

Dialogue between the ANC, COSATU and the SACP

The Impact on leadership, governance and public policy in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Since 1994 the South African state has been governed through an Alliance of the African National Congress (ANC), South African Communist Party (SACP) and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Whilst each of these organisations claims autonomy and independence, it shares a common history and core ideological persuasions which has been articulated as the National Democratic Revolution (NDR). Whilst ANC members may not necessarily have membership of the SACP or COSATU, any member of the SACP or COSATU who desires to enter politics are required to be a member of the ANC. The SACP and COSATU do not contest elections. As part of the agreement, only the ANC contests elections and as such leads the Alliance. This has led to a number of challenges, specifically related to public administration. This article describes the nature of the tripartite alliance by considering the historical roots of the alliance itself and its performance in government; and by concluding that there is an understanding of the leadership role of the ANC within the Alliance. The ANC itself is a reflection of the "broad church" nature of such an Alliance.

INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to understanding the politics, the political dynamics in South Africa and the public administration interface with political governance, it is imperative to know the salient

dynamics associated with the tripartite alliance. Thus has for a very long time, been the machinery of leadership, governance and public policy in South Africa. It is this Alliance that constitutes the major force which is shaping the polity through public policy and practices in the contemporary developmental state in South Africa. The alliance between the leading South African liberation entities – the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), which, a few years after the birth of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), ceased to exist – has been in existence for many decades. Suttner describes the Alliance as “without precedent on the African continent and with few parallels elsewhere in the world” (Suttner 2001). This very crucial historical fact, as a recurring political fact, is lost and forgotten as the observation and analyses tend to occur through the prism of personalities and silo mentality.

Whilst Africa might have had collaboration between political parties and labour formations, the Alliance in South Africa has been a political construction of a very special type. In fact, the paradox of a workers’ movement ferociously criticising the ANC government, including resorting to mass action at times whilst simultaneously insisting that the interests of the working class, and by extension democracy itself, can only be served through the continued alliance with the ruling party, is incomprehensible to many.

The Harare Declaration of 1989, an ANC document supported by the United Nations, gave the ANC the high moral ground in negotiations regarding the future of South Africa and also ensured that the alliance of the liberation movement would be a feature in any future South African society. This strategic document provided the basis for the Alliance in the future democratic South Africa.

The dismantling of apartheid, the unbanning of liberation formations and the release of political prisoners at the start of the 1990s ushered in a new framework and paradigm for how the Alliance would relate to one another in a post-liberated South Africa and, again when the leading partner of the Alliance became the government in 1994.

This article critically assess and dissect the relationship of the three main partners of the Alliance – the ANC, SACP and COSATU – and more specifically the impact that this have had on the administrative capacity of the public service in the years of democracy since 1994. The dialogue between the alliance partners should be seen as a continuum rather than an event and the purpose of this discussion is to analyse how the political dialogue is shaping the business of government which is public administration.

NEGOTIATING DEMOCRACY – 1990 TO 1994

In 1990, former President FW De Klerk unbanned the ANC and SACP together with other previously banned organisations. The relationship between an independent and autonomous COSATU and the ANC, who was considered the main liberator, was put under strain. Where, during the 1980s, the “activists in the labour movement and the civics were de facto leaders of the internal democratic movement,” after 1990 the ANC began to “reassert its hegemony as the political leader of the anti-apartheid movement...” (Ginsberg, Webster *et al.* 1995:7). The ANC was now ushered into the position where it “had to transform itself from an exiled South African liberation movement into a negotiation partner and government-in-waiting. This brought enormous changes on the organisation and its policies” (Nattrass, 1994:343).



The ANC's narrative for national liberation became null and void with the collapse of Soviet communism (a benefactor of the ANC during liberation) in 1989 and it had to rebuild its rationale and strategy for national liberation.

What did national liberation mean in the post-Soviet communism era? With the collapse of Soviet communism in 1989, new ideas came from an unexpected quarter: international capitalism. Western European states offered the ANC models of liberal democracy and parliamentary forms of democratic governance as it prepared itself for government. The ANC began its long ascent to power after a decade in which most political scientists had concluded that, *firstly*, the most important task of new democracies was maintaining economic stability after the excesses of dictatorship; and *secondly*, that the exigencies of maintaining economic stability included restrictions on the concessions to popular demands usually associated with new democracies (Koelble 1999:41-45).

The ANC which returned from exile with the shifting ideological paradigm placed COSATU in a very uncomfortable situation. The labour movement was now faced with an ANC that could not absorb the economic advice of the Western powers without accepting the political framework in which they implemented those policies — and that framework did not contain worker control of industry or complete/full worker participation in government. This posed a political dilemma for COSATU.

For many COSATU leaders, the first indication that something was not quite right in the transition came when COSATU, at the end of 1991, was denied membership in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). The National Party (NP) government denied COSATU's application "and presumably the ANC did not oppose the NP" (Webster 1998:48). Ultimately, only political parties were represented in CODESA; COSATU however, was in a position to participate indirectly, through the ANC and the SACP. "From this point, political parties—not the civil society organizations that were the backbone of the 1980s insurrection...were to be at the center of the transition" (Webster 1998:48). For the first time since its association with the ANC and SACP, COSATU was treated like a junior partner to the ANC and even to the relatively smaller SACP.

During the 1990-1994 period, COSATU remained a force of the left and was neither demobilised nor tamed. Its ability to mobilise mass support for the ANC's position during the negotiations was critical. In 1990, the trade unions won a major concession from the NP government in the form of the Laboria Minute, "a document that committed the state to submit all future labour laws to employer and union federations before tabling the legislation in parliament." The Laboria Minute "helped to establish a mechanism through which organised interests could directly participate in policy decisions affecting them" (Hirschsohn 1996:143). COSATU's organisational capacity was deployed quite effectively during the transition period when in 1992, "rolling mass action" by COSATU members broke a major deadlock in the CODESA negotiations (Heribert *et al.* 1998:149). Yet, the ANC's rapprochement with capitalism meant that COSATU lost any real hope of furthering direct worker control of industry, one of its major ideological principles.

Some would argue that the ANC considered COSATU's main purpose in the new South Africa to be that of mobilising workers in support of the ANC's reconstruction policies (Webster and Adler 1995:89). This assumption reflects a peculiar continuity between the democratic centralism of the ANC in the 1980s and the liberal democracy of the ANC in the 1990s. Both ideological systems is premised on the notion that civil society

organisations like trade unions exist to support and influence the process of government and not to directly participate in it. The ANC's perceived conversion to capitalism drastically reshaped the party's economic philosophy, but left its theory of relation to the trade unions largely unchanged.

The leaders of the ANC were strategic and tactical in their recognition of the trade union's desire for an active role in the new democracy. The ANC delegated to COSATU the responsibility of drafting the Alliance's post-transition economic programme, the document that would eventually become the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Nelson Mandela promised union leaders substantive positions in the government of national unity (GNU). While the ANC reserved to Parliament the ultimate say in economic policy, it endorsed the Laboria Minute and assured union leaders that it would support negotiated settlements between management and labour (Hirschsohn 1996:144-145).

COSATU interpreted these promises from the ANC as signs that the ANC would continue to work with the trade unions to construct at least a mixed economy. It needed this narrative as it tried to preserve its platform despite the transformation of its closest ally's views. While COSATU had to abandon the prospect of worker control in the early 1990s, the emphasis of the ANC on the RDP and its endorsement of corporatist bargaining suggested that it would still countenance labour participation in the creation of government economic policy. It is not surprising, therefore, that between the signing of the Laboria Minute in 1990 and the inauguration of NEDLAC in 1995, COSATU's leaders reconciled themselves to joining the government and working through corporatist structures. With the prospect of a sympathetic government, corporatism seemed less like a gilded cage and more like a natural evolution in COSATU's mission, which reads:

to protect worker interests and advance their rights...[by building] large broadly based industrial unions capable of dealing with the highly centralized structures of capital...[and] to formulate clear policies as to how the economy would be restructured in the interests of the working class and to work towards this restructuring (Hirschsohn, 1996:144-45).

The unions' successful bargaining with the NP government on the Laboria Minute, their mobilisation in favour of CODESA, and other campaigns, including their general strike against the Value-Added Tax, had convinced them that they could substantively influence government policy (Webster and Adler 1995:93). These factors contributed to the confidence, in 1994, of trade union leaders who thought that they could represent the interests of their rank-and-file while participating in national government. All indications were that the ANC appeared committed not only to consulting the union movement on economic policy, but also with entrusting union leaders with implementing the government's plan for economic restructuring. Jay Naidoo, former secretary-general of COSATU, was appointed Minister responsible for the RDP in Mandela's cabinet.

Despite the public images of harmony, tensions between the ANC and COSATU remained. When the ANC in 1993 attempted to affect revisions of the RDP to reassure investors, it provoked an outcry among COSATU leaders (Nattrass 1994:359). Even as the ANC worked to assure investors that it would maintain a friendly economic climate, it reassured the federation that it would be an important partner in the new government. In this context, the decisions of COSATU leaders to leave the unions for the government—



what Webster terms the *exodus without a map*—and to focus their efforts on national-level bargaining forums make more sense.

Yet, the ANC it can be argued, never really adopted COSATU's view of the democratic process. While it used the Union's mobilising power in the struggle of the 1980s and the transition of the early 1990s, it actually adopted the economic philosophy of the trade union federation's class enemies. The key point emphasised here is that economic philosophy has a concomitant political philosophy, one that assumes that groups like unions are supposed to be observers or pressure groups or lobbyists, and not direct participants, in the democratic process. COSATU's leaders, acting under the assumption that the ANC still accorded a substantive role to the trade unions, entered government without ensuring that links back to the union movement could be preserved independently of government support. When ANC policy began to turn against the unions after 1994, the Federation was left without a coherent philosophy of its own to counter the ANC's assertions that the unions needed to bend before the inexorable forces of liberalisation and globalisation. It is debatable that COSATU had ultimately made the same mistake that SACTU had decades before as it had yoked its cart to the ANC, which turned out to be a very fickle beast.

BIRTH OF A DEMOCRATIC STATE – 1994 TO 1999

The first five years of democratic government in South Africa was characterised by tensions that strained the Alliance. Notwithstanding the many gains made during the first period of majority rule, the expectations of workers nonetheless have suffered as they continued to be disappointed and frustrated by the ANC-in-government. To many looking in from the outside, it appeared that the Alliance was kept going by a serious commitment to it on the part of key COSATU leaders and in the absence of legitimate political alternatives. The year 1999 was spectacular in that in spite of the strains of the previous five years, COSATU's approach to the 1999 elections was very similar to that of 1994.

In 1999, COSATU's support for the ANC's election bid went far beyond statements of support. COSATU dedicated a number of leaders, staff and shop stewards to the ANC's electoral bid and even pledged that all COSATU and affiliate leaders would be made available to the ANC. The then General Secretary of COSATU, Mbhazima (Sam) Shilowa, was mandated to co-ordinate the COSATU elections strategy on a full time basis. Union staff was deployed to support the ANC campaign, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape where they attempted to counter the strength of the Inkatha Freedom Party, the National Party and the United Democratic Movement respectively.

The Central Executive Committee of COSATU embraced the ANC's Election Manifesto in 1999, claiming at the time that it "undoubtedly maintains the historic bias of the ANC to workers and the poor," and "creates the necessary socio-economic and political conditions for increased delivery of a better life for all of our people." (Sapa, 31 March 1999). The Manifesto, it was worth noting, avoided mentioning by name the government's *Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR)* strategy – the source of many of the ANC-COSATU tensions since its adoption in 1996 – although it reiterated several of GEAR's major objectives.

COSATU's 1999 electoral strategy in support of the ANC's Election Manifesto mimicked the 1994 electoral campaign. As happened in 1994, a large number of senior COSATU

leaders were identified to leave for Parliament. The belief that having ex-unionists in Parliament meant having allies in Parliament also seemed to have survived. In a February 1998 interview in the *South African Labour Bulletin*, Shilowa argued that, “although the ANC has the interest of workers at heart, it also represents other interests. If these other interests release people to go into government and we don’t, we could find ourselves in a losing position.”(Buhlungu and Webster 1998).

Being “inside and outside the state” by placing sympathetic representatives in Parliament did not prove terribly effective during the first five years of democratic rule, however. *Realpolitik* dictated what transpired. Parliament failed to have established a *labour caucus* in the first Parliament, and some deployed trade unionists have actually been accused of betraying the interests of workers. ANC members of Parliament and particularly Cabinet ministers had a formal obligation only to advancing the policies of the ANC. They had no obligation to support COSATU’s programme and would be constrained from doing so if the two were seen to be in conflict. Those who went to Parliament in 1999 served under similar conditions to those who went in 1994.

In 1999, COSATU, was again set to lose a large number of its most senior and experienced leaders to Parliament, to government, and to the provincial legislatures. The loss of capacity in COSATU and the affiliates that followed the personnel drain in 1994 appeared destined to recur in 1999. It bears noting that those who were *redeployed* to Parliament or to government departments after 1994 seldom returned to the union movement.

Despite the disappointments of the first five years of ANC rule, the Central Executive Committee of COSATU stated firmly in a pre-election pamphlet that “the question workers should ask themselves is – do you believe that any other political organization will deliver better or more than the ANC has done in the last five years?” Many analysts and political observers did not understand this unadulterated support for the ANC given COSATU’s recent experience in the Alliance pact with the ANC.

On 27 April 1994, COSATU members had every reason to believe that *their* government would improve the lot of workers and their families and communities. The ANC’s electoral platform (the *Reconstruction and Development Programme*, or RDP) had, after all, been developed in close cooperation with COSATU. Yet, even early on there were clear signs that workers would not be as well served by the new government as they and their leaders had anticipated. COSATU and key affiliates objected to a number of government policy initiatives – tariff reduction, high interest rates, privatisation, public sector lay-offs and, the failure to make centralised bargaining compulsory. More generally, there were indications that it was to business leaders and opinion makers, not workers that the government looked to for support and legitimacy. Creating an attractive investment climate (even if also in the *interests of workers* in a capitalist context insofar as it led to jobs) trumped worker demands for democratisation and redress whenever the two were judged to diverge.

Still, the most dramatic sign that COSATU’s expectations would not be met was the June 1996 announcement of the government’s strategy, GEAR, made without prior consultation with its Alliance partners. The announcement severely tested the relationship between the ANC, particularly the Cabinet, the SACP, who aligned with COSATU in this respect.

At first, COSATU signalled its intention to debate the economic strategy but ANC ministers quickly made it clear that GEAR was government policy and *non-negotiable*. Meanwhile, a close examination of its main tenets raised serious concerns about GEAR’s

content as well as the process of arriving at it. Such concerns led regional activists to push COSATU's Central Executive Committee to publicly oppose large sections of the programme. By November 1996, developments seemed to point towards the possibility of a decisive rupture of the Alliance.

In an effort to try to reassert some influence over ANC policy, yet avoid an open rift, the COSATU Executive produced a *Draft Programme for the Alliance* (Umsebenzi 1996) that criticised both content and process in the development of GEAR. The *Draft Programme* proposed a new accord to bind Alliance members to a common agenda. The substance of that agenda, as suggested by COSATU, centred on state provision of basic goods and services, social transfers, and land distribution that would also create jobs, raise income (including the social wage) and redistribute wealth. It was furthermore agreed that extensive state regulation of the private sector would translate into job creation and income distribution.

A COSATU-SACP meeting in December 1996 agreed that major policies had to be made or at least debated within Alliance structures rather than solely in Cabinet. On this basis, the ANC was brought into a series of discussions that culminated in an Alliance Summit in August 1997. There were potential benefits for the ANC in meeting to discuss policy and process with other Alliance partners. It was an opportunity to remind the SACP and COSATU of the importance of smoothing over differences in the run-up to the COSATU Congress, the ANC Conference and the 1999 elections. The ANC leaders did not want the party's commitment to the GEAR programme to be debated extensively on the floor of the ANC Conference, nor to come to a vote, if that was likely to lead to an irreconcilable rift. Some within the ANC leaders also viewed the meeting as an opportunity to *educate* COSATU and SACP critics on the merits of GEAR.

It was clear, in any case, that by the time the ANC, SACP and COSATU delegates met in late August 1997 the COSATU leadership itself felt a stronger commitment to the Alliance than it did in pushing a new policy agenda in the ANC. The meeting resolved little by way of policy disagreements, although all three partners committed themselves to work towards consolidating a common Alliance platform at their forthcoming national conferences and congresses. Thus the August 1997 meeting cleared the way for the upcoming COSATU Congress (September 1997) and the ANC Conference (December 1997) to present a common commitment to the Alliance, yet without a consensus on the ANC's economic programme, GEAR (Report on the Tripartite Alliance Summit, 1997).

In order to facilitate this renewed commitment to the Alliance, there was some appearance of movement on GEAR, in the form of the statement that "any macroeconomic policy is not cast in stone." The Alliance partners agreed to strengthen internal policy and communications structures as well. But even with agreement reached on a process whereby disagreements over GEAR and other economic policies could be discussed within the Alliance, there was little indication of a rapprochement over the content of the policies.

On the one hand, the compromise position on the government's macro-economic programme allowed the *status quo* – GEAR – to continue for the foreseeable future. Yet the meeting on the other hand revealed extensive disagreements among COSATU, the SACP and the ANC on the goal of socialism, the relationship between the state and capital, the limitations of the international context, and the role of *mass mobilisation*. After outlining a

number of specific areas of fundamental disagreement about the implications of the GEAR's strict deficit reduction targets, high interest rates, options for financing the South African deficit, and a relatively liberal tariff and foreign exchange regime, the most that COSATU and other GEAR critics could get was an agreement that "[w]here Fiscal and Monetary policy undermine the RDP, it needs to be reviewed."

At the September 1997 COSATU Congress, GEAR continued to be unpopular. In his speech to the congress, President John Gomomo described it as "the reverse gear of our society," and delegates sang *COSATU Asifuni Gear* (COSATU does not want GEAR) as President Nelson Mandela departed from the Congress after giving a speech that defended the programme's content (albeit conceding that the process of introducing it had been inappropriate).

COSATU's opposition to GEAR was not strong enough to lead the COSATU membership to make its participation in the Alliance conditional on the ANC dropping GEAR. Instead, the trade union federation decided to try quietly to encourage the ANC to reform GEAR. This could be interpreted as COSATU's version of *quiet diplomacy*.

As a result, in the months between the COSATU Congress and the ANC Conference, there was much back-room dealing to hammer out a more solid compromise position. But the only visible outcome was the ANC's economic policy report to the December 1997 Conference which emphasised the congruence between RDP and GEAR aims. GEAR, it suggested, was "the initiative to give effect to the realisation of the RDP by the maintenance of macro balances". Delegates unanimously approved the resolution that: "[t]he Conference endorses the basic objective of macro-economic stability and the GEAR provides the basis for achieving such stability," adding that "like other policies it will be monitored and adjusted as required by analysis through the policy processes adopted in this conference and in the Alliance Summit." This avoided the risky proposition of forcing a vote on the GEAR programme itself.

Whatever expectations the COSATU membership may have had that some type of a deal had been struck that would begin to move the government away from the GEAR programme, the COSATU Executive was forced to conclude in May 1998 that "this strategy is being implemented [o]n all fronts." COSATU then re-committed itself to mobilising its members and other communities to resist GEAR, as had been agreed at the September 1997 COSATU Congress.

This background merely makes it all the more striking that criticisms of GEAR and ANC policies became more muted as COSATU began, in ways outlined above, to prepare for the June 1999 elections, in favour of emphasising the achievements under the first five years of ANC government. "Workers have no intention of abandoning the only vehicle for real transformation – the ANC – in this election," announced the report from a February 1999 Executive meeting. "We seek instead to strengthen the ANC so as to continue in this historic path of transformation of the workplace."

CAN THE CENTRE HOLD? 2004 TO 2009

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, (Yeats, 1920)



In 2005, former President Thabo Mbeki dismissed Jacob Zuma as Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa and curtailed his powers as deputy president of the ANC. These drastic and unprecedented actions were the direct outcome of the conviction of fraud of Schabir Shaik, a close associate of Zuma and in whose corruption case Zuma was implicated. These decisions set in motion a number of events that led to a re-arrangement of the perceptions of power within the Alliance.

The leaders of both the SACP and COSATU inserted themselves deeply into this discontent within the presidency of the ANC. It has been argued that a *Left strategy* was conceived involving COSATU and the SACP following the marginalisation of COSATU within the Alliance, specifically and increasingly after 1996 and more so with the ANC following Thabo Mbeki's resounding victory at the electoral polls in 2004. The strategy was to "capture the ANC from within" with the objective that government strategy will be shifted in a pro-poor and pro-working class direction. Both organisations, COSATU and the SACP, realised that they needed to rally behind a person with mass public appeal (a populist) within and beyond the ANC who could capture the party presidency in the ANC Elective Conference set for December 2007 and subsequently become president of the Republic in the 2009 general elections.

As a result of a chain of events, Jacob Zuma entered the scene and found himself in opposition to Thabo Mbeki. COSATU had already thrown its weight behind Zuma in 2005 when its general-secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi stated that any effort to stop Zuma from succeeding Mbeki as the next President of South Africa would be "like trying to fight against the big wave of the tsunami" (*Mail & Guardian Online*, 7 March 2005).

The leaders of COSATU and the SACP created the image of Zuma as a socialist project and someone who differed from Mbeki in listening to the people, not being aloof and promising to do something about the needs of the poor. What these advocates neglected to point out and which contradicted the created image was Zuma's record as a long-time partner of Mbeki with both of them having left the SACP as central committee members in 1990; and the role that Zuma played in the imposition of GEAR as a member of Cabinet and as Mbeki's deputy. The appeal that Zuma presented was his perceived warmth and populism, perceptions of him being a victim of Mbeki's politics and perceptions of his openness to the ideas of the Left and with that the opportunity for stronger influence for the Left over the next potential head of state. Polokwane was the outcome of years of marginalisation that COSATU and the SACP felt over social and economic policy. Even though the organised Left was vocal in its support for Jacob Zuma, it is important to point out that this support was not unanimous amongst the Left.

A number of major fault lines characterised the *battle at Polokwane*. Zuma managed to harness the support of those who felt excluded by Mbeki's regime (Southall *et al.* 2006). The *walking wounded* included ANC activists denied position and prospects, business interests refused state contracts, ethnic Zulu characters seeking to counter alleged Xhosa hegemony. Notwithstanding this, the principal pillar of the support for Zuma was that the "idea of Zuma" expressed the discontents of the impoverished masses and the formally unemployed who felt left behind by Mbeki's economy (Southall and Webster 2010:142). Although COSATU was not formally represented at the Polokwane Conference, it was "the elephant in the room" in the sense that even though it was not visible, it had a powerful presence (Webster 2008). It may be argued that COSATU was the crucial factor which provided for a systematised

backing for a Zuma slate of candidates including Zuma himself. Between 2005 and 2007, there was a determined strategy of COSATU and SACP members to infiltrate the branches of the ANC across the country. Up to 90 percent of delegates to the ANC National Conference emanate from the lowest level, namely the branches, a condition well understood by COSATU and the SACP (African National Congress Constitution).

What sometimes is amiss in analytical writings is the significance of Polokwane in its affirmation of the ANC's true historic character as a *broad church*. Even though there was a discernable leftward shift in policy and personnel, key Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) magnates like Tokyo Sexwale, Matthews Phosa and Cyril Ramaphosa were re-elected to the NEC in 2007 while several leaders of the SACP failed to be either nominated or elected¹.

Blade Nzimande, the General Secretary of the SACP, summed up the significance of Polokwane to the Alliance when he argued that the programmes emerging from COSATU's 9th Congress, the SACP's 12th Congress and the ANC's 52nd National Conference coalesced around a singular commitment to "building working class and people's power". This translated into it being a "developmental agenda for the benefit of the overwhelming majority of our people" amongst its' expressed purposes the creating of jobs, eradication of poverty and combating the scourge of HIV/AIDS (Nzimande 2008).

The Alliance cemented its positions in May 2008, when, following a Summit between Alliance partners, it declared that:

It was agreed that the Alliance will work together to formulate policy, and monitor its implementation through joint ANC/Alliance policy committees and other mechanisms. This will include the drafting of the ANC Election Manifesto for the 2009 elections and matters pertaining to deployment. These kinds of interactions will become a permanent feature of alliance processes in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies.²

In September 2008, the ANC recalled Thabo Mbeki as President of South Africa. Kgalema Motlanthe, the elected deputy president of the ANC at Polokwane, was soon deployed as President of South Africa. There was a general understanding that this was temporary until such time as the legal case against the ANC president, Jacob Zuma, has been settled.

Under Motlanthe's administration, no fundamental policy changes occurred. Instead, the developmental agenda item articulated under Mbeki's administration with its strong emphasis on governance and technical ability was continued. Motlanthe, however, did not merely keep the presidential seat warm for Zuma. He was instrumental in inspiring public confidence during difficult times of uncertainty following the recall of Mbeki. When a number of ministers resigned and left government with Mbeki, Motlanthe created stability when he strategically renewed the contracts of some directors-general to maintain continuity in the administration of government. Under his presidential watch, emergency teams were set up to mitigate job losses, proposals for the global financial crisis were shared with international audiences and he actively encouraged racial and political reconciliation (Gumede 2009:32).

Motlanthe led the implementation of some of the Polokwane resolutions. One of the crucial resolutions that Motlanthe signed into legislation was the dissolution of the Scorpions, an elite investigations unit attached to the National Prosecuting Authority. With Motlanthe's appointment as *care-taker* president, together with Mantashe's position as general-secretary

in the ANC post Polokwane, some analysts concluded that this strengthened the view that a space has been opened for a move away from the Mbeki Project (*i.e.* GEAR, neo-liberalism) towards a more redistributive socio-economic policy pathway. The basis for this conclusion was Motlanthe's and Mantashe's grounding in the Alliance Left as both had their roots in the National Union of Mineworkers, one of the biggest COSATU affiliates (Pillay 2008:12).

CONCLUSION

This article presented a historical perspective on the nature of the relationship between the core partners of the Tripartite Alliance – the ANC, COSATU and SACP. The Alliance is presented as a political formation where ideology and individual persuasion are not necessarily clearly delineated, but rather integrated in support of the broad-based tendencies of the ANC.

The nature of the Alliance presents a challenge to the shaping of the public service in South Africa. This takes the form of how “cadres” within COSATU and the SACP will use the autonomous and independent organisational structures as well as the Alliance structures to secure careers and other opportunities in and with the state. When one goes beyond the rhetoric, it is clear that leaders of both COSATU and the SACP fully comprehend the leadership of the ANC and understand that mobility (in terms of careers and opportunities) within the state apparatus can only be secured through the ANC.

What has emerged and is becoming more entrenched is the influence of Alliance partners on the leadership elections of each other and how this has the potential to compromise the organisational autonomy of each of the partners. Ideology and organisational integrity, when contesting for political power, sometimes steps back in favour of individuals and the perceived benefits (for personal enrichment) that such individuals can bring about.

The unique nature and character of the Tripartite Alliance presents South Africa with exceptional opportunities, specifically in regard to combating corruption in the public service. Alliance partners have, over the last number of years, developed the acumen, capacity and skills in exposing corrupt activities within the state.

Through the Alliance structures, individual leaders within the Governing Party are held to account for their actions – and, after a hundred years of existence, the Governing party and Alliance structures have managed well even in the heat of political transformation and organizational decorum.

The logic of maintaining this *political marriage* and triangulation, and, also interpreting the essence of consolidating *party manifestos* to its membership, and further to preserving democratic principles, while at the same time translating this into the action of good governance in South Africa, is complex yet manageable.

NOTES

1. <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4769>.
2. <http://amadlandawonye.wikispaces.com/Alliance+Summit+Declaration,+9+10+May+2008,+Gallagher+Estate>.

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