



T H I R D S C E N A R I O

W A L K T O G E T H E R

This is a scenario of active citizen engagement with a government that is effective and that listens. It requires the engagement of citizens who demand better service delivery and government accountability. It is dependent on the will and ability of citizens to organise themselves and to engage the authorities, and on the quality of political leadership and its willingness to engage citizens. It entails a common national vision that cuts across economic self-interest in the short term. This is not an easy scenario. Its path is uneven – there is robust contestation over many issues and it requires strong leadership from all sectors, especially from citizens.

In this scenario, citizens actively organise to force government to be more accountable. This organisation is triggered by the impacts of the global economic crisis and internally by a shifting balance of forces in politics and government after the elections in 2009 and a significantly different balance after 2014. Its major driving force is community and citizen organisation – a plethora of voices raised in local communities that spread across the country.

THE BLEAK YEARS: 2009 – 2011

The 2009 elections have come and gone. The ruling party retains an overall majority and confidently asserts its mandate to govern. The effects of the global economic crisis are an immediate constraint. Growth has slowed to well below 2%, leading to retrenchments and a contraction of consumer spending.

The “crisis pact” between government, business and labour, initiated in 2009, continues to operate but with difficulty. The relationships between the three are plagued by trust deficits. They struggle to arrive at a common vision of social good. The unions and business, for instance, cannot agree on whether promises of job retention should be matched by a wage freeze, or short-time arrangements. The unions point out that the wages of their members support large numbers of dependents; business, particularly the mining industry, insists that its margins are now so low that in some mines it is costing them more than they take out in profit simply to keep them operational. The government, for its part, promises that it will continue to fight poverty through its programmes of social grants, improvement of infrastructure and increased provision of services such as water, sanitation and electricity. But delivery is slow, and although the presidential imbizos continue with the enthusiastic participation of both government and local communities, the promises made at these imbizos are frequently not kept because of worsening capacity constraints at national, provincial and local government levels.

By 2011 the situation is bleak. Everyone had expected a tough few years, but no-one realised how hard they would be. The memories of the boost in economic activity in the early years of the century have faded. South Africans are confronted with an economy that is now stagnant. Even the tourism and infrastructure impetus that the 2010 World Cup gave to the economy has faded. The dividend has been paid.

Thousands of miners have been laid off as commodity exports have shrunk. The fiscus has been stretched beyond its limit to pay out unemployment insurance and social grants, and all the while revenues have continued to shrink. And now three major automobile manufacturers, major exporters, have announced that they will struggle to keep open because of declining export orders.

CITIZENS DEMAND MORE: 2012 – 2014

Constrained by tough economic circumstances and hampered by incompetent delivery, the ruling party is hard-pressed to maintain its clear majority in the 2014 elections. Voters return it to power, but with a reduced majority.

Before the election, a spate of community meetings signalling dissatisfaction over community issues sends a clear signal to the ruling party. The slogans and songs that dominate these meetings are a visceral reaction to increasing reports of corruption and higher tolerance of it among senior members of government. The ruling party gets the message. In response, it actively promotes election candidates with a clean track record on corruption and with better records on delivery.

But citizens want more. A plan ripples through the nation for a national citizen's charter to be drawn up.

Its seeds were planted in 2012 when the public's attention was captured by a wave of spontaneous demonstrations by KwaZulu-Natal residents angry and dissatisfied with the standard of healthcare. It was one of those moments in a nation's life when the unexpected happens. The protests caught fire and news spread quickly through the country. Eager to avoid a show-down at a time when the economy was so weak and in a bid not to scare off investors, government called on citizens to form citizens' healthcare groups with which it could work. By 2014, these groups are active in almost every province and are making their mark. Distinct improvements in government healthcare delivery begin to reveal themselves. The "citizens' movement" soon spreads to other sectors, including education.

By the 2014 election, healthcare and parent-teacher groups have spread throughout the country. As politicians start drafting their election programmes, the citizens' groups begin, in parallel, to draft "citizens' charters" that they present at every election meeting. Politicians are no longer able to simply visit communities to present their election manifestos. Now, instead, they are compelled to listen as local communities present their charters to them. And voters are more discerning at the polls.

The government elected in 2014 comprises a weakened ruling party that forms a tactical alliance with another party that has strong support in two of the nine provinces. There is a realisation now among politicians that their future, and the future of the country, depends on not only the will but on the capacity to effect better delivery and to promote economic growth.



A SOCIAL PACT EMERGES: 2015 – 2017

It is still not an easy time economically. The global economy has begun a turnaround and growth has begun to tick up in South Africa, but not sufficiently to ameliorate the social impacts of job losses and the fiscal constraints placed on social service delivery. The quality of service delivery has also not universally improved. Unemployment and poverty has deepened in both urban and rural areas, sparking growing food riots and generalised flare-ups.

Government realises that it cannot navigate the challenges on its own. Already, it is having problems maintaining the current levels of service delivery and infrastructure. The government advocates a national social pact to begin to address the deep structural challenges, which are now even more acute. It calls on organised labour, business and civil society to contribute to solutions. Again, the localised citizen-charter movement makes its mark and it is agreed that a charter of citizens' rights will be placed at the heart of the pact.

Thus a "citizens' charter" is born.

The social pact spans key areas of social delivery and tackles core economic challenges.

TOWARD AN EDUCATED, HEALTHY AND SECURE NATION

In education, for example, business is asked to work more closely with the education department to help develop the skills the economy needs. In this way, under-equipped schools are identified and plans to provide science laboratories, libraries and better ablution facilities are drawn up for the most poorly equipped schools. This, together with better monitoring of teachers, will pay dividends within just three years. Government now actively encourages parents' associations and school governing bodies to work with and monitor teachers' performance. The union movement also undertakes to put children's education first by encouraging better training for teachers and insisting that their union members focus on improved performance and attendance at schools.

As an experiment, some public schools are even run as public-private partnerships. Government pays private companies to ensure that schools are properly equipped and maintained so that "when the principal and teachers walk into a school they can focus only on teaching."

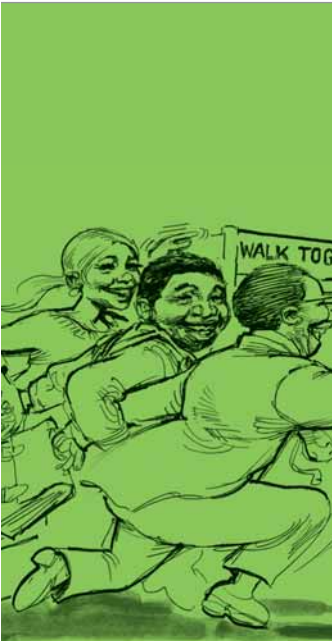
Skills development is actively continued beyond school. By 2016, the SETAs have gone. Business invests instead in an apprenticeship programme that runs alongside, and in conjunction with, colleges. Required and scarce skills are developed in consultation with the private sector.

The realisation that skills can enhance economic growth pushes government to substantially improve its immigration policies, cutting bureaucracy and red tape to attract the skills the economy needs.

In 2017, the matric pass rate increases to 70% and the number of science and mathematics passes increases three-fold. More students are now entering universities and both government and business are offering generous bursaries for the study of science, mathematics and engineering.

Youth unemployment has remained a problem since 2009, even though there have been more jobs available in the skilled sector. Through negotiation, a youth wage subsidy, where government subsidises the wage for first-time workers between the ages of 18 and 25, is adopted. The unions were initially hostile to the idea, as they were to the idea that labour laws should be relaxed to allow firms to give young workers their first jobs. But now they see how this initiative is welcomed by tens of thousands of young people and their parents, because they at last have an opportunity to enter the formal economy.





By 2017, there are far more young people with the requisite skills who are poised to enter the labour market. Similar co-operation arrangements are forged in other areas such as healthcare and crime-fighting.

TACKLING RURAL POVERTY

Rural poverty is also addressed when government encourages the private sector to form partnerships with black farmers and new land-owners in rural areas. These range from equity deals in sugar estates and game farms, to small-scale training of new farmers by established farmers. Some of the programmes began in the previous decade: a project to link black cattle farmers with markets in the Amathole district, for instance, has been actively supported by some of the established white farmers who provided training on how to raise cattle on veld and feedlots. This project is expanded to include more areas in the Eastern Cape where ownership of cattle is high, but realisation of their value low. Government holds this up as an example for other areas of how land can and must be turned into a productive asset.

A PROFESSIONAL CIVIL SERVICE

South Africa's leaders in government, the private sector, the unions and civil society also work hard to build a sense of nationhood and pride. They acknowledge that a key ingredient of growth is the development of a professional civil service. The time has gone for civil service appointments to be used as rewards for political loyalty. The civil service is now representative of the population, so the affirmative action policy is dropped and skilled members of minority groups are actively recruited back into public service. This helps to reinforce a sense of "one nationhood".

FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE JOBS

Short-term "survival" agreements struck during the worst of the global economic crisis are re-negotiated as a jobs pact: government agrees to improve infrastructure and maintain investment confidence; the private sector focuses on investments that will create sustainable jobs; and the unions agree to wage restraint and a flexible labour market in the short term.

Although government maintains its investment in key areas of the economy, such as Coega and Transnet, it does not expand these, focusing instead on delivering the core public goods it is accountable for: education, health, and safety; this with the support of business, the trade unions and citizens. Government does, at the behest of small business and the unions, strengthen and maintain a regulatory framework that ensures competitiveness in the economy, protects consumers and the very vulnerable, and enforces high tax compliance to ensure a reliable revenue stream.

The government acknowledges the role of external expertise in the development and implementation of policy. As in some other countries, think tanks, academics and outside experts are an integral part of policy development.

Investor confidence is buoyed by stable, co-operative governance and by the government's support of prudent fiscal and monetary policies. By 2017, a combination of state and private investment has created new jobs and increased investment in infrastructure.

BUILDING A NATION: 2018 – 2020

Continuing reports of corruption in some areas of government prompt citizens' groups to begin actively campaigning for electoral reform. Voters want politicians to be directly accountable to them, not to their political principals.

In 2018, legislators in opposition parties bring a bill to Parliament to reform the electoral system. Parliament deadlocks and the bill is referred to the Constitutional Court. Citizens' groups join the application, arguing that the right to political representation is infringed by not having legislators directly accountable to people living in various areas. The Constitutional Court directs Parliament to revise the Electoral Act to allow for direct representation of voters, together with a proportional representation system.

In the election of 2019, for the first time since the dawn of democracy, voters can now vote for their own constituency representative at national level, while voting for the political party of their choice at provincial level. By an Act of Parliament the newly elected MPs are made accountable for constituencies. Now, citizens hope, MPs in touch with their constituencies can bring incipient problems to the attention of local and provincial government, the first line of delivery for the key social services. And MPs become directly accountable for delivery in their constituencies.

SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

The success of this scenario depends crucially on effective citizens' organisations and pressure on government to deliver. It depends too on an approach to governance that places value on building relationships between various sectors. It is driven by a balance of forces in society where no one sector is dominant. It depends on enhanced state capacity and stronger accountability structures that force the state to focus on delivery rather than on political favours.

This is not an easy path. It is contested and uneven, and there are flare-ups. If citizen groups are resuscitated and strengthened they must organise themselves, as they did during the anti-apartheid struggle, but behave in a very different way. This is not about making South Africa "ungovernable". Crucially, it is about making South Africa more governable. It is about working with the state to make it more responsive and accountable; it is about making democracy work. If pressure collapses into violent protest that does not build organisation, it can become a destructive force.

The outcomes of this scenario are open and are vulnerable to manipulation by stronger actors. It is difficult to build a sense of nationhood, and failure to agree or deliver could exacerbate social and racial tensions. If this scenario becomes simply an "elite pact" between the organised sectors of society – such as business, the trade unions and major civil society groups – it will further marginalise poor and unemployed people.

Of course, citizen engagement can result in good or bad outcomes. Populist leaders ride on the back of grievances and get elected, and short-term measures that appear popular can have damaging long-term effects. If democracy continues, though, citizens get a chance to reverse their mistakes. But the damage done in the interim can be severe.

Even if agreements between social partners are eventually reached, this is a cumbersome way to effect social delivery. Decisions can be slow to be made and slow to be implemented. This scenario is about active engagement, not only between the already strong sectors of society, but crucially between the citizenry and the state. Diversity and the need for collaboration might make the compacts ineffective or worse, because energies are diverted from strengthening the capacity of the state. If strict time limits are not set for the delivery of certain goals, the capacity to deliver becomes weaker, not stronger.

*“This scenario could translate into a stagnant state.
It presupposes an independent, professional civil service.
Is there the capacity for this given our political immaturity?”*

Key to this scenario’s success is visionary leadership, a committed civil society and a far-thinking private sector. It is a scenario where multiple centres of power need to deliver and be held accountable.

“We need to define the nature of the three centres of power in a well-functioning postmodern society. We need a strong, caring pro-poor government, a vibrant civil society, including trade unions, and a powerful business sector that can consistently position our economy to be globally competitive.”

Essential too is a reservoir of trust and goodwill – a building of social capital – in society. Unless there is trust between the social actors and an effective, well-functioning state that creates an enabling environment and regulates markets fairly and properly, this scenario will fail.

The Birth of the Citizens' Charter

June 16, 2015

Weekly Feature Article

It began in the most unexpected of ways. In 2012, a rural clinic in the far north of KwaZulu-Natal ran out of drugs. ARVs were depleted, as were the drugs to contain TB, and even more minor ailments. Antibiotics were dispensed to patients only with the most serious cases of infection.

The clinic said sorry, but they had to treat many more patients than they had expected. This was partly true, as the global economic crisis had resulted in growing numbers of retrenched people adding to the burden of clinics in the rural areas. Before, people would simply turn around and go home, despondent but angry. This day, they did not go home. They demand to see the manager of the clinic.

At the same time, the hospitals in Durban were also under pressure. Fewer people could use private healthcare because of the economic downturn. A large group of patients, angry and dissatisfied with the standard of care, crowded outside one of Durban's biggest public hospitals demanding to see the management. And the news spread quickly through the country.

Government, eager to avoid a show-down at a time when the economy was so weak and in a bid not to scare off now rare investors, asked the patients in each area to form a committee to tell the health department how it could solve the problem.

By 2014, citizens' healthcare groups were active in almost every province. They were supported by NGOs in the healthcare sector, as well as local businesses, some of whom had been involved for more than a decade in programmes such as malaria eradication.

The citizens' groups made their mark. Managers in various clinics were changed. There was more focus on the competence of managers rather than on their political affiliations or colour. The dispensary became better managed; supplies were brought in on time. At each clinic and hospital, telephones with a hotline number for complaints was installed.

The movement spread to parents, worried about the quality of education for their children. There were still too many schools where teachers did not turn up on time, or were not properly qualified to teach.

Again, it started on a small scale. Parents in Tembisa, in 2012, fed-up with three schools in the area where teachers consistently turned up late for work, decided at a teacher-parent meeting that they were going to arrive in numbers at the schools before 8am, starting time, one morning. As the 8 o'clock bell rang, they locked the gates, trapping the dilatory teachers outside.

The teachers' union complained. The department of education directed them to talk to the parents' associations.

The Tembisa action was the genesis of tri-partite formations – between parents, the teachers' unions and the education department – being set up in every area in Gauteng.

The effect was almost immediate. Teachers, aware that their pay cheques now depended on their timely arrival in class, arrived at school on time.

But there were still not enough qualified teachers. The Education Department pressured Home Affairs, which had with some success been digging itself out of its own mire for the past four years. Home Affairs was told in the Cabinet co-ordination meeting to fast-track the applications of teachers who wanted to work in South Africa.

By the 2014 election, the patients' and parent-teacher groups had spread throughout the country. As politicians drafted their election programmes, the citizens' groups began, in parallel, to draft "citizens' charters" that they presented at every election meeting.

It was these strands of small protests that formed the threads of the citizen's charters: a health committee in KwaZulu-Natal, a parents-teachers body in Gauteng, a community safety forum in the townships of the Western Cape, which suffered the most violent crime in the country.

Together they formed the fabric of a renewed country.

Pact needed for delivery

Cape Town,
February 15, 2015

South Africa needs a strong pact between government and all its citizens to navigate a successful recovery from the global economic crisis, Finance Minister Mandisi Ramalapha said during his Budget speech in Parliament yesterday.

Announcing the Treasury forecast for a 2.5% growth rate in the coming financial year – the highest since 2011 – Ramalapha said now was the time for all sectors of South African society to pull together to make South Africa a better place for all.

“We have been through an exceedingly tough time,” he said. “We are looking today for a repeat of the miracle of 1994. That miracle grew out of an even tougher era. It came about as a result of the goodwill, hard work and determination of millions of South Africans who focused on making democracy a reality. We need those elements again today.”

This is the ruling coalition’s first Budget since the elections of last year, which were marked by widespread protests and demonstrations at election meetings by “citizens’ groups” demanding less corruption and more efficiency in government.



Votes battle goes to Concourt

Johannesburg,
September 1, 2018

The Constitutional Court has reserved judgement in the case brought by the Citizens Action Group (CAG) asking for a declaration that the Electoral Act is unconstitutional.

CAG, which comprises various bodies ranging from school parents’ committees to community policing forums and health committees, is fighting for an amendment to the Electoral Act to allow constituency representation in Parliament. This, it argues, is in accordance with the provision in the Constitution that entrenches the right of public access to the legislature. The CAG argues that the system of proportional representation, where voters vote for parties rather than direct representatives, undermines their access to the National Assembly.

“We have no idea who our MPs are, and when there are problems in our neighbourhoods, it is hard to know who to turn to,” said a CAG spokesperson.

SUMMARY: SCENARIO 3: WALK TOGETHER

THE BLEAK YEARS: 2009 – 2011	CITIZENS DEMAND MORE: 2012 – 2014	A SOCIAL PACT EMERGES: 2015 – 2017	BUILDING A NATION: 2018 – 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruling party retains majority. • Global crisis means declining investment, growth and tax revenues. • Crisis pact wobbles along. • Service delivery deteriorates. • Pockets of citizen groups take action over health, education, crime. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare and parent associations spread through the country. • Government promises action against incompetent managers and civil servants. • Improvements in service delivery. • Ruling party runs election campaign on ticket of competent government. • A weakened ruling party is returned to power; it forms alliance with other parties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy begins slow recovery but insufficient to deal with deepening poverty. • A “Citizens’ Charter” is born. • A formal social pact emerges: it includes political parties, labour, business, citizens’ groups. • Business shoulders more responsibility in education, infrastructure, health. • Trade unions back measures to combat youth unemployment. • Citizens work with government to monitor education, health, crime. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government focuses on delivering core public goods. • Business invests more, employment rises. • International investor confidence buoyed by co-operative governance. • Citizens lobby for more accountability from politicians; opposition parties take up the call. • Citizens, parliamentarians and courts effect change in voting system so politicians are directly accountable to voters.