nguyen 2021).

Despite privatization success stories like Telkom, where public ownership was relinquished, the government's reluctance to cede control over critical infrastructure remains a contentious issue. Legislation aimed at promoting Black ownership and participation, like the B-BEE Act, faces criticism for its limited impact and perceived favouritism towards certain individuals or entities.

South Africa has a history of dominant monopolies, a legacy that still influences various sectors today. While there have been efforts to promote competition, key players continue to exert control, both in the private and public sectors. State-owned enterprises, despite holding monopolies in crucial industries, struggle with inefficiencies and financial burdens (Karimi 2020).

South Africa's economy is closely integrated with the global market, heavily reliant on imports and exports. Amidst global geopolitical shifts, there's a concern that protectionist measures elsewhere could necessitate similar actions from South Africa, impacting consumer costs significantly.

The banking sector in South Africa operates under robust regulations, overseen by the South African Reserve Bank. While the sector adheres to international standards, concerns have been raised regarding the country's mechanisms to combat money laundering and financial crimes, leading to potential grey listing by international watchdogs. Such a designation could increase costs and reporting burdens for individuals and businesses involved in cross-border transactions (Elryah 2022).

Maintaining monetary stability is a core responsibility of the South African Reserve Bank (SARB). This involves safeguarding the value of the South African currency to ensure price consistency. The SARB primarily achieves this through interest rate adjustments, aiming to keep inflation within a targeted range of 3% to 6% for the headline consumer price index (CPI). By altering its basic repurchase rate (repo rate), which dictates the interest rate at which it lends funds to commercial banks, the SARB indirectly influences the prime lending rate offered by these banks to their clients. (Guilherme and Picoli 2021)

Aligned with global trends, the SARB has consistently increased the repo rate, currently standing at 7.25%, to counter inflationary pressures. Despite debates over the SARB's independence, especially regarding its role in fostering inclusive growth, the government remains committed to preserving its autonomy. (Melecky 2021)

South Africa's fiscal stability, achieved in part by reining in public debt during the early post-apartheid years, has been a significant achievement. This was accomplished through prudent fiscal management overseen by the National Treasury, leading to a decline in the debt-to-GDP ratio.

While increased social welfare initiatives were funded during a period of economic growth, limited tax revenue sources and high unemployment persist as challenges. The recent increase in value-added tax (VAT) to 15% reflects the strain on fiscal resources, compounded by impending public sector wage strikes and high servicing costs. Despite a largely domestic debt profile, South Africa's gross foreign debt has increased as a percentage of GDP, posing additional fiscal risks (Spanou 2021).

Inefficient Governance: The Toll of Superfluous Appointments in South Africa

According to the Institute of Directors South Africa (IoDSA), the core issue behind the failure of municipalities to deliver services lies in poor governance. The IoDSA has advocated for the professionalization of the civil service, aligning with King IV principles, which stress the need for skilled, diverse, and independent governing bodies.

The Auditor-General's report highlights how ineffective governance contributes to municipal dysfunction, leading to financial reporting deficiencies and accountability lapses. Additionally, inadequate oversight of technology exacerbates inefficiencies. This is what the parliament should be focusing on rather than focussing on increasing the cabinet and benefits of the ministers (Abrahams, Thani and Kahn 2022).

The IoDSA underscores the urgency of professionalizing the civil service to enhance service delivery and restore municipal health. Halley (2014) suggests that acknowledging the inadequacy of current service delivery is the first step towards improvement. He recommends shadowing executives with the necessary skills rather than enforcing change abruptly, which may face resistance.

In the ongoing discourse concerning public service appointments in South Africa, the central issue revolves around finding a balance between political discretion and merit-based selections. The country's constitution, designed to dismantle the legacy of Apartheid by granting extensive powers to the ruling administration to transform the state apparatus, inadvertently exposed senior appointments to political manipulation. (Mboneni 2023)

According to Hartley, Mills and Soko (2023), a contextually sensitive reform approach underscores the importance of grounding South Africa's reform efforts in the country's political economy. The tailored approach is vital for crafting strategies that are responsive to the unique circumstances of South Africa and drawing insights from nations with comparable developmental stages and bureaucratic maturity. This article further suggest that it is important to engage in the discourse on fostering a more efficient and merit-based public service system in South Africa and beyond (Arimoro 2020).

Budgetary Strain: Examining the Consequences of Wasteful Deployments in Government

Over the past ten years, there has been a notable decline in the availability and standard of essential services. What was once primarily an issue in rural and less affluent regions like the Eastern Cape, such as deteriorating transport infrastructure and inadequate water supply and sewage treatment, has now become increasingly common in major cities like Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town, and Pretoria. South Africans have endured frequent electricity blackouts lasting up to 12 hours a day in 2022 and 2023, a consequence of mismanagement, underinvestment, and corruption within Eskom and other struggling state-owned enterprises. Johannesburg residents have also faced prolonged water cuts. In response, rural communities have taken it upon themselves to fix basic infrastructure. The Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) is also in dire straits, with intercity rail services nearly non-existent and urban routes greatly reduced due to vandalism and looting. This has forced many South Africans to rely on unsafe minibus taxis for commuting. These failures stem from severe mismanagement (Mamokhere 2022).

Regarding political participation, South Africa operates under a proportional representation system at the national and provincial levels, while municipalities follow a mixed-member proportional representation system. However, despite generally free and fair elections overseen by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) since 1994, public trust in institutions has declined significantly over the years. This erosion of trust can be attributed to the government's failure to address longstanding issues of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, exacerbated by widespread mismanagement and corruption.

The African National Congress (ANC) has held a strong electoral mandate since 1994, but internal factionalism has hindered effective governance. The dominance of certain factions, notably during Jacob Zuma's presidency, led to state capture by outside interests, weakening state institutions and hindering policy implementation. Despite the judiciary's independence, weak law enforcement and oversight have limited its effectiveness in combating corruption and ensuring accountability (Tariq 2024).

While South Africa's constitution guarantees freedom of association and expression, there have been instances of authorities suppressing these rights, such as the Marikana Massacre in 2012 and targeted violence against activist groups like Abahlali baseMjondolo. Despite robust protections for freedom of expression, media outlets have faced harassment and intimidation, particularly during Zuma's presidency. However, the media has played a crucial role in exposing corruption and wrongdoing.

In terms of the rule of law, South Africa's constitution mandates a separation of powers and establishes institutions to safeguard democracy. However, weak commitment to these principles has allowed for the blurring of lines between branches of government, contributing to governance challenges. Law enforcement agencies have struggled to prosecute high-level corruption effectively, leading to widespread public distrust in the government's ability to combat corruption and uphold accountability. (Millard 2023)

Despite the presence of Chapter 9 institutions tasked with protecting civil rights, their performance has been uneven, and legal protections alone have proven insufficient in addressing the country's deep-rooted inequalities and history of violence.

South Africa operates as a unitary state with strong federalist traits, boasting democratic structures at national, provincial, and local levels. Although the system theoretically adheres to the doctrine of separating powers, practical implementation reveals widespread weakness and under-resourcing across governmental bodies. Notably, few entities, like the National Treasury and certain local governments, manage to deliver services effectively. However, the majority struggle with maladministration, corruption, and insufficient skills, leading to a lack of accountability. The judiciary remains relatively independent, yet other branches of government show signs of political interference. Overall, the country's institutions face challenges in upholding democratic principles and efficient governance. (Abdullah and Lim 2023)

While the majority support democratic governance, dissatisfaction grows due to perceived ineffectiveness. A significant portion would consider a strong, unaccountable leader if they could deliver essential services efficiently. Dissent regarding the constitution's fairness, especially from certain factions within the ruling party, adds to this discontent.

Despite commitment from most quarters to democratic ideals, there's a growing sentiment, especially within the ANC's left, questioning the constitution's fairness. This sentiment, echoed by figures like Jacob Zuma, reflects broader dissatisfaction among ordinary citizens, who increasingly prioritize effective governance over democratic principles. (Maiurova, Kurniawan, Kustikova, Bykovskaia, Othman, Singh and Goh 2022)

Trust in political parties, particularly the ruling ANC, has declined, leading to disengagement from the political process. The proportional representation system exacerbates this by prioritizing party loyalty over voter representation. This lack of trust hampers effective governance and fosters a winner-take-all mentality, hindering consensus on critical policy issues.

The party system reflects broader social divisions and historical inequalities, with internal factionalism further weakening political consensus. Despite attempts to build coalitions, trust deficits persist, hindering decisive action on key policy fronts.

To address these challenges, there's a growing call for a broader social compact among stakeholders, including government, business, labour, and civil society. However, existing structures like the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), intended for consultation and consensus-building, often remain underutilized and fail to represent civil society adequately. (David 2024)

The support for democratic norms and procedures has been steadily declining over time. In 2011, 72% of respondents in the Afrobarometer Survey expressed a preference for democracy as the favoured form of governance, but this figure dropped to 40% by 2021. Concurrently, there has been a rise in approval for the notion that parliamentary systems and elections could be replaced by a more authoritarian presidency, with approval increasing from 15% in 2011 to 25% in 2021. Despite this shift, it still represents a minority viewpoint. Trust in key public institutions has also seen a downward trend. For instance, trust in parliament decreased from 54% in 2006 to 27% in 2021, while trust in the judiciary fell from 69% to 42% during the same period. (Louis, Hubert and Elisha 2024)

South Africa remains deeply divided due to the enduring legacy of apartheid and colonialism, evident across various aspects of daily life. Despite political changes in 1994, which removed legal grounds for discrimination, genuine social transformation ensuring equality and inclusivity remains elusive. This is largely due to the failure of the post-apartheid state to address structural challenges like poverty, inequality, and unemployment effectively. Racial disparities persist, reflecting the economic patterns inherited from apartheid, where a smaller proportion of white citizens experience poverty and unemployment compared to Black South Africans.

Integration has occurred to some extent within upper-middle and affluent social classes, primarily driven by employment and access to quality education. However, high levels of unemployment limit opportunities for deeper integration. Social capital, trust, and community organization mainly occur within culturally homogenous spaces and social classes, contributing to a fragmented citizenry, particularly in addressing issues like corruption and government failures in critical areas such as energy and healthcare. (Ali, Yan, Razzaq, Khan and Irfan 2023)

Poverty and inequality levels in South Africa remain high and are deeply rooted in race and inherited disadvantage. Official unemployment figures exceed one-third of the labour force, with approximately 80% of the unemployed being long-term job seekers. The public education system, especially in historically disadvantaged Black communities, performs poorly, exacerbating the mismatch between demanded skills and those supplied by the workforce. This contributes to a cycle of poverty and unemployment, particularly affecting women within poor communities. Despite some progress in poverty reduction from 2006 to 2011, poverty rates increased again by 2015, with over half of South Africans living below the country's upper-bound poverty line (Wampler, McNulty and Touchton 2021).

Findings and discussions

In the quest to meet various needs with limited resources, governments are continually faced with challenging decisions regarding resource allocation. Each government tends to prioritize spending according to its unique preferences. In the fiscal year 2021/2022, the South African government allocated R2.19 trillion, an increase of R83 billion from the previous year's R2.104 trillion. Stats SA's statistical release on consolidated general government finances encompasses data from 702 institutions spanning national, provincial, and local governments, as well as extra-budgetary accounts, funds, and higher education institutions (excluding public corporations).

Government spending is categorized either functionally or economically. Functionally, expenditures are categorized based on the various activities or services the government engages in, such as health, education, and defence. Economically, expenditures are classified according to the nature of transactions involved, like goods and services, employee compensation, and interest payments (Odanga 2022).

In functional terms, public services accounted for the largest portion, totalling R565.2 billion in 2021/2022. Economically, compensation of employees, comprising salaries and wages of public servants, was the highest expenditure item at R799.8 billion. The public wage bill constitutes over a third of the total spending. The government's spending priorities become evident when expressed as percentages of the total expenditure. In 2021/2022, compensation of employees represented 36.6% of total spending, with significant portions allocated to education, health, and public order and safety.

Other notable budget items in 2021/2022 include social benefits, accounting for 13.7% of expenditure, and interest payments on government debt, comprising 12.7%. Social benefits mainly include grants to households (Joise, Goenka, Wangyel and Shaturaev 2023).

Analysing changes over time, expenditure shares in 2021/2022 with those in 2014/2015. It reveals shifts such as a decrease in spending on non-financial assets and goods and services, with an increase in spending on social benefits and interest payments on debt.

In summary, government spending has shifted away from investments in infrastructure and goods and services, towards social welfare programs and servicing debt. For further insights, the 2021/2022 Financial Statistics of Consolidated General Government release and accompanying time series data.

South Africa operates under a constitutional democracy with a three-tier government system and an independent judiciary. Each level of government - national, provincial, and local - possesses legislative and executive authority, as outlined in the Constitution. Parliament, comprising the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), plays a central role in governance, with efforts made to enhance transparency and accessibility. The government also employs clusters to coordinate governance across various sectors, aiming for integrated planning and service delivery. Programs like Izimbizo facilitate direct engagement between citizens and government officials (Osmakova, Boyarov, Marques-Porto and Rodrigues 2020).

Additionally, the government forms Inter-Ministerial Committees (IMCs) for specific tasks, focusing on areas like corruption prevention and investment promotion. The Presidency oversees the executive branch, with key responsibilities including socio-economic development planning based on the National Development Plan (NDP) vision 2030. Cabinet, headed by the President and including Ministers appointed from the National Assembly, manages government affairs. Provincially, each of the nine provinces has its legislature and executive council led by a Premier. Traditional leadership is recognized, with structures established to promote its role and cooperation with national and provincial authorities (Fourie 2018).

Local government, comprising municipalities, is crucial for grassroots governance, with recent boundary changes reducing the number of municipalities. The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) oversees local government, implementing initiatives like the Back-to-Basics strategy to enhance service quality and governance at the municipal level. The Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) supports basic service provision in disadvantaged communities (Kahn and Zimbalist 2022).

Moreover, statutory bodies like the Public Service Commission (PSC) and the National School of Government (NSG) play roles in ensuring effective public service delivery and professional development. Departments such as Public Works and Home Affairs are tasked with infrastructure management, economic development, and citizen services, respectively. The Government Printing Works (GPW) handles security printing and other services for state organs (DOLAN, PRICE, LEMPert, PATEL, SYTSMA, PARK, DE LEON, BOND, MIRO and LAULAND 2023).

Conclusion

The allocation of resources towards Deputy Ministers and unnecessary deployments by the South African government represents a significant mismanagement of funds and personnel. This practice not only burdens taxpayers but also detracts from vital areas requiring investment, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure (Preethi, Karmegam, Manikandan, Vickram, Subbaiya, Rajeshkumar, Gomadurai and Govarthanan 2024). To address this issue, a reassessment of government structure and deployment strategies is imperative. Streamlining ministries, reducing unnecessary positions, and redirecting resources towards essential services will promote efficiency, accountability, and ultimately, better serve the needs of the South African population.

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