



Reorganising the State is a fundamental requirement for any coalition government

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The likelihood that the ANC was going to perform more poorly than it had in previous elections was very high. What was not anticipated by many was the extent of the decline of the party's share of total votes. Largely because of the inability to effectively pursue inclusive development, the ANC's influence has been declining over the years.

Inclusive development has been deteriorating because of various factors, significant among them being poor economic growth, largely because of the inability to restructure the economy.

There were some commendable efforts aimed at changing the structure of the economy so it could create jobs and advance wellbeing, at least during the first fifteen years of the democratic dispensation.

The results were, however, disappointing. In any case, government alone could not have successfully changed the structure of the economy, particularly the stubborn, skewed patterns of ownership.

It is in this context that we are of the view that the economy as the basic structure has a direct impact on all activities of the superstructure. The unquestionable progress in access to basic services and in other areas notwithstanding, the democratic state has not sufficiently satisfied the civilising mission of the ANC, defined by both Nelson Mandela and Strategy & Tactics magazine as the improvement in the quality of life of the most vulnerable in society. Essentially, the primary agenda has been, and must still be, the attainment of a national democratic society.

Our proposition is that, through the political settlement reached for the democratic order, the white minority regime won the strategic battle to retain the economy in the hands of the few. This is supported not only by rising unemployment and such, but also by persistent calls within and outside the ANC to amend specific clauses of the Constitution, which are seen to be preserving white privilege.

The continued exclusionary economy cannot be delinked from the failure of the revolution to tick.

Election results may as well be interpreted as the revolt against exclusion and a demand for inclusive economy.

It is our contention that the future of the desired stable and democratic South Africa depends primarily on the resolution of ownership patterns. Democracy should be understood in its relation to development. It must empower the people to live and lead lives they value, without which it becomes a farce.

It is against this backdrop that we assert that any form of a coalition must prioritise the overhaul of the economic structure as the first priority of the new administration. There should not be a blank cheque.

Without this overarching principle and commitment, no coalition will last. Put differently, the continued failure to restructure the economy effectively will ultimately derail our young democracy.

Therefore, we propose additional policy matters which, with the benefit of hindsight of 30 years of the democratic project, we feel need urgent attention.

The macro-organisation of the state and the related capacity of the state to pursue its development mandate are the first. Macro-organisation of the state encompasses aspects such as cooperation between and coordination of the three spheres of government; the horizontal coordination of national departments and provincial governments; integrated planning between and across adjoining provinces, and district and local municipalities – the very architecture of local government; and the size and shape of government in its entirety.

Given the well-recorded parallel/conflicting mandates, turf contestations and attendant accountability gaps on who accounts for what, it might be a good idea to pursue the measured reduction of government departments nationally.

This will not wholly solve policy confusion and coordination challenges, but it has the potential to ameliorate the extent and depth of problems. In a re-configured national government, coordination should be prioritised.

There is broad agreement that local government is the Achilles Heel of the democratic state. Yet, this coexists with the mandate embellished in the White Paper on Local Government, that this sphere of government must be at the forefront of deepening the Bill of Rights contained in chapter 2 of the Constitution.

The latest available information indicates that only 30 municipalities (11.67%) are stable, thus fully functional. A total of 54 municipalities (21.01%) are on low risk; 107 (41.63%) are on medium risk and 66 (25.68%) are dysfunctional. Some of these municipalities have been placed under administration more than twice, with no sustainable turnaround.

In our view, the sphere of local government needs total rethinking, which must be done in context with our proposed further review of the macro-organisation of the state. The proposed review must include the provincial sphere. In other words, it is the whole of the government – all three spheres and other government agencies – that needs rethinking, with the view that the economy must work for all South Africans.

We are aware of the enormity of challenges that the political leaders and their respective parties need to deal with – limited time being the first. Further, we admit that there are a number of changes that are required in order to, at the very least, respond to the obligations imposed on the state by the preamble of the Constitution.

This is no easy task; however, it calls for sobriety and calmness of leadership, which we know we have in the country.

We appeal to all the leaders to put aside their mutual mistrust and think for the most vulnerable in society, who have been waiting patiently for a democratic dividend.