

A Two-way Race between the ANC and a “Clean Coalition”

We are now into the second half of the 2019 election campaign. The polls show that no opposition party can beat the ANC. But there is a prospect that by forming a Coalition, the opposition parties could unseat the ruling party.

So there is no prospect at this stage, according to the polls, that the DA will win, or the EFF. That is not on the cards. But if voters think at a higher level than just their alternative party of choice, they could bring the government down. That is within reach.

But to do so, the opposition parties need to stop peddling the illusion that they are “in it to win”. They are not going to win, no matter how split the ANC is. The only alternative at this stage is to form a Coalition government that can share the power.

A Joint Venture is distinct from the two or more parties that form it. In this case, it will take 51 percent of the national vote to unseat the ANC. That is 3 percent x 17 (= 51 percent). DA leader Maimane has said that he wants to scale down the Cabinet to fifteen. So you can have the offices of President, Deputy President and 15 Cabinet members – that’s 17. It means that in a Coalition government, for every 3 percent of the vote you win, you can have a Cabinet seat.

If the EFF wins 15 percent of the overall vote, that is not five seats because the allocation of seats is counted by seeing the 51 percent as 100-percent-of-the-Coalition. So the EFF could get two or three seats in the Cabinet, plus the office of Deputy President, as runner-up.

Of the 400 seats in parliament, 51 percent is 204 seats. Three percent is 12 seats. So put in the currency of seats, a party winning 12 seats deserves a Cabinet post as well, in the All-Star Cabinet.

The DA would get the office of President as well as about five or six seats in the Cabinet. The rest of the seats would be allocated to those other parties that are expected to win some seats – like UDM, COPE, and GOOD.

By combining forces like this, the “Clean Coalition” could put forward a credible and competent Cabinet. Names come to mind like Holomisa, Lekota, de Lille, not to mention the illustrious from the EFF (Mpofu, Ndlozi) and the DA (Zille, Msimanga, Steinhuisen, Breitenbach). A “Clean Coalition” would not be lacking in either capability or experience.

And it would be clean! No smallanyana skeletons lurking in the closets. A solid track record in terms of confronting corruption and patronage in the ruling party.

The opposition parties should not leave this prospect to sort itself out after the elections. They need to read the signs of the times and pledge themselves to a Coalition. Now, in the second half of the election campaign. Doing so could have the effect of swinging votes from the incumbent to the new contender. In short, people don’t like to choose a loser, they like to choose a winner. And no single party has the realistic prospect of winning at this stage. The polls are clear about that.

But one way to read the polls is that a Clean Coalition could be on the cards. So embrace it! The second half of the campaign should see political parties pledging their support to form a functioning coalition in 2019.

This will involve some new tools – to arrive at “tolerable compromises” as a coalition of parties that have “boggeral” in common. In fact, the cornerstone of the Coalition will be to clean up government and to empower the National Assembly. For this kind of Coalition is the best way to outgrow the ANC’s bent to “vanguardism”. Its party structure the NEC should not be running our country. The State should be run by its National Assembly. That is the way that the Constitution reads.

Coalition government would put the Constitution first and the parties second. Whereas under the ANC there are always two centres of power.

A Clean Coalition government would put power into the hand so the people, instead of the parties wielding the power, by whipping MPs how to vote. That is a genetic throwback to when the ruling party was a liberation movement.

Vanguardism is brought to you by the One-party State. Whereas Coalition government would be the real thing in terms of multi-party Democratic. At last.

In the first half of the election campaign, each party launched its manifesto and beat its own drum. The time has come for those drum-beats to catch one and the same rhythm.

Mechanisms like rank-choice voting and indicative voting can help a Coalition to function smoothly.

A Coalition is NOT the same as a “Minority Government” like Theresa May is running in the UK. In that configuration, you always have a senior partner and a junior partner. In the UK that is the Conservatives from England and the DUP from Northern Ireland. Whereas a Coalition conjoins parties that are much closer to being real partners. You find that that kind of balance in Germany, for example, where no party commands a big majority, so after Elections they have to negotiate governing Coalitions.

The Electorate needs to open its eyes to the risks of re-electing the ANC. It is a party that could break into open warfare on May 9th, the day after the elections. What it calls “unity” is really “gridlock”. Because the Party is predominant, it could even recall the President, as it did with both Mbeki and Zuma. In other words, we are not electing Ramaphosa and he could conceivably not survive the 5-year terms of another majority mandate. You cannot vote for Ramaphosa without voting for Magashule and Mabuza too.

The only viable alternative at this stage is a Clean Coalition. Hello opposition parties; bye-bye liberation movement turned political party.

President Maimane and Deputy President Malema? Younger, sharper, cleaner than the incumbents. The usual concern is that they have “boggeral” in common. Well, what about the two ANC factions vying for its soul? They don’t exactly share common values either. To the point that just this week, the ANC’s General Secretary defends the return of various implicated cadres to his party “lists”, while the President says that there must be jail-time for those who have been exposed. Who should the voters believe?

At this stage, only a Clean Coalition can unseat the ruling alliance. A new alliance must be formed by the opposition parties recognizing that this is now their best shot at replacing the ANC in 2019.