Unpacking the Merits and Demerits of Electoral Coalitions in South African Metro-Municipalities from 2016-2019

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Journal Volume & Issue:
Vol. 6, No. 1 (February 2025)
pp. 169 – 192
DOI: https://doi.org/10.46404/panjogov.v6i1.6193

Received: 27 March, 2024
Revised: 27 February, 2025
Accepted: 27 February, 2025
Published: 28 February, 2025



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The collapse of colonialism and apartheid marked the emergence of a new political culture of pluralism and democratic political participation in South Africa, which heralded a shift in political attitudes, voter behavior, and political socialization trends in post-1994 South Africa. This has seen polyarchy/pluralism playing a pivotal role in creating politically conducive grounds for coalitions in South African municipalities. In light of this, the study examined the municipal electoral coalition trajectory and unpacked the merits and demerits of electoral coalitions in South African metro municipalities from 2016 to 2019. The study relied on the qualitative research paradigm where purposively selected written documents such as journal articles, council meeting minutes, party manifestoes, and local government reports, among others, were used to collect data. The data were then analyzed using thematic analysis and cross-case analysis. The study alluded to the collapse of the African National Congress (ANC) political hegemony, the fading liberation nostalgia, the rise of new smaller parties, the emergence of popular parties, the disintegration of the liberation movement, power struggles in the liberation movement, and bad governance as catalytic factors for the emergence of coalitions in the South African Metro-municipality elections. The study concluded that coalitions bring opportunities by creating a large resource base for coalition partners, promoting democratic consolidation and state governability. However, coalition partners generally feel compromised by changes in the principles to accommodate other parties with different ideologies. To improve coalition stability and effectiveness, the study recommends that political parties should create explicit coalition agreements, organized dispute resolution procedures, and policy alignment plans.

Keywords: *Coalitions, Governance, Political Instability, Electoral Dynamics, Local Authorities, Metropolitan-municipalities, South Africa*

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Introduction

South Africa experienced colonialism and apartheid in all spheres of government before the 1994 general elections. South Africa was divided politically and ruled along racial lines; hence, the establishment of the four provinces, black homelands usually referred to as the TBVC states (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei), and self-governing territories such as KwaZulu, KaNgwane, Lebowa, QwaQwa, Gazankulu, and KwaNdebele. Local government politics were also influenced by racial policies. According to Karume (2003), a non-democratic political culture existed during the apartheid colonial epoch in South Africa before 1994. After 1994, a new democratic political culture began to develop in the South African municipalities. The African National Congress (ANC), which has dominated South African local government elections since 1994, encountered bad governance challenges and lost popularity in most urban metros of South Africa since 2010. Similarly, the ANC began experiencing a notable decline in popularity at the municipal level during the 2021 local government elections (Buhlungu, 2018).

Opposition parties formed coalitions after the 2016 elections in a bid to defeat the ANC and take control of metro councils. In 2016, after the local government elections, no single party in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro won an outright majority. A coalition was formed between the Democratic Alliance (DA), United Democratic Movement (UDM), Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), and smaller parties like the Patriotic Alliance (PA). The coalition formed in Nelson Mandela Bay was a minimal winning coalition (Msimang, 2020). The DA, despite being the largest party, needed the support of smaller parties, including the EFF, to secure a majority in the metro council. The focus here was on the efficient formation of a coalition, where each party added just enough power to ensure governance. The DA's alignment with the smaller parties was not necessarily based on shared ideological goals but on mutual political interest and the goal of ousting the ANC from power (Kolstad & Wiig, 2016).

In Johannesburg, the DA led another coalition government after the 2021 local elections. This coalition included the Freedom Front Plus (FF+), Cope, the ACDP, and ActionSA, among others. Unlike the Nelson Mandela Bay coalition, which had ideological differences, the Johannesburg coalition featured parties with more closely aligned conservative values. The Freedom Front Plus (FF+) and ACDP shared a similar right-wing and socially conservative ideology, making this a more ideologically cohesive coalition (Lerotholi, 2025; Mofokeng,

Ramalobe, and Bogopa, 2024). This alignment helped ensure policy coherence, especially around issues like fiscal responsibility and social issues. In light of this, Lerotholi (2025) argued that the DA and its coalition partners entered this alliance not just to share political power but also to influence local policies. The FF+ and ActionSA were able to secure certain portfolio positions, increasing their political influence, particularly in areas such as economic development and social issues.

It is critical to note that coalition metros have experienced a plethora of votes of no-confidence attempts, such as the City of Tshwane (Pretoria) in 2018 and 2019, the City of Johannesburg in 2017 and 2019, and also the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality in 2018. Power struggles among coalition partners' leadership have debilitated coalitions at the expense of efficient, effective, productive, and competitive service deliveries at the municipal level. In Metros, in which the dominant party obtained an outright majority, coalitions were not an option. This speaks volumes about the factors that propelled the rise of coalitions in South African metro municipalities (Bradshaw & Breakfast, 2019). For example, in the Cape Town Metro, the Democratic Alliance (DA) secured an outright majority and reigns without any partner. The target of most coalition formations was the former liberation movement called the ANC. For instance, in the Cape Town Metro, the ANC lost conspicuously to the DA. The former liberation movement was lost to the DA. Table 1 shows the 2016 local government election results for the Cape Town Metro. The DA won 66.7%, the ANC obtained 24.7%, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) secured 3.0%, and the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) obtained 1.3%. The former liberation movement, which used to dominate local elections before 2016, failed to secure 50% of the elections countrywide.

The problems of the ANC range from alleged corruption, poor service delivery, and the failure to pursue a complete decolonization agenda, like most liberation movements in Southern Africa (Good Governance Africa, 2023). In general, ANC support has dwindled over the years (see Table 1) as South Africa's political culture has evolved. While the ANC has enjoyed political dominance for the past 22 years, shifting political attitudes among South Africans have contributed to its declining support. Citizens are no longer attached to the "we liberated you' gospel, but more pertinent governance issues centered around the distributive and allocative capacity of the ruling party are critical. Bad governance at the municipal level has affected the credibility, integrity, and reputation of the ANC; hence, parties enter into coalitions to prevent

the ANC from perpetuating bad governance. The political trend depicted in Table 1 below has been influenced by several factors, including ANC's loss of popularity in local municipalities and nationally. The dwindling support base for ANC was also witnessed in the 2024 General Elections. With just 40% of the national vote, the African National Congress (ANC) lost its majority in Parliament in the May 2024 national and provincial elections (Peyton, 2024). Compared to its prior supremacy, this was a dramatic drop. In June 2024, President Cyril Ramaphosa responded by forming the Government of National Unity (GNU), which excluded two significant minority parties and included nine other political groups, most of them smaller.

Table 1: ANC Countrywide Local Government Election Results Since 1994

Year	%Votes	No. of Votes	No of Seats
1994	62.65	12 237 655	252
1999	66.35	10 601 330	266
2004	69.69	10 880 915	279
2009	65.90	11 650 748	264
2014	62.15	11 436 921	249
2016	53.90		

Source: Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of South Africa (2016).

In the Cape Town Metro, liberation nostalgia has faded away. As a result, it does not have the same level of respect and popularity as most liberation movements in Africa, even though it is the oldest liberation movement in Africa (Bradshaw & Breakfast, 2019; Ndaetyana & Nomarwayi, 2016). Looking at the results below, the ANC, which is the common enemy of opposition parties, lost, and the DA won overwhelmingly, and therefore, the need for the coalition diminished. The DA rules in the City of Cape Town, Nelson Mandela Bay, the City of Johannesburg, and the City of Tshwane metros with a clear majority. It can be deduced that in Metros, where a dominant party draws majority votes against the former liberation movement, the ANC dissipates the need for a coalition. The critical question that arises is whether coalitions are formed to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity in service delivery or to defeat the former liberation movement and create a new political and governance architecture in the local government sphere. Small parties obtained very few wards and, therefore, emerged as

insignificant in the Cape Town Metro (See Table 2 below) as compared to other metros where small parties became kingmakers. They fought for administrative reforms such as the in-sourcing of staff in exchange for their involvement in the coalition. EFF, *inter alia*, entered the coalition in Tshwane and Johannesburg metro on the basis that the new administration would influence human resource administrative reforms, mainly the in-sourcing of staff who fell into the non-core business categories of the councils.

Table 2: 2016 Cape Town Metro Elections Results

	Ward	Proportional Representation List	Total	Percentage
Democratic Alliance	81	73	154	66.7%
ANC	35	22	57	24.7%
EFF	0	7	7	3.0%
African Christian Democratic Party	0	3	3	1.3%
Al Jama–ah	0	2	2	0.9%
African independent Congress	0	1	1	0.4%
Congress of the people	0	1	1	0.4%
Cape Muslim Congress	0	11	1	0.4%
Democratic Independent Party	0	1	1	0.4%
Freedom Front plus	0	1	1	0.4%
Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC)	0	1	1	0.4%
Patriotic Alliance	0	1	1	0.4%
United Democratic Movement (UDM)	0	1	1	0.4%
Total	**116**	**115**	**231**	**100.0%**

Source: Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of South Africa (2016).

Given the foregoing, it can be deduced from Table 2 above that coalitions in metros in South Africa during 2016 were mainly centered on the idea of ousting ANC dominance in the local sphere of government, as it can be observed that other metros where the ANC obtained more votes than other political parties (opposition parties formed coalitions against it). The DA in the Cape Town metro is the dominant party and won with a vast majority, such that even if the ANC wanted to make a coalition with any of the minor parties or all of them, they would still not vanquish it. According to Kapa (2008), coalition parties have a common enemy in that they scientifically identify and set a plan to remove or defeat local government elections or remove

them from the reins of power at the municipal level. In light of this, it is important to note that most municipalities became much politicized administratively because of the uninterrupted dominance and rule of the ANC (Jeffrelot, 2014; Kadima, 2014). This erstwhile dominance and municipal administrative politicization bred inefficiency, ineffectiveness, and lack of productivity in service delivery in the local sphere of government in South Africa. Municipal politicization affects the operational efficiency, financial effectiveness, and distributive capability of metro municipalities. These administrative shortcomings were experienced in local municipalities because, as a consequence, those metro municipalities were unable to fulfill their developmental mandates. It is important to understand the concept of coalitions.

A coalition is a united front formulated by different political formations, which are conversant with each other's electoral merits and demerits, ideological persuasions, ethnic and socio-economic strengths and weaknesses, political visions, and missions, even if they are at variance with each other. According to Law and Calland (2018), coalition partners are united by the common goal of securing the reins of power and ousting a common political enemy at all costs in any sphere of government. In racially and ethnically diverse countries such as South Africa at their formation stage, coalitions transcend beyond race and ethnicity. However, the problem only emerges when it comes to the leadership of the coalition government, especially after ousting the historically dominant political party. The apartheid and colonial history of South Africa, with its apartheid polarizations, impacts coalition leadership choices.

Leaders from households of settler origin have a lesser chance of leading the coalition government than those from formerly colonized households because of the political sentiments attached to the colonial and apartheid political past. Small opportunistic yet popular parties from formerly colonized households have an enormous influence on who becomes the mayor and leader of the government. For example, in August 2018, in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality, the DA mayor, Athol Trollip, was ousted in favor of the UDM Mayor, Mongameli Bobani. The EFF, UDM, and Patriotic Alliance worked together to ensure the replacement of a white mayor by a black mayor (Peyton, 2024). Race will always play a key role in South African local government politics because of the failure of the decolonization project by the ANC and mainly because of the effects of colonialism and apartheid policies. The

ANC failed to sufficiently and adequately decolonize many aspects of South Africa after apartheid and colonialism.

Smaller parties influence decisions on political leadership and executive management structures in municipalities (Law & Calland, 2018). The EFF and UDM in the Nelson Mandela Bay metropolitan municipality significantly influence the council. The DA obtained 46.7%, and the ANC received 40.9%, as shown in Table 3 below. Neither ANC nor DA received an outright majority. Smaller parties have become critical in creating a coalition local government. A coalition of opposition parties prevailed. Smaller parties that obtained very few votes joined the coalition government with the DA. The seemingly insignificant votes from smaller parties became critical in the formation of the coalition government in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro municipality.

Table 3: 2016 Nelson Mandela Bay Metro Election Results

Party	**Votes**				**Seats**		
	Ward	**List**	**Total**	**%**	**Ward**	**List**	**Total**
Democratic Alliance	**177,920**	**177,551**	**355,471**	**46.7**	**24**	**33**	**57**
ANC	**153,496**	**157,920**	**311,416**	**40.9**	**35**	**15**	**50**
EFF	**19,819**	**19,132**	**38,951**	**5.1**	**1**	**5**	**6**
UDM	**7,600**	**6,969**	**14,569**	**1.9**	**0**	**2**	**2**
African Independent Congress	**1,078**	**6,144**	**7,222**	**1.0**	**0**	**1**	**1**
United Front of the Eastern Cape	**4,133**	**3,048**	**7,181**	**0.9**	**0**	**1**	**1**
Independent	**7,142**	**-**	**7,142**	**0.9**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Congress of the people	**2,929**	**2,658**	**5,587**	**0.7**	**0**	**1**	**1**
African Christian Democratic Party	**1,399**	**1,313**	**2,712**	**0.4**	**0**	**1**	**1**
Patriotic Alliance	**930**	**1,110**	**2,040**	**0.3**	**0**	**1**	**1**
Freedom Front plus	**976**	**941**	**1,917**	**0.3**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Christian Democratic Party	**1,254**	**133**	**1,386**	**0.2**	**0**	**0**	**0**
PAC	**447**	**862**	**1,309**	**0.2**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Alternative Democrats	**287**	**942**	**1,229**	**0.2**	**0**	**0**	**0**

African peoples Convention	**142**	**591**	**733**	**0.1**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Independent Civic Organization	**256**	**467**	**723**	**0.1**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Azanian People Organization	**303**	**358**	**661**	**0.1**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Ubuntu Party	**165**	**143**	**308**	**0.0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
African Power Movement	**150**	**96**	**246**	**0.0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Building a Cohesive Society	**123**	**111**	**234**	**0.0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
380,548	**380,489**	**761,037**	**100.0**	**60**	**60**	**120**	
6,954	**6,569**	**13,523**					

Source: IEC (2016).

The EFF and UDM in the Nelson Mandela Bay metro municipality have significantly influenced the council. Political infighting impacts service delivery in the local government sphere. The DA obtained 46.7%, and the ANC received 40.9%, as shown in Table 4 below. Neither ANC nor DA received an outright majority. Smaller parties have become critical in creating a coalition local government. The coalition of opposition parties prevailed. Smaller parties that obtained very few votes joined the coalition government with the DA. The seemingly insignificant votes from smaller parties became critical in the formation of the post-election coalition government in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro municipality. Some coalitions were formed during the pre-election era, and others after the elections. Political parties may choose to campaign, prepare for elections on their own, and use their own identity. They sponsor their election, preach their manifesto, and sell it to the electorate (Lerotholi, 2025; Capa, 2018; Matlosa & Karume, 2004; Frideman, 1999). They only join other parties to form a government after the elections when they are aware of their results and how these results, together with the results of others, can make a difference in a new government. Such coalitions are called post-electoral coalitions (Chigora & Chilunjika, 2016; Kadima, 2014).

Even if it was very rarer for former liberation movements to enter coalitions, the ANC had to do so in the Ekurhuleni metro. On this metro, no party won an outright majority. The ANC failed to obtain an outright majority, as shown in Table 4 below. The main option was to enter a coalition to govern the metro and control resources. Thus, the once-powerful liberation movement did the unusual act of entering into a coalition to gain power and rule the metro. The main contest was

between the DA and ANC. However, the role of EFF cannot be underestimated or overstated in the Ekurhuleni Metro.

Table 4: 2016 Ekurhuleni-Metro Election Results

Party	Votes				Seats		
	Ward	List	Total	%	Ward	List	Total
ANC	**436,190**	438,961	875,151	48,6	76	33	109
Democratic Alliance	**307,664**	306,709	614,373	34,2	35	42	77
EFF	**102,242**	99,770	202,012	11,2	1	24	25
African Independent Congress	**14,709**	14810	29,519	1.6	0	4	4
IFP	**8,940**	9,345	18,285	1.0	0	2	2
Freedom Front plus	**7,991**	8,059	16,050	0.9	0	2	2
African Christian Democratic Party	**3,908**	3,754	7,662	0.4	0	1	1
PAC	**3,836**	3,743	7,579	0.4	0	1	1
Patriotic Alliance	**2,272**	2,499	4,771	0.3	0	1	1
Congress of the people	**2,209**	2,504	4,713	0.3	0	1	1
Independent Ratepayers Association of SA	**3,067**	2,109	3,544	0.2	0	0	0
Independent	**3,675**	-	3,675	0.2	0	-	0
UDM	**1,435**	2,109	3,544	0.2	0	0	0
Others	**2,283**	5,298	7,581	0.4	0	0	0
Total	**900,421**	**898,780**	**1,799,201**	**100.00**	**112**	**112**	**224**
Spilt Votes	**16,086**	15,783	31,869				

Source: IEC, (2016).

It can thus be noted that a single-party majority was not present in several metropolises, such as Johannesburg, Tshwane, and Ekurhuleni; hence coalitions were in charge. To build these coalitions, the Democratic Alliance (DA) worked with organizations such as the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), Cope, ActionSA, and the Freedom Front Plus. A growing number of political parties' youth wings are actively promoting policies that deal with social

justice, education, and unemployment. Due to their involvement, policy discussions have been affected, and concerns about youth have gained prominence in political agendas. As a result of their increased importance in coalition governments, minority parties are now able to influence governance and policy decisions. These coalitions did, however, experience instability due to conflicting policies and frequent leadership changes, underscoring the difficulties of coalition governance. It is against this background that the study seeks to explore the merits and demits of electoral coalitions in South African Metropolitan Municipalities. To achieve that, the study also explores the different dynamics, trends, patterns, drivers, and nuances underpinning electoral coalitions in the South African Metropolitan Municipalities from 2016 to 2019.

Materials and Methods

The study relied on qualitative methods, which were embedded in interpretivist research philosophy. Purposively selected documents that were pertinent to the study were used to gather data. These included local government reports, coalition agreements, party leaders' public declarations, journal papers, book chapters, books, newspaper stories, party manifestos, public speeches and press releases, coalition agreements, and minutes of council meetings. The selection of these documents was based on how well they addressed the main coalition topics in the study. Additionally, historical research was done in municipal archives to look at the political history of important metro areas and previous coalition agreements. This aided in placing the current political climate in a more comprehensive historical context. The collected data were analyzed using thematic and cross-case analysis techniques to help unpack the discussion on the pros and cons of electoral coalitions in South African Metro-Municipalities from 2016 to 2019. The themes concerning the research questions were interpreted by exploring how coalition partners navigated ideological differences, how power was shared within the coalition, and how these dynamics influenced governance outcomes. A cross-case analysis was conducted to identify similarities and differences in coalition formation, political alignments, and policy outcomes.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the research findings and discusses the merits and demerits of electoral coalitions in South African metropolitan municipalities.

Advantages of Coalitions

Greater Participation and Transparency in Decision-Making/ Municipal By-Laws

Democratic elections have taken place periodically at the local government level since the collapse of apartheid and colonialism in South Africa. In most municipal elections prior to 2016, municipalities experienced single-party domination and control. According to the African National Congress, most of the municipalities are in both urban and rural areas of South Africa, with the exception of some rural districts of KwaZulu Natal and the Western Cape (Ndletyana & Nomarwayi, 2014). The problem with this was that a single party allows the by-laws it formulates to pass through the council, and these are formulated and implemented with insufficient and inadequate debate. Coalitions in local municipalities can overcome this problem because the views of different political parties are considered when municipal decision-making takes place or when by-laws are formulated. The coalition government in the municipalities of South Africa creates a wider public opinion platform than single-majority party views. A coalition allows for the possibility of thorough and robust debates in decision-making rather than domination by a dominant party.

Investors' Inflow to Local Municipalities

Coalition governments have higher levels of investor confidence in their municipal areas. Single-majority parties are scarce investors. When investor confidence is high, the inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) increases, thereby improving the economy and local economic development (LED) (Gumede, Uwizeyimana & Chilunjika, 2023). Thus, coalitions have a greater chance of attracting investors than single-party-dominated municipalities. One party-dominated municipality in South Africa had problems with distributive efficiency, allocative efficiency, and redistributive efficiency (Capa, 2018). The economic impact of this scenario is low investment and economic growth. According to the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) (2019), coalitions at the municipal level attract greater investor confidence and higher FDI in their geographical areas. Economics and commerce occur in the local municipalities. Investors come to municipalities to physically establish their businesses; therefore, it is important to have an investor-friendly apolitical environment at the municipal level (Gumede *et al*., 2023). Coalitions at the local government level can attract greater levels of economic growth and investment than a single-party municipality.

According to Kadima (2014), the weakening of single-party dominance is accompanied by the strengthening of LED, owing to the interplay of diversity of opinion and harmonization of various economic policy views instead of one perspective from a single party. South African municipalities are dominated by a single party, namely the ANC and its alliance partners. Municipal by-law decisions reflected the views of the ANC because of its dominance. As a liberation movement, the views of the ANC were mostly political rather than economic, with the consequence that most municipalities suffered economically (Matlosa & Karume, 2004; Brooks, 2004). One-party dominance in a municipality cripples the accommodation of diverse political and economic views in terms of municipality-by-law formulation and implementation. The decision-making process and municipal decisions are stiffened by a single party in a one-party-dominated municipality. A coalition is a viable panacea for all these political and administrative shortcomings. A coalition municipality is more democratic and transparent in terms of various legislative and administrative views. A coalition represents a much broader spectrum of public opinion. Therefore, municipal decisions or by-laws can reflect the view of the majority of citizens represented by many parties in government rather than one party.

Good Governance and Risk Management

According to Peyton (2024), coalitions foster good governance at the local government level because their decisions are formulated in the interests of municipal majorities rather than single-party leadership. Coalitions provide an excellent platform for political engagement and robust debate. The municipal decisions were thoroughly debated before implementation. Coalitions are a very important key to controlling all forms of corruption, namely systematic, systemic, embezzlement, and nepotism at the local government level (Chilunjika, 2021; Friedman, 1999; DeSwaan, 1997; Bazazel & Deemen, 1989). Coalitions monitor the levels of economic and administrative corruption in the implementation of municipal IDPs (integrated development plans) (Gumede *et al*., 2023). Municipalities implement development through IDPs. Municipal corrupt officials usually exercise corruption in the allocation of municipal tenders or employment with the presence of coalitions, most of which are minimized because of the greater involvement of a wider spectrum of political officials from different political persuasions and parties (Chilunjika, Chilunjika & Uwizeyimana 2023; Bradshaw & Breakfast, 2019; Jeffrelot, 2014; Kadima, 2014; Shale & Kapa, 2011). The ANC dominated most of the municipalities before the

2016 elections, and as a result, municipal corruption levels rose to astronomic proportions; however, with the current existence of coalitions, effective monitoring can minimize it.

Greater Public Accountability

According to Chilunjika (2024), coalitions enhance the accountability of municipal officials. Under the one-party rule, municipal officials are deployed cadres of the dominant party and, therefore, are more likely to account for their party officials than municipal citizens or the majority of people in that municipal geography. Before the 2016 elections, ANC cadres and officials suffered from and are still enduring the Liberation Struggle (WFLS) syndrome (De Vos, 2021). The WFLS syndrome has entitled ANC cadres and officials to account for their liberation movement officials compared with municipal citizens. This WFLS syndrome has made it difficult for most officials from non-liberation-movement origins (NLMO) to work in the municipalities, and consequently, they resigned and left the positions to the ANC cadres (Law & Calland, 2018; Ndletyana & Nomarwayi, 2016). The result is the proliferation of municipal service delivery failures that strike most municipalities in the country. Coalitions allow greater public accountability and responsibility from municipal officials and councilors, while single-party dominance prevents greater openness and transparency at the municipal level (Chilunjika, Mutema & Dube, 2020).

Greater Monitoring and Evaluation of IDPs

The coalition municipal government creates a conducive environment for greater monitoring and evaluation of municipal projects. When an IDP passes, the next stage is its implementation by municipal executives. A coalition is very important in terms of the conceptualization, formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of municipal IDPs**.** A coalition brings about a greater diversity of opinions and views when formulating IDPs (Kadima, 2014; Shale & Kapa, 2011). Thus, from political and administrative perspectives, coalitions are critical for the effective monitoring and evaluation of IDPs. Single-party-dominated municipalities tend to follow myopic party perspectives on IDPs more than coalition governments. IDPs must represent the views of a wider community across all racial divides, especially in South Africa, where the population is mixed (Chilunjika & Chilunjika, 2021). It is advantageous to have a mayoral committee responsible for monitoring and evaluation, which is comprised of members of different political parties, rather than having officials from one dominant party only. A coalition

government provides a fresh perspective on the monitoring and evaluation of municipal IDPs (Mofokeng, Ramalobe, & Bogopa, 2024).

Controlling Corruption in Local Governments

Coalition governments can help regulate and control corruption that has become so prevalent in South African local governments. Corruption has historically been perpetuated and cultivated because the dominant party, in this case, the ANC, was used to control both central and local government authorities (Kolstad & Wiig, 2016). The political will to curb the ongoing escalation of corruption in local government institutions has weakened as a result of the ANC brotherhood syndrome. Instead, because local government institutions were staffed only by ANC affiliates, there has always been an act of mutual protection in the aftermath of corruption scandals (Chilunjika, 2024). In contrast, the rise of coalitions is likely to change the political culture of how local governments are managed, as diverse political affiliations reinvigorate political will to combat corruption. Accordingly, Morrison (2023) asserts that the presentation of opposing viewpoints through coalition governments will create an ideal environment for political parties in power to demonstrate that they are the best alternative for fighting corruption and delivering services to citizens efficiently and effectively.

Increases Youth Participation

In South Africa, young people are now more involved in local government activities than they were a few years ago, particularly under the coalition governments that were formed following the 2016 local elections (Msimang, 2020; Klopper, 2019). More chances for young people to participate in political and governance processes have been made possible by the DA-led coalition administrations, especially in major cities like Johannesburg and Nelson Mandela Bay. According to Mthembu (2020), there are several reasons for the increase in youth participation, including disenchantment with the ANC's and other revolutionary political parties' long-standing dominance, a desire for change, and the opportunity for leadership positions and increased visibility provided by smaller parties like the DA, UDM, and EFF. Following the 2016 elections, the Nelson Mandela Bay coalition government implemented a number of programs that increased young participation. One important component was the youth-oriented policies that coalition allies like the DA and UDM supported, emphasizing youth political inclusion, employment creation, and education. Young people were able to participate in local decision-

making processes after the ANC was ousted from office and coalition governance took over (Buhlungu, 2018). Similarly, young people were allowed to interact actively with politics through political parties such as the EFF and UDM. These parties provided an alternative to the young people who felt marginalized by the ANC's leadership by advocating for youth empowerment and a break from the ANC's domination (Msimang, 2020).

Provides Checks and Balances for Meritocratic Recruitment and Functioning of Local Government Leaders

According to Morrison (2023), South Africa's coalition government ensures the meritocratic recruitment of local government leaders. In the establishment of a coalition government, a diverse group of people with varying levels of skills and capabilities are brought together, creating the luxury of having an array of capable and skilled leaders who can occupy various leadership roles in the local government. Unlike a single dominant party, a coalition government fundamentally provides the local government leaders with some checks and balances that make it easier to select progressive minds that are meritocratically equipped to drive development in local government jurisdictions. Rather than re-electing the same ANC leaders, some of whom have a track record of failing to deliver public goods, a coalition government can be a panacea by bringing in a pool of skilled and capable cadres to steer local government advancement in South Africa. Additionally, Anghel (2018) asserts that the creation of a centralized recruitment tracking system for senior positions in municipalities is feasible under a coalition government. Previously, due to one political party's dominance, the recruitment of senior municipality officials was marred with partisanship rather than competency and meritocracy. Most of the senior positions were occupied based on the ‘who do you know’ incline and ANC affiliation lines. Conversely, the coalition government, since it is the creation of a potpourri of affiliations, will create an opportunity to provide a centralized recruitment system for senior positions in municipalities and ultimately bring transparency to the implemented recruitment procedures.

Disadvantages of Coalitions

Differences in Political Ideology

In South African municipalities, the critical problem is the diversity of party political ideologies, origins, and the constituent populations they represent. Some parties are black popular socialist-inclined parties, and others are dominated by HOSOs (Households of Settler Origins) in their

leadership and voter-members. According to Ndletyana and Nomarwayi (2016), EFF in South Africa is a new political party with a policy inclination toward nationalization of the economy and economic liberation; on the other hand, the DA is a party dominated in its national and local leadership with leaders that oppose nationalization. By its very nature, the DA does not subscribe to economic wholesale nationalization. It does not subscribe to land expropriation without compensation, and most of its members belong to a particular economic class in South Africa. Thus, the DA and the EFF can engage in a coalition together, but the above factors constrain the viability of the coalition in terms of ideology and policy. This diversity in policy orientation and ideology cripples collective political functioning in the coalition municipality, where DA and EFF are involved**.**

The ANC received 48.6%, and the DA obtained 34.2% in the 2016 local government elections in the Tshwane Metro, as shown in the Table below. This meant that no party won with a clear outright majority. The ANC was also rocked by leadership infighting and fielding external candidates for Tshwane's mayoral position. Table 5 below noted that the EFF obtained 11.2% of the votes, while the other parties could not make significant strides in the elections, as shown in the Table below. To prevent the ANC from governing the Tshwane metro municipality, a coalition of opposition parties succeeded in gaining the reigns (IEC, 2016). The DA has a different political ideology from the rest of its coalition partners, but for the sake of removing the common enemy, a coalition was formed successfully. The EFF managed to influence administrative reforms regarding the sourcing of staff who were contract employees and employed privately. The employees were also insourced. This post-electoral coalition influenced administrative reforms in the metro as far as human resource management was concerned.

Table 5: 2016 Tshwane-Metro Election Results

Party	Votes				Seats		
	Ward	List	Total	%	Ward	List	Total
ANC	436,190	438,961	875,151	48,6	76	33	109
Democratic Alliance	307,664	306,709	614,373	34,2	35	42	77
EFF	102,242	99,770	202,012	11,2	1	24	25

Freedom Front plus	14,709	14810	29,519	1.6	0	4	4
African Christian Democratic Party	8,940	9,345	18,285	1.0	0	2	2
Independent	7,991	8,059	16,050	0.9	0	2	2
Congress of the people	3,908	3,754	7,662	0.4	0	1	1
PAC	3,836	3,743	7,579	0.4	0	1	1
Others	5,026	8,619	13,645	0.8	0	0	0
Total	**882,274**	**884,093**	**1,766,367**	**100.0**	**107**	**107**	**214**
Spoilt Votes	10,193	10,224	20,417				

Source: IEC (2016).

Policy and ideological differences have a negative impact on how the two parties and coalition are viewed by the public in South Africa.

Political Party Opportunism

Questions regarding political party opportunism have also been raised. The other disadvantage is how these parties can have collective responsibility for administrative and political decision-making. Council decisions are based on the political demands of local citizens (Chilunjika, Mutema & Dube, 2020; Zhou & Chilunjika, 2013). Traditionally, the DA has served as a limited constituency compared to its current mandate. The problem is that the public image is accustomed to the DA. Citizens in rural and urban areas have not managed to disassociate it from their pre-2016 political image. According to Schaefer (2018), it is very difficult for two political parties with completely different ideologies to work together in the interest of the public in the local areas of South Africa, particularly in the metropolitan areas where the EFF/DA and other smaller parties are involved. The DA was opportunistic in its approach to remove the ANC from the reigns of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro. The EFF was also opportunistic in joining the coalitions. These two parties saw a great opportunity to be in power and remove their foes. The most important issue at the local government level is effective and efficient service delivery.

Mayoral Political and Administrative Role and Interference

Mayoral political and administrative responsibilities are handicapped by coalition governments at the local level. The mayor of a coalition municipality is very vulnerable and unable to implement or formulate decisions without political interference from coalition partners. The mayor's role is politically and administratively corroded. The powers of the mayor are weakened by the coalition partners. They may demand immediate political and radical reforms at the expense of political stability and power consolidation, with the coalition government collapsing or its leadership. A good example of this phenomenon is what happened to the Nelson Mandela Bay municipality, in which DA/EFF/UDM/PA involvement in a coalition succeeded in unseating the ruling ANC but later had serious power struggles in the mayoral position (Bradshaw & Breakfast, 2019; Ndletyana & Nomarwayi, 2016). This caused political and administrative instability in the NMB Metro. The mayor of the first coalition suffered serious challenges propelled by the EFF in favor of a UDM mayor. Political instability crept into the coalition because of the political differences between the two main coalition partners. The Nelson Mandela metro saga indicates that coalitions have a political disadvantage for mixed-race communities. Coalitions between political parties of different racial origins are difficult and problematic for service delivery. In a post-colonial apartheid country such as South Africa, the assumption that racial differences have completely faded away is misleading. Race, class, and gender differences played a role in the leadership struggle of the coalition of the Nelson Mandela metro municipality.

Dominant Party Influence and Small Party Manipulation

According to Bazazel and Deemen (1989), the larger party in the coalition exercises political preponderance in coalition decision-making. This automatically creates resistance from smaller partners within the coalition. This lack of trust sparks leadership struggles that debilitate the coalition administratively and politically, and as such, the DA, as a bigger coalition partner, has a greater propensity to dominate its smaller coalition partners. However, it faces resistance from the EFF and UDM, which results in leadership fragmentation and weakening, as shown in the NMB metro. Smaller partners spend time warding off greater party domination than concentrating on municipal service delivery issues. Internal coalition democracy is threatened by the domination-inclination of larger partners. Small parties can blackmail and compromise other

coalition partners by demanding political reforms that favor their ideology and push for political concessions. Even if such demanded concessions are not in the interest of big partners, small parties succeed in getting them because it is a game of numbers, and no one wants to lose anyone. Thus, smaller parties can impose their own political agenda and reforms through political blackmail. EFF has managed to be the kingmaker and to influence short-term political reforms through this process, which is opportunistic. Given the foregoing, it suffices to say that coalitions in most metros in South Africa have more disadvantages than advantages. In short, political coalitions face many political and administrative challenges.

Limited Visions and Lukewarm Councils

Coalition in municipalities is disadvantageous because the absence of majority party domination creates a political platform conducive to councils with limited visions, missions, and lukewarm policy measures. Coalition governments are usually unsure and confident of their stay in power because they depend on each other's views and acceptability. Lukewarm councils are not municipal governments that have long-term views of themselves or long-term policy plans because of the political uncertainty coalitions present (Schaefer, 2018). Most parties usually have a long-term vision and long-term plans for the municipality because they won with a clear majority and have a clear 5-year mandate and term to actualize their political manifesto. Coalitions do the opposite: they engender lukewarm council syndrome (LCS). Municipal councils of this nature are unable to enact municipal by-laws effectively because the struggles in the debates when formulating municipal by-laws are very severe and critical.

Councilors want to be safe for the next term of office; therefore, no one wants to make any decision on council matters lest they make a mistake that can cost the party some seats or a term of office. This is probably the greatest undoing of coalition governments because citizens suffer when indecision occurs. Given the above, the Tshwane Metro, Johannesburg Metro, Ekurhuleni Metro, and Nelson Mandela Metro have symptoms of lukewarm councils. According to Law and Calland (2018), lukewarm councils are weak in terms of enacting municipal by-laws or repealing or amending them because councilors do not want to make any mistakes in decision-making. From an incrementalism paradigm, councilors prefer a muddling-through approach or a mixed scanning method so that they are very safe from blunders in decision-making. Failure to make decisions on critical issues, such as service delivery or IDPs, weakens municipalities' administrative function.

Interdependence, Compromise, and Opportunism

A coalition in municipalities is disadvantageous because coalition partners depend on each other for survival, even if this means compromising their standard values and norms to accommodate each other. Accordingly, Bradshaw and Breakfast (2019) state that larger coalition partners in the local council cannot afford to lose smaller partners because of the need to have greater numbers of councilors and constituencies and, consequently, a greater voice and control of the council. However, this does not translate automatically into better service delivery. Coalitions reflect political opportunism in defeating the dominant parties. Every party joins a group of partners with certain promises and alignments, and when these are not realized, coalition councils easily falter and disintegrate. The EFF agreed to be part of the coalition in the Johannesburg Metro based on certain demands, which included the protection of jobs for metro citizens. The DA had to compromise on its plans to restructure the job market to allow for the employment creation that the EFF demanded. What happens when this opportunism and compromise end? The coalition government disintegrated at the expense of local citizens. Parties must compromise with their ideologies and ethics to accommodate each other and survive. Compromises weaken the coalition councils because they cannot formulate long-term plans and do not have a unifying philosophy or political manifesto other than the desire to dislodge the former dominant party like the ANC. Coalitions are mostly concerned with formulating popular short-and long-term decisions. Some scholars have summarized and highlighted the opportunities and challenges presented by coalitions, as depicted in Table 6.

Table 6: Opportunities and Challenges of Party Coalitions

Opportunities	Challenges
• By combining forces and resources with others, parties can increase their influence and accomplish goals they could not achieve on their own	• To find common ground with partners, each party must to some extent compromise on its priorities, principles, and ideology
• Parties can broaden their appeal and increase their vote share by combining forces with others. This may create an opportunity to secure legislative seats to form a government and achieve their specific political goals.	• Parties may lose some control over decision-making and may find it difficult to maintain a distinct profile that distinguishes them from their coalition partners

• The Public may see coalition-building as an admirable effort to consider other points of view and seek compromise	• The need to consult and reach agreement among coalition partners can make government decision-making complex and slower
• Coalition parties can learn from each other and thus strengthen their parties based on those experiences.	• Poor communication between individual parties on coalition goals, objectives, and benefits can sometimes fuel tensions and cause divisions.
• The coalition can provide opportunities to broaden participation in government.	• The public may feel that party leader have abandoned their principles by coalescing with other parties.

Source: The National Democratic Institute (NDI) (2015).

According to Jeffrelot (2014), coalitions enhance the level of citizen participation in decision-making in the local government sphere. Coalition partners have the opportunity to learn from one another about various aspects of politics at both the leadership and operational levels of engagement. New parties can learn from old parties with experience in the political and administrative environments of South Africa. The DA's experience of managing the Western Cape efficiently, effectively, and competitively is a great lesson to various political parties in the coalition with the DA in various metros in South Africa. To mention DA as an example is not to say that it does not have its shortcomings, despite some notable positive political and administrative achievements being attained in the Western Cape under the DA administration. Coalitions operate based on accommodating other views, and therefore, tolerance of divergent views is exercised to the benefit of service delivery and citizens (Schaefer, 2018; Kadima, 2014). The most obvious opportunity is that the coalition gets more seats on the council and is, therefore, able to unseat their common enemy. Most coalitions in metro cities have managed to remove the ANC from power. This is the objective that they successfully achieved.

Coalitions provide opportunities to create a large resource base for coalition partners. Financially or otherwise, the coalition partners can work together to attain their common goal. The critical challenge of coalitions is that supporters generally feel compromised by changes in principles to accommodate other parties with different ideologies. Communication is difficult because there are different political leaders and members. Decision-making is stifled by bureaucracy in the coalition. In short, coalition partners have to exercise compromise and accommodate each other in decision-making, which negatively impacts service delivery.

Conclusion

Local authorities in South Africa have adopted coalitions to increase their competitiveness against a political foe. The study observed that metro municipalities have since resorted to political party alliances and coalitions during election times, which has paved the way for state governability, democratic consolidation, and national cohesion. The different metro-municipality electoral dynamics in South Africa from 2016 onwards have been explored. In this scenario, the study identifies the advantages of coalition municipalities as transparency, good governance, greater accountability, effective monitoring and evaluation, and wider consultation. Additionally, some disadvantages and or challenges ranging from ideological clashes, small-part manipulation, and the creation of lukewarm municipalities to political and administrative failures in service delivery were noted.

The study, therefore, emphasizes that coalition administrations are still a structural and political reality in South African urban governance despite these challenges. Coalition agreements are likely to endure as electoral support becomes more dispersed. Strengthening the institutional structures and governance frameworks that direct coalition relationships will be essential to their success. To improve coalition stability and effectiveness, the study advises political parties to create explicit coalition agreements, organized dispute resolution procedures, and policy alignment plans.

To sum up, although electoral coalitions in South Africa's urban municipalities from 2016 to 2019 have demonstrated both democratic benefits and governance difficulties, they are nevertheless an unavoidable aspect of the nation's changing political scenario. Reforming institutions, fostering greater political collaboration, and putting service delivery ahead of political competition are all necessary to address the shortcomings of coalition governance. A more organized and open coalition-building process will be necessary to guarantee efficient, responsible and long-lasting urban governance as South Africa undergoes more electoral changes.

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