

PARTY COALITIONS -LESSONS FOR SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY

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OBJECTIVES

1. Show the contexts and conditions in which party coalitions have formed in Kenya.
2. Consider politico-economic implications of party coalitions in Kenya
3. Draw attention to the parallels and divergences of South African and Kenyan political landscape
4. Suggest key lessons that South Africa could learn or avoid from the Kenyan case

THREE CONTEXTS OF COALITION PARTIES EMERGENCE IN KENYA

CONTEXT ONE: RESISTANCE FOR POLITICAL LIBERATION

- The first context relates to Africans resistance against British settlers in the 1920s through 1950s.
- The resistance became more organised and effective from 1952, under the outfit of a nationalist movement (MauMau) which employed armed resistance strategy against the British in Kenya.
- The colonial government responded by employing the army on one hand, on the other, organizing and lobbying support of various tribes-mainly the Kalenjin, the Luo and the Kamba against the Mau Mau movement, of which 90% of youth Kikuyu men were members.
- The loyalists were given political concessions which included appointment to the Legislative Council. One such leader was Daniel Arap Moi (appointed to the colonial legislative council in 1955), a school teacher who recognized "how much Africans owe to her Majesty's Government" that had "done so much in the darkest years-days when Africans were in the dark."
- Also in 1955, a Luo Trade Unionist Thomas Mboya was sent to Oxford University to be taught governance and labor relations.
- The guiding philosophy of coalition building by the colonial government in Kenya was two fold.
 - The economic pressures associated with World War II forced the empire to abandon its global colonial ambition.
 - The sustained resistance from Africans suggested that colonial project was no longer sustainable politically.

CONTEXT TWO: ETHNIC INTERESTS REPRESENTATION IN AFRICAN GOVERNMENT IN WAITING

- The Kenya African Union was formed in 1944 the objective being to resist the British colonial administration.
- It was subsequently accused of transforming to the kind of violent nationalism reflected in the MauMau movement.
- In 1960, in the efforts to gain a larger ethnic base, KAU merged with the Kenya Independence Movement, and the National people's Convention Party to form the Kenya National African National Union (KANU).
- Although the target was a broad national representation, KANU's leadership represented the two main ethnic groups-the Kikuyu's and the Luos.
- In fear of being disenfranchised, political leaders from smaller tribes formed the Kenya African Democratic Union, whose aim was to defend the interests of the so-called KAMATUSA (an acronym for Kalenjin, Maasai, Turkana and Samburu ethnic groups), against the interests of the larger tribes represented by KANU.
- Kenya achieved independence from British colonial rule in 1963, with Jomo Kenyatta, the leader of the Kenya African National Union becoming the first President of Kenya.

CONTEXT THREE: PERSONAL AMBITIONS OF THE POLITICAL CLASS

- After independence, the question of 'ethnic interests' moved to the shadows and personal political ambitions became more openly the *sine qua non* political motivation.
- Thus, in 1964, KADU voluntarily dissolved and joined the governing party KANU.
- In 1966, a short lived leftist party, the Kenya Peoples Union was formed by Oginga Odinga (himself from the Luo tribe) but after supporters rioted against Jomo Kenyatta, the party was banned and Oginga Odinga was detained.
- From 1969 onwards, Kenya became a *de facto* one party state and in June 1982, the National Assembly changed the constitution making the country a *de jure* one party state.
- During this third phase, ideological lines by and large dissolved, and where there were traceable remnants, these were easily crushed by Moi's imperial presidency.
- In September 1984, thus, Moi gave the following public order to civil servants.

"I would like ministers, assistant ministers and others to sing like a parrot after me During Kenyatta's time, I sang only 'Kenyatta' I didn't have ideas of my own. Who was I to have my own ideas?... So you play my tune. Where I put a full stop, you put a full stop."

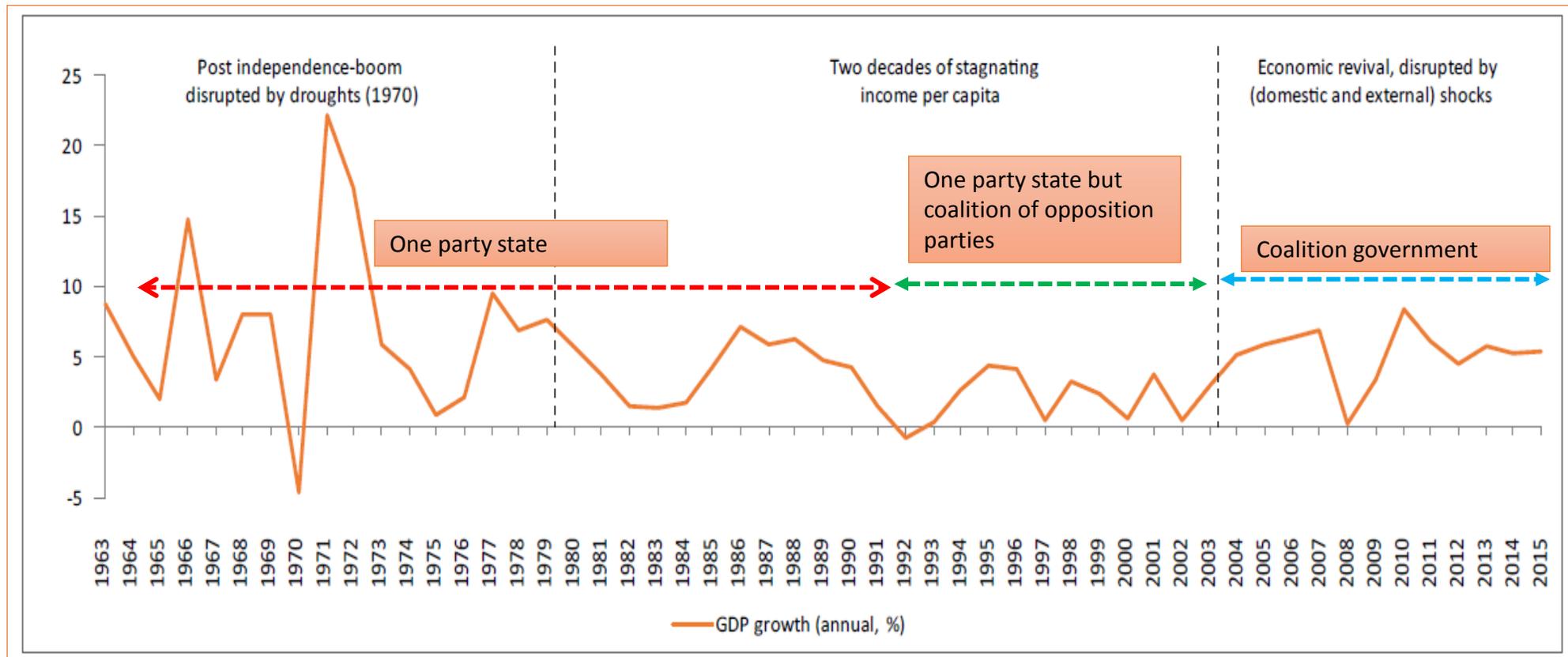
- This became the guiding principle of the one party state period. The second coming of political parties is traceable from 1992, when multi-partism was re-introduced in Kenya.
- Since 1992, coalition party system has become a way of doing politics in Kenya. The general elections in 1992, 1998, 2002, 2007, 2013 and in 2018 have been contested under coalition of parties on both the incumbent and the opposition.

GOVERNING COALITIONS

Election Cycle	Number of coalitions in Government
1992	1
1998	1
2002	4
2007	4
2013	4
2017	11

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE UNDER COALITION GOVERNMENTS IN KENYA

- During the “second coming of democracy” in Kenya, apart from the devastating effect of the 2007/8 elections violence which left 1100 people dead and over 3000 displaced, economic growth has been reasonably high.
- GDP growth accelerated from under 2% in 2002 to 7% in 2007. After flattening in 2008, it picked up again at 8.4% in 2010, and has averaged 6% since.



Source: Calculations from World Bank and Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2014)

THE CHARACTER OF COALITION PARTIES IN KENYA

1. The formation of party coalitions was both cause and effect of the death of ideology in Kenya.
2. These party coalitions were all formed before elections, except for the 2007 grand coalition government.
3. All coalitions in Kenya have exclusively taken a national form
4. Coalition party systems in Kenya have tended to bring unlikely alliances in Kenya, although these unlikely alliances have a dark (negative) ethnic texture
5. All coalition governments have run their course, despite internal conflicts and tensions.
6. The subsequent coalitions have been, for the most part, recycled parties in different names/outfits.

CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES OF SOUTH AFRICAN AND KENYAN SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXTS

DIVERGENCES

- (a) Kenya's most salient socio-political character is based on (negative) ethnic relations while South Africa's socio-political character turns on race relations.
- (b) Related to the above, coalition parties in Kenya have tended to exploit the ethnic divisions. In South Africa, the prevailing dominant discourse on race is likely to shape coalitions more than a rather muted ethnic discourse.
- (c) South Africa's decentralized system is more than half a century old, while in Kenya a decentralised system is less than a decade old. This explains why we are yet to see sub-national coalitions in Kenya. In South Africa, current coalitions between the EFF and the DA are sub-national. Whether national coalitions can thrive in South Africa is an open question, although as already pointed out, subject to political party adaptations.

CONVERGENCES

- (d) In Kenya and South Africa alike, almost all smaller opposition parties are breakaways from the liberation movement. This suggests that to a limited extent, there are relational and ideological convergences.
- (e) For the past decade, I suggest that South Africa's political landscape has seen softening of ideological positions especially in the interest of derailing the past administration. The fragmentation of the governing party has been in fact, a result of fragmenting ideological pathway.
- (f) The visible ideological differences on the surface reveal little about the real associations and alliances that take place beneath the ideological surface. The examples of my assertion are numerous.

-First there is the ANC campaign head asking voters to vote for the EFF,

-Second, there is the EFF's deputy president's ANC wife,

-Third, there is the minister of Police appointing DA's Lennit Max as his advisor,

-Fourth, there is Patricia De Lille's court representation by the EFF chairperson

SEVEN PROPOSITIONS

1. Party coalitions have been and continue to be a global phenomenon. South Africa's almost three decade old democracy suggests that coalition parties have potential to deliver a different future
2. Linked to the above, like in Kenya, the corrosion of ideology provides a relevant context for engaging coalition party systems.
3. Coalition party formations in South Africa should be shaped simultaneously with thorough going de-racialisation and de-ethnicization programme
4. A more robust (empirical) research on coalition governments should be done in partnership with civil society, the global academy and political parties themselves
5. The civil society will need to play a proactive role in ensuring that the political class retains the constitutional interests of public institutions
6. The political parties and civil society will have to undertake serious membership campaigns targeting especially the youth
7. Finally, the civil society must ensure that the political class stay engaged on the development agenda. Coalitions in Kenya seems to have locked the country on power fights and some kind of permanent state of election politics.