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# Coalition Governance: Unchartered Waters in South African Political Landscape

**Dr Kaizer Raseane Makole,** https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5860-2336
PhD, Lecturer, Tshwane University of Technology, Soshanguve South Campus, South Africa
**Dr Bhekabantu Alson Ntshangase,** https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5410-7036
PhD, Senior Lecturer, Acting Dean, Mangosuthu University of Technology, South Africa
**Samson Adeoluwa Adewumi,** https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4156-0971
PhD, Researcher, Mangosuthu University of Technology, South Africa
**Corresponding author:** Samson Adeoluwa Adewumi, adewumi.samson@mut.ac.za
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**Abstract***: Coalition governance in South Africa is adjudged as an opportunity for nation-building and social compact, which intends to jettison the apartheid legacy of racial and social separation. Coalition governance in South Africa quintessentially demonstrates a maturing nation-building project whereby political parties embrace a cohesive spirit for democratic governance and citizenship representation. However, the lack of consensus about a developmental posture to drive nation-building in South Africa put different political parties on antithetical dissimulations that undermine effective coalition governance in both national and local governmental spheres. An era of dominant party hegemony is approaching its final demise, which challenges political parties to build workable and collaborative consensus toward leading South Africa out of its current developmental stagnation. The study examines the challenges and opportunities of coalition governance in South Africa. The objective of the paper is to understand how coalition building can be a leverage for Nation building in the context of South African political structure. A qualitative study is undertaken by analyzing strategic and policy documents of political parties and journal articles to examine challenges and opportunities for coalition governance in South Africa. The thematic content analysis examines emerging patterns from primary and secondary documentary sources to generate relevant themes that influence and guide conceptualization, challenges, and opportunities for coalition governance in South Africa. Findings revealed that a major challenge for coalition governance in South Africa is political brinkmanship by political parties who negotiate in bad faith, demanding more concessions than votes garnered from election results, which demonstrates political immaturity. However, a positive aspect of coalition governance might be for parties to formalize binding coalition agreements that can serve as conflict management mechanisms that can compel parties to demonstrate reciprocal accountability during governance.*
**Keywords:** coalition agreement, coalition governance, control mechanism, ideological and ethno-cultural tension, political brinkmanship, social cohesion, South Africa.
**JEL Classification:** L38, R38.

# Coalition Governance: Unchartered Waters in South African Political Landscape

## 1. Introduction

Coalition governance has become an institutional norm in major Western countries like Germany, Belgium and Netherlands due to the improbability of one party obtaining an absolute majority in an election process (Kluver & Back, 2019). Subsequently, African countries experienced democratization from colonialism in the 1960s, post-liberation politics in the 1970s to1990s, and coalition governance gained momentum in developing countries like Mauritius, Kenya, Zambia, Lesotho, and lately, South Africa (Mokgosi, Shai, & Ogunnubi, 2017). Different analysts view coalition governance in South Africa as a sign of maturing democracy to open space for divergent political players and increase the power of electorates in governance and leadership of the country and municipalities (Booysen, 2018; Hanabe & Malinzi, 2019; Jolobe, 2007). Masipa (2016) claims that coalition governance should be viewed as an opportunity to steer South Africa from one-party dominance of the African National Congress (ANC) to multi-party governance that became prevalent in the 2016 local government election to encourage governance accountability in different municipalities. Gumede (2021) interprets coalition governance as a sign of citizenship maturity of South African voters who shifted their thinking from emotionally associating with a particular political party since they begin to vote with their minds to influence better governance towards the improvement of service delivery in their localities.

Coalition governance is perceived as a governing system and practice of checks and balances, which is critical to avoid a situation of winner-takes-all by a dominant political party which symbolises corruption through cadre deployment at the expense of governance competencies (Booysen, 2018; Makole, 2021; Shava & Chamisa, 2018). Coalition governance should be analyzed from a prism of strengthening a multiparty democratic system through freedom of association and choice enshrined in the South African constitution that gives citizens the power to choose representatives from a plethora of political parties based on promises in their political manifestos (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Coalition is the amalgamation of political parties for the formation of government in the instance that there is no absolute winner in an election. It also represents the sharing of divergent ideas and practices that represent voters' wishes for improved governance performance. In other words, the idea of coalition governance can be of benefit to citizens by ensuring that political parties are held accountable for their promises. Failure to deliver on election promises might result in being left out of the bargaining table in national, provincial, and municipal governance spheres.

The necessity of a coalition government in South Africa is grounded on many justifications. For instance, the dominant and ruling political party in South Africa-the National Action Congress (ANC) continues to remain the dominant party system in the parliamentary system with the locus that the Parliament is typically weak and non-active (Falco-Gimeno, 2014). In other words, it is dominated to the executive, which, invariably, is bonded with and subject to the executive of the party- structure. On many grounds, the South African system reflects more of a presidential system, in which the opposition political parties tussle unceasingly to affirm themselves in an ANC that largely operates a hegemonic-dominated party system. The contour on which the need for the coalition is premised can be declared from the ANC's incessant strength in the electoral stakes such that its concurrent activities can explain as a political party (Booysen, 2012). Therefore, speaking organisationally and theoretically, the ANC no doubt continues to project itself as a radical movement that operates in Parliament and flourish in its existing relationship with the general population (Falco-Gimeno, 2014). This obvious domination, therefore, is not unconnected from the moving and insistent changes in electoral emotion and the tactics of political leaders (Basak, 2020). It is to say that the knowledge of such change inspires political parties, in addition to some civil society organizations desiring to change political narration, to advance issues and perhaps align with opposition parties to promote new electoral alliances. On this basis, the coalition government is urgently needed in South Africa to upturn the influence and dominance of the ANC for a real multi-party system to further democracy.

This paper contributes to how the coalition governance model can be implemented in South African body politic by entrenching governance accountability, deepening democracy, and bringing about much-needed service delivery in an administrative sphere of governance at local, provincial, and national levels deteriorated due to one-party governing hegemony. The paper is thus relevant for the South African

governance system that is transitioning from two decades of political stability and a honeymoon where it was easy to predict election results dominated by the governing ANC to a current period where election results are unpredictable (Harper, 2020). An analytical discourse in the paper begins by outlining reviews of coalition governance by examining international models or trends in Western Europe, political machinations, and approaches of coalition governance in Africa, and analyses accountability mechanisms in the South African governance system. Subsequent sections deliberate on themes relating to challenges and opportunities for coalition governance in South Africa and provide conclusive extrapolations and recommendations for future practices to enhance coalition governance at national, provincial, and local governance levels. After that, a review of the methodological approaches was explained.

## 2. Literature Review

This section of the paper seeks to address extant literature on coalition governance regarding the South African case. The section highlights and discusses varying issues, including the exploration and explanation of Western European models of coalition governance. It is needed to be able to situate the South African case in the light of international reference. In addition, the section distills the politics of coalition governance in Africa, where the examples of Kenya and Nigeria were invoked for a robust understanding of issues in South Africa's context. Thus, lessons from Uganda and Zimbabwe were positioned as cases to infer from. The section clearly explained the South African governance model and coalition formation.

**2.1. Western European Models of Coalition Governance.** This sub-section provides the context for forming and managing coalition governments in Western Europe. Many western European countries like Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, and Spain accumulated political experience to form and manage coalition governments that outline control mechanisms for trade-offs and compromises to minimize the disruptive effects of the governance model (Falco-Gimeno, 2014; Back, Debus, & Dumont, 2011). Political parties should enter coalition governance formation with astute political maturity that requires ability to compromise their narrow political agendas in favour of contributing to institutional governance and performance improvement in public service to benefit all citizenry. Many Western democracies that formed coalition governments institutionalized conflict management mechanisms to mitigate tensions between democratic cabinet decisions and those of political party members, in cases of political ideological differences for the overall interest of citizens (Back, Debus, & Dumont, 2011; Martin & Vaberg, 2005). Falco-Gimeno (2014) profess that numerous governance institutions have been set up to address conflicts arising from coalition politics and enforce compromise policies in their governing jurisdictions. Ostensibly, one control mechanism might be compromise clauses written in governing coalition agreements to influence behaviours of political parties during negotiation processes.

This coalition governance modelling intends to centralize decision-making within the cabinet to avoid policy confusion in government. Another salient point is to ensure equity and fairness for electorates whereby junior partners do not overplay their roles and hold senior partners at ransom. Miller and Meyer (2010) advise that coalition mechanisms be legitimized by forming decision-making committees to enforce legal agreements about policy preferences and direction. Coalition committees should be embedded in election rules to bind to all governing coalition partners. Another important bargaining factor that influences bargaining coalitions in Western Europe is the transaction costs of such bargaining (Strom, 2000). Political parties strategically conduct a cost-benefit analysis of entering into governing coalition agreements so that they should stay within their policies and electorates. For example, can entering in a bargaining coalition agreement dilute what a political party stands for, and lead to its political demise? What might be the benefit of partaking in coalition governance? Anderweg and Timmermans (2008) identify a challenge of tangentiality preference during the establishment of governing coalitions whereby one political party puts much emphasis on economic and cultural issues, contrary to a member coalition partner focusing more on political and social issues.

**2.2. Politics of Coalition Governance in Africa.** The pivot of African coalition politics in this review is limited to former British colonies because the British government being the colonizer facilitated the formation of coalition governments in former colonies, unlike the French government that left former colonies to chat their path. Karume (2003) explains that in some African countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Uganda, and especially recently in Central Europe, where politics are influenced by ethnic, cultural, and regional affiliation, there is hardly any single political who was able to mobilize and win election. This position clearly makes coalition governance component of governance and politics.

Ethnic, cultural, and regional interests dominated political party formation during Africa's independence from colonialism and a shaped one-party system where there was a need to coalesce and bridge cleavages within a society (Oyugi, 2006). Coalition governance in Zimbabwe between Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) was ephemeral because of the ethnic dominance of one party resulting in mistrust and political turmoil (Sithole, 1986). In Kenya, the coalition government was driven more by the British's external influence as it claimed to create stability (Bennet, 1963; Kyle, 1999). In Nigeria, coalition governance was also swayed by the British government as an attempt to maintain territorial integrity but lacked principles and was ideologically dissonant to coalesce contending parties (Oyugi, 2006).
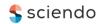
In Uganda, political friction between the Baganda Kingdom and the Uganda People Congress of Milton Obote, consequential to the land dispute in the Banyoro sub-district, collapsed the coalition arrangement (Low, 1971). All these factors influenced coalition politics in these four African countries and provided examples of intrigues during coalition formation and sustenance, which are elaborated in subsequent sections. Concomitantly, Volden and Carrubba (2004) contend that an oversized governing coalition constituted by many political parties suffers from instability due to cultural cleavages and divergent socio-cultural identities, making it extremely difficult to find consensus around policy directions and attainment.

*2.2.1. Approaches to Coalition Governance in Kenya and Nigeria*. Kadima (2003) identifies three types of electoral systems that operationalize democracy in African countries to be proportional representation (PR), first-past-the-post (FPTP), and an amalgamation of the two. According to Bandyopadhyay and Oak (2004), countries with a PR system are more likely to form coalition governance than those with FPTP since no single party is guaranteed more than 50 per cent of seats in parliament. The majoritarianism model of the PR system results in a situation whereby coalition governments are formed on a post hoc basis guided by party political interests rather than the promotion of social cohesion in a country. Interestingly, Oyugi (2006: 57) demarcates coalition governance in Africa between first-generation coalitions (on the eve of independence and immediately after independence) and second-generation coalitions (resurrection of multipartyism in the 1990s). Examples of first-generation governing coalitions are those in Kenya (1962-1963) and Nigeria (1957-1959), which were configured with the influence of the British government to safeguard a stable political climate and influence the transition to independence (Kadima, 2003; Karume, 2003). To minimize tension between the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), the British government employed parity members by delegating ministers from the two contending parties in 1963.

However, during the second-generation coalition era of multipartyism, coalition formation in Kenya was more driven by the need to ensure victory by the main parties (Oyugi, 2006). During the two multiparty election contests of 1992 and 1997, the KANU of Daniel Arap Moi returned to power by just one-third of the first-past-the-post (FPTP). Consequently, there was a realization amongst opposition parties to consolidate and form an alliance because their division was bound to keep the KANU in power in the next electoral cycle in 2002 (Karume, 2003). A major factor that influenced the formation of a coalition amongst the 14 parties was a need to break the political hegemony of the KANU and remove it in power rather than trade off policies they wanted to implement (Oyugi, 2006). Such coalition formation was also driven by the constitutional system of election of the president by Members of Parliament based on the number of parliamentary seats.

Coalition formation in Nigeria resulted in the appointment of federal Prime Minister Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, which characterized strong regional tendencies to neutralize and moderate federal government (Oyovbaire, 1985: 10). Based on Young's (1979: 293) postulation about greater tension and conflict between the ruling Action Group in Western Nigeria and National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) being the ruling party in Eastern Nigeria, the 1959 election meant that coalition government could be established by either one of these two parties and the Northern People's Congress (NPC). Consequently, a governing coalition was established between the National Council of Nigerian Citizens and the Northern People's Congress despite being apart in ideologies and principles.

Evidently, the British government exerted huge influence to bring these two ideologically divergent parties together to unify the country and maintain its territorial integrity (Oyugi, 2006: 57). Notably, coalition governance in Nigeria was fostered through the legacy of colonialism that spurred governing coalition partners to continue with their relationships in the post-colonial period during independence. Nevertheless, ethno-regional loyalties and political allegiance structures undermined political parties' ability to work

harmoniously (Adomolekun, 1986; Oyovbaire, 1995). Inevitably, by 1963 coalition between the Northern People's Congress and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens have drifted apart, resulting in looking elsewhere for new coalition partners in preparation for federal government legislation in the 1964 elections.

A new splinter group from the Action Group in Western Nigeria named Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP) got in bed with the Northern People's Congress (NPC) to form a coalition alliance (Oyugi, 2006). To minimize simmering political tension, Tafewa Balewa, the prime minister, formed a 'broad-based government to eliminate official opposition. Inevitably, the military staged a coup d'état as it disingenuously claimed to restore the territorial integrity of the Nigerian nation (Adomolekun, 1986). Regrettably, instead of maintaining territorial integrity and national cohesion for Nigeria, coalition governance was subjected to political manipulation at the altar of partisan and ethnic interests and rivalries.

*2.2.2. Lessons from Coalition Governments in Uganda and Zimbabwe.* Low (1971: 12) argues that during the British colonial period, Uganda was a quasi-federal state where the Baganda kingdom under Kabaka was 'given a special position in the power structure despite constituting only 16 percent of the population. Buganda aspired to secede from Uganda to establish an autonomous entity, but the nationalist movement stymied their ambition during the struggle for independence in the 1950s. Kabaka of the Baganda was forced to reconsider his options when preparing for independence in 1962, leading to a marriage of convenience with Milton Obote's Uganda People Congress (UPC) in opposition to the form of a coalition alliance (Oyugi, 2006). The intention of the Baganda in signing a coalition agreement with the UPC was to have a political voice and influence in the post-independence government. The coalition agreement between the Kabaka of Baganda and UPC resulted in the formation of coalition governance whereby Milton Obote assumed the position of executive prime minister in 1962 and Kabaka became president and head of state (Low, 1971).

Friction started to emerge within the coalition between the Baganda and central government due inducement of Kabaka Yekka's members of parliament to take UPCs' membership, a move that Kabaka viewed as a betrayal by the governing partner. Oyugi (2006) explains that there was also an ideological realignment with the Kabaka Yekka grouping. This realignment further divided members of the parliament into two contending parties, with the most conservatives giving allegiance to the Kabaka Yekka of Baganda kingdom. Another sticking point was an agreement reached between the British government and African nationalists who undertook to hold a post-independence referendum to settle the land dispute of the Banyoro kingdom (Low, 1971).

The nature of the dispute was that the sub-district of the Banyoro kingdom was ceded to the sympathetic Baganda kingdom by the British colonizer, which was required to be returned the kingdom of Bunyoro kingdom who were rightful owners and was a final straw that collapsed coalition between UPC and the Baganda kingdom (Low, 1971). Kabaka, head of state and president, refused to sign a land restoration agreement for the Banyoro kingdom. Consequentially, Obote exercised his executive power as a prime minister by signing land restoration. It heightened tension between two governing coalition partners and resulted in the abolishment of the Baganda by declaring Uganda a republic (Oyugi, 2006).

As stated in the foregoing section on politics of coalition governance in Africa, there was an attempt between the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) to forge a Patriotic Front that necessitates governing coalition during Zimbabwe's independence (Sithole, 1986: 15). Oyugi (2006) argues that coalition formation in Zimbabwe was preceded by the militarization of the national liberation struggle that provided an opportunity for the ZANU-Patriotic Front (PF) and ZAPU-PF to collaborate in the armed struggled against the British colonial power and later Ian Smith's minority regime. It was after Ian Smith declared Rhodesia independent from British colonial power on 11 November 1965 (Mandaza, 1986). The unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) from the British by Ian Smith to become the prime minister led to a protracted armed struggle. It resulted in a quasi-agreement to accommodate conservative political parties in an internal settlement through proportional representation that excluded parties engaged in guerrilla warfare in 1978 (Sithole, 1986).

A major outcome of the constitutional agreement for Zimbabwe-Rhodesia at the Lancaster House Conference was the insistence to accommodate minority groups, especially the white minority, by forming a national unity government that crafted a separate voter's roll for whites under proportional representation as a means for transition. Mandaza (1986) notes that the 1980 election for Zimbabwe's independence won by the ZANU preserved the spirit of the government of national unity (GNU) by accommodating ZAPU and

the white minority Rhodesian Front in a coalition government. Consequentially, there was a coalescing of different ethnic and regional groupings into a one-party system of governance in Zimbabwe during the 1980 independence between the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) to form the Patriotic Front, which proved to be just the calm before the storm. A major trigger that collapsed coalition governance between ZANU-PF and ZAPU-PF occurred in 1982 due to rivalry and attacks between their two guerrilla forces still in external camps (Mandaza, 1986; Sithole, 1986; Oyugi, 2006).

**2.2. South African Governance Model and Coalition Formation.** The South African Constitution of 1996 provides for a three-tier governance model in national, provincial, and local government spheres through a proportional representation (PR) system. It allows minority parties to hold sway or be kingmakers when forming coalition governance (Republic of South Africa, 1996; Hanabe & Malinzi, 2019). A coalition governance model can be constructed to strengthen accountability mechanisms in the South African political system by strengthening checks and balances in the electoral system. Hanabe and Malinzi (2019) posit that the PR electoral system in South Africa makes it possible for political parties to coalesce and form a coalition government at either of the three spheres of government in the absence of one party obtaining an outright majority in an election. Interestingly, a positive consequence of coalition governance formation in South Africa can be reciprocity amongst different parties as they compelled work together to establish a coalition government, keep each other in check, and be accountable for delivering quality services to the electorates.

Therefore, Coalition governance reconfigures the governance landscape to minimize corrupt practices in a single dominant-party government. Booysen (2018) contends that coalition governance in South Africa can serve as a deterrent to the monopolization of power by a dominant party like the African National Congress, which betrayed the electorates' trust and undermined its liberation promises and credentials. The coalition governance model at the local government sphere in South Africa can be used as a new governance model that can improve leadership, share governance practices, and service delivery to guide future national governance trajectory (Hanabe & Milanzi, 2019). Inversely, coalition governance in South Africa is nascent in comparison to matured democracies of Western Europe and can be subjected to challenges. For example, political party policy and ideological differences can create squabbles, intrigues, and dissonance amongst coalition partners that can limit the efficacy of governance and disadvantage citizens in ensuring the sustainability of service delivery.

Despite opportunities of fostering democratic pluralism, governance accountability, and social cohesion, nascent coalition governance model in South Africa can be bedeviled by challenges of intergovernmental conflicts, and differences between a governing party and opposition parties to undermine cooperative governance and interdependence amongst three governmental spheres stipulated in section 40 of the South Africa constitution (Pieterse, 2019; Republic of South Africa, 1996). Typically, in the South African context, the governing ANC may want to pursue divergent policies from those of opposition parties, i.e., a tender system for outsourcing service providers for security and cleaning that might be antithetic to implementation plans guided by an Integrated Development Plan of metro council run by opposition parties, i.e. insourcing services through direct employment of security guards and cleaners in City of Johannesburg run by the Democratic Alliance and coalition partners leading to intergovernmental conflict. Section 41 of the South African Constitution engenders three spheres of government to strengthen cooperation to provide an effective, transparent, accountable, and coherent government for the Republic as a whole (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Intergovernmental conflict further played itself out in the City of Tshwane in 2020 when the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Human Settlement and Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in the Gauteng Provincial Government, Mr. Lebogang Maile square up with the DA-run council at the Gauteng North Despite opportunities of fostering democratic pluralism, governance accountability and social cohesion, nascent coalition governance model in South Africa can be bedeviled by challenges of intergovernmental conflicts, and differences between a governing party and opposition parties to undermine cooperative governance and interdependence amongst three governmental spheres stipulated in section 40 of the South Africa constitution (Pieterse, 2019; Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Typically, the ANC government may want to pursue divergent policies from those of opposition parties i.e., tender system for outsourcing service providers. Section 41 of the South African Constitution engenders three spheres of government to strengthen cooperation for effective, transparent and accountable governance to South Africa. Divergent approaches to governance between coalition partners and the governing party

might create disparities in service provision for citizens, which might continue the apartheid legacy of inequality. Currently, the Democratic Alliance claims that where it governs, like in the City of Cape Town, 'it gets things done and governs better' than the governing ANC in Buffalo City and the City of Polokwane (Democratic Alliance, 2021: 10; News24, 2021).

Table 1. Gauteng Metropolitan Local Government Election Results in November 2021

| Gauteng Metropolitan Municipalities | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Municipality** | **ActionSA** | **ANC** | **DA** | **EFF** | **FF+** | **IFP** | **PA** | **Others** | *Total* | **Prior Control-2016** | **New Control-2021** |
| **City of Johannesburg** | 44 | 91 | 71 | 29 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 16 | *270* | ANC-COPE-AIC-UDM-Al Jama-ah coalition | DA-ActionSA-IFP-COPE-Al Jama-ah-ATM-APC-VF+-UIM coalition |
| **Ekurhuleni** | 15 | 86 | 65 | 31 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 12 | *224* | ANC-AIC-PAC-PA coalition | DA-ActionSA-IFP-COPE minority |
| **City of Tshwane** | 19 | 75 | 69 | 23 | 17 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 214 | DA-ACDP-VF+ minority | DA-VF+-ActionSA-ACDP-COPE-IFP Majority Coalition |

Source: Electoral Commission of South Africa, November 2021

## 3. Methodological Approach

The study employs the interpretive research philosophy and relies on the assumptions of the qualitative data to understand the challenges and opportunities inherent in coalition governance regarding the South Africa case. In this study, emphasis was placed on secondary data to make sense of the research problem. The paper draws insight from a qualitative research approach to gather theoretical and textual data in the research making meaning of secondary data. In addition, the research design dovetails with the assumption of exploratory design methods to further the limited knowledge about coalition governance in South Africa (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The qualitative data retrieved from secondary sources, including extant literature, secondary documents, archives materials, government gazettes, government legislation, newspapers, journal articles and other relevant secondary sources, becomes justified as secondary data sources for this data. To make sense of these sources, the researchers engage in critical review and analysis of the various secondary data by making sense and organizing them into different categories of themes and that cut across all the data sources (Hatch, 2022).

The reliability of the secondary qualitative data was pursued with the Trochim and Donnelly's (2007) four stages of ascertaining the reliability of qualitative data, such as ensuring the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the qualitative data set. First, the credibility of was ensured that all the views contained in the secondary sources gathered were well represented in the analysis and results of the findings. Secondly, the transferability of the secondary data was ensured in that the results can be transferable to another similar research context. Thirdly, dependability was pursued by ensuring adequate ethical consideration in the secondary data reports. Lastly, the conformability of results was attained, i.e., there was a relationship between the secondary data reported and the results.

The thematic content analysis of literary sources was employed using an inductive process to establish categories, patterns and themes, which entailed organizing data from the bottom up until the researcher established a comprehensive set of final themes. The qualitative research approach allowed the researcher to inductively interpret data when generating themes to provide multiple perspectives through identifying numerous factors during data analysis and establishing a holistic picture of the central phenomenon (Creswell Miller, 2000: 128; Hatch, 2022). Therefore, this paper's nature is theory-building in that it aims to expand on existing literature and contribute to a new South African phenomenon of coalition governance formation.

The thematic analysis and data presentation of the secondary qualitative data in this study are borrowed from Miles and Huberman (1994) three stages of analyzing secondary qualitative data such as data reduction, data display and drawing inferences. For the first part, a large volume of secondary data was arranged. What followed was the need to reduce and re-arrange such that different codes were attached to

relevant themes and sub-themes with continuous gazing of the secondary qualitative data set to effectively locate and identify clear patterns in the data and themes that directly or indirectly speak to the research problem. After the reduction of the enormous secondary qualitative data, the reduced data sets were later condensed and summarized and arranged in the order in which the themes were identified from the secondary qualitative data. Lastly, conclusions and inferences were later drawn from the arranged and summarized data by carefully interrogating what each theme and sub-themes represent and clear explanation were consequently provided as they dovetail with the research problem.

## 4. Themes and Discussion

Thematic content analysis was employed to collate and reduce information derived from primary and secondary documents of political parties and newspapers and literature studies from journal articles. Four themes that are generated to examine relationships among different ideas, constructs, and views about coalition governance from international, continental and national perspectives are *political brinkmanship and immaturity, and ideological and ethnocultural tension, formalized and binding coalition agreements, and social cohesion*. From the four themes, two, which are *political brinkmanship and immaturity, and ideological and ethnocultural tension,* analyzed challenges, whereas the other two which are *formalized and binding coalition agreements, and social cohesion,* outline opportunities for coalition governance in South Africa.

Table 2. Themes and Sub-themes

| | Themes | Sub-themes |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Political brinkmanship and immaturity | Political party's behaviour, political negotiation, political attitude, political maturity |
| 2 | Ideological and ethno-cultural tension | Political cohesion, ethnic and racial make-up, ideological differences, multi-culturalism, politics of race, political contestation |
| 3 | Formalization of coalition agreement | Transparency and accountability, sincerity and integrity of political parties, corruption, policy formulation and implementation |
| 4 | Social cohesion | Cultural persuasions, national identity, social acceptance, nationalism, racial division, unequal treatment |

Source: Secondary data analysis

**4.1. Political Brinkmanship and Immaturity.** Political brinkmanship is a political party's behavior or attitude that uses threats during negotiation with other parties to achieve its narrow sectarian interests through hard bargaining, which can lead to deadlock and collapse of negotiation efforts (Mansbridge & Martin, 2013). Basak and Deb (2020) interpret political brinkmanship as a 'negotiation myopia' because a political party overplays its sense of power, resulting in an impasse, mistrust and fail to achieve a win-win outcome. Political brinkmanship as a negotiation strategy occurs when a major partner during coalition negotiation insists that other parties should follow its principles and programs by threatening to pull out despite not having achieved a clear majority to govern on its own.

Concomitantly, a minor party can retaliate by claiming a kingmaker role whereby it insists that a bigger party should accede to its unreasonable demands, which can threaten the stability of governing coalition, which is also a sign of political immaturity. While political brinkmanship can be a short-term negotiation strategy to outsmart an opponent during negotiations, its long-term consequences can be detrimental for coalition governance. This is so as partners might also seek revenge that can affect service delivery and erode credibility and trust by citizens in a coalition government. Political immaturity can further lead to an inability by different political parties to compromise during coalition negotiation and hold each other to ransom to drive ideological agenda at the expense of improvement of governance performance and service delivery. Political immaturity through brinkmanship characterizes a lack of appreciation of electoral results by political parties, which can undermine social cohesion and consensus towards national building exercise in the South African political landscape.

Political brinkmanship symbolizes an immaturity of a political party that views itself as a major partner in a coalition. As such, they reference others as smaller partners who should accede to their own values and terms of the agreement. A typical example is the aftermath of the 2021 local government election in South Africa, where the Democratic Alliance party (DA) adopted the political brinkmanship attitude by insisting that any political party that wish to be its coalition partner must sign a coalition agreement single-handedly crafted by its federal council. The DA also refused to work with EFF by focusing on ideological differences despite the latter amassing enough votes in Tshwane, Ekurhuleni, and Johannesburg metros to strengthen

opposition parties' ability to form stable coalition government of 50 plus 1 majority necessary to pass municipal budgets and Integrated Development Plans. The DA's stance was a clear sign of political brinkmanship and immaturity because the prevailing political circumstance forced it to rely on votes from the EFF to form coalition governments in Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni metro councils but refused to comprise on their differences despite no party having an outright majority (Electoral Commission of South Africa, 2021).

Lack of proper consultation by the DA when designing coalition agreements is a serious threat to coalition governance, demonstrating its 'big brother attitude' coupled with arrogance and disrespect for other coalition partners. A genuine approach to establishing a coalition agreement or pact requires all parties to honestly engage and work out compromises about important issues to improve service delivery without prioritizing narrow sectarian preferences and beliefs. The attitude of the DA towards coalition agreement and governance is a sign of future discontentment within the coalition government that pose serious risks to governance stability. The DA's approach did little to rebut accusations from its political opponents who define and typify it as harboring an attitude of white supremacy within its political rank. Coalition governance formation requires a mature political attitude guided by strategic compromises necessary for the stability and longevity of coalition government.

**4.2. Ideological and Ethnocultural Tension**. Ideological and ethnocultural differences amongst political parties in Africa and Europe threaten social and national cohesion in different countries, including South Africa, by focusing more on what divides societies than strengthening diversity. Similar to occurrences in Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe, South Africa are characterized by different ethnic cultures and nationalities that align with political parties that resemble ethnic and racial makeup. It means that conservative Afrikaners join Freedom Font-Plus, some Zulus prefer to support the Inkatha Freedom Party, and radical black youth support the Economic Freedom Fighters, whereas the black and white middle-class divide their voting preferences between the African National Congress and Democratic Alliance. Different political party leaders in South Africa master the art of employing populist rhetoric to take advantage of ideological and ethno-cultural differences amongst citizens to be their main strategy for politicking which is propitious to win hearts and minds of the electorates and gain political mileage. Paradoxically, Julius Malema, the leader of the Economic Freedom Front (EFF) and Cornie Mulder from the Freedom Front Plus (FF+) both employ populist rhetoric to rally supporters based on racial and ideological identities (Ngwane, 2019; Nyenhuis, 2020; Resnick, 2014). According to Adam (1995), Johnson (1994) and Louw (1994) the ANC gradually shifted from non-racialism to Black Nationalism to attract majority of black voters during election campaigns because voting has become a racial census in South Africa.

Furthermore, living conditions of different social classes in South Africa, where most black people are unemployed or poor working class and reside in informal settlements and townships, influence the political outlook which aligns with the Economic Freedom Fighters. In the end, whites and black middle class who are wealthy and reside in rich suburbs choose to align with either the Democratic Alliance or African National Congress, thus deepening ideological contestations and class contradictions that undermine national and social cohesion. Coalition governance by different parties representing different nationalities and cultures can suffer because racial and cultural stereotypes are divisive and fail to identify common issues that unite South African citizens. Racial and ideological divisions are embedded in the South African psyche due to the legacy of apartheid that magnified racial and cultural separation.

Currently, the Freedom Front-Plus views itself as a bulwark to protect the rights and interests of the Afrikaners minority, including the land. In the end, the Economic Freedom Fighters was founded on the principle of ensuring the return of the land to the rightful black owners as it was forcefully dispossessed by whites and Europeans settlers during colonialism in the 17th century (Davis, 2019; Economic Freedom Fighter, 2013). Some South African political leaders still beat the drums of ideological and ethnocultural differences and tensions which deny citizens the opportunity to unite and work together to exemplify the spirit of Ubuntu through multi-culturalism and encourage diverse groupings to learn from each other and work together for the common national good as espoused in the South African constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Similarly, in Uganda, where disagreements between Uganda People Congress of Milton Obote and Kabaka of Baganda Kingdom centered on land restoration for the Banyoro kingdom, which led to the collapse of the coalition government, ideological differences between the DA and EFF were more glaring during the parliamentary debate and vote on land distribution (Oyugi, 2006; News24, 2021). Irreconcilable differences

between the EFF and DA on the land question became a major reason for the collapse of the coalition government in Nelson Mandela municipality when the EFF withdrew its tactical support 'to cut the throat of whiteness of the DA mayor Athol Trollip (Polity, 2020). Politics of race also played themselves out in the City of Tshwane municipality, where the EFF discontinued its support for the DA minority government by walking out of the council chamber with the opposition ANC resulting in the collapse of the DA municipality that was put under administration by the Gauteng MEC for local government and cooperative affairs in 2020 (Harper, 2020).

Ideological and racial divisions have persisted in the non-democratic South Africa to the extent that they currently play themselves out in the governing ANC that has morphed into two major factions, one led by President Ramaphosa, which is accused of supporting 'white monopoly capital' to safeguard white capital interests, and the other under the stewardship of former President Zuma and suspended ANC General Secretary Ace Magashule which claim to support 'racial economic transformation' to prioritize black South Africans' industrialization and ownership (Mavuso & Sadike, 2022). These racial and ideological contests and tensions within the governing ANC undermine the ability of the government to improve economic and social conditions due to policy contestation and incoherency within the governing party (African Nation Congress, 2017).

**4.3. Formalisation of Coalition Agreements**. Consociation during coalition governance in South Africa can be guaranteed when parties enter into formalized and binding coalition agreements that promote transparency and accountability for electorates. Formalized and binding coalition agreements should be shared with electorates who voted for parties so that they can be aware of the terms of the agreements and assess whether political parties stick to what they promised during elections. Contents of the coalition can cover economic, fundamental service delivery issues like water reticulation, construction of roads and housing, electricity, civil rights issues, and deadlock-breaking mechanisms in an event of disagreements and conflicts amongst partners (Kluver & Spoon, 2016; van der Wardt, de Vries, & Hobolt, 2014).

Formalized, binding and open coalition agreements can further improve transparency which currently needs to be improved because parties form a coalition government under closed doors to classify the nature and contents of such agreements by not disclosing them to voters. Formalized and binding coalition agreements can also be used to measure the sincerity and integrity of parties that have coalesced and punish parties that do not stick to the terms of coalition agreements in future elections. Formalized and binding coalition agreements also become important legal binding documents used by the South African legal system to compel a party that breaks these terms to obey them to foster the stability of the coalition government. Furthermore, knowledge of coalition agreements can empower citizens to track, monitor and evaluate the performance of a coalition government about service delivery improvement to inform the voting public about whether parties were effective in governing.

It will ensure that voters are not used as voting fodders during the election when they are bought with parties' T-shirts and food parcels which has become a norm in South Africa. Transparency of coalition agreements can minimize the cancer of corruption in the South African governance system because they can warn citizens about under-handedness during issuing tenders for the provision of basic services like building houses, water and electricity for the implementation of government programs. Kluver and Back (2019) underscore the significance of coalition agreements in western European governments to guide policy formulation and implementation during legislative terms. Coalition governing partners compromise on some of their policy preferences to design a government agenda. Such coalition agreements ascertain that the government's programs are not dominated by one dominant party but negotiated fairly and satisfyingly to prioritize issues of importance to the majority of citizens represented by their political parties. Timmermans and Gerard (2011) note the alignment of prioritized issues in a coalition agreement with the legislative agenda of a coalition government. Coalition agreements also serve as an incentive for parties to negotiate their ideological conflicts, which are detailed in the policy agenda (Indridason & Kristinsson, 2013).

Policy and decision-making processes during coalition governance should be informed by binding political agreements amongst actors to outline conflict management mechanisms in the event of contestations. Bradshaw and Breakfast (2019) underscore the importance of formalized and binding coalition agreements for the adoption of resolutions and tabling of the budget during the coalition government, of which failure to agree might result in a stalemate and consequential collapse of governance. An essential lesson for coalition governance that influenced coalition agreements in German is that such agreements are informed by three principles of 'responsibility, reliability, and realistic assumptions' (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Moore, 1986;

Schaefer, 2018:6). Expectantly, coalition partners should take responsibility for the success of coalition governance, be reliable and trustworthy to prioritize interests of service delivery and improvement of citizens' living conditions and be realistic about what is workable and achievable when governing together.

**4.4. Social Cohesion.** The coalition government of different parties from different ideological, social, and cultural persuasions in South Africa can build social cohesion by fostering a working culture amongst citizens who take a cue from their political leaders and representatives. Social cohesion through coalition governance can be an antidote to cultural and racial divisions inherited from the apartheid legacy of separate development and unequal treatment. Social cohesion amongst political parties in South Africa can further model co-existence and non-violent behaviour amongst citizens to mitigate the high rate of violence that has become a new social feature of democratic South Africa (Bradshaw & Breakfast, 2019; Rosenberg, 2012).

Coalition governance in South Africa should encourage building national identity and common purpose amongst different racial and cultural groups. It can be done by coalition partners who collaborate in governance to formulate governance policies meant to build social acceptance of each individual, as purported in chapter 2 of the Constitution on the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Social cohesion is fundamental to the unity of the country and counteracts some notions of secession that are brewing from the Cape Independence Party that calls for a referendum in the Western Cape by arguing that people classified as coloured are neglected by the democratic government of post-1994 as was the case during apartheid dispensation (Friedman,2021). Social cohesion can contribute to the social capital of South African citizens to encourage capacity-building initiatives from those who are advantaged and skilful to empower their compatriots who were denied development opportunities during the apartheid era.

However, political rhetoric and posturing from some political parties like the Freedom Front-Plus and EFF discourage social cohesion by beating the nationalistic and populistic drums of division amongst South African citizens. Such irresponsible political attitudes can fuel racial, cultural, and political tensions in South Africa. Violent and acrimonious behaviours of parliamentarians can spread to their supporters who can resort to physically attacking each other during election campaigns as was the case in the KwaZulu-Natal province in 2021 local election when ANC members attempted to stop EFF leader from visiting a polling station. Lack of social cohesion in a country like South Africa can degenerate into social disobedience and anarchy because most people, especially the poor, feel dislocated from mainstream economic participation and dividends. The July uprising in South Africa whereby industrial areas and shopping malls in some parts of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces were looted after the arrest of former President Jacob Zuma, should be analyzed from prism of disintegration of social norms and cohesiveness whereby a legal matter mutated into a social and political issue (News24, 2021). McClellan (2000) cautions that new social transformation, which is consequential to the advancement of technology in communication, removes leaders from their followers who feel disconnected. Thereby social relations are undermined, resulting in societal chaos.

## 5. Findings

Findings derived from thematic content analysis of primary documents and secondary sources indicate that the formation of coalition governance in South Africa might be faced with challenges of political brinkmanship and ethnic and ideological tension. Political brinkmanship can be viewed as a sign of political immaturity by coalition partners who do not approach the coalition negotiation process in good faith but want to hold others to ransom to agree to their demands or terms. Ethnic and ideological tension can create difficulties during coalition governance formation as political parties position themselves ideologically and based on ethnocultural dispositions that create division and deadlock.

Coalition governance should be driven by building social cohesion, particularly in a country like South Africa that is still dealing with the after-effects of the apartheid ideology of ethnic, national, and racial segregation. Coalition governance can therefore improve social cohesion, heal racial scars of the past, and create a unified nation with a common purpose and destiny. It can be achieved when different leaders of political parties agree to coalesce by putting the interests of the electorate above their sectarian preferences and setting good examples to their followers to unite and work together for the societal and national development of the country.

Furthermore, the findings indicate the opportunities of formalized and binding coalition agreements during coalition governance to provide legal mechanisms to strengthen checks and balances and improve accountability. Formalized binding coalition agreements should empower citizens to track, monitor, and

evaluate government performance when implementing programs to improve service delivery. It can be achieved by making coalition agreements accessible to the public to ensure transparency of government dealings so that they can be accountable to the electorates and citizens.

Despite some deficiencies of coalition governance, such as political brinkmanship and ideological tensions amongst coalescing partners, they can adopt formalized binding agreements that provide conflict management mechanisms to navigate governance challenges. Noticeable opportunities that can be accrued from coalition agreements are improvement of service delivery as parties are compelled to convince voters about their governance abilities, monitoring and evaluation by voters to punish parties that do not abide by the prescripts and terms of engagement. These measures are significant to embed reciprocal accountability amongst political parties that force them to put the interests of citizens before their sectarian interests and preferences. Furthermore, conflict management mechanisms within governing coalitions should encourage constructive engagements and transformative culture to enable parties from different political persuasions to learn from each other and amplify the democratic dividend of citizen representation.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper aimed to analyze factors that can drive and influence the formation of coalition governance in South Africa in a period whereby one-dominant party hegemony has reached its sell-by date. The paper further argues that the apartheid government bifurcated South African society by demarcating citizens according to racial and cultural lines, which undermined social cohesion and the spirit of unity as espoused by the fathers of a democratic and unified country rich in its diversity. Coalition governance is unchartered waters informed by the new South African reality in the post-democratic period. However, the political brinkmanship and lack of political maturity from political parties with divergent interests might undermine social cohesion and service delivery expectations of the electorates during the formation of a coalition government. It is because South African citizens still align with political parties based on ethnic, cultural, and ideological dispositions and inclinations.

Political parties are advised to prioritize citizens' interests in the improvement of service delivery rather than prioritizing their narrow sectarian preferences and interests when forming coalition governance. Contents, terms, and conditions of coalition agreements should be accessible to citizens so that they can monitor and evaluate performance of coalition government and hold governing partners accountable. Political parties that enter into coalition agreement should enter with a spirit of building social cohesion in South Africa and desist from applying strategy of political brinkmanship that create a culture of mistrust amongst governing partners. Coalition government at the national sphere of governance should formulate educational policies that strengthen educational curricula to include social cohesion, which lay the foundation for South African citizens to build a culture of national cohesion. Political parties should approach coalition governance in a manner that deepens democratic participation to drive national interests, which encourage citizens to unite and shift away from ethnocultural divisions.

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