

COMPROMISE AND CONTESTATION

Understanding the Drivers and Implications of Coalition Behaviour in Africa

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ABSTRACT

When and why do African political parties form electoral alliances? And how do these alliances translate into post-electoral governance and policymaking? To answer these questions, this article presents data on pre-electoral coalitions for executive elections formed in all African countries between 1990 and 2013. Office-seeking motives overwhelmingly explain the goals of these coalitions but a variety of other factors, including two-round electoral systems, access to financing and the timing of coalition pacts, help determine whether such coalitions last until election day. Post-electoral coalitions have manifested in three main ways, including pre-electoral pacts that result in post-electoral Cabinet sharing, unity governments intended to end a political crisis, and parliamentary coalitions. The article concludes that while coalitions may occasionally lead to party turnover and end violent conflicts, their long-term consequences with regard to creating strong ties with voters, helping parties mature, encouraging more efficient policymaking and eliminating underlying sources of social contention remain more doubtful.

INTRODUCTION

When and why do African political parties form electoral alliances? And how do these alliances translate into post-electoral governance and policymaking? Addressing these questions is particularly important given the wide variety of coalitions that have been formed throughout the region in recent years. In addition,

the promotion of coalitions is an increasing focus of the international democracy assistance community, particularly since funding coalitions allows donors not only to conserve scarce resources but also to promote inter-party cooperation and dialogue. For this reason the topic of coalition behaviour and its consequences is both of academic interest and relevant to policy.

Thus far, however, the literature on coalitions has been concentrated on more advanced democracies (see, eg, Baron & Ferejohn 1989; Carroll & Cox 2007; Debus 2009; Golder 2006a, 2006b; Laver & Shepsle 1990; Müller & Strøm 2000). In addition to the relatively short history of multiparty elections in Africa another reason for this gap is that the majority of African countries are presidential regimes, meaning that, in theory, the incentive for pre- and post-electoral coalition-building is much smaller than it is in parliamentary democracies. Nevertheless, there is a small but burgeoning area of research on African coalitions (see, eg, Arriola 2013a, 2013b; Cheeseman 2011; Cheeseman and Tendi 2010; Kadima 2006; Oyugi 2006; Resnick 2013a). Collectively, this scholarship presents a variety of hypotheses about the motivations and implications of such arrangements for party turnover, electoral volatility and party institutionalisation and for peace and reconciliation.

Using both quantitative and qualitative data this article builds upon this previous research in order to provide an overview of coalitions in Africa since the 1990s, examine factors that facilitate the formation of coalitions and consider the consequences of coalition governments. I find that pre-electoral coalitions form quite frequently in Africa even though the majority of the countries in the region are presidential regimes. This contradicts the expectations of a number of both comparativist and Africanist scholars, who believe that such regimes create disincentives for cooperation (see, eg, Linz 1990; Manning 2005; Valenzuela 1994).

Office-seeking motives overwhelmingly explain the goals of these coalitions but a variety of other factors, including two-round electoral systems, access to financing and the timing of coalition pacts, help determine whether such coalitions last until election day. Contrary to expectations, most coalitions formed by opposition parties are not successful in ousting incumbents.

Post-electoral coalitions are viewed as falling into one of three categories: coalitions in presidential regimes that result from pre-electoral negotiations and involve sharing Cabinet posts, unity governments formed to end a political crisis and violence and coalitions in parliamentary regimes. Existing research suggests that, aside from those in parliamentary regimes, post-electoral coalitions do not necessarily address the root causes of inter-party conflict nor do they facilitate quicker decision-making and policy continuity.

Before discussing these findings in greater detail, some definitional clarity is required. The terms 'alliance' and 'coalition' are used interchangeably here.

Pre-electoral coalitions refer to two or more parties coalescing and coordinating their electoral strategies, with the expectation of sharing potential benefits in the event of victory at the polls (see Golder 2006a). In presidential regimes this results in parties jointly deciding to support one candidate, while in parliamentary ones it typically manifests as a commitment among multiple parties to compete under their own banner but not to field candidates in the same constituencies as their coalition partners.

A public electoral pact, especially by the *formateur* or selected coalition candidate / main party, may help to cement *ex-ante* the credibility of the distribution of any *ex-post* benefits. Post-electoral coalitions occur when two or more parties jointly lead government by virtue of shared cooperation at either the ministerial level or within Parliament.

As a result of this definition there are number of party configurations that are not considered coalitions. For instance, in this article, coalition does not refer to amalgamations of multiple societal actors under one banner. Thus, while the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) in Zambia was formed by a variety of labor union, civil society members, academics, and politicians, it was not the result of the fusion of two or more parties.¹ In addition, parties that merged in the past and became new entities are not considered coalitions; rather, parties needed to retain their own separate identities and support bases despite working jointly with other parties and individuals. For example then, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) would not be considered a coalition, even though the party originated from a merger in 1987 between the Zimbabwe African People's Union (Zapu) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (Zanu). By contrast, the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) is still an alliance of four separate parties and therefore constitutes a coalition.

With these definitional issues in mind, this article first presents a broad synthesis of all the pre-electoral coalitions that have taken place in the region since 1990. Subsequently, I discuss the various theories related to the formation and consequences of pre-electoral coalitions and test their applicability to the African party landscape. Using a variety of qualitative case studies I then discuss the drivers, significance and longevity of post-electoral coalitions. The final section concludes by discussing the article's main findings and highlighting remaining research gaps in the study of African party coalitions.

1 This approach differs from that of Arriola (2013a) and Kapa (2008), who both classify the MMD as a party coalition.

OVERVIEW OF PARTY COALITIONS IN AFRICA

There are a number of advantages to forming pre-electoral party coalitions. In the African context, such alliances can help transcend ethno-linguistic or religious divisions and attract votes across societal groups (Horowitz 2002; Salih & Nordlund 2007). More generally, they allow parties to pool resources and, especially for opposition parties, prevent incumbents from using 'divide and rule' tactics (see Howard & Roessler 2006).

However, there is little optimism in the Africanist literature about the ability of parties to form coalitions. The fact that most regimes in Africa are presidential means that there is only one top 'prize' and party leaders are hesitant to forfeit the opportunity to obtain their country's highest position (see Manning 2005). Presidential regimes are generally believed not to be conducive to political cooperation (Linz 1990). As Valenzuela (1994, p 93) argues with reference to experiences in Latin America, 'the very rules of the presidential system often generated pressures that undermined the logic of coalition formation'. Moreover, the prominence of ethnic and religious cleavages is believed to hinder greater cooperation. According to Mozaffar & Scarritt (2005), ethnic fragmentation hinders coordination by party leaders, who fear they may alienate their constituents by aligning with elites from other ethnic groups.

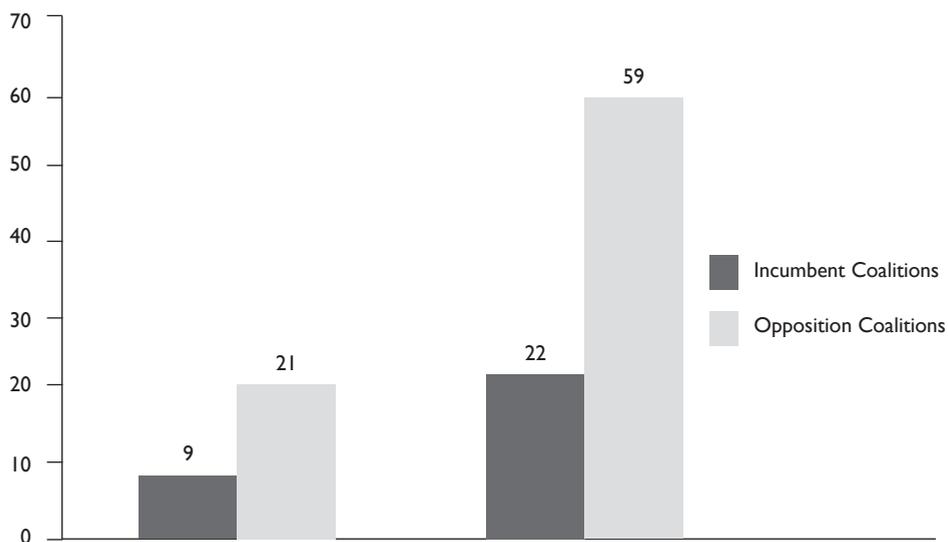
In order to examine patterns across the region with regard to coalition formation I aggregated data on pre-electoral coalitions formed in all African countries between 1990 and 2013. In doing so I focused specifically on executive elections because the motivations for joining a coalition for legislative elections can be quite different from those related to choosing a president or prime minister. Since the majority of African countries are presidential regimes, much of the focus is therefore on presidential elections. The only exceptions were for those five African countries (Botswana, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Mauritius, and South Africa) that are parliamentary regimes and where, therefore, the number of seats won by various parties determines who is ultimately appointed head of state.

This data builds on previous cross-national research in a number of ways. Specifically, Resnick (2013a) focused exclusively on the period from 2000 onwards, ignoring developments during the 1990s. Moreover, both Arriola (2013a) and Resnick (2013a) examined only opposition coalitions and limited their analysis to electoral democracies. Consequently, the use of coalitions by incumbents and in more circumscribed political regimes has been ignored. An important caveat, though, of this data is that it is based on election results and therefore overlooks pre-electoral coalitions that did not last until the election day.²

2 This data comes from the African Elections Database (africanelections.tripod.com), Arriola (2013), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems Election Guide (www.electionguide.org/), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA).

Figure 1, which examines both incumbent (supporting a candidate who was already in office at the time and opposition coalitions or, for parliamentary regimes, the party to which the head of state belongs) debunks the notion that coalitions are rare or too difficult to form in Africa. In fact, 33 African countries have had at least one pre-electoral coalition since 1990.³ In total, 111 pre-electoral coalitions for executive elections have been formed that lasted until the election day. Figure 1.⁴ The number of pre-electoral coalitions, particularly among opposition parties, increased dramatically between the 1990s and the 2000s. This most likely reflects both an increase in the number of countries that allowed multiparty competition in the 2000s as well as the attendant growth in political parties resulting from more liberalised political environments.

Figure 1
Number of Pre-Electoral Coalitions in Africa over Time



Source: Calculated by author using the sources detailed in footnote 2

3 Countries in which there were no pre-electoral coalitions or where coalitions did not remain united until election day include Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe.

4 In Mauritius, for example, if one of the parties that belonged to a coalition contained the party of the existing prime minister at the time of elections, it was coded as an incumbent coalition.

Not surprisingly, coalitions tend to be more frequent in more open political environments because circumstances usually contribute to a higher number of participating parties. Figure 2 largely supports this by showing the relationship between the number of coalitions and the political rights ranking of a country during the year in which a coalition (or coalitions) were formed. The political rights ranking is from Freedom House and includes the electoral process, political pluralism and participation and the functioning of government. A ranking of 1 is best while a 7 indicates a highly restrictive political environment. While a large number of coalitions have been formed in countries with relatively open political environments, a not insignificant share have also emerged in more autocratic countries. Typically, such coalitions are either formed by incumbents that ally with much smaller and weaker parties in order to gain credibility or by a large share of opposition parties as they try collectively to oust an autocratic leader. Nevertheless, in extremely restrictive countries that limit multiparty competition, such as Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, and Swaziland, there have been no coalitions.

Figure 2
Number of Coalitions by Degree of Political Rights



Source: Calculated by author using data sources detailed in footnote 2. Political rights rankings are from Freedom House.

Notes: This figure excludes the two Kenyan coalitions in 2013 because, at the time of writing, Freedom House data was unavailable for that year.

MOTIVATIONS FOR PRE-ELECTORAL COALITIONS

Two key explanations are often given for why parties form coalitions. The first relates to office-seeking objectives. In this view, parties decide to join coalitions in order to gain control over the particular benefits, in terms of both power and material rewards, that accompany political office (see Budge & Laver 1986; Laver & Schofield 1990; Riker 1962; Strøm & Müller 1999). The second explanation focuses more on policy-seeking objectives, emphasising that parties with similar ideologies are more likely to coalesce (De Swaan 1973). The reason for this may be the interest of the parties in influencing the post-electoral policy agenda or that a party's constituents are more likely to support a pre-electoral coalition if they do not need to make large policy concessions (see Budge & Laver 1992; Golder 2006b).

In the African case, patronage is often advanced as an additional reason for coalition formation, especially by smaller parties that ally with an incumbent party (see, eg, Van de Walle 2007). In such cases, smaller parties may not expect to win many votes but instead hope for certain material incentives or Cabinet seats in return for supporting the incumbent.

Since a number of analysts (eg, Randall & Svåsand 2002; Van de Walle & Butler 1999) claim that African political parties rarely advance distinct policy agendas, most pre-electoral coalitions within the region are formed for office-seeking motives, especially in presidential regimes (see Rakner, Svåsand & Khembo 2007). Yet, given that office-seeking is a goal of a majority of political parties, why do coalitions succeed in some countries and in some elections but not in others?

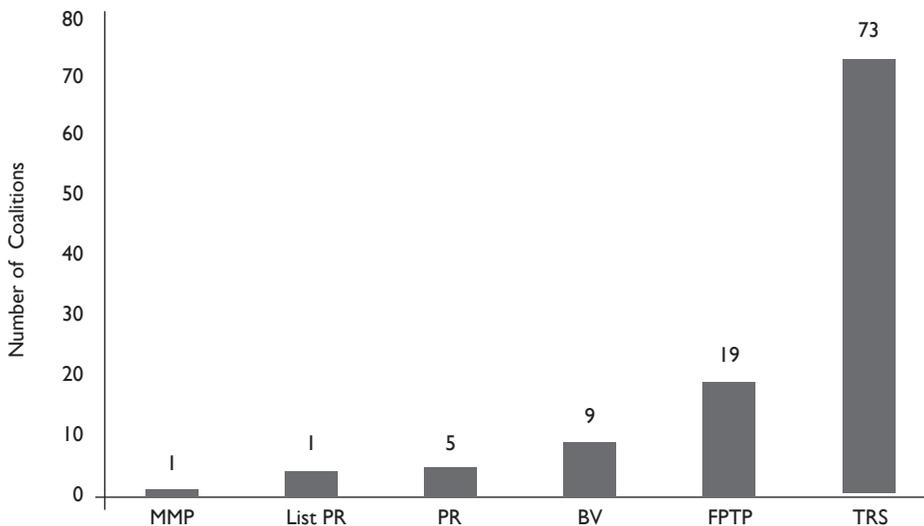
A rational explanation for when they occur is related to electoral expectations. For instance, Van de Walle (2006) argues that a coalition formation by opposition parties is equivalent to a 'tipping game', in that parties will only coalesce when they believe there is a realistic chance of victory. Otherwise, they are better off not opposing the ruling regime and potentially engaging in post-electoral bargaining with either the incumbent party or other opposition parties.

However, whether victory is realistic should plausibly be tied to the type of electoral rules governing the selection of an executive. According to Cox (1997), there are greater incentives for coalition formation in a plurality system than in a run-off system. Likewise, Kadima (2006) claims that first-past-the-post (FPTP) systems in particular place pressure on voters to avoid wasting their vote, thereby increasing the propensity of parties to form coalitions. By contrast, Rakner & Van de Walle (2009) argue that coalitions are more likely in two-round systems (TRS) because candidates that lose in the first round tend to be more willing to

support the party front-runners who make it to the second round (see also Van de Walle 2006).⁵

As seen in Figure 3 coalitions are much more likely to occur in TRS.⁶ Table 1 further indicates the number of coalitions by country and electoral system, highlighting that Senegal is the country with by far the most coalitions formed between 1990 and 2013. Importantly, however, under the TRS, many of the pre-electoral coalitions were formed after the first round.

Figure 3
Number of Coalitions by Electoral System, 1990-2013



Source: Calculated by author using data sources detailed in footnote 2.

5 In addition, some claim that disproportionality increases the likelihood of coalition formation. However, some (eg, Strøm, Budge & Laver 1994; Golder 2006a, 2006b) believe this argument is more relevant for legislative elections.

6 Arriola (2013a) does not find that electoral institutions are statistically significant in explaining multi-ethnic, opposition party coalition formation. However, he only codes a multi-ethnic opposition coalition as existing if it was formed *before* the first round of voting in a TRS system.

Table 1
Number of Coalitions by Country and Electoral System, 1990-2013

Country	Number of coalitions	Electoral system for executive elections
Senegal	12	TRS
Mauritius	9	BV
Ethiopia	6	FPTP
Angola*	5	PR
Benin	5	TRS
Burkina Faso	5	TRS
Gambia	5	TRS
Liberia	5	TRS
Mali	5	TRS
Djibouti	4	TRS
Ghana	4	TRS
Kenya	4	TRS
Madagascar	4	TRS
Malawi	4	FPTP
South Africa	4	List PR
Congo-Brazzaville	3	TRS
Mauritania	3	TRS
Mozambique	3	TRS
Botswana	2	FPTP
Central African Republic	2	TRS
Côte d'Ivoire	2	TRS
Gabon	2	FPTP
Tanzania	2	TRS
Togo	2	FPTP
Comoros	1	FPTP
Congo-Kinshasa	1	FPTP
Guinea-Bissau	1	TRS
Lesotho	1	MMP
Nigeria	1	TRS
São Tome & Príncipe	1	TRS
Seychelles	1	TRS
Uganda	1	TRS
Zambia	1	FPTP

Source: Calculated by author using data sources detailed in footnote 2.

Notes: Countries in boldface are parliamentary systems. *As of the 2010 constitution, Angola's president is elected by the party that obtains the majority of seats in Parliament. TRS – Two round system; BV – Block vote; FPTP – First past the post; MMP – Mixed member plurality; PR –Proportional representation

While the argument related to electoral institutions concerns why coalitions form in the first place, alternative explanations may be more valuable for understanding why coalitions that do form sometimes collapse before elections. According to Arriola (2013a), one reason why coalitions, particularly among opposition parties, emerge in some contexts is related to whether incumbents have exclusive control over financial capital. In more financially liberalised contexts, more resources are available to fund opposition campaigns than they are where most key industries are under state control. Using the examples of Kenya and Cameroon he highlights why the opposition was able to form the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in the former but why the Coalition pour la Réconciliation et la Reconstruction Nationale (CRRN) fell apart before elections in the latter.

In the same regard, the timing of the formation of a coalition can be relevant to its survival or collapse. In theory, an earlier formation can lead members to better articulate their common message, raise financial resources and increase awareness among the population. In practice, however, such forward planning gives the coalition more opportunity to fragment before elections as squabbles over leadership have time to emerge. A clear example is that of Zambia, where the Patriotic Front (PF) and the United Party for National Development (UPND) formed a pact in 2009. Approximately six months before the 2011 presidential election the pact collapsed as a consequence of squabbles between the parties' leaders, Michael Sata and Hakainde Hichilema, respectively, over who would be the pact's presidential candidate.

By contrast, the Mgwirizano coalition in Malawi was formed only three months before the 2004 elections and succeeded in staying together until election day (see Kadima & Lembani 2006).

Much of the above discussion of pre-electoral coalition formation is related to opposition parties. Yet, as seen in Figure 1, there have been a sizeable number of incumbent coalitions. Given that incumbents typically have a resource advantage over the opposition, why would they ever choose to be part of a coalition? There appear to be three main trajectories. The first, which tends to occur predominantly in francophone countries, is the formation of alliances by independent presidential candidates who are presumably trying to gain credibility for their electoral bid without needing to be formally sponsored by a particular party. Key examples include the Union Pour la Majorité Présidentielle Plurielle that was formed around Yayi Boni in Benin in 2009, the Alliance for Democracy and Progress around Amadou Toumani Touré in Mali in 2007, and the National Convergence Kwa na Kwa formed around Francois Bozize in the Central African Republic for the 2005 elections.

The second reason is that, due to recent changes in electoral rules, uncertainty exists over an incumbent candidate's or party's electoral prospects if they

competed independently. For example, in Congo-Brazzaville in 2002, changes to the Constitution created a more competitive environment that prompted Denis Sassou-Nguesso to enter a coalition. Blaise Compaoré's party, the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP), decided to enter a pre-electoral coalition known as the Presidential Movement Alliance for the 2002 presidential elections. According to Kapa (2008), pre-electoral coalitions were rare in Lesotho until the country switched to a mixed member proportional (MMP) system prior to the 2007 elections. As a result, the long-ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) formed an alliance with the National Independence Party (NIP).

The impact of electoral rules on the decision by incumbent regimes to form pre-electoral coalitions can be most pronounced in countries with substantial ethno-regional cleavages. One main example of this is the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, which is the ruling alliance in Ethiopia and which is led by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Because Tigrayans are a minority population in Ethiopia they require cross-ethnic alliances with other parties in order to retain enough seats to dominate within Parliament.

A third trajectory relates to policy-seeking rather than office-seeking motives. The clearest example of this is South Africa's tripartite alliance between the African National Congress (ANC), the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Both the SACP's and Cosatu's legitimacy and clout is enhanced by their alliance with the ANC. While the ANC would most likely still win elections without being part of this alliance, its policy and avowedly leftist credentials are enhanced by remaining within it.

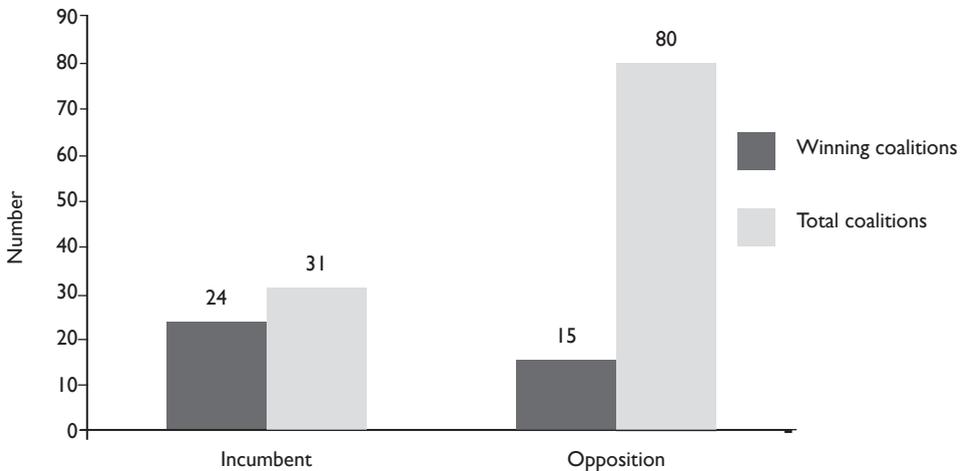
Consequences of pre-electoral coalitions

The formation of coalitions has been broadly advocated for opposition parties as a strategy by which they can oust incumbents and contribute to party turnover (see, eg, Howard & Roessler 2006; Van de Walle 2006). Fragmentation of the opposition is one of the key tactics used by incumbents, particularly in authoritarian regimes (Schedler 2002). Indeed, an oft-heard lament about African opposition parties is that they are unable to come together and present a united front (Arriola 2013b; Darnolf & Holm 1999; Dorenspleet 2003; Joseph 1997). This viewpoint is often shared by African citizens. For instance, in the run-up to Malawi's 2004 elections, churches and civil society groups actively engaged in a process of negotiation and dialogue to arrive at a presidential candidate who could lead the Mgwirizano coalition (Rakner, Svåsand & Khembo 2007).

Nevertheless, the empirical evidence suggests that coalitions only rarely contribute to opposition parties ousting incumbents (see Resnick 2013a). In fact, Figure 4 highlights that around 77% of incumbent coalitions have won the

elections they contested, while the equivalent figure for opposition coalitions is only approximately 19%. Appendix 1 presents the full details of these winning coalitions. The large proportion of incumbent coalitions that have been victorious is not especially surprising given that incumbents typically have an advantage in elections due to their access to state resources and greater name recognition among voters.

Figure 4
Winning Pre-Electoral Coalitions in Africa, 1990-2013



Source: Calculated by author using data sources detailed in footnote 2.

Besides failing to contribute substantially to party turnover, coalitions can have deleterious effects on other aspects of democratic consolidation. As Resnick (2013a) highlights, they can be responsible for high levels of electoral volatility and reinforce low levels of party institutionalisation. Given the frequency with which they form and dissolve, coalitions fail to enable African parties to fortify their ties with particular constituents. Moreover, due to their office-seeking motivations, such coalitions typically result in strange bedfellows, with parties that competed against each other in previous elections subsequently coalescing. For instance, in Malawi, the United Democratic Front (UDF) formed a pact with the party it ousted during the country's first multiparty elections in 1994, the

Malawi Congress Party (MCP). In Côte d'Ivoire in the 2010 elections Henri Bédié decided to support the candidacy of Alassane Ouattara under the banner of the Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP). Ironically, however, Bédié had been a key promoter a decade earlier of the *Ivoirité* concept, whereby he tried to exclude Ouattara from competing as president because the latter's father originally came from Burkina Faso.

At the same time, there is the possibility that parties that previously worked together subsequently decide to compete against one another. In Mauritius, for example, the Labour Party (MLP) has alternatively been in coalition with the Mouvement Socialiste Militant (MSM) and the Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM), while also having competed against both those parties.

POST-ELECTORAL COALITIONS: WHY DO THEY FORM? AND ARE THEY EFFECTIVE?

In cases where pre-electoral coalitions are successful at the ballot box there are important implications for the longevity of post-electoral governance arrangements that vary according to political regime (see Table 2). In presidential regimes post-electoral coalitions typically involve sharing Cabinet positions. They are often the least sustainable type of post-electoral coalition because there is little to prevent the winning candidate from renegeing on promises to coalition partners. As Mainwaring (1993, p 200) notes, 'incentives for parties to break coalitions are generally stronger in presidential regimes'.

For instance, Senegal's 2000 elections were historic because Abdoulaye Wade's Front pour l'Alternance (FAL) coalition ousted the long-ruling Socialist Party (PS). However, a year after coming to office Wade had ousted his prime minister, Moustapha Niassé, from the Alliance des Forces de Progrès (AFP) and dismissed a number of Cabinet members from other parties, including the Ligue Démocratique-Mouvement pour le Parti du Travail (LD-MPT) and the Parti de l'indépendance et du travail (PIT), which had supported his candidacy.

More recently, in Senegal, Macky Sall of the Alliance for the Republic (APR) was elected president in 2012 with the support of at least 14 other political parties in the second round of those elections. Subsequently, Cabinet seats were distributed among not only the APR but also the AFP, PS, and a party known as Rewmi, and the latter two parties complained about their small seat allocation (see Resnick forthcoming). Less than 18 months later Sall re-shuffled his Cabinet, purging five ministers.

Table 2
Typology of Post-Electoral Coalitions

Type	Examples (year of elections)
Post-electoral coalition in presidential regime	Malawi (1994), Kenya (2002), Senegal (2000, 2012), Côte d'Ivoire (2010)
No pre-electoral coalition but post-electoral unity government	Kenya (2007), Zimbabwe (2008)
Post-electoral coalition in parliamentary regime	Ethiopia*, Lesotho (2012), Mauritius*, South Africa*

Note: * These countries have had multiple post-electoral coalitions

In Kenya Raila Odinga's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) had been a critical coalition partner in the NARC coalition that supported Mwai Kibaki's presidency in the 2002 elections. Odinga was awarded a Cabinet position as Minister of Roads. However, he opposed Kibaki's attempt in 2005 to change the Constitution in order to strengthen presidential powers and he was subsequently purged from the Cabinet, along with a number of other members who had participated in NARC.

In contrast to presidential regimes, post-electoral coalitions in parliamentary regimes are the most sustainable, given that the stability of the government is more likely to be threatened if coalition partners rescind their support for one another. However, in Africa's five parliamentary regimes there appears to be a main difference according to whether there is a dominant party that plays the role of coalition *formateur* prior to elections. Specifically, in Ethiopia, the TPLF competes in elections as part of the EPRDF coalition and therefore has already made an *ex-ante* commitment to work with the other parties that are members of that coalition. Due to its dominance in Parliament, the EPRDF in turn has never needed to ally with additional parties in order to govern. Likewise, in South Africa, the ANC competes as part of a coalition with the SACP and therefore governs with that smaller party in the wake of elections and shares Cabinet positions accordingly. In turn, the dominance of the ANC in elections means that it has not yet needed to work with additional parties in order to rule.

A different dynamic prevails in the parliamentary regimes of Mauritius and Lesotho, where no one party is dominant. In Mauritius parties tend to reflect a mixture of both ethno-linguistic characteristics and diverse policy orientations. There are two main parties, the LP and the MMM, but also a variety of smaller yet still influential entities, including the MSM and the PMSD. Since independence the country has been governed by a coalition of at least two parties (Sithanen

2003). A key reason for this has been the country's unique electoral system, which is organised according to a three-member constituency, FPTP system and a best loser system that creates incentives for cross-ethnic collaboration (Sithanan 2003; Kadima & Kasenally 2006).⁷ In contrast to the situation in Ethiopia or South Africa, a number of coalition governments in Mauritius have collapsed, including the MSM-MMM alliance in 1991, the LP-MMM coalition in 1995 and the Alliance of the Future in 2011.

While most of the governing coalitions in the above cases differ from Western European parliamentary regimes in that they have already been determined prior to elections (see Kadima 2006), Lesotho represents an interesting exception. In Lesotho the long-ruling dominance of the LCD was overturned in the 2012 elections, resulting in the Democratic Congress (DC) gaining the most seats. However, it still lacked enough seats to form a government and instead the party with the next highest number of seats, the All Basotho Convention (ABC), formed a government with the LCD and the Basotho National Party (BNP) (see EISA 2012). The uncertainty surrounding post-electoral coalition-building in the Lesotho case is most likely due to parties still learning how to strategise around the new MMP electoral rules and the recent growth in political parties due to internal rifts in recent years.

In terms of sustainability, governing coalitions formed as a consequence of electoral strife tend to occupy an interim position. Although there have been examples in other post-conflict settings such as Afghanistan, Honduras, and Iraq, such arrangements have been relatively specific to the African context. Most recently, a power-sharing arrangement has been promoted by the African Union, the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community as a solution to Madagascar's ongoing governance crisis, precipitated when President Marc Ravalomanana was overthrown by the mayor of Antananarivo, Andry Rajoelina.

Under such arrangements, typically known as unity governments, Cabinet positions are shared among all major parties involved in conflict. They are usually focused on a narrow set of goals that involve ending violence and planning a timetable for fresh elections (Cheeseman 2011). In order to encourage unity governments, the international donor community typically makes the disbursement of funding contingent on such arrangements.

Two of the most notable power-sharing arrangements have taken place in Zimbabwe and Kenya after divisive and chaotic elections in 2008 and 2007, respectively. In both, Cabinet posts were roughly equally distributed between the

7 More specifically, the best loser system returns eight members of Parliament in those communities that are under-represented in Parliament (see Sithanan 2003).

ruling party and the opposition. Both Robert Mugabe and Mwai Kibaki refused to give up the presidency, so the opposition leaders in each country, Morgan Tsvangirai and Raila Odinga, were given the office of prime minister. In Zimbabwe, the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) also obtained the prestigious Cabinet post of finance minister for Tendai Biti (see Cheeseman & Tendi 2010). Other examples of power-sharing have occurred in Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa.

Implications of post-electoral coalitions

The implications of post-electoral coalitions can be examined with respect to peace and stability as well as policy efficiency. As noted above, unity governments are, in theory, established to promote peace and stability. However, the existing research is not especially optimistic. Cheeseman (2011) addresses this issue by focusing specifically on the ability of coalition governments to address security sector reforms. He finds that the success of unity governments in these domains depends on the level of elite trust and the distribution of violence, which refers to whether one or multiple parties have committed atrocities. In his analysis, South Africa represents a unique case because the National Party and the ANC could agree on a modest transformative agenda as the country made the transition from apartheid rule. By contrast, such arrangements in Angola, Burundi, the DRC, Kenya, and Zimbabwe have failed to lead to meaningful reforms that would prevent future conflict. In the latter two cases in particular, the unity governments lasted for an entire electoral term, but partisan divisions remained sharp, leading to the pessimistic conclusion that 'Rather than create space for reform coalitions, power-sharing can be manipulated by incumbents desperate to retain their positions in the face of electoral defeat, undermining the prospects for reconciliation or institutional regeneration' (Cheeseman & Tendi 2010, p 207).

Another challenge for post-electoral coalitions more generally is policy effectiveness. Coalition governments in parliamentary regimes are typically believed to be more deadlocked by competing party perspectives and therefore less efficient in making decisions (see Hagan 1993). In the African context this appears to be truer in the case of coalitions in Mauritius and Lesotho, where the lack of a dominant party in recent elections prompted post-electoral coalitions, than in Ethiopia or South Africa, where there is a dominant party.

In Africa's presidential regimes a post-electoral coalition is still dominated by the policy preferences of the executive and therefore there is little to hinder the speed with which decisions are made. However, if such coalitions collapse, the ensuing Cabinet re-shuffles can contribute to high levels of policy instability within specific sectors as new ministers try to make their mark. In Senegal, for

example, the former president, Wade, had seven different agriculture ministers during his tenure as a result of fissions within post-electoral alliances, which, in turn, hindered any policy continuity in that sector (Resnick 2013b).

CONCLUSION

Electoral coalitions are an increasing phenomenon in Africa, especially since the onset of multiparty politics in much of the region in the early 1990s. Although there has been a recent spate of research on coalitions in Africa, this article is the first to provide a synthesis of dynamics across both democratic and autocratic countries as well as presidential and parliamentary regimes. In addition, it has examined pre-and post-electoral coalitions among both incumbent and opposition parties.

In general, I found that pre-electoral coalitions are more frequent than would be expected from the literature on presidential regimes, even though the majority of African countries fall into this category. But, contrary to the expectations of other Africanist scholars, such coalitions are rarely a successful strategy for ousting incumbents. Moreover, they often collapse in the post-electoral period, unless they were part of a unity government or formed in a parliamentary system. Encouraging parties to participate in unity governments in post-conflict contexts is difficult, as shown by the collapse of efforts in Madagascar in 2009. But even where such coalition governments do prevail, there is little evidence outside of South Africa that they reduce the underlying tensions that could contribute to a resurgence of conflict in the near future.

While a majority of research has focused on the drivers of coalition formation and collapse, the implications of coalitions in Africa constitute an area for much greater analysis. Two possible areas for inquiry relate to policy substance and democratic legitimacy. In other areas of the world, coalitions are found to exhibit different foreign policy behaviours (Kaarbo 2012) and economic policy orientations (see, eg, Edin & Ohlsson 1991).

Thus far there has been no systematic examination of whether coalition governments in Africa display markedly different behaviours in such domains than non-coalition governments. In addition, there has been little analysis of how African citizens view the legitimacy of coalitions. Journalistic accounts tend to highlight a preference by African voters for pre-electoral coalitions of opposition parties, especially in countries where incumbents have been difficult to dislodge. But thus far no survey research has been conducted into how voters actually perceive pre-electoral coalitions. Furthermore, in the European context, there have been studies suggesting that governing coalitions are viewed as less accountable for their performance, especially with respect to the economy, because no one party can be directly blamed for policy decisions (see Samuels 2004). However,

an analysis of governing coalitions, particularly unity governments and coalitions in parliamentary regimes, and perceptions of accountability still remains a key knowledge gap in the African context.

Overall, the existing research presented in this article suggests that expectations of the potential of coalitions should be tempered. On the one hand, the growing number of parties that have been willing to come together, and stay together for long enough to compete in elections offers optimism about the prospects of inter-party cooperation. On the other hand, given that most pre-electoral coalitions in Africa are formed for the purpose of office-seeking rather than for promoting particular policies, they rarely transform parties into more institutionalised and robust entities.

Pre-electoral coalitions that include incumbents may even perpetuate the status quo by co-opting smaller parties through patronage and the distribution of offices. Thus, while coalitions may, in the short term, occasionally lead to party turnover and end violent conflicts, their long-term consequences with regard to creating strong ties with voters, helping parties mature, encouraging more efficient policymaking and eliminating underlying sources of social contention remain much more doubtful.

APPENDIX
Winning Coalitions in Africa, 1990-2013

Incumbent Coalition/Pact/Alliance	Country (Year)
New Benin Alliance (Alliance du Benin Nouveau-ABN)	Benin (2006)
Union pour la majorité présidentielle plurielle (UMPP)	Benin (2011)
Presidential Movement Alliance	Burkina Faso (2005, 2010)
National Convergence 'Kwa na Kwa'	Central African Republic (2005)
Congolese Work Party-United Democratic Forces (PCT-FDU)	Congo-Brazzaville (2002)
Rally of the Presidential Majority	Congo-Brazzaville (2009)
RPP-FRUD	Djibouti (2000)
Union for the Presidential Majority (UMP)	Djibouti (2005, 2010)
Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)	Ethiopia (2000, 2005, 2010)
New Alliance	Gabon (1993)
Progressive Alliance	Ghana (1992, 1996)
Party of National Unity	Kenya (2007)
MSM-MMM	Mauritius (1991)
Alliance of the Future	Mauritius (2010)
Coalition Sopi 2007	Senegal (2007)
Tripartite Alliance	South Africa (1994, 1999, 2004, 2009)
Opposition Coalition/Pact/Alliance	Country (Year)
Union pour le Triomphe du Renouveau Democratique (UTRD)	Benin (1991)
FARD-Alafia-NCC-RDL-Vivoten Pact	Benin (1996)
Rally of Houphouetists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP)	Côte d'Ivoire (2010)
National Rainbow Coalition (NARC)	Kenya (2002)
Jubilee Coalition	Kenya (2013)
Forces Vives Rasalama (FVR)	Madagascar (1992)
Crisis Cell Alliance	Madagascar (2001)
Common Electoral Group	Malawi (1994)
Alliance for Democracy in Mali-Pan African Party for Liberty, Solidarity, and Justice (ADEMA-PASJ)	Mali (1992)

Pact around Amadou Toumani Touré	Mali (2002)
MLP-MMM	Mauritius (1995)
MMM-MSM	Mauritius (2000)
Social Alliance	Mauritius (2005)
Alternative 2000 coalition	Senegal (2000)
Macky 2012	Senegal (2012)

Note: Incumbent and opposition coalitions for Mauritius were designated by examining the party from which the prime minister came.

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