

Evolving Coalition Governance in South Africa: Dimensions, Lessons, Prospects

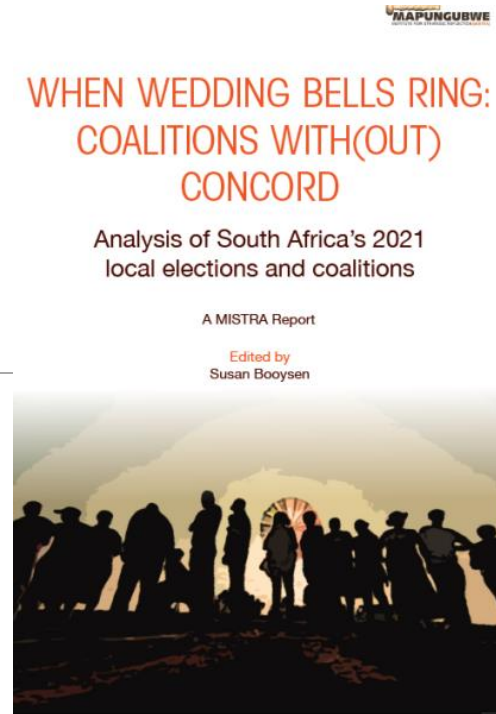
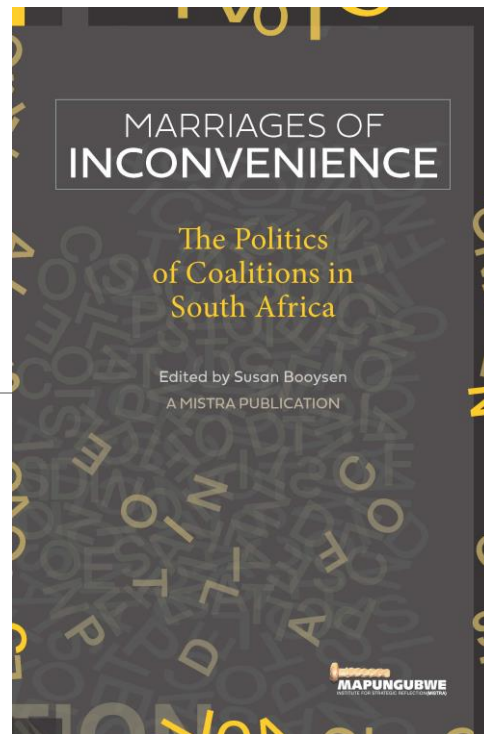
Gauteng Provincial Legislature

5 September 2023

Professor Susan Booysen



ANCHORED IN MISTRA RESEARCH



Framework – Dimensions Lessons Prospects

Coalitions practice emerges authentically, rooted

- Learning curves and experiences – South Africa builds on early democracy national and provincial experiences
- Strategy, tactics and party political thrusts just below surface, ongoing thread
- Now secondary period, often turmoil in this new epoch

Current epoch, new driving forces, new cultures

- Tectonic plates of party politics shifting, struggle to retain or gain, decline of predominant party, uncertain interregnum
- Culture of ‘coalitions as continuous elections’, gain majorities that were denied in elections
- SA is a nation divided on coalitions – MISTRA national survey



SA Coalitions: Emerging Practice and Culture

SOUTH AFRICA HAS ACCUMULATED COALITION CULTURES –
INEVITABLE BASE FOR GOING FORWARD – BUT MANY NEW
ADDITIONS

POLITICAL PARTIES AND COALITIONS	PEOPLE'S CULTURES ON COALITIONS	GOVERNMENT PRACTICE PROVINCES AND LOCAL
PREMONINANT FOCUS OF REVIEWS	EMERGIGING, NEW MISTRA STUDY SHEDS LIGHT	WORKING TO SHAPE WORLD OF POST-DOMINANCE
Dominant party culture – use coalitions to stem the tide, time to dig in, limit rising opposition	Recent MISTRA fieldwork, ‘a nation divided’ – report due for release in October	Coalition municipalities unstable, inefficient in <i>a sea of similarity</i>
Opposition parties see windows of opportunity for inroads, hungry for new spaces	Condemnation inefficiency, instability – indictments, parties to be judged	Consensus-building at time of several party initiatives, legislative initiatives
Small and micro-parties entrenched, symbiotic with big, roles, mandates	Acceptance, entrenchment of small parties, repertoire of choices	Coalition initiatives bear resemblance to campaigns
Party politics ‘tricks’, disorder, relative agreements, political interference, grabs, litigation	Unambiguous belief that parties act in own interest, rather than national interest	Select actions to correct shortfalls in local government – ‘IGR, limited powers’
Condemn instability while perfecting the art	Many consider changing their vote just to avoid coalition government – can be manipulated	Build capacities – extend actions, beyond immediate coalition municipalities
ESTABLISH THE BASE RULES ON WHICH NEW CULTURE WILL BUILD		

Coalition experience across the spheres of SA government

NATIONAL

PROVINCIAL

LOCAL



NATIONAL

* GNU of 1994 consensual and socio-political compacting for reconciliation

PROVINCIAL

* KwaZulu-Natal of 1994-2004 in various iterations and part of peace and power politics

* Western Cape of 2004, from floor-crossing (2005) to consolidation to possible further transitions (Cape Town 2006)

LOCAL

Election year – local	Number of coalition councils – local, metro
2000	29
2006	31
2011	37
2016	27
2021	70

Thus, on history
and relevance of
experience

- ❑ South Africa no newcomer to coalition government
- ❑ Context and objectives change
- ❑ Experiences and practices accumulate
- ❑ Citizen consciousness changes
- ❑ Brings lessons of experience-specific coalition praxis

The times are changing ...
new parties rise as elections do not deliver clear winners; new values become more explicit in interregnum

- ❑ Power retention, bigger parties gain what did not come by election verdict, opportunistic accumulation
- ❑ Enabled by epoch of the old in decline and the new not ready to be born – and many small and micro parties flourish
- ❑ Small parties hope they will come to grow and predominate; alternatively, act as top-ups, kingmakers, disruptors and spoilers, apostles of community interests ensuring very local delivery
- ❑ New coalition practice in SA to be recognised as driven by principle of power – power gains at all cost

SA New Local Coalitions Practice

AT THE LOCAL SPHERE NEW PRACTICE IS RISING ORGANICALLY,
BUILDING ON PAST BUT SHAPING NEW FORMS

New coalition field
unstable and
unpredictable –
one of realities of
current epoch as
new rules emerge
(although still
contested)

**CONTEST WILL PREVAIL
IN RUN-UP TO
ELECTION 2024, AND
EXTEND BEYOND**

- ❑ Quests for power make new coalitions predictable in some ways – no party not lured by state coffers and what it can do for power, on a spectrum of direct personal and party enrichment to party benefit via policy and delivery
- ❑ Rules of new SA coalition politics by now very familiar
 - Practice In councils: Tyranny of motions of no confidence, disruptions, hyper-trade in mayorships
 - Coalition agreements: Minimal or informal, evident in allocation of positions and portfolios, secret, not worth the paper – exchangeable, coalition-crossing
 - External partnerships: Party structures, provincial governments, courts as port of final call until next opportunity for new rules arises
- ❑ Micro-parties (although different types) demanding disproportionate share due to kingmaking equaliser and bigger parties oblige, even go beyond and put micros in charge – new ‘par for the course’

Types of coalition agreements – illustration of new rules, and evolving SA-specific new coalition cultures

SO FAR MOSTLY POST-ELECTION, ALTHOUGH SOME EMERGENCE OF PRE-ELECTION ALLIANCE FORMATION

TYPES – MANIFESTATIONS IN COUNCILS

- Coalition by voting for offices of mayor, deputy mayor, speaker, chief whip
- Coalition by announcement of municipal portfolio allocation
- Bloc or pattern voting as evidence of coalition
- ‘Voting partner’ status as preference over ‘coalition partner’
- Confidence and supply arrangements
- Coalition by stealth – strategic abstention from voting, absenteeism, abscond from council sittings
- Formal, multiparty agreements, deliberated and announced

POLITICAL PARTIES AND TYPICAL (not exclusive) COALITION PARTNERSHIPS ARISING FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FIELD, 2023 illustrations	ANC-DRIVEN COALITIONS	DA-DRIVEN COALITIONS
	ANC, EFF	DA, FF+
	ANC, EFF, NFP	DA, IFP
	ANC, PA	DA, FF+, IFP, ACDP, Cope - ActionSA
ANC, PAC, Good, UDM, AIC, ATM, community parties, etc.	DA + UIM, community parties, etc.	
<p style="text-align: center;"> Voting blocs constructed by both these parties (ANC, DA the bloc leaders); At specific sites at particular times, the lines may be crossed; So far only handful of independents played a central role </p>		

**TYPICAL PATTERNS OF ASSOCIATION, BUT FEW RULES THAT BIND;
EVEN THE TWO MAIN BLOCS ALLEGED TO COALESCE**

SA Coalitions Management, Control, Legislative initiatives

TENTATIVE PRACTICE SO FAR, WITH PARTIES' PRE-ELECTION INTEREST IN COALITIONS TAKEN AS INDICATIVE OF ELECTION PROSPECTS

Accumulating initiatives by political parties to optimise their interparty coalition agreements

APPROXIMATE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Entail both limited bi-party, and multiparty initiatives

DA's five-point plan for the stabilisation of coalitions, October 2022, emphasises setting electoral threshold, formalising coalition agreements, establishing independent registrar of political parties, extending time period for election of mayors, limiting motions of no-confidence.

ANC and EFF, early 2023 announcing that they would cooperate in municipalities across the provinces to remove the DA from power.

NFP siding. February 2023, with the ANC (and EFF), and in several councils also contribute to removal of IFP from power (in some councils some NFP councillors went rogue).

DA announcing its Moonshot Pact intentions, April 2023.

ANC announcing its 12-point plan for coalition formation, May 2023 (which includes the principle of the biggest party to lead a coalition).

7-party Moonshot offshoot, Multiparty Charter for SA, comprising the DA, IFP, ActionSA, FF+, UIM, Isanco, and SNP, August 2023.

IFP-DA service delivery pact, July 2023.

ANC and DA pressured by small parties to disown reports of pending oversized coalition linked to 2024 national, provincial elections.

ANC insists fighting election for a majority, not entertaining pre-election coalition talk, September 2023 – while Deputy President runs government initiative.

Initiatives to legislate the coalitions space

So far, mostly the DA initiating private members bills, accompanied by the National Coalitions Dialogue of August 2023

Window of opportunity pre-2024 election has possibly expired – legitimacy and timing

- Democratic Alliance initiating private members bills in Parliament in March 2023, comprising:
 - Bill to amend legislation on national and provincial governments, proposing to amend the Electoral Act, to be Sanco introduced once the Electoral Amendment Bill is finalised.
 - Bill to amend legislation re local government, proposing to amend the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act.
 - Bill to amend Constitution of SA to regulate frequency of motions no-confidence, and extend timeframe to form a government following elections.
- Deputy Minister of CoGTA announcing that legislation was in the pipeline to control coalitions.
- National Coalitions Dialogue exploring frameworks to control the coalitions future – Ramaphosa argues agreement reached on 1% threshold for representation.

Aspects that might be legislated

PARTY POLITICS AND REPRESENTATION

Enter formal agreements

Threshold for representation in legislature

Establish party oversight body

LEGISLATURE OR COUNCIL OPERATIONS

More time for constitution of government

Limit motions of no-confidence

Outlaw disruptions and antics

Threshold for representation in executive

Form of executive – mayoral, proportional

Firewalls between council and bureaucracy

CONTROL OF COALITION COUNCILS ALSO BY AUDITOR GENERAL PROCESSES

Provincial comparison of auditing outcomes for South Africa's coalition municipalities 2021-2022

	Disclaimed	Adverse	Qualified with findings	Unqualified with findings	Unqualified without findings	Total
Eastern Cape	-	-	2	1	-	3
Free State	1*	-	2	1	-	4
Gauteng	1	-	2	4	1	8
KwaZulu-Natal	-	-	5	14	2	21
Limpopo	-	-	2	-	-	2
Mpumalanga	1	-	1	1	-	3
North West	1	-	2	-	-	3
Northern Cape	2	-	4	3	1	10
Western Cape	1	1	1	5	8	16

* Not finalised at time of required submission

Source: Extracted from Auditor General, 2023; MISTRA Coalitions Barometer, 2023

SA Coalitions meet Elections and Governance

TIMING NOT CONDUCIVE TO FOSTERING BETTER PRACTICE – THUS,
ENTERING POSSIBLE NEW COALITIONS ERA WITH FEW AGREED
TOOLS; CLEAR THAT THE NEED FOR CONSENSUS NEVER STRONGER

Coalition talk at this stage is in the zone of electioneering

- Parties wary that interest in coalitions will reflect own projection of election prospects
- Bandwagon prevails over underdog in SA world of elections – voters look for parties that can do things for them
- Small-party coalition behaviours have probably improved their prospects
- Big efforts to sway the abstention blocs
- And, unlikely that coalition deliberations will progress much prior to Election 2024

LESSONS on
consensus,
governance and
rising above
narrow party
political interest

- Coalition government not unique in turmoil, disruption, but can be exacerbated, especially if bureaucracy entangled in power games
- Accountability suffers with coalition turmoil, crossing and alternation
- Quality and ethics of leadership carry both coalition and non-coalition governance
- But SA likely to enter next phase unguarded
- Over to political parties to embark on voluntary consensus seeking – but idealistic

LESSONS

If consensual, effective coalition governance is to be established, and take hold, attend to sequence and process – for new culture in which party politics in interregnum style subsides

Institutionalise pre-election alliance announcement, statements on partners in case of no outright majority, leave principled space for newcomers big and small

↪ If hung legislative body then arises, follow through with sufficient period for negotiation, anchored in policies and programmes

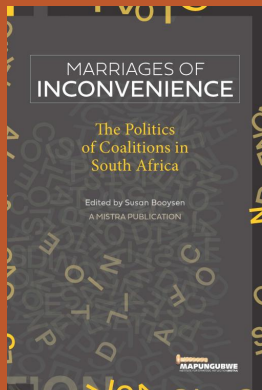
↪ Formalise agreement, make it public, parties committed to the deliverables, exit clauses be known and mapped

↪ Agreed mechanism for oversight and enforcement, sanction for non-compliance, work with popular sentiment

↪ Overall, curtailment of council tricks and antics, limit bias and interference, ensure flow of governance

Working with and changing cultures – possibilities and bottom-lines for a way forward

KEY CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS



- Party politics as prime driver subverted, transcended by new consensus between parties?
- Superseding the prevalent curve of jarring cultures?
- In-government contests, often pivoting off party and personal interests, minimised for the greater good?
- Combination of ‘professionalised’ government, not subjected to party politics – interspersed with competing in elections?