

Coalition Councils in South African Local Government: Analysis of the Challenges and Possible Solutions

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Coalition government is an old phenomenon that has got its roots in Western European countries. It has since spread all over the world including in South Africa. Coalitions in the local sphere of government have existed predominantly in KwaZulu Natal and Western Cape, but it has since spread over to other provinces in South Africa. The outcome of the 2016 local government elections brought about dramatic results which saw the governments of three metropolitan municipalities change hands to coalitions of political parties. The Democratic Alliance (DA) and other small parties with the assistance of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) constituted coalition governments in Nelson Mandela Bay (in Eastern Cape), City of Tshwane, and Johannesburg in Gauteng province. However, the DA mayor and his executive in Nelson Mandela Bay have since been removed with the one from the United Democratic Movement (UDM) as a mayor and the executives from the African National Congress (ANC) and other smaller parties. The EFF announced in July 2019 that it will not vote with the DA or ANC in all municipalities where coalition councils must be formed. This paper seeks to identify challenges associated with coalition governments in the local sphere of government and propose possible solutions for curtailing such challenges. The paper does so by way of reviewing existing literature related to coalitions and alliances of municipal governments in South Africa. One of the challenges is the differing policy positions of the political parties in the coalition. This paper proposes that the needs and service delivery demands of the local communities must be given more preference over the political ideologies of the political parties concerned.

Keywords: coalition, municipalities, political parties, service delivery, communities

The phenomenon of coalition intertwines with modern politics in Western European countries (Oyugi, 2006; Kadima, 2014) and due to their experiences, countries like Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, and Spain have contributed greatly to the theorisation of coalition governments. Coalition, as a practice in the political and public administration spheres, has proven to be a convenient solution for constituting governments, obviously in cases where the outright majority in nonexistent following elections, particularly in constitutional democracies across the world. It has been defined differently by scholars and practitioners alike, with Makoa (2008) referring to the phenomenon of formal cooperation based on an agreement between or among two or more organised groups about specified activities. Coalition or alliance involves the formation of cooperating parties in a national, provincial and municipal government both before and after municipal elections. Political coalitions are more often than not designed to serve the individual and collective interests of the cooperating parties. In this instance, either leaders of political parties or political parties themselves (Oyugi, 2006).

Despite great efforts by European countries to conceptualise and theorise this phenomenon, most scholars are agreeable that coalition is not a straightforward process nor does it have a blue-print for success in reality (Kadima, 2014; Maserumule et al., 2016). This much is apparent in South Africa case, where thirty years into democracy, the country is still grappling with finding a framework for proper management of coalitions, especially in the local sphere where a “series of alliances and sprinkling of coalitions” (Boysen, 2015:74) have emerged after every election period since the Local Government Elections held in the year 2000 (Ndletyana, 2018; Munzhedzi, 2021). Notably, the literature is replete with inherent challenges associated with coalition practices in different South African municipalities (Matoane, 2023; Masina, 2021; Boysen, 2015). This includes, among other things, the council's inability to pass or agree on budgets and other crucial municipal decisions, unstable municipal councils, the creation of parallel councils, and the spontaneous removal of mayors. In light of the above, this conceptual paper reviews existing literature to identify challenges associated with coalition governments in the local sphere, and further proposes possible solutions to curtail the identified challenges in South African local government. The paper commences with a broad understanding of the phenomenon of coalition government within the local sphere of governments in South Africa.

Contextualisation of Coalition Politics in South African Local Government

The local sphere of government in South Africa is made up of 257 municipalities and is a sphere that is considered closest to the people (Independent Electoral Commission, 2023). It consists of

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metropolitan, districts and local municipalities and all these municipalities are mandated to provide a wide range of services to the constituents within individual municipalities. South African local government which is established in terms of chapter seven of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996* (hereafter referred to as the 1996 *Constitution*) operates within a decentralised system in that a considerable amount of power has been delegated to it (Kahn, Madue, & Kalema, 2016). Municipalities have been conferred with the power to function autonomously, distinctively, and interdependently from other spheres (Shopola & Mukonza, 2020). The 1996 *Constitution* also makes a provision for the executive and legislative authority of a municipality to be vested in its municipal council.

Unlike any other local government election outcomes before, the 2016 election outcomes were dubbed 'dramatic' in that no single political party won an outright majority (50% plus 1) to govern at least four of the metropolitan municipalities in South Africa (Mokgosi, Shai, & Ogunnubi, 2017). All other local government elections before were dominated by the African National Congress (ANC) with the exception of the City of Cape Town and a few other districts and local municipalities country-wide. Brooks (2014) is of the opinion that the ANC overwhelmingly dominated the political landscape in all spheres of government in South Africa in that it often had a convincing majority (an average of not less than 60%) in the national, some provinces, and municipalities. These municipalities that were excluded from this dominance are predominately in KwaZulu Natal and Western Cape provinces.

The 2016 outcomes are considered to be dramatic in that they were not anticipated hence the political parties involved in the coalition governments did not undertake preliminary negotiations preceding the election results (Mokgosi, Shai, & Ogunnubi, 2017). The three metropolitan municipalities, namely, Tshwane, Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, and Nelson Mandela Bay did not have an outright winner which forced political parties to negotiate and enter into a coalition governments (IEC, 2016). After that, the Democratic Alliance and other small parties such as the Freedom Front Plus (FFP) with the assistance of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) constituted coalition governments in the City of Tshwane, Johannesburg, and Nelson Mandela Bay. Differences between the Democratic Alliance and the Economic Freedom Fighters ensued thereafter in 2017 and saw the Democratic Alliance mayor and his executive in Nelson Mandela Bay being removed with the mayor from the United Democratic Movement (UDM) and the mayoral executive from other parties including the African National Congress and other smaller parties (Ndletyana, 2018). The African National Congress (ANC) formed a coalition with an African Independent Congress (AIC), the Pan African Congress (PAC), and the Independent Ratepayers Association of South Africa (IRASA) in the City of Ekurhuleni. This goes to show that coalition governments are political terrain that is often contested. It is for this very reason that political factors outside of Nelson Mandela Bay were used to vote out the then-mayor of the Democratic Alliance, Athol Trollip. It must be noted that until 2021 the EFF was not in coalition in all these three metropolitan municipalities, either with the DA in Tshwane and Johannesburg or with the UDM and the ANC in Nelson Mandela Bay.

The 2021 local government election which resulted in over 60 hung councils also triggered coalitions (IEC, 2021). Similar patterns of unstable coalition governments thus continued. The City of

Joburg, for instance, had five mayors reshuffled in less than two financial years. Currently, the City is led by the Aljamah mayor a party with just three seats in the City council. This decision was supported by EFF, ANC, and other small parties and the arrangement was such that the other parties will also have a stake in the mayoral committee. As things stand, ten portfolio committee seats are shared across the coalition arrangement in the following order; Finance portfolio (ANC), Corporate and Shared Service (ANC), Public Safety (EFF), Development Planning (ANC), Economic Development (ANC), Human Settlement (PA), Community Development (ATM), Transport (PA) and Health (EFF). Since coalitions are highly dependent on cooperation from the involved parties the sustainability of governance and building of stable councils is not an easy task to do, and this is accompanied by the ever-present possibility of metropolises and many other locals collapsing at any given time. In other provinces such as Limpopo, coalitions have led to municipal dysfunctionality and administrative confusion. Modimolle Mookgopong Municipality is such a culprit in that disagreements between parties have led to the establishment of two separate councils and parallel appointments of two municipal managers (Business Day, 2018).

Understanding Municipal Coalitions in South Africa

The South African local sphere of government is no exception to this in that many coalitions have been formed as early as the year 2000. Each municipal election subsequent to the 2000 ones has always had a substantial number of coalition governments including the one in 2016. Ndletyana (2018) indicated that the 2016 municipal election results had a total of twenty-seven (27). This phenomenon of coalition is defined differently by scholars and practitioners alike. Makoa (2008) refers to a coalition as a formal cooperation based on an agreement between or among two or more organised groups about specified activities. Oyugi (2006) observes that a coalition or alliance involves the formation of cooperating parties in national, provincial and municipal governments both before and after municipal elections. Oyugi further opines that political coalitions are more often than not designed to serve the individual and collective interests of the cooperating parties. In this instance, either leaders of political parties or political parties themselves.

Kadima (2014) postulates that the main reason for the formation of coalition governments in Africa as elsewhere in the world is to hold public or municipal office. Martin and Stevenson (2001) concur with Kadima's assertion and further posit that the primary goal of political parties entering into some coalition governments in their respective municipalities is to hold office and attain power to control. One of the benefits enjoyed most by parties in coalition governments is occupying mayoral committee (municipal executive) positions or any other positions agreed upon by the parties concerned.

On the other hand, Lodge (2014) and Rudge (2014) refer to a coalition government as an agreed arrangement to cooperate under which more than one political party unites and cooperates to form a coalition government. In such instances, parties in a coalition government agree in principle that they will vote together to approve a municipal integrated development plan (IDP), budget and service delivery, and budget implementation plan. Approvals that need the majority of the municipal council are attended without difficulty because of the coalition. In essence, regular consultation and negotiation until common ground is achieved between the parties is

solicited. Rudge (2014) goes further to claim that such cooperation and consultation are paramount in that the parties in the coalition share a mandate of power given to them by the local electorate. According to O'Day (2014), the terms and conditions of any coalition including the local government setup must be specific and suitable for the particular political system and political culture in which they operate. Political coalitions are not easy to form, but they are even more challenging to sustain once they are formed. The reason for this could be that coalitions are often about the cooperation of parties and people with different political ideologies. Other coalition governments are unable to sustain the cooperation and the term of office due to the challenges that encounter during their cooperation.

Singh (2006) is of the opinion that some coalitions are formed with the objective of pulling down a party in power and also providing an alternative government, and that is referred to as a positive or constructive coalition. On the other hand, a coalition may be formed with the sole intention of toppling the incumbent government and not providing an alternative government, then such a coalition is referred to by Singh (2006) as a negative or destructive coalition. Lodge (2014) points out that coalitions may be classified into pre-poll and post-poll alliances depending upon their time to come into shape. A pre-poll coalition refers to a situation where a number of political parties that participated in the municipal elections come together into one formation before the elections. On the other hand, Sharma (1989) suggests that a Post-poll coalition is seen after election results, and in this formation, parties switch sides to enter into an alliance to obtain the ruling power like the DA and other small parties in the City of Tshwane and Johannesburg. All the coalitions based on pre-election alliances were formed by the political parties which were ideologically close.

Makoa (2008); Maserumule, Vil-Nkomo, and Mokate (2016), point out that Since 1994 South Africa has witnessed an atrophying and weakening opposition and the growth of ruling party hegemony. However, the huge majority of the ANC has been dwindling with each election. The electoral victory of the ANC went down from 69.69% in 2004, 65.90% in 2009, 62.15% in 2014 and 57.50% in 2019 (IEC, 2016). The ANC is still the dominant party, offering little political space for the opposition, even though, at the local government level, some councils are controlled by its rivals, while on the other hand, Siddle (2016) shares the same sentiment as he argues that the ANC has been the dominant political party in South Africa since 1994. For this reason, the opposition parties might draw the incentive to enter into a coalition to dismantle the dominant-party system in which the ANC's election success has been an inevitable conclusion from one election to the next. Unlike the pre-election alliances, the post-election or coalition formed by opposition parties is often done with the intention of beefing-up their strength in order to win a combined electoral majority even out-winning the incumbent party (Makoa, 2008; Lodge, 2014).

Coalition municipalities are an old feature of South African local politics which dates back to the 2000 municipal elections. Before the 2016 elections, the local government had experienced a total of 97 coalition municipalities. The 2016 elections pushed that tally up to 124. They were highest in 2011 at 37, followed by the 2006 elections at 31. Despite the prominence of the 2016 elections, they produced the least number of municipal coalitions which is 27. This is based on the analysis of the database of the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC, 2016).

According to Siddle (2016), it is worth noting that all but one of the eight metropolitan municipalities were controlled by the ANC with the exception of Cape Town. Following the 2006 local elections, the DA managed to form a coalition with a number of smaller parties to take control of the City of Cape Town from the ANC. This was the first example of a significant coalition arrangement in local government in the country. Several other smaller municipalities in the Western Cape were run by coalitions. Siddle (2016) and Mokgosi, Shai, and Ogunnubi (2017) posited that the 2016 local government elections were perhaps the most significant elections to be held in South Africa at any level since 1994. Despite pre-election turmoil, the elections themselves were conducted without major incidents. The dominant party, the ANC, lost considerable support, dropping by 2% to just over 54%. The loss was most severely felt in the large metropolitan municipalities. The developments at many municipalities in South Africa including in the City of Tshwane, Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela Bay, and Ekurhuleni necessitated the formation of coalitions precisely because there was no outright winner. However, there are many challenges associated with municipal coalitions including in South Africa. Such challenges are discussed in detail in the subsequent section of the paper.

In the book "Future Realities of Coalition Government in South Africa" the former mayor of Ekurhuleni, Mzwandile Masina argues that in much as international literature provides no blueprint for successful management of coalitions South Africa begins to navigate around to find ways to make municipalities function beyond councils (Mzwandile, 2021). The Parliament of South Africa is currently ceased with the proposed coalition bill submitted by DA which is an attempt to prevent managerial implications associated with problematic coalition councils. This also in anticipation of the predictions made by scholars that the local government coalition results and dynamics are a microcosm of the upcoming national elections (Booyesen, 2023). In anticipation, the DA, IFP, Action SA, and other small parties represented in the national assembly have initiated a pact [moon-shot pact] which is a pre-arranged coalition partnership for the post-2024 election coalition government (Shopola, 2023). Notably, there seems to be an appreciation from political players in South African body politic that coalitions are difficult to manage because they demand a high level of cooperation, maturity, and tolerance-characters that most parties have displayed a lack of. However, the point raised by Masina (above) is important but has its own hurdles. That is, if one considers for example-the provisions of section 151 of the Constitution (1996) which effectively vests both legislative and executive powers in the municipal council, and the provisions in the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 03 of 2022 which defines the role and significance of council within the local government planning and budget decision-making process, it would prove very difficult imagine municipalities functioning beyond council unless in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances in this case may relate to mandatory interventions through section 139 of the Constitution (1996) during the election day or in cases of supervening impossibility.

The Speaker of the coalition council in the City of Joburg, Polly Makhubele rejected the supposition that governance will be affected amid an unstable council due to disagreements arising from the coalition. She told the media that service delivery does not stop because there is no council as the role of politicians is largely on

policy issues (ENCA, 2023). This argument is correct at a clinical level, especially if one uses the circumstances outlined in the foregoing paragraph as criteria. This, unfortunately, negates the fundamental nitty-gritty of political leadership especially with respect to local democracy. Local representatives are regarded as the key bridge between municipalities (as public institutions) and communities hence the periodical elections. Perhaps the former Auditor-General of South Africa, Terrence Nombembe, argued the point best in opining that “the first and final level of responsibility is held by the executive leadership, who have front line role in setting the tone for good governance and accountability”. Having regard to the power granting section, section 151 (2) of the Constitution (1996) which gives credence to the Municipal Council over executive powers, the former AG correctly adds that the political leadership [council in this case] “is best placed to set the tone for the rest of the civil service culture: a culture of ethical conduct, a culture of learning, high performance, and accountability, all of which will help to prevent any threats to good governance and public accountability”.

The major challenge with coalitions is that service delivery gets compromised whenever there is a collapse in party agreements, and Asivikelane's Service Delivery Index (2022) edifies in that regard. The index assessed the City of Joburg's performance with respect to water provision, sanitation, and refuse removal, and found that there has been a service delivery decline in those areas. Over 58 % of residents reported that there has been insufficient to no access when it comes to the afore-listed services, and this was linked to an unstable coalition council in the city (Ndlovu-Nachamba, 2023). To a ponderable extent, therefore, it can be said that the answer or solution lies in the hands of the electorates because they are the ones responsible for coalition results. Perhaps a good question to be asked is: Are there any available alternatives for residents to escape the present quandaries precipitating from coalition realities? This question rests upon the general premise that coalitions are a convenient way of addressing certain problems, especially the ones arising from election outcomes. However, international trends point to a relatively huge shifts from the party-led cities to citizen-led cities to the extent that there is even a theoretical construct “*the New Municipalism*” that characterises these changes. The New Municipalism is regarded as a nascent global social movement and is a direct conceptual offshoot of the *Fearless Cities Network* summit held in 2017 in Barcelona. As pointed out by Maserumule (2022) this phenomenon is still developing, with just over 176 cities in existence globally thus far. As it did in cities such as Rosario (in Argentina), Bologna (in Italy), Madrid and Barcelona (in Spain) and Mississippi in the US, this phenomenon is likely to make strides in South Africa as it is easily and steadily perpetuated by the citizens' belief that local politics have failed to offer solutions to their problems (Russell, 2019). Thus, the advent of coalitions and their unpredictable nature and the inconvenient posture on service delivery provides a fertile ground for new options to manage cities including the New Municipalism. Considering this possibility in South Africa, the question of context is of paramount importance, and this necessitates extensive research-on this developing phenomenon-with more focus placed on testing whether the idea represents change or represents the left politics; what is its stand-point on electoral politics? is it a new paradigm altogether or as Russell asks, is it a return “of yet another round of 'particular localism'” (2019:994). The following section looks into the theoretical insights that can assist in

understanding the phenomenon of coalitions.

Theoretical Framework

Political party coalition including the local sphere of government is often studied using two theories, namely, the theories of size and ideology, and the new institutionalism (Gamson, 1961; Hinckley, 1972; Mokgosi, Shai, & Ogunnubi, 2017). This paper chose the theory of size and ideology which claims that for a coalition government to have a prospect of success, the size and ideology of the coalition play a paramount role. The claim is that the political parties in the coalition government must be as little as possible to avoid many differing voices within the coalition. Equally, the theory of size and ideology also encourages that the coalition parties should be as close as possible as far as political ideologies are concerned. The argument advanced is that the more closer the ideology of parties is, the more likely the prospects of success in that coalition. Gamson (1961) in concurrence is of the view that the smaller the number of parties in the coalition the better. This will minimize the prospective benefits in the form of executive positions to be occupied in the municipality. The more the political parties are involved in the coalition, the theory of size and ideology postulates that the differences are more likely. It is even more difficult to manage such parties let alone the differences, particularly if they are more than a reasonable number (Riker, 1962). In essence, Riker's (1962) assertion is that the smaller the number of political parties in a coalition and the more closer the parties to their ideologies the better and easier they are to manage. However, Kadima (2014) correctly dismisses the view held by many including Franklin and Mackie (1984) that policy goals of political parties play a central role in coalitions, and advances the view that policy goals play a minimal role in as far as forming a coalition is concerned.

The coalition governments are often formed as a result of the absence of the absolute winner when municipal election results are declared. As such, a general deduction from the mainstream literature is that coalitions are often formed with the main reason being that of occupying office no matter how far apart the coalition partners are concerning their ideological proximities (Mokgosi, Shai, & Ogunnubi, 2017). For example, the EFF voted for the DA to govern Tshwane and Johannesburg with other smaller coalition partners while the ANC formed a coalition with AIC and Ratepayers Union in Ekurhuleni. EFF has since announced in July 2019 that they will not vote with either the DA or the ANC where there are coalition governments. However, it must be noted that the EFF was not part of the coalition governments in these Metros besides voting with the DA to pass a budget, by-laws and the IDP as well as voting for the mayoral candidates put forwards by the DA. In essence, the EFF voted with the DA without being in a coalition government with them in Tshwane and Johannesburg. A different scenario played out in the recent election of the Aljama candidate to the mayorship of the City of Joburg where EFF, ANC, and ATM traded their support for mayoral committee seats.

The DA's and the EFF's ideologies are far apart from each other but the two have a working arrangement (not a coalition) where they negotiated and agreed from time to time to vote together on issues of common interest. This arrangement between the DA and the EFF supports the argument which says that political ideologies and policy goals play a minimal role in choosing coalition partners to form a government (Mokgosi, Shai, & Ogunnubi, 2017). Seemingly, DA and IFP have been working together to dethrone ANC in some

municipalities in the KZN. In the absence of any other pointer that can be used to locate the relationship between DA and IFP outside of numeric interpretation of electoral outcomes in different municipalities, a valid suspicion is that the two parties may be knotted by their ideological orientation as they both believe in federalism. The EFF had indicated in 2016 that the reason they are voting with the DA is to punish the corrupt elements in the ANC which was in power since the dawn of democracy in all metros in South Africa with the exception of Cape Town (Maserumule, Vil-Nkomo, & Mokate, 2016; TimesLive, 2016).

In Nelson Mandela Baby, the EFF changed its position and decided to vote out the DA because of what they characterise as the “stubbornness of whiteness” (Politics Web, 2018). Notably, the EFF has in a number of hung councils emerged as the 'kingmakers' and have always tried to use its status to drive its own agenda without being worried about leading from the helm (mayorship). One of many examples is the North West based Metsimaholo Municipality *which produced a hung council in 2021* where EFF rejected the mayorship offer on the score that the party would only assume such responsibility through an outright majority. All these elements are the ideals of the elite theory which has also been espoused in this paper in addition to the theory of size and ideology.

The elite theory which has been selected because of its applicability in this paper is about the dominance and the central influence of the political elites in the municipal policies and decisions. It therefore means that the decision to form and choose a coalition partner is in terms of the elite theory more of an elitist decision, meaning that the elites decide for the people. Largely, political decisions are taken without the necessary consultations with the affected communities. In the case of coalition governments, it would be the members of the political parties in a coalition government. More often than not, the ANC, DA, and the EFF entered into several coalition discussions following the absence of the absolute winners in some of the metropolitan municipalities in the 2016 local government elections. All decisions regarding the coalitions were taken by the political elites of these parties. It can be opined that the negative relationship between the former President of the ANC Jacob Zuma and the leader of the EFF Julius Malema, in 2016, played a paramount role in the two parties not agreeing to form a coalition government in several metropolitan municipalities, especially in the City of Tshwane and City of Joburg. The two political elites (Zuma & Malema in this case) play a central role. Shai (2013) posits that the elite theory manifests itself in the following manner:

- When public policy does not reflect the demands of the people,
- The elites are interested in preserving the system and their places in it,
- The welfare of the local communities rests upon the elites rather than the themselves,
- People's agenda is set and determined by the elites, and
- The way of communication is perpetually from the elites to the masses.

The preceding elements discussed define the elites theory and what it is about. In essence, elitism is about disregarding the views and needs of the local communities and giving more preference to the elite group which could be the top politicians and business people. For example, we argue that the coalition talks between the ANC, DA, and EFF after the 2016 local government elections were

largely influenced by the elites (relations between Zuma & Malema). The EFF ended up voting with the DA in Tshwane and Johannesburg while ANC partnered with the AIC and Ratepayers Union. Surely all the political parties involved in the coalition governments after the 2016 local government elections and beyond did not consult their respective members and voters. Decisions are often taken by the elites with the interests of the very same elites. Local communities never decide for themselves in as far as elitism is concerned. The elite theory extensively differs from the theory of size and ideology which dictates that coalition governments are formed with the size and ideologies of such political parties as being the cornerstone.

The two theories are adopted in this paper precisely due to the reason that the theory of size and ideology correctly claims that the fewer the number of parties in the coalition, the better it is to manage it, while the elite theory believes that the interests of the elites in the political space play a significant role. It is argued that ideologies are an important element in a coalition, yet in practice, political personalities play an even more primary role in forming or ending a coalition. The subsequent part of the paper identifies and discusses challenges in coalition municipal governments.

Challenges of Municipal Coalition in South Africa

Even though municipal coalition governments possess a number of advantages for democracy, they certainly have challenges that they are often confronted with that make them unable to pass credible by-laws, municipal IDP, and budgets. The challenges are discussed in the ensuing section of the paper.

Trust Deficiencies Amid Political Leaders

Coalition governments dictate that political leaders of such parties or coalitions should work together on an ongoing basis. Oyugi (2006) is of the opinion that trust deficiency among political leaders of coalitions, and such often generates friction between them. This is often due to the fact that leaders do not trust that a leader of another political party is likely to make a decision that is in the interest of that party rather than of the coalition governments or at least of the populace. Oyugi (2006) further alludes that the experience of South Africa is relevant. The DA and the EFF's working relationship has ended in mid-2019 because of such mistrust. The DA indicated that they were not willing to give the mayoral seat of Tshwane Metro to the EFF, this also includes Mookgophong-Modimolle Municipality in Limpopo (IOL, 2019). As a consequence of that lack of trust, some coalition governments never last for the entire term. The elite theory also alludes to the fact that everything to do with the coalition is about the leadership of political parties and not the interests of the local communities.

Minor Political Parties

Coalitions have also had the effect of fragmenting the party system in some countries (Kadima, 2014). Small political parties may get weakened due to this fragmentation. After such fragmentation, leaders of small political parties often obtain less number of votes in the subsequent elections precisely due to the fact that they can't prove as a political party that they can stand alone while large parties will increase their support base from the experience of coalition. Consequently, it can be safely maintained that party alliances and coalitions tend to disproportionately weaken small political parties

while strengthening the main party in the alliance or coalition (Kadima, 2014). Booysen (2014) also concurs with this assertion and posits that one of the contributing factors is the migration of supporters and to some extent members of a small coalition partner. A good example is that in the 2011 municipal elections, the DA obtained a substantial number of votes to now govern the City of Cape Town on its own after dominating its small coalition partners in the 2011 municipal election (Siddle, 2016). Thereafter, the coalition arrangement came to an end in that metro, meaning that the DA's support went up while those of its other coalition partners at the time went down. This poses a major threat in the coalition because it clearly shows that once a party gets enough votes to govern the municipality, the small parties that they entered into a coalition with are ditched. After all, their support is no longer needed which in turn causes bitterness out of some parties as they would be used by the party they entered into coalition with. In essence, small parties get swallowed by major parties in the coalition in that its councillors may get recruited into the main party in the coalition and vanish into the thin air. This is particularly true if the difference in size between the parties concerned is very enormous.

Fragility of Coalition Agreements

Siddle (2016) is of the opinion that coalition governments are by their very nature fragile, and that often leads to their dysfunctionality. Due to such a fragility, municipal by-laws, IDP, and budget are difficult to pass without the support of all the parties in the coalition government including minority parties (Maserumule, Vil-Nkomo, & Mokate, 2016; Mokgosi, Shai, & Ogunnubi, 2017). The positions of elected office-bearers, such as the mayor and the speaker are often put for motion of no confidence whenever there are disagreements between coalition partners. One of the main reasons for this fragility is the that the coalition is constituted by many political parties which is the opposite of what the theory of size and ideology postulates as discussed in the preceding section of this paper. Equally important as provided for in the discussion of the theory of size and ideology is that some of these coalitions are comprised of parties that are far apart in terms of their ideologies. However, the elite theory postulates that the ideologies of parties in a coalition are not as important as the need to attain political power in the municipality. Conversely, the fragility of the arrangement in Johannesburg has already been demonstrated, when the mayor, shortly after having been elected with EFF support, announced his intention to privatize the city's refuse collection service, only to be told in no uncertain terms that such a course of action would cost him the EFF's support and his job (EWN, 2016). The recent development has resulted in the EFF announcing that they will not vote with the DA wherever they have coalitions including in the City of Tshwane and Johannesburg (IOL, 2019). This may be argued that it is influenced by different ideologies of the DA and the EFF. However, the advantage is that whenever there is a coalition government between political parties in a municipality, good governance is advanced. This is because management or the administration will be under pressure to perform with the fear of being exposed to poor governance and maladministration.

Municipal Administration Politicized

The public administration environment is always politicized in that government administration and politics are like inseparable twins

(Cameron, 2009; Sebiloane, 2009; Munzhedzi, 2020). Municipal administration is no different in that the municipal election outcomes also have huge implications at an administrative level for municipalities that have undergone changes in political control, and not just those that have a coalition or minority governments (Siddle, 2016). This may be because the administrations of most municipalities have become profoundly politicized after years of single-party dominance, and are inhabited by political appointees (Maserumule, Vil-Nkomo, & Mokate, 2016; Munzhedzi & Phago, 2020). Therefore, it is a challenge for the leader of a coalition government to make decisions and plan and execute various policies or obtain consensus from all sides (Gautam, 2018). South African government like many governments of the world has adopted the policy of cadre deployment which seeks to deploy cadres of the ruling political party in the management of that municipality (Mello, 2013). This in essence means that politicians are deployed in administrative departments of the municipalities. This is rather incomprehensible in coalition governments in that they are comprised of multiple parties which makes the deployment of a municipal manager and directors a little challenging unlike when there is an absolute winner in the municipal election. However, senior managers such as municipal managers in coalition municipalities can be generally assumed to be often sourced from the dominant coalition partner.

Delegation of Authority and Responsibilities

Gautam (2018) identifies delegation of power, authority, and responsibilities as another thorny challenge among different parties forming a coalition municipal government. A leading party in a coalition would have its members in decision-making structures so that when important issues are debated they would make favourable decisions. Power contest between coalition partners is bound to occur like what transpired in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro when differences between the mayor from the DA and the deputy mayor from the UDM collapsed the coalition government between the DA, UDM, and Patriotic Alliance (EWN, 2019). This was with the support of the EFF in electing a mayor, speaker, IDPs, and a municipal budget. The DA and EFF relationship has since ceased to exist in all municipalities as a result of the EFF announcing that they are no longer voting with the DA in all coalition municipalities where support was there previously.

The challenges discussed in the preceding section of the paper are an indication that coalition governments including the local sphere of government cannot function without barriers. Many of these challenges may be caused by ideologies that are far apart from each other like that of the DA and the EFF. Some of these challenges are also caused by the fact that coalition partners are too many which results in differing policy positions of many partners. On the contrary, the elite theory posits that ideologies are not the determining factor in a coalition. The elite theory claims that all that matters is the elite of the parties and not the local communities. The theory of size and ideologies dictates that the coalition must be as small as possible for it to function appropriately. Furthermore, the theory of size and ideologies dictates that the coalition should be comprised of partners with ideologies that are closer to each other. This means that political parties with ideologies that are far apart from each other like the DA and EFF, PAC and FFP are likely not to function properly. The ensuing section of the paper recommends possible solutions to the identified challenges.

Possible Solutions to Municipal Coalition Challenges in South Africa

The challenges discussed above are an indication that coalition governments within South African municipalities are confronted by many challenges that have an effect on municipal service delivery. The reason for this is that if coalition partners are fighting, the smaller partners in the coalition are likely not to support the approval of the policies, IDPs, and municipal budgets. This paper suggests the possible solutions to the identified challenges in the subsequent section of the paper.

Representation of Small Parties

According to Siddle (2016), for a coalition government to function properly and address the fragility of the coalition, smaller parties in the coalition must be represented in the executive of the municipality, that is, selecting them as part of the mayoral committee or even as a speaker. This is so different from the kind of arrangement that existed in the City of Tshwane and Johannesburg where the EFF voted with the DA in the council but its councillors have not been included in the executive while the relationship lasted. However, it must be noted that the EFF preferred that arrangement until July of 2019 when they wanted to be voted as a mayor in Tshwane with the support of the DA (IOL, 2019). The representation of small parties in the coalition executives also boosts the confidence of small parties in the coalition as they know that their opinions matter in important issues that are discussed. Equally important is that the major coalition partner has to cooperate with the small parties because they rely on them not to pull out of the coalition. Ensuring that all coalition partners are included in the municipal executive or as a speaker strengthens the relationship between the parties that are in the coalition.

Regulating the Relationships

Gautam (2018) is of the opinion that to manage divergence in coalition government, the relationship between coalition partners must be regulated by some form of a contract. The regulating contract should seek to manage the equality of coalition partners, the fragility of the coalition, politicisation of the relationship as well as delegation of responsibilities and deployment into positions. If deployment into positions of responsibility and delegation of powers is not handled properly, conflicts within coalition partners are likely to rise. It is a fact that different political parties have different visions, and goals and the regulating contract may assist in managing the relations between the parties. In essence, the coalition partners must strive to behave within the confines of the regulating contracts.

Co-governance

Political parties forming a coalition government must develop a clear plan on how they intend to execute their obligations in ways that support their given mandate. It is on this basis that Maserumule, Vil-Nkomo, and Mokate (2016) contend that following the outcome of the 2016 local government elections in South Africa, a need necessitated coalition partners to put maximum effort into ensuring that the coalition becomes a success. The claim is that two hands are better than one so if political parties co-govern a municipality the likelihood is that there will be better governance in the municipality as a result because they hold each other accountable for their work. However, others are of the view that this could not be executed as per the Auditor-General of South Africa (2019) report where coalition

municipalities including the City of Tshwane and Johannesburg obtained excessive irregular expenditures. Nevertheless, this does not mean that co-governance is not a good strategy for political parties in a coalition to hold each other to account. With co-governance by coalition partners, the likelihood of divergence, deviation, and corruption is minimal for the same reason that there are good checks and balances in coalition governments.

The challenge of trust by coalition partners as identified above may be adequately addressed through co-governance between political parties in the coalition government. If all parties in the coalition (big & small) are involved equally in the management of that municipality, they are likely to trust each other. Co-governance brings cooperation, trust, stability positivity to respective municipalities. Equally important to addressing differing ideologies in coalition governments is putting the needs and interests of the local populace at the center of local politics. It is recommended that the ideologies of political parties be secondary to the needs and interests of the people within the jurisdiction of those municipalities. The challenge is that political parties including in the context of coalition politics function and operate on the basis of the ideologies of their respective political parties. However, the elite theory correctly postulates that even though ideologies should play a fundamental role in coalitions, elitism plays an even more central role. Attainment of political power becomes an ultimate aim at all costs. This could even be the reason why DA and EFF worked together (not in coalition) for some time from 2016- July 2019 with differing ideologies. Elitism played a primary role in such relationships as posited by (Mokgosi, Shai, & Ogunnubi, 2017).

The possible solutions discussed in the preceding part of the paper designate that it is possible for coalition municipalities in South Africa to function beyond the identified challenges. The identified challenges including trust, weak and small partners, fragility, and delegation of responsibilities are mere blockades to the effective and efficient functioning of coalition governments. If these recommended measures discussed above could be adequately implemented, the management and operations of coalition governments in South Africa may be well advanced.

Conclusion

The above discussion indicated that coalition governments are an old phenomenon which originated in Western Europe countries and later spread over the world including in South Africa. As early as the year 2000, coalition municipalities came about in South African municipalities. However, the 2016 local government election ushered in a new era in that it was for the first time that, first, at least four metropolitan municipalities did not have an ultimate winner, and second, the ANC has never lost power and votes in the metros in such a massive scale. It is worth noting that coalitions play a very significant role in the local government sphere although they have their challenges that make them not function optimally. Equally important is the fact that this paper developed possible recommendations to counter the identified challenges. To this end, it is clear that the political landscape in South Africa is changing as elections come and go, and that the playing field is no longer a one-man show like it used to be before which shows that there is growth in the political turf.

The theory of size and ideology was one of the two theories adopted in this paper, and it advocated that the fewer number of political parties in the coalition government and the closer their

ideological stances, the better the coalition. It claims that the more the partners in the coalition, the more likely the chances of being confronted with challenges. In addition, the elitism theory which claims that ideologies play a secondary role in coalitions while interests of the elites play a primary role was also espoused. An example was when DA and EFF had a working relationship between 2016 and July 2019 with ideologies that are far apart from each other. Some of the challenges that confront coalition as discussed include lack of trust, weakened small political parties, fragility, politicised administration as well as delegation of responsibilities. These challenges are what make the coalition governments not function adequately. It is recommended that even though political ideologies are important in political discourses, the needs and interests of the local people must be the primary determinant. Ideologies must be secondary to the needs and interests of the people in the respective municipalities in South Africa. However, a number of recommendations are advanced to counter the challenges discussed. Such recommendations include representing smaller coalition partners in the municipal executives, regulating the relationship as well as co-governance. It was discussed that the fewer the number of parties in the coalition, the more likely it is for the coalition to succeed.

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