
CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

It can be said that South Africa's development objectives are captured and enshrined in the National Developmental Plan (Vision 2030). Vision 2030 could be viewed as a social contract, in response to rising poverty, inequality, and unemployment (NPC, 2011). South Africa has since the 1990s been trying to put in place a social pact for all partners in society for the advancement of wellbeing in the country. There have been many attempts, largely aimed at ensuring social cohesion and or nation building. I was involved with some of the initiatives when I was responsible for the social sector in government. In hindsight, many efforts did not yield desired results because not all partners came on board. The reality of the South African society and its history is that government cannot achieve much in certain areas without the involvement of the private sector, the organised labour and the broader civil society. It has not helped that government has not been effective in pursuing initiatives that it has control over. In addition, corruption and inefficiencies in government since 1994 have made it difficult for other stakeholders to partner with government towards a social pact.

It is becoming increasingly likely that South Africa is headed for a coalition national government. South Africa has some experience of coalition politics. The GNU during the first administration should provide some insights. Coalitions in local governments should also provide lessons, perhaps lessons about what not to do in a coalition government. Trends in voting patterns indicate that the ANC is losing many voters while other parties are gaining (see Gumede, 2020a). It is worth noting that the Democratic Alliance (DA) is also losing votes and parties that appeared stagnant (e.g. Inkatha Freedom Party and Freedom Front Plus) are gaining votes, at least during 2014 and 2019 general elections. It would be important to plan for a coalition government, drawing lessons from countries that have had coalition governments. The capacity and organisation of the state would most likely matter even more in a coalition government.

Back to the National Development Plan/Vision 2030, it was canvassed across society even though some claimed to not have had an opportunity to make inputs. Notwithstanding, all the key stakeholders agreed to it. The NPC accommodates various role players with commissioners from the private sector, organised labour and representatives from other

sectors including the broader civil society. As such, the very nature of the NPC is that it involves all stakeholders. This, however, is not ideal when comparing the South African NPC with other national planning commissions. Planning commissions are populated by experts and the secretariats of other national planning commissions in other countries have sound specialised capacities. The three national planning commissions in South Africa so far have not had requisite capacities such as expertise in the various social and economic sectors and in other pressing challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and poverty as an example. This issue of capacity was raised as a concern by some at the Policy Unit during the Mbeki administration. In comparison to other countries, the capacity, in terms of number of people employed and their expertise and experience, of the NPC Secretariat is grossly insufficient. The NPC should not be commissioning consultants for its work.

Vision 2030 provides an overarching set of goals on how South Africa can be free of poverty and reduce inequality and unemployment. It builds consensus on what should be done to overcome obstacles and provides a long-term strategic planning framework for government and society on making choices about how to use scarce resources. The NDP aims to achieve decent standards of living for all but particularly the poor in terms of the provision of housing, electricity and sanitation; reliable public transport; education and skills development; safety and security; healthcare; welfare and social protection; employment; recreation and leisure; a clean environment; and adequate nutrition. The Presidency should lead the establishment of a Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) in order to shape an implementation and budget cycle and to develop performance indicators and targets for departments and government agencies. The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation ought to guide this process. Therefore, proper capacities must be in place in the Department in order that it can provide the necessary leadership and policy interventions that can ensure that NDP goals are accomplished. It might be that the challenge is not so much capacity but the organisation of the government. Government, in terms of government departments, has continually been re-organised since 2010 but results have not improved. The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated that government is weaker than was thought.

Vision 2030 has been disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, signs that it was not going to be met were showing long before Covid-19. It is ironical and paradoxical that the performance of the government has gradually deteriorated while capacity in terms of planning, monitoring and evaluation as well as the general headcount and the wage bill increased. It is in this context that I am suggesting in this book that the fundamental challenge with the South African government is the manner in which it is organised. In other words, all the efforts to better re-organise the government since 1994 have not worked. The public sector reforms that have been continually pursued have not addressed the correct problem. There is doubt whether the proposed new reforms are addressing the correct problem, and whether they will not worsen the already hollowed out government. This issue is even more pertinent in the context of a coalition government that is likely in South Africa's near future.