

# JOURNAL OF AFRICAN ELECTIONS

*Special Issue*

*Understanding the Causes and Consequences of  
Political Party Alliances and Coalitions in Africa*



**Volume 13 Number 1 June 2014**



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*Understanding the Causes and Consequences of  
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Published by EISA  
14 Park Road, Richmond  
Johannesburg  
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P O Box 740  
Auckland Park  
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ISSN: 1609-4700

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Printed by: Corpnet, Johannesburg

Cover photograph: Reproduced with the permission of the  
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# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE POLITICS OF PARTY ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS IN SOCIALY-DIVIDED AFRICA

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## ABSTRACT

*There is a gradual emergence of a body of knowledge about the factors that stimulate the formation, survival and disintegration of party alliances and coalitions in Africa. What is relatively less known is the impact of these alliances and coalitions on various aspects of political and governance systems in African countries. This article is a modest step towards explaining the effects of party alliances and coalitions on national cohesion and party systems in Africa's socially-divided states.*

## INTRODUCTION

Pre-electoral alliances and post-election coalitions of political parties have become an increasingly significant feature of contemporary African politics. A study of this political phenomenon is important to an understanding of election dynamics and government formation politics in Africa. It is encouraging to note that in the past decade there has been a relative increase in studies devoted to alliances and coalitions in Africa (Karume 2003; Sithanen 2003; Kadima 2003, 2006a; Kapa 2008; Resnick 2011; Arriola 2013). In spite of this increase, various aspects of this political phenomenon are still largely under studied. The majority of studies look at the causes of alliances and coalitions (Karume 2003; Kapa 2008) and only a few have tried to explain the effects on the political, party and democratic systems of African countries (Resnick 2011; Kadima 2006b). On the other hand, coalition theories have their roots mainly in the experiences of Western European countries and therefore tend to focus excessively on post-election coalitions. Yet, in Africa, pre-electoral alliances occur nearly as frequently as post-election coalitions.

A study of the number of African countries with pre-electoral alliances and / or coalition governments (as opposed to single-party governments) in the period up to October 2013 is quite revealing. When one excludes countries in which

multiparty parliamentary elections have not been held for a variety of reasons (Eritrea, Sahrawi, Somalia and Swaziland), pre-election party alliances were formed in the most recent legislative elections in 51% of African states and 54.9% had some form of coalition government. Similarly, pre-election alliances were formed for presidential elections in the same period in 22 of 43 countries (51.2%), excluding monarchies (Lesotho, Morocco and Swaziland), indirectly elected presidents (Botswana, Ethiopia, Libya, Mauritius, South Africa and Tunisia) and countries that did not hold (presidential) elections (Eritrea, Sahrawi and Somalia).

This introductory article develops the insights and arguments originally posited in early work on African Party Alliances (Kadima 2006b). It is a modest step towards not only explaining the causes and factors stimulating the formation, survival and disintegration of party alliances and coalitions in Africa's socially-divided states but also the consequences of these alliances and coalitions for national cohesion and party systems.

It is worth starting this study by defining a number of concepts, namely 'alliance', 'coalition', 'party system' and 'national cohesion'. Given their similarities as inter-party cooperation modalities the terms alliance and coalition are generally used interchangeably. However, owing to the unique features of the platforms and processes characterising alliances and coalitions it would be useful to differentiate between the terms. Andrew Wyatt (1999) argues that

in forming coalitions, politicians leading disciplined parties have a clear idea of their respective strengths whereas politicians forming electoral alliances work with less certainty as they only have an estimate of the strength of their electoral support and how it might be affected by a potential alliance. Likewise they can only estimate the electoral cost of an ideologically-inconsistent alliance.

What is implicit in this distinction between an alliance and a coalition is that the former is formed before an election and the latter is built on the basis of the election outcome.

Based on Wyatt's characterisation, 'alliance' can be defined as the coming together of at least two political parties prior to an election in order to maximise their votes, while a 'coalition' refers to the agreement of a minimum of two political parties to work together in Parliament and/or in government on the basis of the election outcome. Both alliances and coalitions are characterised by the coming together of a minimum of two political parties for a certain period, in pursuit of an agreed set of common goals to be reached by means of a common strategy, joint actions, the pooling of resources and the distribution of possible subsequent pay-offs (2006b).

It is also useful to define the notions of 'party system' and 'national cohesion', two important parameters analysed in this article. Party system refers to 'the way in which various parties interact at a particular level of political competition and/or cooperation (eg, predominant party system, multiparty system, etc)' (Lefebvre & Robin, 2009). The differentiation between party systems in various countries and within the same country is generally based on the variance in terms of competitiveness, cooperation, stability and fragmentation. As for national cohesion, it is the process of constructing a nation by using state power with the aim of unifying the various communal groups within the state and ensuring political cohesion and stability, social harmony and a sense of common (desired) destiny.

Eghosa Osaghae (1999) uses the term 'to refer to a process of constructing a *welness* or a sense of belonging among members of different groups in a polity, through the regulation and reconciliation of differences as well as competing interests and demands'. In a cohesive state there may be ethnic, racial and religious differences but they are of secondary importance in determining political behaviour. A key variable is the degree to which political parties politicise ethnicity and other sub-national segmentary identities.

This study, although primarily based on the experiences of Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique and South Africa, also draws on evidence from other African countries to explain the patterns of party alliance and coalition politics in Africa and assesses the extent to which coalition theories, mostly derived from the analysis of government-building in Western European countries, can form a compelling explanatory framework for the formation and collapse of electoral alliance and coalition politics on the continent. The five countries studied were chosen on the basis of four main criteria:

- A history of pre-electoral alliances and post-election coalitions;
- A mix of political regimes: presidential (Kenya and Malawi) and parliamentary (Mauritius and South Africa);
- A mix of electoral systems: proportional representation (South Africa and Mozambique) and plurality (Kenya, Malawi and Mauritius); and
- A mix of party systems: dominant (South Africa and Mozambique), two-party (Mauritius) and multiparty (Kenya and Malawi).

The study addresses three main questions: What are the causes and factors motivating alliance and coalition building? How effective have electoral alliances and coalition governments been in fostering national cohesion in socially-divided African countries? What has been the impact of party alliances and coalitions on party systems in Africa?



The article is divided into four sections, excluding this introduction and the conclusion. These are: a brief review of coalition theories; the background to party alliances and coalitions in Africa; the causes and factors motivating alliance- and coalition-building, survival and disintegration and the effects of party alliances and coalitions on political systems and party systems in Africa.

### COALITION THEORIES

‘What is the applicability to African contexts of theories of party alliances and coalitions developed in other settings and, if relevant, in what ways might they need modification?’ This is the guiding question in this section. The theories of party coalitions are essentially based on the experiences of continental Western Europe (Gamson 1961; Riker 1962; Axelrod 1970; De Swaan 1973; Dodd 1976; Luebbert 1983). These theories have focused on predicting and explaining models of government formation and termination in parliamentary democracies. Two main approaches are used in studying the subject, namely the theories of size and ideology, on the one hand, and the new institutionalist theory, on the other.

Theories of coalition based on size and ideology emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. They centre on the effects of a potential coalition’s size and ideology on its chances of formation and may be subdivided into office-seeking and policy-seeking theories. Office-seeking theories are based on the assumption that the main goal of political parties is to access power. For the defenders of this viewpoint, government formation is a win-lose scenario in which Cabinet portfolios are the payoffs. Therefore, if the most important thing for political parties is to receive Cabinet portfolios, a majority coalition in Parliament would not accept the existence of a minority government and would take the spoils of office for itself.

These theories have gradually been refined. The minimal winning hypothesis was applied to government formation by William Gamson (1961) and was later ameliorated by William Riker (1962). The theory is based on the assumption that government coalitions should comprise as few political parties as possible – just enough to win the legislature’s vote of confidence. Minimal winning governments, therefore, in order to maximise possible office benefits, carry no passengers. Michael Leiserson (1968) also supported the minimum winning theory, arguing that the prospective government should seek to minimise the number of political parties in the coalition because it is easier for a smaller group of parties to reach consensus.

It is undeniable that the core arguments of office-seeking theories are relevant in African contexts. The main reason for the formation of alliances and coalitions in Africa, as elsewhere, is to hold public office. However, the argument that minimal winning governments carrying no passengers are most likely to be formed in

order to maximise possible office benefits is often contradicted in African contexts where pre-electoral alliances rather than post-election coalitions tend to be made as large as possible deliberately in order to guarantee electoral victory even if this means not maximising the benefits.

The assumption on which policy-seeking theories are based is that party coalitions are justified by policy goals. Robert Axelrod (1970) suggests that office-seeking coalitions pursue the maximisation of their benefits while minimising the coalition's bargaining costs by forming only those winning coalitions that contain ideologically adjacent parties; hence the hypothesis of minimal connected winning coalitions. Similarly, Abram De Swaan (1973) notes that political parties form the minimal winning coalition with the smallest ideological range, which positions the hypothesis of 'ideologically compact winning coalitions'. Concurring with Axelrod's and De Swaan's views, Paul Warwick (1994) argues that ideologically diverse governments tend not to survive because of the greater policy compromises coalition members have to make.

Policy-seeking theories are sound, but they do not appear to be a solid basis for adequately explaining alliance and coalition building and collapse in most African countries. This is because the differentiation between political parties from an ideological or policy standpoint is not rigid. The end of the Cold War has seen a shift by the main parties towards the centre. Even in those few countries with relatively more delineated ideologies (eg, Mauritius and South Africa) high poverty levels have forced party leaders to grant the state a comparatively large role in the market economy in order to fast-track national socio-economic development. This convergence of the main priorities creates a degree of connection among the majority of mainstream political parties, thus justifying why most parties can compatibly share power. Divisions tend to be, in essence, personality-driven rather than ideologically based.

Finally, coalition theories emerging from the study of party coalitions in Western Europe do not account sufficiently in their theorisation for social-cleavage-related factors. Most scholars argue that social cleavages such as race, religion, class and gender have declined in political importance throughout the mature democracies (Hamilton 1972; Dalton and Wattenberg 1993; Franklin 1985 and 1992 and Lawrence 1996). However, other scholars of party coalitions in advanced democracies disagree. Jeff Manza and Clem Brooks (2003) believe that 'despite significant changes in the American political landscape, social cleavages as a whole remain an important source of voter alignments and the composition of the Democratic and Republican Party coalitions'.

This study pays particular attention to the weight of the social cleavage dimension in party alliances and coalitions in Africa. The experiences of countries such as India offer useful insights. Explaining why an alliance between the Bahujan

Samaj Party (BSP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP) in the electorally vital state of Uttar Pradesh during the 1998 legislative elections, which would have prevented the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from coming to power, did not form, Andrew Wyatt argues that deep social cleavages partly made the negotiations difficult (1999). Here Wyatt shares Lawrence Dodd's theory of social cleavage according to which, where political parties are organised along social cleavage lines their key motivation will be to look after the interests of their respective constituencies and any effort to find middle ground with an adversarial constituency will be discouraged and difficult to sustain (Dodd 1976).

According to Wyatt, the social structure in Uttar Pradesh is highly stratified, with the SP strongly related to the middle castes and in an adversarial relationship with the upper-caste-dominated Congress Party; the BJP, though drawing support from a more diverse constituency, enjoying much of the support of the upper castes which once supported the Congress Party and the BSP appealing essentially to the middle castes, the same constituency as the SP (Wyatt 1999).

Lefebvre & Robin (2009) highlight the importance of different geographical bases of support to the composition and sustainability of Indian pre-electoral coalitions. They argue that the BJP-led alliance declined because it had to give too much to access central power because of its concentration in specific geographical areas in contrast to its arch rival, the Indian National Congress, which enjoyed the advantage of having a spatially-scattered voter base which enhanced its alliance bargaining position. The two authors also note that pre-election alliances in India 'are more likely to win elections when their size (in number of parties) is large but characterised by significant size difference between the coalition partners' (Lefebvre & Robin 2009).

Because of the prevalence of deeply-rooted social cleavages in India, which is also a notable feature in Africa, the experience of the world's largest democracy is rich in lessons for the continent.

## BACKGROUND TO PARTY ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS

Contemporary African political history starts with the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, which resulted in the subdivision of the African continent into a multiplicity of states based on the economic and geopolitical interests of the participating Western powers of the time. This exercise resulted in the creation of states composed of a diversity of ethnic, racial, religious and linguistic groups. The new states faced the daunting challenge of achieving nation-building, having gone through the often divisive pre-independence elections largely contested by ethnically-based political parties in a process exacerbated by the widespread use of the 'winner-takes-all' electoral system inherited from colonisation.

Pre-independence political parties were, in essence, formed along ethnic lines (Oyugi 2006), a trend that has continued. In this context, an electoral defeat did not only mean the defeat of a political party but of a whole ethnic group. The resulting post-election resistance to state power by the defeated parties or ethnic group culminated in ethnic polarisation and, in the worst of cases, civil wars and massacres, leaving deep scars in the socio-political fabric of these plural societies.

States had to find ways of dealing with the centrifugal trends in order to achieve some degree of national cohesion. In this context, nation-building became a fundamental objective for nearly all countries in Africa given that it was seen as a certain way of ensuring the peaceful coexistence of the various societal groups. Since political parties were themselves formed along ethnic, linguistic, regional and /or religious lines, several types of political party regulations were attempted to address the ethnic politics that threatened 'social peace, national integrity and political stability' (Bogaards 2008).

After a century of 'divide and rule' by the colonial powers, national cohesion efforts in Africa have often entailed the construction of a national identity through the integration of the various groups into a nation. National cohesion efforts have encompassed a range of initiatives such as the careful choice of national anthems, flags, national days, national languages and national myths; the use of military force; sports events; propaganda; the development of major infrastructure; massive investment; economic growth and revenue redistribution. Other important mechanisms for nation-building include the engineering of particular political systems and institutions, electoral systems, party systems and the devolution of some powers from national to sub-national entities.

In relation to political parties, targeted strategies that were developed and implemented included but were not limited to the establishment of single-party systems (in the former Zaire, Togo, Gabon, Cameroon, Malawi, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville and Côte d'Ivoire), the merger of political parties (Zimbabwe) and the imposition of a two-party system as briefly introduced in Nigeria in the mid-1990s. An extreme option has been the banning of all political parties, as in Swaziland, or a one-party system disguised as a no-party system in Uganda, which ended in 2005, or a de facto one-party state such as Eritrea, where the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) rules and no other political groups is allowed to organise.

With the re-introduction of political pluralism in the early 1990s the building of pre-election alliances and post-election coalition governments has emerged as a new trend among political parties, which has allowed them to be more effective in fragmented party systems than they would be on their own. This was the case in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Nigeria.

Alliances and coalitions have therefore helped parties to access and/or maintain power, limit the majority level of the winning party or coalition and to reach out to parties from across diverse social divides. What is relatively less known is the impact of pre-election alliances and coalitions on party systems, democratic consolidation, state governability and national cohesion. This article makes a contribution to reducing this knowledge gap.

### FACTORS MOTIVATING PARTY ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS

This section answers the question: 'What are the causes and factors motivating alliance and coalition-building, their survival and disintegration?' Party alliance- and coalition-building in Africa are unequally influenced by institutional, political, legal, social and financial factors. These factors include the nature of the political regime, the type of electoral system, the legal framework governing political parties and alliances and coalitions, the nature of political parties and the party system, ethno-linguistic and regional factors, financial motivation, ideologies (in rare cases) and classes.

The results of the previous election can have a bearing on which parties are selected and who among the leaders will be the flag bearer. The motives, roles and personality of party coalition leaders also influence alliances. More generally, the inadequate institutionalisation of democracy, the domination of the founding leaders over their parties and the structural and organisational weaknesses or strengths of political parties also affect not only the parties themselves but party alliances and coalitions. In addition, the political economy of the country, especially in the context of limited career opportunities outside of government, often leads to the building of unprincipled coalitions (Kadima 2006b).

#### *The political regime factor*

The type of political regime has an impact on the formation of electoral alliances and coalition governments. In a parliamentary regime (Mauritius, South Africa and Lesotho), the government's survival depends on the confidence of Parliament. As a result, partners work hard to maintain the cohesion of the governing party or coalition. The main difference between Mauritius and Lesotho, on the one hand, and South Africa, on the other, is that the latter has a dominant-party system in which the African National Congress (ANC)'s electoral victory has been a foregone conclusion from one election to the next.

Between the first democratic elections, in 1994, and the second, in 1999, there was a constitutional requirement that South Africa must be governed by a coalition. As a result, during those years the country was run by a government

of national unity which featured National Party and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) Cabinet ministers alongside those of the victorious ANC. Since 1999, however, the ANC has had the overwhelming majority of seats in the National Assembly and there has been no need for it to enter into an alliance or coalition to remain in power. However, it has continued to invite representatives of smaller parties to take on Cabinet positions in the predominantly ANC Cabinet, pointing to another motivation for building coalitions – to maintain or extend political consensus across ideological and social divisions. In addition, in areas where the ANC is not dominant (at sub-national levels, particularly municipal councils), the party has been forced to enter into alliances with smaller parties in order to govern.

Presidential regimes in ethnically divided countries (Kenya and the DRC) depend on their alliance partners to be elected. Once in office, this dependency ends as presidents use their constitutionally entrenched prerogatives to govern rather than subjecting themselves to pre-election agreements signed with alliance partners. Nonetheless, the president and his/her party would necessarily need the support of their partners to enable the smooth passage of legislation (Altman 2000). The deep factionalism in the presidential coalitions in Malawi led to an extreme situation involving a failed attempt to impeach the president, the resignation of the president from the party that sponsored him in the presidential elections and floor crossing by dozens of MPs to the new presidential party (Kadima & Lembani 2006). Similarly, in Kenya, President Mwai Kibaki's refusal to honour the pre-election agreement and the memorandum of understanding of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) compelled some of his alliance partners to stop cooperating with him, accusing him of having violated his commitment. The impasse within the governing alliance made Parliament almost ungovernable for most of the five-year term of the NARC (Kadima & Owuor 2006). The president began to rely on the opposition, including the Kenya African National Union, which had, until then, led the opposition to NARC, in an attempt to pass legislation.

Party coalitions in parliamentary regimes tend to be more effective than those in presidential regimes as, for the survival of government, consensus must be sought. In presidential regimes elected heads of state tend to overlook coalition agreements, giving precedence to their constitutional prerogatives. This situation has often resulted in division within the coalition, compromising the functioning and effectiveness of Parliament and government. This is even more the case when coalition partners opt to use Parliament as a platform from which to fight each other, which could lead, as in the case of Kenya between 2003 and 2007, to a fractured parliamentary caucus engaged in internecine squabbling and unable to pass crucial legislation (Kadima 2006b). The flipside is that an effective coalition can lead to greater accountability in Parliament and curb excessive use of the presidential prerogative.



*The electoral system factor*

Different kinds of electoral systems give rise to different types of instrumental calculations among political parties. The nature and character of the electoral system also predetermines the natural propensity of parties to opt for coalitions or alliances.

In socially-divided African countries which use the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system and are not dominant-party systems, political parties generally choose to enter into pre-election alliances in order to avoid wasting votes. This is often done by pooling votes in support of a candidate of one of the alliance parties. By coming together they increase their chances of winning the elections. In Kenya the requirement that presidential candidates must obtain a minimum of 25% of the votes cast in each of more than half of the country's 47 counties reinforces the need for parties to coalesce prior to the elections. Mauritius's three-way FPTP, where voters are each given three ballots, combined with the geographical concentration of the various communal groups in rural and urban areas, requires pragmatism. Thus party leaders have adopted a broad-based ethnic approach and enter into pre-election alliances in order to ensure electoral victory.

In African countries using proportional (PR) electoral systems where there is no election threshold which might result in wasted votes, political parties do not rush into pre-election alliances. Instead they build post-election coalitions on the basis of the number of seats each partner party has won. This was the basis of the post-election provincial coalitions between the ANC and the IFP from 1994 to 2004 in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN); the Democratic Party (DP) and the New National Party (NNP) in 1999 in the Western Cape and the ANC and the NNP in 2003 in the Western Cape.

In the past Mozambique also used a PR system for its parliamentary elections, with a minimum electoral threshold of 5% of the national vote, making it vital for small parties to build pre-election alliances in order to avoid wasting their votes. This explains why ten small political parties that failed to win a single parliamentary seat in 1994 entered into pre-election alliances with the Resistência Nacional de Moçambique (RENAMO) in both the 1999 and the 2004 parliamentary elections (Kadima & Matsimbe 2006). This electoral threshold was subsequently scrapped. Consequently, no significant coalition was built for the 2009 legislative elections in Mozambique.

South Africa's local government elections are conducted under a pure mixed system, with 50% of seats fought on the basis of FPTP and the other 50% according to a PR closed party list. In this case, the FPTP element means parties stand a better chance of having a particular candidate elected if they enter into pre-election alliances. This was clearly the case in the 2000 local government elections when a pre-election alliance among the DP, NNP and the Federal Alliance (FA) ensured

their victory in the Cape Town Metro council and several other local councils (Kadima 2006d).

The use of a two-round electoral system for legislative elections also encourages the building of pre-election alliances. This happens in the first round and, more importantly, ahead of a run-off election, as has been the case in Mali and the Central African Republic.

In instances where there is a constitutional requirement that a candidate standing in a presidential election must secure a 50%+1 majority of valid votes in the first round and no candidate achieves this majority a run-off is organised between the two top candidates. In these instances pre-election alliances tend to be formed ahead of presidential elections. African presidential regimes provide an interesting opportunity for the study of alliance and coalition politics and a study of countries like Senegal, Mali, Guinea, the DRC (before 2011 when the two-round system was replaced with a simple majority), Benin, Côte d'Ivoire Kenya and Madagascar would yield interesting insights

### *Legal framework governing alliances and coalitions*

Political parties and their alliances and coalitions are generally affected either by the absence or the inadequacies of legislation. In Malawi the legal framework does not explicitly recognise party coalitions. As a result, alliances and coalitions have no status beyond that of gentlemen's agreements. The consequence of this inadequate recognition of coalitions is that in Malawi the position of head of state is unduly strengthened at the expense of alliance and coalition partners. Partner parties are weakened by the fact that they find themselves campaigning for their joint presidential candidate, promoting his/her party's symbol. At the same time, they campaign for their own parties in the parliamentary elections, using their own party's symbol, a practice that confuses voters and negatively affects the chances of parliamentary candidates representing coalition partners that do not field a presidential candidate (Kadima & Lembani 2006).

The fact that until recently Kenyan law did not recognise party alliances and coalitions forced the NARC and subsequent alliances to register as political parties in their own right. The legal framework governing Kenya's political parties was amended in 2011. Section 10 of the Political Parties Act (PPA) of 2011 provides that

two or more political parties may form a coalition before or after an election and shall deposit the coalition agreement with the Registrar. A coalition agreement entered into before an election shall be deposited with the Registrar at least three months before that election. A coalition agreement entered into after an election shall be



deposited with the Registrar within twenty-one days of the signing of the coalition agreement. A coalition agreement shall set out the matters specified in the Third Schedule.

In Mauritius any group of parties wishing to contest an election together must register with the Office of the Electoral Commissioner. The alliance is also required to have its symbols registered with the electoral commissioner. The recognition of party alliances helps prevent the unfairness experienced in Malawi and, until 2011, in Kenya.

The floor-crossing legislation in South Africa, enacted to facilitate the formal disintegration of a party alliance, made it possible for members of Parliament who were elected under the closed list proportional representation system to quit their parties, form new parties, or join other parties, without losing their seats in the National Assembly or the provincial legislatures (Booyesen 2011). This legislation led to the periodic splitting of parties, defections of elected party representatives and, ultimately, to the fragmentation and weakening of the party system (Kadima 2008). In addition, floor crossing undermined the meaning of representative democracy as elected leaders joined parties that stood for views other than those for which their parties were elected. Floor crossing was hugely unpopular in South Africa and was scrapped after it had served the purpose of enabling the ANC to control, albeit temporarily, the Western Cape (Kadima & Booyesen 2009).

This article does not advocate the over-regulation of party alliances and coalitions. It recognises that the inadequate or silent nature of the legislation has made party alliances and coalitions dysfunctional in many countries and, in extreme cases, has led to fracture, instability, tensions and violence, as it did in Kenya between 2003 and 2008.

### *Ethno-linguistic and regional factors*

It must be recognised that politics in Africa is still characterised by ethno-linguistic and regional factors. All the major parties, both ruling and opposition, in Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique and South Africa are associated with a particular ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious or regional group. Certain party alliances and coalitions end up resembling alliances and coalitions of tribes and sometimes multipartyism turns into multitribalism. As a result, the ethnic dynamics that have an adverse impact on individual political parties often find their way into the alliances and coalitions. The successive coming together of the main party leaders in Kenya was, in fact, the coming together of the main ethnic groups in support of the party alliances (Kadima & Owuor 2006).

The case of Mauritius, one of very few countries on the continent with a long tradition of multiparty government, is unique, owing to social cleavages which characterise the society, the parliamentary system and the multiparty system, in which the two dominant political parties cannot command an absolute majority on their own. Any party that is serious about winning an election must therefore enter into a pre-election alliance. Since independence in 1968 Mauritius has never been governed by one single party.

Mauritius, characterised by racial and religious cleavages as well as well-delineated social classes and class consciousness, had held nine successful general elections up to 2010, of which all but one were contested by two major pre-election alliances. Ethnic calculation has been central to these elections in which, essentially, an incumbent coalition has been challenged by an opposition alliance (Sithanen 2003; Kadima & Kasenally 2005). Furthermore, in Mauritius, politicians often 'sell' coalitions as the only means of accommodating ethnic diversity, building consensus and promoting social cohesion. The reality is, however, different, as coalition-building and, ultimately, its breakdown, takes place along ethnic lines and these coalitions are essentially a vehicle that allows politicians to access or maintain power. In other words, the *raison d'être* of a party coalition is ultimately to govern, and ethnic accommodation, though desirable and reassuring, has essentially been of peripheral importance.

In order to guarantee its electoral victory the Mouvement Militant Mauritan (MMM) entered in coalition with a smaller party, the Mouvement Socialiste Mauritan (MSM), in 2000 and agreed to share the post of prime minister, with the MSM taking the first three years, while the MMM contented itself with the remaining two years. This ethnic calculation was based on the recognition of the demographic weight of the Hindu majority, who constitute about half the population (Kadima & Kasenally 2005). It can, however, be argued that even though ethnic accommodation was only a by-product of alliance and coalition building, it is nonetheless an essential derivative.

In Malawi from 1994 to 2004 the northern-region-based Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) was able to oppose the southern-region-based United Democratic Front (UDF) against the central-region-based Malawi Congress Party (MCP) (Kadima & Lembani 2006), which allowed it to play the role of kingmaker by making and unmaking coalitions, until its own disintegration into smaller parties.

Ironically, the attempt to attract as many ethnic groups as possible in order to be seen as politically correct and win elections results in a lack of homogeneity which constitutes the main weakness of any coalition in an ethnically diverse society. In other words, the diversity that allows a coalition to win an election is, paradoxically, the factor that is likely to cause it to disintegrate.

### *The ideology factor*

Ideology has not been an essential factor in party coalition-building or splitting in African countries. In Malawi (Kadima & Lembani 2006) and Kenya, interviews with leaders of the main parties showed that representatives were unsure about their party's ideology. Even when there were some rudiments of ideology, parties did not live up to it and none of their coalition-related decisions seemed to be clearly based on ideological considerations. As for Mozambique, while it is relatively discernible that RENAMO is a centre-right party and its longstanding rival, the governing Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) a centre-left party, the ten smaller parties which coalesced around RENAMO from 1999 to 2009 under the RENAMO União Eleitoral (RENAMO UE) did not all have a clearly professed ideology. Similarly, in many other African countries such as Senegal, the DRC and Mali, ideology has no bearing at all on the building or collapse of party alliances and coalitions, the single most important motivation being the quest for public office.

In Mauritius and South Africa, however, the main political parties can be classified with some more certainty on a left-right spectrum, though a superficial observation of coalition politics in these countries might lead to the impression that there is a virtual absence of ideology. Both Mauritius and South Africa are export-oriented and find themselves under the influence of economic neo-liberalism (Narsiah 2006; Lallah 2000). This has, through pragmatism, pushed the main political parties in these countries to the centre of the ideological continuum, with slight nuances regarding the role and place of the state in the economy.

In the same vein, since the end of the Cold War, most African political parties have realigned themselves ideologically, moving to the centre. The challenges facing African countries are huge and well known. They include extreme poverty levels, economic competitiveness and the need to improve the quality of education and access to health. Most parties have largely espoused economic liberalism, with the state playing an important role in order to accelerate socio-economic development and alleviate poverty. It is therefore not surprising that there has been a convergence of the main ideas and priorities, thus creating a degree of connection among the parties. Such a context justifies the reduction of the importance of ideology as a differentiating factor in alliance and coalition building.

### *The financial security factor*

Undoubtedly, parties enter into coalitions in order to win elections. Access to power often comes with various privileges, including financial advantages.

Affiliated parties benefit from a coalition by winning parliamentary seats and, where possible, ministerial and other well remunerated posts. In other words, coalitions provide financial security for members of the coalition partners. In addition, in those countries that have an FPTP electoral system it tends to be an advantage to run for office as an incumbent.

Incumbency gives easier and often undue access to public resources such as state-owned media, civil servants, vehicles, the state apparatus and even public funding, which serves to perpetuate certain individuals and parties in office, thereby limiting economic gains to a self-circulating and incumbent elite. Interestingly, while financial security is often associated with ruling parties or coalitions, the opposition RENAMO in Mozambique was able to offer the same to its partners, essentially through their parliamentary seats and public funding of parliamentary parties.

The Mozambican case explains, to a large extent, the unusual longevity of its opposition alliance. In the same way, in decentralised systems such as South Africa and, since 2013, in Kenya, the national opposition parties can win executive positions at sub-national levels (eg, governor or mayor) and be the governing parties, thus enjoying the advantage of incumbency in the entities under their control.

This situation has improved the sustainability of opposition coalitions in these countries. Arriola (2013) further developed this aspect of the study of coalition by arguing that lack of finances means opposition alliances often do not form, hence ruling parties find it easier to build coalitions than their opponents.

### *Other factors*

Other factors, such as the personality and ambition of party leaders and competition among them, deep differences between alliance and coalition partners, the results of the previous elections, the proximity of a general election, inadequate internal democracy and transparency and poor management procedures all influence pre-electoral alliances and post-election coalitions (see Kadima 2006b).

## CONSEQUENCES OF ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS FOR THE POLITICAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PARTY SYSTEMS

This section answers the following questions: how effective have electoral alliances and coalition governments been in fostering national cohesion in socially-divided African countries? What has been the impact of party alliances and coalitions on party systems in Africa?

*Effects on national cohesion*

The arbitrary subdivision of the African continent in 1885 has led to the creation of states where violent ethnic, linguistic, regional and / or religious cleavages have made peaceful coexistence and national cohesion challenging and one important objective of immediate pre-independence and post-independence party coalitions was to bring about national unity and nation-building. The fact that alliances and coalitions have brought together political parties from different and even conflicting ethnic, regional, religious and linguistic backgrounds has helped to foster a degree of national cohesion, particularly in ethnically-divided African countries.

In Mauritius, after the pre-independence elections of 1967, the Labour Party (LP) and its then arch rival, the Parti Mauricien Socialiste Démocrate (PMSD), formed a post-election coalition which lasted for 15 years, thus helping nation-building by reconciling the Hindu majority, represented by the LP, and the so-called General Population, which consists mainly of people of African descent and those of mixed races, represented by the PMSD (Kadima & Kasenally 2005).

In South Africa the 1994-1996 government of national unity, consisting of the ANC, the National Party (NP) and the IFP, also contributed to nation-building in the racially and ethnically divided country. This transitional constitutionally-enshrined multiparty government arrangement brought together the architects of apartheid, the NP, and the party chiefly responsible for apartheid's destruction, the ANC.

One of the most successful party coalitions in the post-apartheid era in South Africa has, surprisingly, been the successive post-election coalitions between the ANC and the IFP in the KwaZulu-Natal province from 1994 to 2004 and nationally. The ANC and IFP came together in an attempt to eradicate political violence in KZN and their coalition contributed to restoring peace in the volatile province after decades of hostility between supporters of the two parties.

Party politics in Kenya are ethnically based. Correspondingly, inter-party politics are ethnically driven. By bringing together ethnic groups from opposing sides, political party alliances and coalitions have contributed to reinforcing national cohesion, as illustrated by the nationwide enthusiasm generated by the formation of the NARC. Coalitions have also allowed for a more equitable sharing of national resources. It can also be observed that grand coalitions like NARC (2002) and the PNU-ODM (2008-2013), while they can annihilate opposition and restrict accountability, have contributed to national cohesion because they are about the politics of inclusion, while smaller governing coalitions make sections of the population feel that they are under-represented in state institutions. The formation of electoral alliances tends to ensure rapprochement among various

ethnic groups, however, the emergence in Kenya of two main alliances competing for power has meant that the country has often found itself politically polarised, with the rivalry leading to grave violence and loss of life.

The establishment and disintegration of party alliances has undeniably affected individual political parties both positively and negatively. Some effects are tangible, while others are mere perceptions which must be validated by means of further research.

The building of party alliances and coalitions has improved the image of some regionally-based political parties, giving them a degree of national relevance. In Malawi, for instance, through its intermittent alliances with the southern- region-based UDF and the central-region-based MCP, the northern-based AFORD raised its profile and became a national role player (Kadima & Lembani 2006). The same applies in South Africa to the IFP, which, thanks to its participation in the ANC-led national government, changed its widely perceived image as a provincial party essentially concerned with the interests of its Zulu constituents to that of a national player. The participation of its president, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, in government as minister of home affairs and his periodic appointment as acting president of the Republic also enhanced his stature (Kadima 2006d).

In substance it can be observed that party alliances and coalitions do contribute to a degree of national cohesion just as their collapse may lead to political polarisation, which can undo the progress achieved in nation cohesion.

### *Effect on party systems*

This section deals with the impact of party alliances and coalitions on party systems in Africa. The establishment and disintegration of party alliances and coalitions undeniably affects political parties both individually and collectively. The argument here is that pre-electoral alliances and coalition governments often result in the strengthening of the main political party at the expense of its junior partners. This can be illustrated with the example of South Africa, where, although there were short-term benefits in coalition building for individual political parties (eg, positions in state institutions) there were also adverse effects resulting both from entering a coalition and from subsequently withdrawing from it. One such example is that of the NNP, which joined the DP in 1999 to form the Democratic Alliance (DA), only to be progressively 'swallowed' by its partner. Its withdrawal from the coalition and the subsequent formation of a second one – this time with the ANC – angered the majority of its supporters. Ultimately, it was coalition politics that led to the demise of the NNP when its supporters were shared among the DA, the ANC and the Independent Democrats (ID).



Similarly, a study commissioned by the Freedom Front Plus (FF+) showed that its 1994 cooperative arrangement with the ANC was punished by its supporters in the 1999 general elections, when the party lost more than 50% of its seats in the National Assembly. It has also been argued that the DA's Coalition for Change with the IFP and its consequent support for the maintenance of Ulundi as the provincial capital of KZN resulted in lost votes in Pietermaritzburg and surrounding areas in the 2004 provincial election in favour of the ANC, which had expressed a preference for keeping Pietermaritzburg as the provincial capital.

There is also a perception that the decade-long participation of the IFP in a coalition government with the ANC in KZN and nationally might have confused IFP supporters. The steady decline in support for the IFP in KZN since 1999 and the increase in support for the ANC has been interpreted by some in the IFP as the party's supporters preferring to vote for the governing party rather than for its junior partner. In the same vein, the alliance between the DA, which is the main opposition party in South Africa, with the ID, a smaller opposition party, ended in the integration of the ID into the DA.

Also in South Africa, the ANC entered into coalition cooperative arrangements with a range of smaller and widely different political parties, including the IFP, the NNP, the United Democratic Movement, the Minority Front, the Azanian People's Organisation, the FF+ and the ID. This openness enhanced the governing party's image as a moderate dominant party at a time when the country needed to work hard to reduce ethnic and racial polarisation (Kadima 2006d) and allowed the smaller parties a policy- and decision-making role they might otherwise have been unable to access. The DA, too, entered an alliance with the NNP and a coalition with the IFP, the UDM and the ID. In virtually all these cases, the ANC and the DA, which have been the senior partners, have seen their partners lose ground, which has, at times, resulted in the integration of junior partners such as the NNP and the ID or their gradual reduction in the next elections.

A more general consequence of the rise and fall of various party coalitions in South Africa is that parties have learnt their lesson and have become exceedingly cautious, resulting in far fewer alliances and coalitions built, with a greater preference for situational issue-based cooperation and alliances over specific campaigns, for example, opposition to the Protection of State Information Bill or the tolling of freeways in Gauteng.

In Malawi, too, coalition politics has led to the demise of some parties. By entering into a coalition with the UDF prior to the 2004 elections and, more importantly, because of its support for the UDF leader's controversial attempt to extend his term of office beyond the constitutional maximum of two five-year terms, AFORD not only lost members through defections, it was severely sanctioned by the voters. Its parliamentary representation shrank from 29 seats

in 1999 to six in 2004. In 2009 this support dropped to a mere one seat (Kadima & Lembani 2006).

In Mauritius it has been argued that the MSM paid for its leader's submissive attitude to its coalition partner, the MMM. The fact that the MSM leader lost his parliamentary seat in the July 2005 general elections was interpreted as the consequence of this alliance.

Coalitions have also had the effect of fragmenting the party system in some countries. It has been observed in Mauritius and Malawi that politicians have often left their parties to form new ones in order to join the governing party as a coalition partner. In the following general elections those splinter parties have tended to disappear.

South Africa, although its party system is relatively stable, has also experienced fragmentation, though as a result of the opportunistic introduction of the floor-crossing legislation for a short period rather than as a consequence of party coalitions per se.

Equally, in Kenya, small parties were weakened by coalitions, especially when their leaders were in government and tended to neglect their parties in favour of the coalition. Such leaders frequently paid the price for their absence during the subsequent elections. It has been observed in some instances that the stronger the coalition the weaker the affiliate parties, and vice-versa.

The experiments of African countries with party alliances and coalitions show that smaller political parties usually enter into coalitions for short-term goals like jobs or to have a single issue addressed, while larger parties tend to focus on a long-term strategy aimed at consolidating their support base. As a result, party alliances and coalitions tend to disproportionately weaken small parties while strengthening the main party in the alliance or coalition. It would not be unrealistic to expect this process to culminate in the long run in the gradual reconfiguration and stabilisation of the party system with the consolidation of the large party and a reduction in the number of smaller parties

Perhaps an exception to this rule is Mauritius, where the third-largest party, the MSM, seems to have understood how party alliances weaken junior partners and was able to maintain itself in power by taking advantage of the strong rivalry between the two main parties, the Labour Party (LP) and the Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM). The MSM's Anerood Jugnauth managed, for 13 consecutive years, to occupy the position of prime minister, a period that ended only when the LP and MMM formed an alliance in 1995. However, thanks to a new coalition with the MMM, Jugnauth made a comeback in 2000 and led the country for a further three years as prime minister before he was elected by Parliament as non-executive president of the Republic (Kadima & Kasenally 2005). The MSM has remained the third force in the country as the two main parties have never been able to 'swallow' it.



In Kenya smaller parties have also realised that when a coalition is strong its affiliate parties tend to be weaker. Conversely, when affiliate parties are strong, the coalition tends to be weaker (the Party of National Unity). On the other hand, it has been noted that coalition leaders tend to be the main beneficiaries of the coalition (Kibaki in NARC, Odinga in the ODM and Kenyatta in Jubilee) and would prefer a centralised and even integrated coalition structure for better control of and discipline within the coalition. Junior coalition partners, on the other hand, favour a decentralised structure in order to keep their bargaining power and flexibility. This quest for independence by party leaders has resulted in a fragmented, unstable and weaker party system in Kenya. The laws relating to political parties provide for substantial funding of parties that have secured a minimum of 5% of the total vote. It is expected that this provision will encourage parties to reconsider the value of remaining in loose alliances and coalitions and building viable political parties instead.

## CONCLUSION

Most African societies are ethnically divided and the majority of African political parties are ethnically and/or regionally based, while the patrimonial nature of African politics not only turns political competition into ethnic competition, it also turns it into economic rivalry. An election defeat often feels like the political and economic defeat of an entire ethnic group. In this context, the building of alliances and coalitions is largely seen as an appropriate democratic way of accommodating ethnic diversity. By bringing together and accommodating political parties from different, if not conflicting, political, ethno-linguistic and regional divides, party alliances and coalitions have contributed to fostering a stronger sense of national cohesion.

On the other hand, the disintegration of party coalitions when they take place in a context of strong enmity between the competing alliances and coalitions may provoke politically-motivated ethnic violence and lead to a reversal of some of the progress made in building national cohesion. It can, however, be argued that, in the long run, election alliances and coalitions may ameliorate the intensity of strife when party leaders come to realise that they have a chance of being elected in peaceful and democratic elections by entering into pre-election alliances or through post-election coalitions.

This study has observed that pre-election alliances and post-election coalitions have become the rule of the democratic game in a sizeable number of African countries and are increasingly seen by citizens as a democratic mechanism for accessing or retaining power. This relative public support for alliances and coalitions is inconsistent with most legal frameworks governing party alliances

and coalitions in Africa which make it possible for the senior partner party to take undue advantage of its junior partners to the detriment of the whole party system.

Multiparty democracy rests on strong, viable and effective political parties and party coalitions, where applicable, as well as on stable party systems. Where legal frameworks weaken the party system, including alliances and coalitions, reform may be necessary. Because alliances and coalitions are institutions of public interest the law should provide for some regulation and require that their objectives, duration and agreement be made public. The electoral commission or another appropriate body could be given the power to decide whether the coalition agreement or memorandum of understanding complies with the law.

In 2011 Kenya reformed its political party laws along the lines of the recommendations by Kadima & Owour (2006). It is too early to assess what improvements these reforms will bring. It is, however, worth pointing out that extreme regulation of coalitions should be avoided as it could lead to the infringement of freedom of association. The right balance should, therefore, be struck in the interest of the stabilisation of African party systems and national cohesion.

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# ELECTORAL ALLIANCES IN AFRICA

## *What Do We Know, What Can We Do?*

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### ABSTRACT

*Under what circumstances do opposition parties form electoral alliances, when are they successful, and how do they contribute to democratisation? These are the leading questions in recent studies of opposition coalitions. This article reviews the quantitative literature on pre-electoral coalitions in Africa and beyond. Although differences in operationalisation, periodisation, case selection and research design hinder the accumulation of knowledge, the tendency is for the quantitative literature to highlight government policies, opposition features and the economy, whereas the qualitative literature focuses on institutions. In addition, this article points to the party system as a variable in its own right. Shifting from the empirical to the prescriptive, the conclusion discusses an institutional innovation that would help to strengthen opposition coalitions in Africa.*

### INTRODUCTION

Coalition governments have always been rare in Africa (Oyugi 2006). At the time of independence coalitions were formed in a small number of Anglophone colonies. After the third wave of democratisation reached Africa in the 1990s coalition governments remained rare.<sup>1</sup> A combination of presidentialism and dominant (authoritarian) party systems around the continent has resulted in single-party governments. The ‘governments of national unity’ in Kenya and Zimbabwe are unhappy marriages born out of election-related violence. They are heavily criticised in the political science literature for being uncondusive to democratisation and long-term peace (Sriram & Zahar 2009; Cheeseman & Tendi 2010; LeVan 2011).

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1 Resnick (this issue) counts more coalition governments in Africa than Oyugi (2006).

Electoral alliances are much more common than coalition governments, though they occur only in some places and at some times. In recent years several studies have been published that seek to explain this variation in Africa (Arriola 2013) and elsewhere (Wahman 2011; Gandhi & Reuter 2013). Other scholars are more interested in the *consequences* of electoral alliances in Africa (Resnick 2013) and beyond (Wahman 2013). The focus in this new literature has been on opposition coalitions, reflecting a preoccupation with the way cooperation among opposition parties contributes to alternation in power and democratic transition. This democratisation bias is also clear from the case selection: recent quantitative studies on opposition coalitions concentrate on elections in electoral authoritarian regimes (Wahman 2011, 2013; Gandhi & Reuter 2013).

This article has three aims. First, it reviews the recent quantitative literature on coalitions in Africa and beyond in order to take stock of our existing knowledge about this important phenomenon. Next, the article develops the argument that coalitions should be understood in the context of party systems. Different types of party system, democratic as well as authoritarian, offer different incentives for pre-electoral alliance formation, resulting in a range of dynamics and patterns. The article concludes with a proposal to strengthen the opposition in African parliaments through an institutional incentive for opposition coalitions.

### THE COMPARATIVE QUALITATIVE LITERATURE

Kadima (2006a) has pioneered the study of electoral alliances in Africa. His edited volume with case studies of South Africa, Malawi, Mozambique, Kenya and Mauritius provides the first systematic treatment of this topic. Kadima (2006b, p 10) defines a party coalition as ‘the coming together of a minimum of two political parties for a certain period, in pursuit of an agreed set of common goals to be reached by means of a common strategy, joint actions, the pooling of resources and the distribution of possible subsequent pay-offs’.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to descriptive detail, four features distinguish Kadima’s study from most of the recent quantitative literature on party alliances reviewed below. First, a broad interest in the factors that influence the formation, survival, and effectiveness of party coalitions as well as their impact on the party system and national cohesion, though ‘the general argument linking stable coalition governments with deepening democracy is fuzzy’ (Jua 2007, p 521). Second, Kadima’s study extends to party coalitions involving the ruling party, whereas most of the contemporary literature only has eyes for opposition parties. Third,

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2 Following the literature, this article uses the terms ‘electoral alliances’, ‘electoral coalitions’ and ‘pre-electoral coalitions’ interchangeably.



Kadima's study also covers party splitting and floor crossing.<sup>3</sup> This helps in better understanding the dynamics of coalition formation and collapse. Fourth, Kadima's study has a normative dimension in that it seeks to formulate recommendations for good practice. Thus, the conclusion finishes with a list of measures that would help to improve the durability, effectiveness and democratic quality of party coalitions. One suggestion, which has been criticised by Jua (2007, p 519) as being too detailed and demanding, is that 'because political parties and coalitions are institutions of public interest, the law should provide for the registration of coalitions and require that their objectives, duration and agreement are made public' (Kadima 2006c, p 238).

### QUANTITATIVE STUDIES OF ELECTORAL ALLIANCES IN AFRICA

Arriola's (2013) book on multiethnic coalitions in Africa is the most comprehensive and ambitious study of the topic since Kadima (2006). It starts with the observation that alternation in power is less frequent in Africa than in other regions. This is due in part to a lack of opposition coordination. Arriola (2013, p 7) estimates that in 40% of the 74 presidential elections won by incumbents the top three opposition challengers together collected more votes than the candidate of the ruling party.

If the reasons for working together are so obvious, why, then, does the opposition fail to form pre-electoral coalitions more often?<sup>4</sup> Arriola's answer is: money. His 'pecuniary theory of coalition building' highlights the crucial role of capital. The argument goes like this: in Africa's multiethnic societies political leaders are expected to provide patronage. This is much easier for the incumbents, who have access to the state, than the opposition, resulting in a resource asymmetry. In order to win elections the opposition normally has to join forces, but this is complicated by the ethnic nature of party politics. The spoils of collaboration are uncertain because, firstly, the coalition might not win the elections, and secondly, there is no guarantee that once in office the winning candidate will keep his or her promise to share power and resources. In other words, any potential leader of the unified opposition faces a credible commitment problem. It is not enough to promise rewards after the elections, the would-be-leader of an opposition coalition

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3 Other studies on floor crossing in Africa include Goeke & Hartmann (2011), who seek to demonstrate that anti-party switching laws helped to stabilise patterns of inter-party competition, and Booysen (2006), who observes how floor-crossing legislation in South Africa weakened the opposition and strengthened the dominant-party system.

4 One way of finding this out is by asking the opposition. Huskey & Iskakova (2010) interviewed opposition politicians in Kyrgyzstan and asked them to rate how important factors such as divide-and-rule policies of the incumbents, economic conditions, policy differences, personal ambitions, ethnicity, and trust were in complicating cooperation within the opposition. The results were sometimes surprising, for example, the low salience of money and identity.



has to distribute rewards before the elections. In Arriola's (2013, p 27) words: 'In patronage-based politics across Africa, politicians must be able to pay upfront for the cross-ethnic endorsements that make up electoral alliances.'

But with what means? The answer is: private business. Private business, however, will only dare to support the opposition when this does not threaten its access to credit. From independence onwards African governments have sought to establish state control of capital. Thus, only where financial liberalisation has taken place, usually because of political conditionality following the economic crisis of the 1980s, is private business free from the fear of financial reprisals by the state, allowing it to support the opposition. Absent financial liberalisation the opposition will remain fragmented.

Arriola (2013, p 28) is right to note that 'scholars have overlooked the role of business in supplying vital resources to the opposition in multiethnic developing countries', but not everybody will be convinced by his mono-causal story.<sup>5</sup> The empirical study combines a paired comparison of Kenya and Cameroon with a statistical analysis of all cases. Arriola (2013, p 36) defines a coalition as 'an electoral alliance in which politicians from different ethnic or regional groups endorse a single candidate for executive office'. Only coalitions of 'politically relevant actors' are included (p 211). While the aim is clear and the justification plausible, the criteria are not. Arriola relies on 'parliamentary representation' or 'expert assessments found in country case studies' (p 211) but does not provide coding rules that allow for replication.

The data set includes 85 multiparty elections for the executive in the period 1990-2005. Of these, 32 were contested by an opposition coalition. Surprisingly perhaps, 'there is no continuous increase or decrease in the incidence of opposition electoral coordination over time' (Arriola 2013, p 212), which might be interpreted as a lack of political learning.<sup>6</sup> The figure is low in international comparison, something Arriola (p 211) attributes to Africa's presidential systems and the frequency of elections that are not free and fair. While plausible, his empirical analysis does not test these insights, which could have been done by distinguishing parliamentary from presidential elections and using the quality of elections as a variable.<sup>7</sup> The quantitative analysis shows economic growth to have the strongest positive impact on coalition formation, indirectly confirming the importance of resources. The availability of private credit and the number of commercial banks are also positively related to the number of coalitions.<sup>8</sup>

5 For an enthusiastic book review see Bleck (2013), for a more critical reception, see Eizenga (2014).

6 In contrast, Resnick (this issue) shows a dramatic rise in the number of electoral coalitions in the new millennium.

7 Data on quality of elections for the period is available from Lindberg (2006).

8 The *size* of coalitions plays no role in Arriola's (2013) analysis.

Although Arriola claims (2013, p 3) that 'this book engages such questions in the context of Africa's incomplete democratisation' and situates his theory in the literature on hybrid regimes (p 9), regime type is, in fact, only of minor importance to his theory and empirical analysis. In the statistical analysis Arriola does test one hypothesis that seems to capture the regime variable: 'Greater democratic experience should increase the likelihood of multiethnic opposition coalition formation' (p 218). However, 'democratic experience' is measured as the number of previous multiparty elections, irrespective of whether these elections were reasonably free and fair. Arriola's use of 'democratic experience' does not distinguish electoral democracies from electoral autocracies and it comes as little surprise that the variable is statistically insignificant.

In the expectation that opposition coordination is even more difficult in authoritarian regimes, Arriola (2013) includes a measure of democracy in his models. What he finds is the opposite: 'opposition coalitions are more likely to emerge under more authoritarian conditions' (p 232), an outcome, Arriola speculates, which might be explained by the perceived need on the part of the opposition to unite in the face of an authoritarian incumbent who will use fraud or other undemocratic means to stay in power. This points again to the need to separate electoral democracies and electoral authoritarian regimes in the analysis of opposition alliances.

If politicians 'have no means of enforcing any power-sharing promises' and if in 'the weakly institutionalised conditions in which politicians vie for office in democratizing countries, politicians cannot expect to rely on institutional mechanisms to enforce a pre-electoral agreement' (Arriola 2013, p 31), as happened, for example, in Kenya, this diagnosis seems to call for institutional reform along the lines proposed by Kadima (2006c), as we saw above. However, Arriola does not draw this conclusion and his only policy recommendation is not to overregulate campaign finance lest this scare away business from supporting the opposition.

Whereas Arriola (2013) seeks to explain the *occurrence* of opposition alliances in Africa, Resnick (2013) examines the *outcome* of opposition coalitions. She identifies two major challenges facing African opposition parties: incumbency advantage and a lack of distinct political programmes. Pre-electoral coalitions are seen as a way to overcome these obstacles. Resnick treats electoral coalitions as an independent variable. She does present data on the electoral system used for presidential and legislative elections, but this serves merely to note that 'opposition coalitions are formed across a range of electoral institutions' (p 743). The dependent variable is 'consolidation', defined in terms of turnover and party system institutionalisation.

Resnick (2013) looks exclusively at electoral democracies, identified with the help of Freedom House.<sup>9</sup> She argues that 'the challenges of defeating incumbents and articulating a distinct policy agenda are often impossible when elections are not free and fair and where opposition parties lack the freedom to campaign' (p 740), although this overstates the ability of authoritarian regimes to win elections (see the contributions to Lindberg 2009). Her conclusions are largely pessimistic, noting that 'opposition coalitions rarely have defeated incumbent parties in either presidential or parliamentary elections' and that volatility among members of opposition alliances has 'contributed from one-third to two-thirds of total electoral volatility' (Resnick 2013, p 751).

Both conclusions can be disputed. First, the disappointing success record of opposition alliances in Resnick's study, which stands in contrast to the figures presented by Arriola (2013), may be due to differences in the operationalisation of electoral coalitions. Resnick broadly defines (opposition) coalitions as the coming together under one banner of any two or more parties and also non-aggression pacts in which parties promise not to compete for the same legislative seats (Resnick 2013, p 736).<sup>10</sup> Thus, she registers the 'Grand Coalition' of three (very) minor parties around Edward Mahama in the Ghanaian presidential elections of 2004. Mahama received less than 2% of the vote and Resnick records this as an instance of an opposition coalition unable to defeat the incumbent. Arriola (2013), on the other hand, does not detect a coalition in 2004.<sup>11</sup> In the context of Ghana's two-party system, Arriola's coding rules seem more appropriate than Resnick's. Second, the opposition can only win power if it wins votes at the expense of the ruling party. Bogaards (2008) therefore calculates 'incumbent vote change' to distinguish between countries where the opposition is able to encroach upon the incumbents and those 'where volatility is largely caused by a game of changing chairs among opposition parties' (p 122).

Resnick's measure of 'opposition coalition volatility as share of total volatility' only captures that part of intra-opposition volatility that occurs among the members of the alliance she identifies. In other words, her measure is bound to understate the degree to which the opposition is preying on itself. Moreover, Resnick (2013) has very few observations, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions.<sup>12</sup> Finally, no systematic attempt is made to explain the variation on the dependent variables(s).

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<sup>9</sup> See: [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)

<sup>10</sup> On party nomination strategies in Africa, see Ishiyama (2009) and Stroh (2010).

<sup>11</sup> Arriola (2013, p 263) does code a coalition between the New Patriotic Party (NPP), one of the pillars of the current two-party system, and the People's Convention Party (PCP) in 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Bogaards (2008) examines electoral volatility over 78 elections in the 20 African countries that, by the time of writing, had enjoyed at least three consecutive multiparty elections.

## ELECTORAL ALLIANCES AROUND THE WORLD

As in the African literature, studies that examine electoral alliances globally can be distinguished by the role of electoral alliances as dependent (Wahman 2011; Gandhi & Reuter 2013) or independent (Wahman 2013) variable. As is the case with the African literature, worldwide analyses of pre-electoral coalitions are mostly concerned with *opposition* alliances and motivated by an interest in democratisation. In contrast with the African literature, though, cross-regional studies of electoral alliances give a more prominent role to regime type, also distinguishing between different types of electoral authoritarianism.

Wahman (2011) examines electoral coalitions in competitive authoritarian regimes for the period 1989-2004. To distinguish competitive from non-competitive – or what the American literature calls ‘hegemonic authoritarian’ regimes, Wahman (p 647) adopts the admittedly ‘arbitrary’ threshold of two-thirds of the seats in Parliament for the ruling party. When the largest opposition party is part of a pre-electoral alliance with the second and/or third opposition party, this is labelled a ‘coalition of contestation’. The standing of opposition parties is based on vote share in the ‘current election’ (p 655). When the second- and third-placed opposition parties form a coalition without the main opposition party, this is labelled a ‘marginal coalition’. As a consequence, while Arriola (2013) and Resnick (2013) register the ‘alliance’ that won Senegal’s 2000 presidential elections, Wahman codes Senegal as not having had a coalition that year.

Wahman (2011) finds that the more the government and the main opposition party differ on policies – as reported by their voters – the more likely there is to be an opposition electoral coalition, at least when all three main opposition parties are located on the same side (to the left or to the right) of the government. It should be noted though, that policy congruence is measured by comparing the ruling party and the main opposition party. In other words, this measure says very little about opposition coherence. Wahman also finds a statistically significant result for negative economic growth and liberalisation in the year leading up to the election, both contributing to the probability of the formation of an electoral coalition.

No information on parties’ policy positions is available for half of the cases in Wahman’s study. One suspects the percentage to be even larger for the African subset, rendering any conclusions about the importance of policy congruence for African coalition formation highly dubious. Kadima (2006c) noted that in his study ‘ideology has not been an essential factor in party coalition building or splitting in any of the five countries’. Although Wahman (2011, p 648) acknowledges that ethnic orientation might matter as much as policy positions, he does not incorporate this variable into the analysis because of a lack of data. In

the conclusion Wahman is sceptical about what he calls 'opportunistic coalitions' in 'non-ideological party systems' and doubts that these coalitions contribute to democratisation, even if they result in turnover (p 655). No separate analysis is available of the subset of African cases in Wahman's study, 26 elections of which featured a coalition.

Gandhi & Reuter (2013) cover much the same ground as Wahman (2011). Like him, they want to know which factors contribute to the formation of pre-electoral coalitions in non-democratic elections. Their dataset consists of 413 multiparty elections with 65 opposition coalitions for the period 1946-2006.<sup>13</sup> Most of these coalitions were formed in the past two decades as there is a clear trend over time (Gandhi & Reuter 2013, p 140).<sup>14</sup> Gandhi & Reuter (p 145) specify three reasons why the incentives for coordination in authoritarian multiparty contests should differ from those in democracies.

The first of these is the degree to which there is a level playing field. The government can resort to coercion or cooptation to prevent the opposition from uniting. The second reason is the degree to which actors are certain that the incumbent will cede power. Opposition parties face a dual uncertainty about the outcome of the elections and the reaction of the incumbent to losing. Opposition victory implies regime change, raising the stakes for all involved. The third reason is that mistrust among parties is a typical authoritarian legacy, as 'without a stable past of interaction and with uncertainty about who their bargaining partners might be in the future, parties may find it difficult to form meaningful reputations and future expectations that are conducive to coalition building' (p 146).

Gandhi & Reuter's empirical analysis distinguishes between two broad sets of independent variables: institutional incentives versus authoritarian factors. Both sets perform poorly in the statistical analysis, with very few variables reaching statistical significance. The number of elections in which the largest opposition party has competed has the strongest positive impact on the formation of an opposition coalition.<sup>15</sup> If a distinction is made between all opposition coalitions and those involving the largest opposition party one sees that the share of the seats of the ruling party has a negative impact on the first, but not on the second.

13 We are not told which countries were included or how authoritarian regimes were identified. In the tables the number of countries varies from a low of 54 to a high of 94. Included are all cases in which 'any significant opposition formed a pre-electoral coalition with another opposition party' (Gandhi & Reuter 2013, p 147), but no list of coalitions is presented. A coalition is considered significant when the members together held more than 5% of the seats in the previous Parliament and the ratio of the largest to the second-largest party in the coalition is less than 15.

14 The post-communist countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have the highest number of opposition coalitions (Gandhi & Reuter 2013, p 141).

15 Somewhat confusingly, this variable is labelled 'age of largest party', even though age and electoral experience can be two very different things, as is the case, for instance, with the African National Congress in South Africa.

This suggests an intimidation effect, to which the largest opposition party is immune.

Interestingly, Gandhi & Reuter (2013, pp 149-150) also look at regime coalitions and find that ethnic fractionalisation makes an electoral coalition around the ruling party more likely, whereas economic growth and the age of the ruling party make it less likely. Electoral authoritarian regimes vary greatly and the literature has attempted to capture these differences by distinguishing between competitive and hegemonic authoritarian regimes. Donno (2013, pp 710-711) shows that opposition coalitions only contribute to democratisation in competitive authoritarian regimes, not in hegemonic authoritarian regimes.

Finally, Wahman (2013) investigates not the causes but the consequences of electoral coalitions. He does so again focusing on elections in competitive authoritarian regimes, but with more countries – 86 instead of 55 – and over a longer period (1973-2004). The first finding is that ‘the predicted probability of an opposition victory is 29 per cent higher in elections where the opposition had formed a coalition’ (p 15). That is the good news. The bad news is that the formation of opposition coalitions as such does not result in what Wahman calls a ‘Democratic Electoral Outcome’, meaning a positive change on the combined Polity-Freedom House index. Only when the opposition coalition wins the elections is there a democratising effect and even this effect disappears when the Polity democracy index is used by itself.<sup>16</sup> In other words, what makes the difference for democratisation is not so much whether the opposition formed a pre-electoral coalition but whether it won the elections.

By implication, what we need to know is which factors contribute to the formation of opposition coalitions, under what conditions opposition coalitions contribute to opposition victories and then how opposition victories lead to further democratisation. Unfortunately, while this is the causal chain implicit in Wahman’s (2013) analysis, it is not directly tested.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Wahman is too pessimistic in his conclusions about the impact of opposition victory. While it is undoubtedly correct to warn that ‘alternation in power is not sufficient to transform a country into a democracy’ (p 23), his results do show that opposition victory is positively related to democratic progress. Secondly, looking at the situation one year after the elections hardly counts as an examination of the long-term impact of either opposition coalitions or opposition victory.

Wahman (2013) does not provide a separate analysis of the African cases:

<sup>16</sup> See: [www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html](http://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html).

<sup>17</sup> Wahman (2013, p 21) does have one table in which he tests a range of variables, but only one is statistically significant – negative economic growth in the year leading up to the election – as in Wahman (2011) – and the explained variance is extremely low, suggesting that with these variables (among others: electoral system, form of government, level of democracy, modernisation, aid and trade) we are unable to account for the formation of opposition coalitions.



29 countries with a total of 82 elections, of which 19 featured opposition coalitions. This could easily have been done by including a regional dummy variable and would have been justified by the fact that almost one-third of the elections under consideration took place in Africa. Another reason for a focus on Africa should have been that the article is framed as a test of Lindberg's (2006) theory of democratisation through elections, a theory originally developed to explain the African experience.<sup>18</sup>

### PARTY SYSTEMS AND ELECTORAL ALLIANCES

Wahman (2011, p 647) explicitly excludes 'strict two-party systems' from his analysis, arguing that 'they are not comparable to other instances of oppositional coalition formation'. In the online appendix to his article one can read that this coding rule resulted in the disqualification of three African cases: Comoros 1996, Ghana 2000 and Zimbabwe 2002. We saw above that Arriola (2013) and Resnick (2013) disagreed about the presence of a coalition in the Ghanaian presidential elections of 2004. Wahman presents a way out of this dilemma and points to a larger issue: the role of party systems in understanding alliance dynamics and patterns.

Golder's (2006a, 2006b) analysis, which forms the basis for much of the recent research on electoral alliances, likewise hints at the importance of the party system. It starts with the observation that 'pre-electoral coalitions arise from a bargaining process in which party leaders compare the expected utility from running independently to the expected utility from forming a coalition' (Golder 2006a, p 198). In her study of parliamentary democracies in the developed world Golder finds that the costs and benefits of forming a pre-electoral coalition are affected by the relative size of parties and the extent of polarisation. These are classic party-system properties that occupy a prominent place in Sartori's (1976) typology of party systems.

To indicate the promise of an analysis that examines more systematically the connection between opposition coalitions and party systems, Table 1 brings together party system data from Bogaards (2008) with information on opposition coalitions from Arriola (2013). Many countries are still missing at this point because they had not organised three consecutive parliamentary elections by 2008, the minimum duration to identify the emerging party system, or because the country is not covered by Arriola (2013).

To determine the type of party system Sartori's counting rules for 'relevant'

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18 For a critical re-examination of Lindberg's evidence, see Bogaards (2013, 2014).

parties are used (See Bogaards 2004, 2008).<sup>19</sup> Relevant are those parties with coalition or blackmail potential, that is, all parties with the potential either to form a coalition or to prevent a coalition from being formed (Sartori 1976, pp 122-123). In presidential systems those parties are relevant 'that make a difference in helping (or obstructing) the president's election, and that determine his having (or not having) a majority support in the legislative assemblies' (Sartori 1994, p 34).

Sartori's counting rules are grounded in a typology. In Africa's 'fluid' polities there are four types of multiparty system: dominant authoritarian, dominant, non-dominant and pulverised (Sartori 1976, p 260). The non-dominant-party system is described as a situation of 'relatively few parties that actually counterweight one another' (p 258) while a pulverised party system has so many relevant parties that the exact number no longer even matters to inter-party relations. A dominant-party system exists when one party wins an absolute majority in Parliament in at least three consecutive elections and captures the presidency. Of special interest is the dominant *authoritarian* party system, in which one-party dominance is maintained by non-democratic means. The authoritarian dominant party does not allow for competition on an equal basis. Dominant authoritarian parties are operationalised as dominant parties in authoritarian regimes. To distinguish democracies and non-democracies, Freedom House's designation of a 'free' country or 'electoral democracy' is used.<sup>20</sup>

There are 12 countries for which we have information on the type of party system (from Bogaards 2008) and the formation of opposition coalitions (from Arriola 2013). What do we see in Table 1? Opposition coalitions can be found in all types of party system: pulverised, non-dominant, dominant and dominant authoritarian. With only 12 cases it is impossible to say anything meaningful about frequencies other than that opposition coalitions are not unique to any type of party system and can be found in both democracies and non-democracies. This may seem a trivial finding until one realises that the quantitative literature on opposition coalitions has ignored the party system as a variable of interest. If a party system, following Sartori (1976, p 44, emphasis removed from original), is 'the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition', then surely the process of fission and fusion is an integral part of that and we need to study the interactions as they occur in the context of the party system as system.

19 For other recent overviews of party systems in Africa, see Lindberg (2007), Erdmann & Basedau (2008) and Fleischhacker (2010).

20 For more information on measures of democracy as applied to Africa, see Bogaards (2007a, 2007b).



**Table 1**  
**Opposition Coalitions and Party Systems in Africa**

Country	Election year (pres.)	Freedom House	Relevant parties (parl.)	Party system	Turn-over	Opposition coalition
Benin	1991	F	6+	pulver	yes	yes
	1996	F	6+	pulver	yes	yes
	2001	F	6+	pulver		
Botswana	1994	F	1	dom		
	1999	F	1	dom		
	2004	F	1	dom		
Burkina Faso	1991	PF	1	dom auth		
	1998	PF	1	dom auth		
	2005	PF	1	dom auth		
Ghana	1992	NF	1	dom auth		
	1996	El dem	1	dom		yes
	2000	F	2	non dom	yes	
Mauritania	1992	NF	1	dom auth		yes
	1997	NF	1	dom auth		
	2003	NF	1	dom auth		yes
Mauritius	1991	F	2 to 4	non dom		yes
	1995	F	2 to 4	non dom	yes	yes
	2000	F	2 to 4	non dom	yes	yes
Mozambique	1994	PF	1	dom		
	1999	El dem	1	dom		yes
	2004	El dem	1	dom		yes
Namibia	1994	F	1	dom		
	1999	F	1	dom		
	2004	F				
Senegal	1993	PF	1	dom auth		
	2000	F	1	non dom	yes	yes
South Africa	1994	Free	1	dom	yes	
	1999	Free	1	dom		
	2004	Free	1	dom		yes

Zambia	1991	F	1	dom	yes	yes
	1996	PF	1	dom auth		
	2001	PF	1	dom auth		
Zimbabwe	1990	PF	1	dom auth		yes
	1995	PF	1	dom auth		
	2000	PF	1	dom auth		

Sources: Bogaards 2008; Arriola (2013) on opposition coalition and turnover

Key: F – Free, PF – Partly free, NF – Not free, El dem – Electoral democracy, relevant number of parties in parliamentary elections closest in time to the presidential election.

It is my contention that the formation of opposition coalitions follows a different logic depending on the type of party system. Thus, in a pulverised party system like that in Benin, opposition coalitions are a must to win elections and one would expect all national elections to be contested by coalitions. Hence, in Benin, what needs explanation is not the opposition coalitions that formed for the presidential elections in 1991 and 1996 but their absence in 2001.

In a non-dominant-party system the relative size of the parties matters. In Ghana's two-party system coalitions play no role. In Mauritius only coalitions play a role. These conjectures enable precise predictions about the presence of coalitions in pulverised and non-dominant-party systems without having to resort to the independent variables highlighted in the recent quantitative literature on opposition coalitions.

In a dominant-party system elections are always a game of one versus all. Unless opposition parties have a reason to compete among each other they will focus all their attention on beating the incumbent. Thus, dominant-party systems provide a strong incentive for coalition formation. The question therefore is what prevents the opposition from doing so. One possibility is that, again, relative size matters and that the opposition is so weak that the best it can hope for is to win representation in Parliament. In other words, electoral competition is not about forming the government but about securing seats in a Parliament dominated anyway by the ruling party.<sup>21</sup>

Opposition coalitions, then, only form to secure parliamentary representation in the face of electoral obstacles, as with the electoral threshold in Mozambique (Kadima & Matsimbe 2006, pp 163-164). Thus, we have an account combining party system and electoral system.

21 In Kraetzschmar's (2011) typology of opposition cooperation, developed for the Middle East, these are called 'vote/seat winning alliances'.

In dominant authoritarian party systems we expect to find dynamics similar to those in dominant-party systems, albeit in an even more pronounced form. Following Van de Walle (2006) we would expect opposition parties in electoral autocracies to be even clearer about what they want: to replace the government or to secure a modicum of access to resources. We thus need more information about the type of electoral authoritarianism in which the opposition competes (see Bogaards 2014).

In competitive authoritarian regimes opposition parties might see a chance of winning and hence have an incentive to form a coalition. In hegemonic authoritarian regimes opposition parties might resign and simply go for access to the spoils, something better achieved on their own. Or, indeed, by aligning with the ruling party. Hence, to get a fuller picture of the processes of fission and fusion we also need to look at coalitions involving the ruling party and at party switching. Needless to say, at this stage these are still hypotheses in need of empirical corroboration.

## CONCLUSION

The emerging literature on electoral alliances of (opposition) parties in Africa and beyond, in democracies and non-democracies, has identified several variables that are conducive to opposition unity: ideological divergence between the opposition and government, economic decline and political liberalisation (Wahman 2011); the electoral experience of the largest opposition party, government harassment of the opposition, and the seat share of the ruling party (Gandhi & Reuter 2013) and financial liberalisation (Arriola 2013). Several studies reported insignificant results, perhaps an indication that this type of research is still in its infancy and that the search for the drivers of electoral coalitions and the factors that condition their impact continues. Unfortunately, differences in the definition and operationalisation of the concept of opposition coalition, differences in the scope of the theory and the corresponding set of cases (electoral democracies, electoral autocracies, a particular type of electoral autocracy, all regime types) and differences in periodisation hinder the accumulation of knowledge. Moreover, further research is necessary to determine whether factors highlighted in the African literature, such as ethnicity, are equally important elsewhere and whether results from the global literature, for example about the importance of party ideology, can be replicated in Africa.

One variable missing from the current quantitative literature is the party system itself. The party system is not merely the outcome of processes of splits and mergers but also, as a system, provides incentives for and against electoral alliances. The literature reviewed here agrees that these incentives further differ by

regime type. A focus on the party system would provide an integrated framework for the study of electoral coalitions, situating them in their respective type of party system.

The current quantitative literature, despite its democratisation bias, has remarkably little to say about ways in which opposition coalitions can be furthered and strengthened. This is an important omission in comparison to the qualitative study of Kadima (2006a), who advocates institutional measures. However, if the recent quantitative studies agree on one thing, it is that institutional factors, including the electoral system, cannot explain the formation of opposition coalitions.<sup>22</sup> How, then, can the democratic opposition in Africa be strengthened?<sup>23</sup>

In his comparative study of electoral systems and party systems in developed democracies, Lijphart (1994) explores ways in which electoral engineers can adjust the balance of power between a majority party and the opposition by introducing a majority ceiling and minority premium. In other words, no matter how many votes the leading party wins, it can never get more than, say, 55% of the seats in Parliament: a majority ceiling. On the other hand, the largest opposition party would, as a rule, get, for example, 35% of the seats: a minority premium.

Bogaards (2000, pp 177-184) discusses the potential of a majority ceiling and minority premium in African party politics. The aim is to limit the dominance of the ruling party and to strengthen the position in Parliament of the main opposition party. Such over-representation would turn the largest opposition party into a focal point for the opposition, increasing incentives for smaller opposition parties either to join or to form a rival alliance to secure the minority premium. In both cases, alliance formation would result, consolidating the opposition and increasing the chance of turnover and democratisation.

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22 The qualitative literature tells a very different story. See, eg, Kapa (2008) on electoral system reform and pre-election coalitions in Lesotho.

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# 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.

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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.

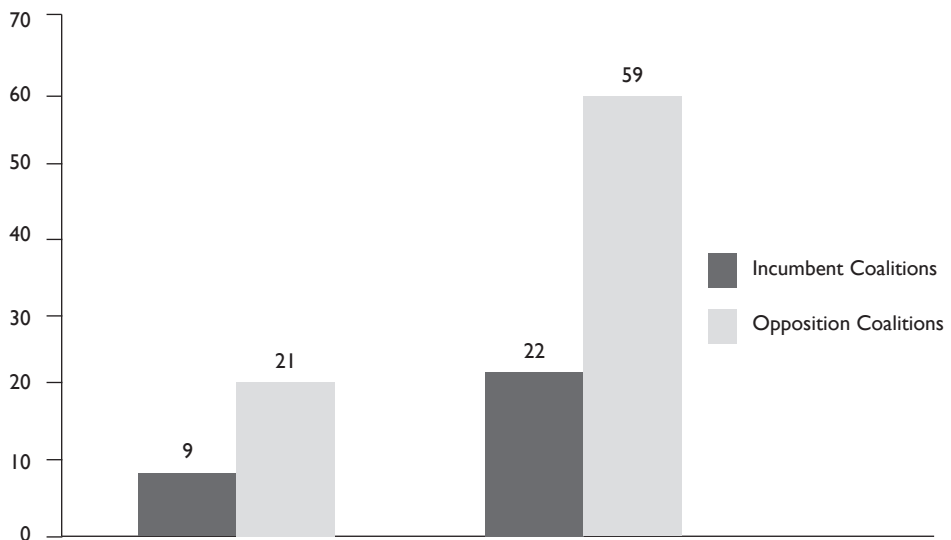
In order to examine patterns across the region with regard to coalition formation I aggregated data on pre-electoral coalitions formed in all African countries between 1990 and 2013. In doing so I focused specifically on executive elections because the motivations for joining a coalition for legislative 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.<sup>2</sup>

2 This data comes from the African Elections Database ([africanelections.tripod.com](http://africanelections.tripod.com)), Arriola (2013), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems Election Guide ([www.electionguide.org/](http://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.<sup>3</sup> In total, 111 pre-electoral coalitions for executive elections have been formed that lasted until the election day. Figure 1.<sup>4</sup> 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**



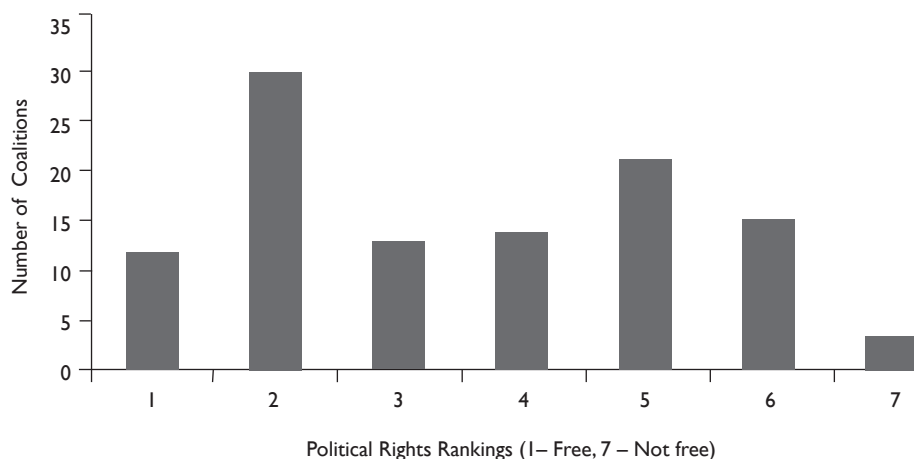
Source: Calculated by author using the sources detailed in footnote 2

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

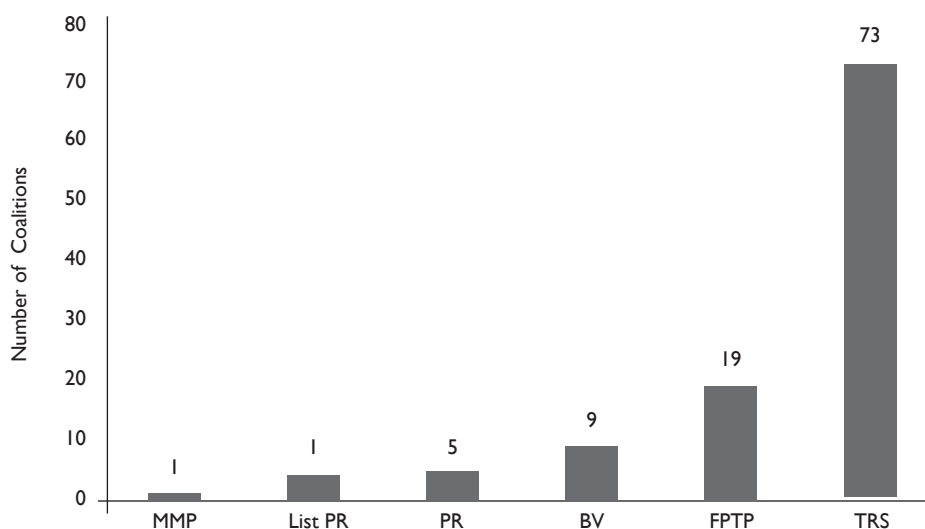
However, whether victory is realistic should plausibly be tied to the type of electoral rules governing the selection of an executive. According to Cox (1997), there are greater incentives for coalition formation in a plurality system than in a run-off system. Likewise, Kadima (2006) claims that first-past-the-post (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).<sup>5</sup>

As seen in Figure 3 coalitions are much more likely to occur in TRS.<sup>6</sup> 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
<b>Mauritius</b>	9	BV
<b>Ethiopia</b>	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
<b>South Africa</b>	4	List PR
Congo-Brazzaville	3	TRS
Mauritania	3	TRS
Mozambique	3	TRS
<b>Botswana</b>	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
<b>Lesotho</b>	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.

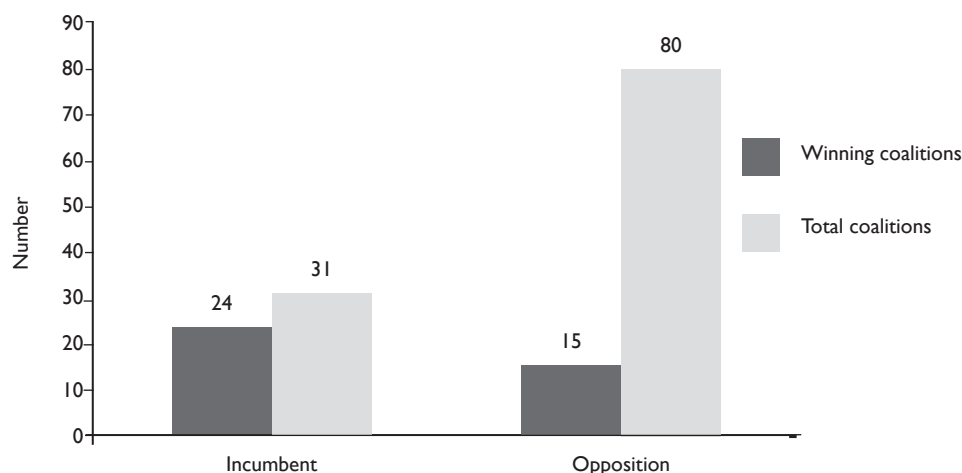
### *Consequences of pre-electoral coalitions*

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 reneging 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 Niasse, 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).<sup>7</sup> 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

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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

<b>Incumbent Coalition/Pact/Alliance</b>	<b>Country (Year)</b>
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)
<b>Opposition Coalition/Pact/Alliance</b>	<b>Country (Year)</b>
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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# CAUSES AND IMPACT OF PARTY ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS ON THE PARTY SYSTEM AND NATIONAL COHESION IN SOUTH AFRICA

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## ABSTRACT

*South Africa's first decade of democracy, 1994-2004, delivered a high volume of governing and opposition alliances and coalitions in South Africa. These alliances and coalitions catalysed the party system and facilitated the consolidation of ANC power. Simultaneously, alliances in this decade triggered the main opposition party, the DA, which continued to dominate opposition politics numerically through Election 2014. The second decade of democracy, 2004-2014, was characterised by continued ANC dominance, yet, instead of the ANC unremittingly usurping parties, it became subject to splits. Some of the split-offs emerged to become opposition parties. Others fused into alliances with either the ANC or existing opposition parties. This article takes stock of the development during these two decades and looks ahead to budding new alliances that may thrive in conditions of lessened ANC dominance.*

## INTRODUCTION AND EMERGING THEORY ON THE CASE OF SOUTH AFRICA

The African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa continues to head an established dominant-party system in a parliamentary system where Parliament is characteristically weak. Parliament is subjugated to the executive, which, in turn, is fused with and subject to the executive of the party-movement. In many respects the South African system resembles a presidential system, one in which the opposition political parties struggle continuously to assert themselves in the context of an ANC that operates in a gradually decaying yet still close-to-hegemonic system.

The ANC's continuous strength in the electoral stakes is at least partly explained by its simultaneous operation as a political party and a movement (Booyesen 2011). Both organisationally and ideologically the ANC projects itself as an ongoing 'revolutionary' movement, which operates in Parliament but thrives on its direct relationship with the people of South Africa (see Booyesen 2011, chapters 1 and 4). This dominant narrative, however, is not sheltered from ongoing modest and persistent changes in electoral sentiment and the strategies of political elites. The knowledge of such change encourages political parties, along with some civil society organisations aspiring to affect politics, to champion issues and possibly align with opposition parties with a view to fostering new electoral alliances.

This analysis of inter-party alliances and coalitions, as they organise at the time of elections and with an eye on the next round of elections, thus tells a story of piecemeal and gradually emerging change in party politics in South Africa.

In the main, and in line with Kadima's (2006) conceptualisations, the term 'alliance' in this article is understood as the coming together of at least two political parties prior to an election in order to maximise their votes. Hence it refers to pre-election alliances or electoral pacts. 'Coalition' refers to the association of at least two political parties, working together in Parliament and/or government on the basis of election outcomes. In this context, this term is understood to be a 'post-election coalition'. In addition, and given the continuous stream of inter-party activities in party politics and government to affect further ANC consolidation of power or generate opposition momentum, the article also notes the range of between-election and government-based forms of party cooperation which help prepare for future electoral alliances and possible post-election coalitions.

Given the ANC's large majority and the operation of the electoral system of proportional representation (PR), opposition political parties have generally been relatively disinclined to form coalitions. In conditions of incumbent dominance, combined with the PR system, post-electoral alliances between opposition parties do not leverage changes in who governs. In contrast, and at municipal level, where balances of power are often close (and where there is a 50-50 mix of PR and first-past-the-post – FPTP – electoral systems) alliance and coalition formation is more frequent (see Booyesen 2012). Such alliances mostly prevail in local municipalities with small numbers of councillors. At the time of Election 2014, when opposition parties in Gauteng province had hoped to push the ANC below the 50% mark, there was a sudden flurry of coalition talk.

Essential to an understanding of alliances and coalitions in South African politics is the phenomenon that the ANC itself operates in an alliance – the 'Tripartite' Alliance with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) (there is also a minor civil society

fourth member, the South African National Civic Organisation). The alliance is designed and used to help the ANC retain its hold on state power at election time.

Many of the important political and policy debates that would otherwise have informed election campaigns and opposition politics (Booyesen 2010) have been conducted in the alliance.<sup>1</sup> It helps the ANC that many of the conflicts are not driven into the domain of inter-party and electoral contests. The strength of this alliance, however, has fluctuated. By 2014 there were signs of decay. Intra-alliance political debate had become more controlled and conformity and loyalty to the dominant ANC faction were often afforded higher value than cutting-edge debate. There were attempts by the ANC to contain a Cosatu split, which would inevitably also have an impact on the future of the ANC's electoral dominance.<sup>2</sup> The SACP was well merged into the ANC and believed that it set the tone for much of the government's action.

As Kadima (2006, p 22) observes, largely with regard to the country's first decade of democracy, there has been a high volume of governing and opposition alliances and coalitions in South Africa, despite the fact that the ANC had established this dominant presence nationally and in most provinces. The current analysis argues that in the second decade of democracy and in conditions of continuous ANC dominance there has been a decline in alliances of major political significance in comparison with the first decade.

These initiatives appear to have positioned South Africa as an emerging two-party, within a one-party dominant system. The Democratic Alliance (DA) grew consistently in the three elections from 2004 to 2014, albeit with 2014 support remaining at the level of its 2011 local election result. It was also mainly the DA that continuously strategised to draw minor opposition parties into its camp and build this hitherto modest second leg of the two-party system. However, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) – split-off from the ANC and 2014's main new entrant into electoral politics – posed a potential challenge to such a two-party configuration. The EFF was positioning itself as the centre of a budding left-opposition to the ANC, which could rise to displace the ANC (EFF 2014).

In the interim, alliance formation activities centred on small opposition

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1 The main fora are occasional intra-alliance summit meetings and ANC structures and meetings in which Cosatu and the SACP are represented directly in terms of delegate status, or indirectly courtesy of dual or triple cross-cutting memberships among the three main alliance formations. These meetings include the five-yearly national ANC policy and elective conferences, the ANC's mid-term national general council (NGC) meetings, and the quarterly meetings of the ANC's national executive committee (NEC) and more regular meetings of its national working committee (NWC).

2 At the time of writing the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) was threatening to split from Cosatu. ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe warned that the price of driving out Numsa and the suspended Cosatu general secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, would be a toll that might not be worth paying (Munusamy 2013). ANC interventions on the eve of Election 2014 subdued Numsa's anti-ANC campaigning.

initiatives, often with the DA as the focal point. The 2013 emergence of Agang SA, for example, followed the DA's failure to pull off a joint initiative with Agang's founder (see Joubert 2013). A 2014 DA-Agang SA alliance attempt followed and floundered. Agang SA barely made it into Parliament.

It thus appears that, as this contested evolution towards a two-party system – although on a jagged, piecemeal curve – took place, alliance formation on the grander scale of the first decade eased. The ANC remained dominant (on a reduced scale), the DA grew consistently (albeit with uncertainty as to whether it would, in due course, effectively breach the racial ceiling)<sup>3</sup> and the EFF pursued a left-opposition alliance. There was a sense of stabilisation (see Sitter 2002) in that the ANC remained dominant amid opposition party initiatives that built up and floundered again, at least up to 2014.

The first decade of democracy and its impactful alliances are illuminated in the context of floor crossing, which catalysed the development of South Africa's party system (Booyesen 2006). The floor-crossing era prevailed roughly from 2003 to 2007, with much tapering off from 2005 onwards. It was only in 2009 that South Africa's president finally signed legislation to outlaw the phenomenon (see Booyesen 2011, chapter 7).

**Table 1**  
**Typology of party alliances and coalitions in South Africa**

Type of formation	Objective or effect	Illustrations
<b>ALLIANCES</b> and cooperative formations that may lead to formal pre-electoral alliances		
Formal inter-party alliances – with electoral participation and potential representation in Parliament	Consolidate power, rescue dying parties, consolidate cultural identities	ANC and NNP into ANC NNP and DP into DA DA and ID into DA
Sub-party alliances – channelling participation and representation through the mother party	Historical alliances, channel contestation away from electoral arena, take major issues out of party contests	ANC's Tripartite Alliance, 'governing' alliance, with SACP and Cosatu, SACP formally in government, but over time subsumed into ANC processes

3 The DA in Election 2014 continued to capture some black-African support, yet research showed that it was still not accepted as a non-racial party that citizens trusted to act in the interest of the bulk of black-African South Africans (see Booyesen 2013b; 2014a).

Occasional inter-party cooperation – on issues and campaigns	Restrain governing party, withhold strategic majorities through cooperation agreements	DA, Cope and UDM Collective for Democracy EFF, Sopa and BCP
<b>COALITIONS</b> Inclusive of co-option to help sustain ANC power in government, or gradually help forge mergers		
Governing coalitions – multiparty	Provincial and local government level, in absence of outright majorities	ANC, NP and IFP in GNU 1994 ANC and NNP in Western Cape ANC and IFP in KwaZulu-Natal Range of municipalities with diverse actors, eg, ANC and NFP
Sub-party coalitions	Generate hegemony, focus power	ANC's Tripartite Alliance through ANC and SACP (Cosatu members at first did not take up formal positions in government)
De facto minority party into government	Co-option into government and minor engagement of individuals in government, legitimating ANC and moderating oppositional impacts	Mosibudi Mangena (Azapo) as Cabinet member Mangosuthu Buthelezi (IFP as Deputy President) Pieter Mulder (FF+) as Deputy Minister Gavin Woods (IFP) as Scopa chairperson Themba Godi (APC) as Scopa chairperson

Source: Author's conceptualisation and classification.

Abbreviations: NNP – New National Party, DP – Democratic Party, EFF – Economic Freedom Fighters, ID – Independent Democrats, Cope – Congress of the People, UDM – United Democratic Movement, Sopa – Socialist Party of Azania, BCP – Black Consciousness Party, NP – National Party, IFP – Inkatha Freedom Party, GNU – Government of National Unity, NFP – National Freedom Party, Azapo – Azanian People's Organisation, FF+ – Freedom Front Plus, APC – African Peoples Convention, Scopa – Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Beyond the actions of the main parties small and micro-parties often generously embrace multipartyism and revel in minor achievements (Booyesen 2011, chapter 6) such as surviving by gaining a minimal number of seats in Parliament or the provincial legislatures. They often celebrate the mere fact that they emerge from national elections with 0.25% of the vote, thereby being guaranteed one parliamentary representative. The South African closed list PR electoral system does not have thresholds beyond the requirement to win the necessary quota of



votes to qualify for at least one representative. Several parties on both the left and the right of the political spectrum which have failed to grow electorally have turned to alliance formation. The survivalist initiatives between the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo) and the Socialist Party of Azania (Sopa), on the left, and the Freedom Front (FF), Conservative Party (CP) and Afrikaner Unity Movement (AUM) on the right to form the FF Plus illustrate the point.

The modest convergence of other minor opposition parties around the DA took place as the ANC continued on its track of shedding support through the national and provincial elections of May 2014. The three-year-long battle of the ANC mother body against its youth leader, Julius Malema, and the 2013 establishment of the EFF, illustrated the trend to date of the DA gradually accumulating support amid multiple efforts to get challenges to the DA going. Previous ANC support losses through split-offs happened through the United Democratic Movement (UDM), which emerged from the initial National Consultative Forum of 1997/8), and the Congress of the People (Cope, in 2008/09).

The ANC's shedding trend did not constitute a rapid decline, although its serial four percentage point losses from Elections 2004 to 2009, to 2014 were substantial. The ANC compensated for losses through, for example, the return of some Cope supporters and its encroachment on the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) base in KwaZulu-Natal, at least until the 2011 local elections (Booyesen 2011) when the split-off from the IFP, the National Freedom Party (NFP) usurped support that had become available to the ANC. ANC growth in KwaZulu-Natal continued in 2014, albeit at a moderated pace.

The DA's emergence as the main opposition party was modestly aided by an alliance with the Independent Democrats, a split-off from the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) with a 'coloured' cultural bias. In 2004 the ID had been regarded as the electoral *wunderkind*, but its support had declined and the alliance saved it from electoral humiliation and facilitated DA power in the Western Cape and the Cape Town municipality. The IFP never again won the 10% of national electoral support it had received in 1994, leaving the DP-DA to become the preeminent national opposition party.

Hence, although party political alliances in South Africa beyond the 1994 unity government (dominated by the ANC) have not dramatically redirected politics, alliance formation, usurpation of minor parties by bigger ones and cooperation between parties are regular features of party politics of the second decade of democracy. Table 1 illustrates the configurations of alliances and coalitions that continuously contest the balance of power between the parties.

The wide reach of such alliances and coalitions also emerges from the fact that of the 19 parties that have won a seat or seats in South Africa's four national elections from 1994 to 2014 (see Table 2) only four – all minor in terms of electoral

support – were not involved in some form of alliance or coalition at national or provincial level. These were the PAC, a former liberation movement, which failed to make a successful transition to multiparty democracy and suffered splits, rather than growth, with minor alliance actions at municipal level; the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), a national but minimally represented party); the United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP), a party in the North West province that lived on minimally beyond its Boputhatswana Bantustan origins, and the African Independent Congress (AIC), a cross-provincial-border ‘protest party’ in the Eastern Cape. By late 2013 the UCDP was one of the parties involved in a pre-election alliance, the Collective for Democracy, to try to ‘stop the ANC from winning a two-thirds majority’ in 2014 (see Seale 2013). The UCDP failed to win representation in Election 2014. All the rest of the parties have been involved in alliance-coalition arrangements either with fellow opposition parties or with the governing party.

## REVIEW OF PARTY ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

This section takes stock of the series of alliances and sprinkling of coalitions that evolved in party politics in South Africa from 1994 until the present (see Table 1). In order to capture the range of activities that characterise party political movement the analysis extends beyond the immediate pre- and post-election periods to include relevant alliance events in the periods between elections. The trends are thematically interpreted in the two subsequent sections, dealing with the analysis of the causes and consequences of the alliances and coalitions. Pivotal political events drove party political dynamics and often triggered party political developments, interpreted as secondary events and developments. The primary political events occurred in the main in the first decade of democratic South Africa.

The main events were, firstly, the unbanning of various political parties and organisations in February 1990, among them the ANC, SACP, PAC and Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). This helped to set the ball rolling for the constitutional negotiations of 1991-93 and the first democratic election, in April 1994. The PR electoral system helped confirm the ANC as the dominant party in Parliament, a dominance that peaked in 2004.

A grand alliance of formerly hostile party political and liberation movement forces rang in the new South Africa in 1993-94. The interim Constitution of 1993 provided for this Government of National Unity (GNU), consisting of the ANC, the National Party (NP) and the IFP. The alliance component of the foundational grand coalition was omitted from the final Constitution of 1996.

The GNU alliance faded with the assimilation of the NP /NNP into the ANC and the decline of the IFP into one of many small opposition parties. Whereas the

1996 Constitution did not repeat the inclusive government provisions, there were goodwill-based possibilities for their continuation (see Table 1), albeit strictly on the ANC's terms. Meanwhile the NP and its followers became restless, resenting their secondary position in government in relation to the ANC. Torn between its roles of junior government partner and opposition party, the NP started self-imploding, a process driven by internal leadership contests and differences over strategic positioning. The NP withdrew from the GNU and tried to reinvent itself as the New National Party (NNP) but this did not halt its decline (see Schulz-Herzenberg 2005). During the ensuing leadership battles the transition leader and one of the two GNU deputy presidents, FW de Klerk, left politics.

**Table 2**  
**The history of party political performance in South Africa**  
**Results for all parties that gained representation in elections from 1994-2014**

	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014
<b>Party</b>	In each of the five columns: Vote percentage (%) / No. of seats / No. of votes				
<b>ANC</b>	62.65 252 12 237 655	66.35 266 10 601 330	69.69 279 10 880 915	65.90 264 11 650 648	65.12 249 11 436 921
<b>DP / DA</b>	1.73 7 338 426	9.56 38 1 527 337	12.37 50 1 931 201	16.66 67 2 945 829	22.23 89 4 091 584
<b>EFF</b>	–	–	–	–	6.35 25 1 169 259
<b>COPE</b>	–	–	–	7.42 30 1 311 027	0.67 3 441 854
<b>IFP</b>	10.54 43 2 058 294	8.58 34 1 371 477	6.97 28 1 088 664	4.55 18 804 260	2.40 10 441 854
<b>ID</b>	–	–	1.73 7 269 765	0.92 4 162 915	–
<b>UDM</b>	–	3.42 14 546 790	2.28 9 355 717	0.85 4 149 680	1 4 184 636
<b>FF / FF+</b>	2.17 9 424 555	0.80 3 127 217	0.89 4 139 465	0.84 4 146 796	0.9 3 104 039
<b>ACDP</b>	0.45 2 88 104	1.43 6 228 975	1.60 7 250 272	0.81 3 142 658	0.57 3 104 039

	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014
<b>UCDP</b>	–	0.785 3 125 280	0.75 3 117 792	0.37 2 66 086	0.12 0 21 744
<b>PAC</b>	1.25 5 243 478	0.71 3 / 113 125	0.73 / 3 / 113 512	0.27 / 1 / 48 530	0.21 / 1 / 37 784
<b>MF</b>	0.07 0 13 433	0.30 1 48 277	0.35 2 55 267	0.25 1 43 474	0.12 0 22 689
<b>Azapo</b>	–	0.17 1 27 257	0.25 1 39 116	0.22 1 38 245	0.11 0 20 421
<b>APC</b>	–	–	–	0.20 1 35 867	0.17 1 30 676
<b>NP / NNP</b>	20.39 82 3 983 690	6.87 28 1 098 215	1.65 7 257 824	–	–
<b>FA</b>	–	0.54 2 86 704	–	–	–
<b>AUM</b>	–	0.29 1 46 292	–	–	–
<b>AIC</b>	–	–	–	–	0.53 3 97 642
<b>Agang SA</b>	–	–	–	–	0.28 2 52 350
<b>TOTAL valid votes</b>	100 400  19 533 498	100 400  15 977 142	100 400  15 612 671	100 400  17 680 729	100 400  18 402 497

Source: Compiled by author, based on IEC data of 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014

Abbreviations: ANC – African National Congress; DP/DA – Democratic Party/Alliance; EFF – Economic Freedom Fighters; Cope – Congress of the People; IFP – Inkatha Freedom Party; ID – Independent Democrats; UDM – United Democratic Movement; FF/FF+ – Freedom Front/Plus; ACDP – African Christian Democratic Party; UCDP – United Christian Democratic Party; PAC – Pan Africanist Congress; MF – Minority Front; Azapo – Azanian People's Organisation; APC – African People's Convention; N/NP – New/National Party; FA – Federal Alliance; AUM – Afrikaner Unity Movement; AIC – African Independent Congress

The dissolution of the NP/NNP commenced with some leaders, such as constitutional negotiator Roelf Meyer, splitting to join forces in an alliance with General Bantu Holomisa, a former Bantustan leader who had been expelled by the ANC. The IFP remained in the GNU until 2004, with its leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, remaining a deputy president of South Africa until 1999, when then President Thabo Mbeki appointed the ANC's Jacob Zuma to this post.

Until 2004 the ANC's rise was aided by its alliance with the NNP. This alliance did not bring in large numbers (most NNP supporters had already migrated to the DA), but there was great symbolic significance in the ANC's usurpation of its former nemesis. The results of the first five national elections show a gradual decline in the ANC's dominance from the high of its 69.69% of the national vote in 2004. In 2009 the ANC fell back to just under the two-thirds majority mark (Table 2, to 66%) and in 2014 nationally it slipped to 62%. There was thus increasing, although continuously limited space, for opposition party initiatives.

Inter-opposition party alliances in democratic South Africa vary in scope and vacillate in endurance. Most of these alliances form among minor parties but even at this level the alliances are often asymmetrical. Because joint opposition party action offers no singular benefits unless the alliance constitutes a legislative majority, the smaller parties have tended to opt for loose cooperative agreements that bring functional cooperation rather than formalised mergers. In cases where the cooperative partners are more equal, intractable negotiations often result. The relationship between Azapo and Sopa is a case in point – they split in the 1990s and by 2013 they were hoping for and then failed to achieve a merger again (see Mabasa 2013; Ndaba, 2013).

Floor crossing was introduced into the parliamentary system in 2003, largely with a view to unblocking stalemates in the evolution of the party system. It started playing a role when cracks appeared in the NP. The NNP in 2000 aligned with the then Democratic Party (DP) and the small Federal Alliance (FA) to form the DA, which governed the Western Cape for a short period. It was an unhappy union and, seeing an opportunity to split the unstable new DA, the ANC aligned with segments of the NNP to oust the DA from power in the Western Cape. The ANC-NNP coalition governed briefly until the 2004 election, when the DA won the majority, bolstered by the bulk of former supporters of the dying NNP. Floor crossing played a substantial role in party political realignment, but was terminated in 2009 (see above).

These first-decade alliances helped shape the evolving party system in South Africa. Further and relatively modest events with a political impact emerged in the form of splits from the bigger parties. The new and small parties – the UDM of 1999, the ID of 2004 and Cope of 2009 – hardly ever sustained their initial and one-election fervour.

**Table 3**  
**Range of alliance and coalition activities of parties with parliamentary representation**

Party*	Date / period	Nature of agreement
<b>ANC</b>	1994	Dominant party coalition government with NP and IFP
	2001	Collaborative agreement and phased coalition with NNP; parties become merged
	2001 / 2	Cooperative arrangement with the NNP, specifically in the Western Cape province
	1994-2009	Coalition government with the IFP in KwaZulu-Natal (mostly under IFP majority, although shrinking) lets the ANC to hold executive positions in the IFP-led provincial government, and from 2004-09 in situation of ANC majority; MF also enters the relationship
	2011	ANC and NFP form coalition governments in several KwaZulu-Natal hung municipalities
<b>DP / DA</b>	2000	DP merges with the NNP to constitute coalition style majority provincial government
	2003-2004	Coalition for Change with the IFP
	2011	DA in phased coalition, growing cooperation with ID, moving towards unity
	2014	DA in failed coalition-merger initiative with Agang SA
<b>EFF</b>	2014	Includes representatives of the BCP and Sopa in its candidate list, cooperates with Azapo and the PAC, holds out prospects for future cooperation with trade union Numsa's (envisaged) United Front
<b>COPE</b>	2009 onward	Informal cooperation with DA, UDM; ineffectual due to Cope factional wars and implosion in Election 2014 (its members largely migrated back to the ANC and DA)
<b>IFP</b>	1994	Minority party in coalition style GNU with the ANC and NP
	1994-1999	Coalition style cooperation through filling one of two deputy presidencies of South Africa
	1994-2004	Coalition government with the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal (under IFP majority)
	2003-2004	Coalition for Change with the DA
	2004-2009	Coalition government with the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal (under ANC majority)

<b>ID</b>	2011	Floor-crossing party of 2003 starts cooperation with DA, enters into phased merger, does not contest the 2014 election
<b>UDM</b>	1999	Original formation platform an alliance with mini-NNP breakaway group under Roelf Meyer
	2009 on	Informal cooperation agreement with several opposition parties
<b>FF / FF+</b>	2003	Coalition-merger with the Conservative Party (CP, which never gained parliamentary seats), the Afrikaner Unity Movement and later also the Federal Alliance
	2009 onward	Coalition style cooperation with ANC government in deputy-ministerial executive position
<b>ACDP</b>	1994-2014	No alliance and coalition activities on record
<b>UCDP</b>	1994-2014	No alliance and coalition activities on record
<b>PAC</b>	1994-2014	No formal alliance and coalition activities on record, although considered cooperating with the EFF in 2014
<b>MF</b>	1999-2004	Coalition-style offer of its one parliamentary seat to push the ANC into a two-thirds majority; MF also joins the ANC's 2004 coalition with the IFP
<b>Azapo</b>	2013-14 (and earlier)	Efforts to form an alliance, perhaps merge, with split-off Socialist Party of Azania (Sopa), informal cooperation with the EFF
<b>APC</b>	2008-2014	Split off the PAC in 2007, coalition style cooperation with the ANC, in occupying chairpersonship of the parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Scopa)
<b>NP / NNP</b>	1994	Minority party in coalition style GNU with the ANC and IFP
	1994-1996	Coalition style cooperation through occupation of deputy presidency of South Africa
	2000	NNP merges with DP as DA to constitute coalition style majority provincial government in the Western Cape
	2001-2004	Various coalitions with ANC, resulting in being subsumed into the ANC
<b>FA</b>	2000	Merges into the DA, along with the DP and NNP
<b>AUM</b>	2003	Merger with FF and CP to form the FF+
<b>AIC</b>	2006-14	No alliance and coalition activities on record

\*Parties are listed in the order in which they appear in Table 2.

Source: Author's monitoring of events and interpretation in the current framework



The Economic Freedom Fighters faces the challenge to prove staying power beyond its 2014 election support – 6% nationally and the strongest opposition party in two of the nine provinces.

In the 1999-2014 period it was mainly the ID and Cope, along with the batch of minor floor-crossing parties, which fed into party alliances (inclusive of minor splitting and realignment processes). Most of the alliances aimed at constituting an effective opposition, chipping away at the ANC's continuous majorities. The issues they battled with ranged from the question of participation in the parliamentary system to ideological purity and racial consciousness.

**Table 4**  
**Historical trajectory of party alliances and coalitions, counter-posed with party splits and split-offs**

Date	Parties	Subsequent political formation	Generic reason	Durability
1994	ANC, NP and IFP	Coalition government with dominant ANC in command	Preceding conflict and constitutional settlement	Two years and then gradually faded out; NP exits; no attempts at own transformation; largely accepted as sunset measure
1997	UDM splits off ANC; faction of the NNP splits off NNP			
1997/8	ANC and NNP splits commence cooperation towards new party	Two platforms merge – the National Consultative Forum (Holomisa side), and the New Movement Process (Meyer side)	New integrated non-racial identity	UDM takes on a more Eastern Cape, Africanist identity; its white component moves into ANC
2000	DP, NNP and FA	Party merger and provincial government	Imagined convergence of ideology and power	Brief (before ANC stepped in), until October 2001
2000	ANC and NNP	Provincial government and phased incorporation of NNP	NNP negotiating dignifies party death	Until the following election, 2004
2003	ID splits off PAC			

2003	Freedom Front, Conservative Party, AUM	New Party: Freedom Front +	Convergence of identity and ideology	Ongoing by 2014, grows fractionally in Election 2014
2008	Cope splits off the ANC			
2009	DA, UDM and Cope	Post-election loose cooperation	Share some resources, campaigns	Very low key, ephemeral cooperative arrangement that faded
2009/10	DA and ID	Phased integration into DA	Convergence, ID decline, ID voters migrate to DA	Consolidated by 2013
2011	Multiple loose alliances via local elections	Local level is not covered in the current analysis, but a wide range of largely opportunistic alliances to gain municipal power take hold (see Booysen 2011).		
2012	DA and pre-Agang SA (aborted)	Did not succeed	Build effective opposition	Relationship increasingly acrimonious, Agang SA gets two National Assembly seats in Election 2014
2013	Sopa and Azapo	Attempted merger process ongoing	Former unity restored	Azapo participates in Election 2014, but fails to win seats; Sopa cooperates with EFF in 2014 candidate lists
2013	EFF 'splits' off the ANC			
2014	Cope	Migration of supporters back to DA and ANC	Voters note the faction-induced dissolution	-
	UDM and Cope's Shilowa faction	Absorbed into UDM	Convenience, lifeline to Shilowa	Inconsequential
	Cope, IFP, FF+, ACDP, UCDP	Collective for Democracy	Minimal, mostly declining micro-parties	Nominal rather than effectual formation
	EFF, Sopa, BCP, envisaged United Front	EFF with Sopa, BCP (same list) also cooperating with PAC, Azapo	To constitute a new left opposition formation with a view to taking over power from ANC	EFF and associate parties cooperate, potentially linking to Numsa's United Front, talks with WASP, Numsa praises EFF election result

Source: Author's monitoring and interpretation of events

## CAUSES AND MOTIVATING FACTORS IN INITIATING AND MAINTAINING ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS

South Africa's 'political environment has seen racially and ethnically configured coalitions, ideologically matched or disconnected coalitions, as well as politically opportunistic ones', observes Kadima (2006, p 16). He further explores these contentions about the causes of alliances and coalitions and finds them well sustained. The analysis notes the centrality of gains in or consolidation of political power as a driving force.

In the context of many party political efforts to surmount ethno-racial divisions in South African party politics, and much of the real politik operating in a virtually uncontested (except in revolutionary pretence) ideological terrain, politics often revolves around the ruling party defending the political ground occupied by the previous liberation movement ... and opposition parties set on gnawing into exactly that base. Ideology and identity factors are well used, but are permeable.

The great opposition and alliance battles of South Africa's democratic era, on the national level, have primarily been the attempts of opposition parties to survive and find traction amongst the voters. In the ranks of the micro-opposition parties (those with 2% or less of national support) many of the coalitions and mergers have equated with party political survival politics (see above), and were only secondarily about building some form of power to challenge the ANC. Some of these struggles play themselves out in provincial politics, in particular in the provinces of the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

The Western Cape, with its politically marginal character – political control is not cast in stone in the period of analysis, although the DA has been gaining support – was also one of the main sites for alliance formation, and sheds light on the typical causes of alliances in South African politics. One of the significant post-1994 party alliances, between the ANC and the NNP, was triggered by the ANC's desire also to control this minority-character province. It briefly succeeded in doing this, but voter dynamics returned the province to the then opposition. With substantial inter-provincial migration from the Eastern Cape to the Western Cape provincial voter dynamics assure that the questions about continued DA dominance persist. In Gauteng, the ANC majority was set to decline and on the eve of Election 2014 opposition parties briefly contemplated a provincial alliance. The ANC squeezed in on 54% of the Gauteng vote, obviating possible attempts by ideologically opposing parties such as the DA and EFF to forge some form of alliance.

Beyond these forms of power-mongering as a driving force, the rest of the section explores the role of regime type, leaders simply following migrating

supporters, electoral system, legislative frameworks, social cleavage, and ideology and policy as causes of South Africa's host of alliances and coalitions.

### *Impact of the type of political regime*

The type of political regime has been a major factor affecting the formation, or not, of party alliances and coalitions in South Africa's first two decades of democracy. Much of the preceding analysis confirms this point. The ANC, despite notable declines in its support, remains the dominant party (Booyesen 2013a; 2014b). This limits the opposition party initiatives to form alliances and coalitions; no amount of manoeuvring will leverage them into majority alliances, except if it is projected as part of a longer-term strategic alliance construction. The DA, for example, since at least its increase in support in 2004 (see Table 2) and certainly since the confirmations of growth in the 2009 and 2014 national and provincial elections, has been positioning itself as *the* party that will be the vehicle for future electoral challenges to the ANC (see Jolobe 2012).

The fact that South Africa operates a parliamentary political system (see Kadima 2006) in which the dominant party is subject to the extra-parliamentary arms of the ANC contributes to the relatively ineffectual nature of opposition party operations in the National Assembly. The parliamentary ANC is subjugated to both the ANC's executive and policy-making processes and to a second level of political organisation and popular mobilisation where the ANC operates in parallel to the world of party and electoral politics (Booyesen 2011, chapter 3).

The ANC in the South African Parliament operates under the strict guidance of the parliamentary caucus and ANC parliamentary counsellors, all directly controlled by the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC) and the ANC's top six officials. Hence, the ANC in Parliament takes its political instructions and policy directives from the party principals. As is typical of PR electoral systems, their line of accountability is also into the party structures. Whereas this situation is not uncommon, the ANC under President Jacob Zuma (and to some extent before that) has taken full control of the operations of its employees in legislative institutions.

Hence the parliamentary system is weak and, in effect, shows many of the characteristics of a presidential system, a system that dilutes the effectiveness of Parliament and of provincial representative structures. It also means that opposition party feats in the representative institutions are less notable and unfold in the context of a majority party that uses ongoing legitimacy with the people to circumvent Parliament as the predominant point of connection between party and people. Major opposition party initiatives to engage in supposedly meaningful parliamentary debates frequently amount to toy-telephone conversations.

There is also the perennial debate about a grand coalition of left forces in South African politics to emerge and rise to formal party status. For this to happen, the ANC would need to split or rapidly decline. Cosatu (or segments of Cosatu) is the most likely source of key drivers of such a process. The SACP has become a tame subsidiary of the ANC and Cosatu, circa 2013-14, was in turmoil, debating whether it was to be confirmed as less challenging on issues of ANC policy and governance. Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, previously a leading light of Cosatu dissent, was suspended due to a workplace sexual misdemeanour. He was reinstated prior to Election 2014 courtesy of an ANC intervention to minimise Cosatu campaigning against it. For the time being, the ANC thus succeeded in stemming Cosatu's potential as a launch pad for future opposition alliances.

*Party leaders following their voters into new party arrangements*

One of the basic, if not banal, driving forces in opposition party alliances has been the migration of the weaker of the two parties' supporters to the stronger one; party leaders for their own survival then initiate pre-election alliances with the current hosts of their former supporters. There are several illustrations.

In 1999 many of those who had supported the NP in 1994 failed to vote for the then new NNP. This trend emerged in a series of municipal by-elections in localities like Newlands in Johannesburg and Mogale City on Gauteng's West Rand (Booyesen 2011, chapter 8). The migration was confirmed in the 1999 national elections. The NNP was in precipitous decline; attaching itself to the DP (and later to the ANC) was an escape from further annihilation. NNP supporters deserted the NNP for the DA in Election 1999. The NNP leaders, after their brief alliance with the DP/DA (see Kotzé 2001) then liquidated the party and aligned it with the ANC from 2001 onwards.

Another example was the case of the ID in Election 2009. This 2003 floor-crossing party had now reached its support limits. It remained anchored in coloured community support in the Western Cape and the Kimberley area of the Northern Cape. By 2009 its voters were migrating to the DA. It shrank (see Table 2) and negotiations for a gradual merger with the DA commenced. The two parties (and later the one, merged party) formed coalition governments in the Western Cape province, in the Cape Town metropolitan municipality and in a range of other municipalities.

Third, and small-scale, many Cope representatives in the run-up to Election 2014 approached the DA in pre-emptive actions and on sub-alliance-level to help themselves secure places on party lists and dangle the carrot of (black-African) racial identity, sought-after in the DA. Cope's Election 2009 supporters had begun to migrate back either to the DA or to the ANC, which were the two main party

sources from which the bulk of the 2009 Cope supporters had come (see Greben 2012; Kimmie, Greben & Booysen 2009). Closer to the election several senior Cope leaders also defected to the ANC; some securing seats in Parliament.

### *Impact of the electoral system*

Unlike the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system, the list PR makes every vote count. As a result, parties do not necessarily have to enter into pre-election alliances but tend to build post-election alliances in accordance with the number of seats secured by each party. The cases of the coalition governments in KZN from 1994 to 2004 and the Western Cape in 1999 and 2004 illustrate this.

Kadima 2006, pp 52-53

This assertion, closely aligned with the arguments in the previous section, goes hand in hand with the phenomenon of the ANC as an entrenched dominant party. South Africa uses the closed-list PR system with the Droop formula, also known as the highest remainder method. The contesting parties' seat counts are determined according to their share of the vote. As Lodge (2004) points out, '(t)his system means that there is no formal threshold for parliamentary representation'.

In South Africa it has been evident (see section above) that political parties often embark on alliance and coalition initiatives after elections and with a view to the next round of elections. Elections highlight fading party fortunes and leaders then often initiate inter-party cooperation, including gradually building up to new alliances, in order to rescue their own careers, and/or negotiate relatively graceful endings for their parties. The parties do not have direct constituencies to account to and the small parties often have flexible party structures, enabling them to switch with relative ease. The mooted alliance in late 2013 of Cope, FF+, ACDP and UDM was a case in point. It was ineffectual: in Election 2014 (see Table 2) Cope imploded down to one 1% of the national vote, the already-micro ACDP declined further and the equally small UDM and FF+ both grew minimally off micro-bases.

The parties in a PR system thus do not gain immediate benefits from formal associations through specifically constituted alliances. The mere act of coordinated voting on a particular policy, campaign or governance issue will have as much effect as it would have had had the parties been in a formal coalition. When opposition parties jointly start approaching pivotal vote cut-off points, for example, in the case of blocking a two-thirds parliamentary majority for the ANC, a stronger need for formalised cooperation arises. To illustrate, after Election 2009 the ANC was just short of a two-thirds majority. When the contested issue

of e-tolls on the Gauteng freeways arose circa 2012-13, the opposition parties jointly *required every possible vote* to refer the ANC policy to higher courts for further adjudication. At the time, in August-September 2013, Cope (due to internal conflict) was unable to fill a vacancy, and the informal opposition alliance had to secure the support of the one PAC representative in Parliament. The position was occupied by the PAC's then president and sole MP, Letlapa Mphahlele. The opposing PAC factions removed him from his leadership and parliamentary seat. Mphahlele contested his removal, while the informal opposition alliance feared that the internal PAC fallout might have been instigated to prevent them from getting the necessary numbers and forestall the further legal battle and deadlock on e-tolls (see Vecchiato 2013).

### *Legal and regulatory context of alliances and coalitions*

The formation of political parties in South Africa is only mildly regulated. They are subject to the general rights and obligations that are integral to the Constitution of South Africa Act No. 108 of 1996 (and before that the Interim Constitution of 1993). Parties enjoy the rights that are granted in terms of freedom of speech, association, organisation and mobilisation, although these rights are subject to not adversely affecting the rights and dignity of fellow South Africans (Constitution of South Africa 2006, article 2).

The Constitution does not specify functions and general rights of political parties (Booyesen & Masterson 2009). The Bill of Rights (article 2, s 19(1) of the Constitution) specifies that every citizen 'is free to make political choices, which includes the right to form a political party; to participate in the activities of, or recruit members for, a political party; and to campaign for a political party or cause'. Every citizen, furthermore, has 'the right to free, fair and regular elections for any legislative body established in terms of the constitution'; the right 'to vote in elections for any legislative body ... and to do so in secret'; and 'to stand for public office, and if elected, to hold office'.

The Electoral Act No 73 of 1998 outlines election procedures and forbids anyone 'to compel or unlawfully persuade any person' to 'register or not to register as a voter', 'to vote or not to vote', 'to support or not to support any registered party or candidate', 'to attend and participate in, or not to attend and participate in, any political meeting, march, demonstration or other political event', and to prevent a party, candidate or official 'from gaining reasonable access to voters, whether in a public or private place'.

The 1996 Constitution is pertinent to coalition formation in that it requires a party, in terms of the PR system, to win an absolute majority in order to have its leader elected president of the country or the premier of a province. In order to



receive a majority of the votes and govern, coalitions of political parties have been formed when no candidate has secured the minimum level of 50%+1% of support.

The necessity to govern through coalition building has hitherto not emerged at the national level in South Africa. However, in the two provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape (also see the last section) it has been required (see Kadima 2006). KwaZulu-Natal went through a relatively long period in which the IFP and ANC had to build coalitions to achieve a majority, until the ANC eclipsed the IFP in 2009 *and* gained an outright majority of the provincial vote. The ANC moved from 32% of the provincial vote in 1994, to 39% in 1995, 47% in 2004, 63% in 2009 and eventually 65% in 2014. In the Western Cape the ANC experienced a modest upward trend from 1994 to 2004, peaking at 45% in 2004, declining to 32% in 2009 (see Booysen 2011, chapter 6) and rising to 34% in 2014. The ANC in the Western Cape had won the 1999 elections with a relative majority of 42%, but lost provincial control to the NNP and the DP after the two parties formed the DA and the associated coalition government (see Kadima 2006, p 70). Soon thereafter the ANC regained the province, this time with the help of the NNP, and in the wake of floor crossing.

Floor crossing was thus an important trigger for party political realignment and the evolution of the party system. Legislation was enacted, with the support of most of the opposition parties, to enable the practice. The first of the laws were instituted in 2002. They included the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Amendment Act No 18 of 2002, the Constitution Second Amendment Act No 21 of 2002, the Local Government Municipal Structures Amendment Act No 20 of 2002, and the Loss or Retention of Membership of National and Provincial Legislatures Act No 22 of 2002 (see Booysen 2011, chapter 7).

In response to objections the Cape High Court halted the promulgation of the legislation and deferred it to the Constitutional Court of South Africa, which ruled that floor crossing was consistent with the founding values of South Africa's Constitution and its Bill of Rights and that defection in a PR system was compatible with democracy. It noted that unhappiness in terms of the principles of proportionality 'should be dealt with in the next election' (Constitutional Court 2002). While the court upheld floor crossing at local government level it also upheld the UDM-IFP challenge to the Membership Act (intended to enable floor crossing at the national level) on the technical grounds that the legislation 'impermissibly amended the Constitution by means of ordinary legislation rather than a constitutional amendment' (see Devenish 2003). In response to this ruling Parliament passed the Constitutional Amendment Act 2003. A series of window periods followed in which floor crossing first flourished and then waned.

These measures enabled an elected representative in Parliament, the provincial legislature or a local council to become a member of another party

while retaining membership of the legislative body. It also became possible for an existing political party to merge with another party or to subdivide into more than one party while allowing an MP affected by such changes to retain membership. For floor-crossing legislation to apply, the number of members leaving the original party had to represent not less than 10% of the total number of seats held by the original party in that legislature (see Kadima 2006, p 71). The effect was that the larger parties, and especially the ANC in Parliament and the provinces, remained largely unaffected. The ANC at its Polokwane conference deliberated floor crossing, but vacillated. The ANC as government took over and subsequently passed prohibitive legislation. The president finally signed off on the legislation outlawing floor crossing in early 2009.

### *Social cleavage as a contributing factor*

Ethnicity, race and culture have shaped South Africa's political history – and continue to do so in the present in alliance formation. South Africa's smaller political parties often have relatively exclusive racial-cultural profiles and the bigger ones have their job cut out in attempting to cross the barriers imposed by race, ethnicity and culture.

Both the ANC and the DA are known to have multiracial memberships. The DA claims to be the most multiracial of South Africa's political parties ([www.da.org.za](http://www.da.org.za) 2013). Yet, despite by 2014 claiming to have more black than white members, it carries the image of a predominantly white and upper class party. Research revealed a view that, as the ANC would also like the majority of South Africans to believe, should the DA come to power it will bring back apartheid (Booyesen 2013b). The ANC, in turn, has suffered serial problems in capturing minority group voters from coloured, Indian and white backgrounds (see Greben 2012). Some of its previous breakthroughs have also been reversed.

The role of race-ethnicity in party alliances, in both election and between-election periods, is illustrated in Table 3. For example, the ID followed its largely coloured middle- and working-class voters who had already migrated to the DA, after their brief stint with the ID (see section above). Afrikaner nationalist parties banded together in the coalition-merger of the FF, CP and AUM (to form the FF+). When the NNP had itself been incorporated into the ANC, the bulk of NP supporters and leaders had already moved to the DA. Ironically, it was the more nationalist-conservative grouping in the NNP, and those with the highest power ambitions, which remained for the merger with the ANC.

At the opposite end of the continuum, several coalitions had as an important motivating factor the aspiration of the parties to bridge the social cleavages typical of South African society. The GNU formation was an obvious case in point (see

Kadima 2006). Thereafter, upon Bantu Holomisa's fallout with the ANC and Roelf Meyer's with the NNP, these two groupings entered the alliance fray with the vision of 'uniting citizens in their South Africanness' (www.udm.org.za 2013). The ID and DA coalition helped guarantee the DA a notable coloured constituency (see section above). Cope, in its fleeting heyday, brought together both the ANC split-off and a substantial block of followers from across South Africa's racial spectrum.

The PR system's low threshold for representation enhances the inclusion of a range of minority parties (Mottiar 2003, p 7). Many of the small parties have distinct racial and ideological characters and would have been excluded in a FPTP system.

### *Ideology and policy as a thrust for alliance and coalition formation*

Post-apartheid South Africa has turned into an ideological melting pot and a battlefield of ideological compromises, two trends that affect the potential for alliances and coalitions. The socialist thrust of the ANC's Freedom Charter of 1955, which is, to this day, a guiding document for South Africa's ruling party, was moderately interpreted in democratic South Africa. Soon after his release Nelson Mandela made some fundamental economic policy reversals (compared to the ANC's assumed more radical thrust) (see Booysen 2011, chapter 2). This change was further confirmed in the 1995 adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear) strategy, which largely replaced the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP), originally drafted by Cosatu and which came to embody the thrust of the ANC's 1994 election campaign. The trend continued in the ANC's adoption of the National Development Plan (NDP). In addition, the SACP had retained little of its expected socialist thrust.

This compromise and moderation, which removed much of the ideological contest from South African politics, also meant that some alliances and party amalgamations became more feasible. For example, in the mid-1990s the NNP still feared the communist element in the ANC. By the time it had to realign to rescue itself, communism was the last thing on its mind, apart from the fact that socialism had effectively been abandoned by the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance. It mostly remained alive in rhetoric and broad interpretation of their own actions as government. On the subject of labour brokers, for example, the ANC was morally obliged to be sympathetic to Cosatu's anti-brokering line, yet some ANC leaders were involved in the practice.

It was equally evident, in the times of both Tony Leon and Helen Zille as leaders of the DP/DA, that the party was adopting some ideas that were associated with the ANC yet might help the DA win support. Differentiation nevertheless remained clear in the ANC's greater emphasis on state responsibility and

involvement in the economy, and on specifics such as its vacillation on a youth wage subsidy and a ban on labour brokers. Despite some clear differentiation, the major mobilisational thrust for the DA became its crusade against state corruption. On this theme the DA found resonance with many of the other smaller opposition parties, but this was still insufficient to drive the type of overriding opposition party alliance seen in several other African countries.

The often envisioned great ANC split and realignment to form a viable and left-oriented alternative continued to falter and minor new left or approximately left political parties are flying solo. These include the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) and the Democratic Left Front (DLF). By mid-2014 the potential for a new left opposition alliance was growing, given both the EFF's project for the alignment of left-opposition forces and Numsa's repeated indications post-Election 2014 that it will proceed with forming a workers' party.

### CONSEQUENCES OF ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS

Given that South Africa since 1994 has only seen a handful of significant party alliances and coalitions, which evolved into governance relations, it follows that the impact and consequences have mostly not been far-reaching. However, these two types of formations have played notable roles in the *evolution of the party system*; they have contributed to governability, to some extent to social cohesion and democratic consolidation and had further potential to bring an ideological realignment. The rest of this section highlights these effects.

#### *Governability*

The main governability feat at national level remains the GNU arrangement of 1994. In this time of transition from struggle and instability to democracy, the co-governance arrangement established the inclusivity of the main actors and enhanced rapid acceptance of the emerging democratic order.

On the sub-national level it was only in the case of KwaZulu-Natal prior to the ANC in 2009 asserting an outright provincial majority that governability was evident as a concrete outcome of the coalition in the province between the ANC and the IFP. In the period between 1994 and 2009 the two parties were in a forced coalition government – neither had been able to win an outright majority and there was the likelihood of a resurgence of the pre-1994 violence should one party dominate the provincial government.

The ANC and the IFP remained in electoral competition throughout this period with the ANC gradually encroaching on the IFP's electoral territory. Some parts of the province remained no-go areas for the ANC up to the run-up

to Election 2009. The IFP was further eroded when the NFP split off at the time of the 2011 local elections. In the aftermath of these elections the ANC and the NFP entered into coalition governments in several municipalities in the province – but with a notable backlash from some NFP voters who continued to feel closer to the IFP than to the ANC.

Coalition government between the ANC and the NNP in the Western Cape advanced the ANC's determination to gain dominance in this province, a territory it projected as still in need of liberation from the forces of the status quo ante. The Western Cape, unlike KwaZulu-Natal, had not experienced an era of virtual civil war and had no problems of governability. The issue was merely which party would be the dominant governing party, with coalition formation as a secondary issue.

### *Social cohesion*

Party alliances and coalitions in democratic South Africa have, on occasion, attempted to, and modestly if fleetingly succeeded in, building some social cohesion. The UDM – combining, in the main, split-offs from the ANC and the NNP – was one such effort. Although the coalition and the subsequent incorporation of the NNP into the ANC amounted to the as-graceful-as-possible disbandment of the NNP, the party's leadership presented it as a major act of socio-political advancement. In the words of Van Schalkwyk at the time of the event (2004; also see Quintal 2004): 'The NNP welcomes president [former President] Thabo Mbeki's emphasis on the need for all South Africans to be co-builders of the new South Africa' and 'The NNP chooses to put the national interests of all South Africans above narrow party political interests and to be part of the solution in our country.'

Cope, in as much as it was constituted through support from the two main feed-parties, the ANC and DA, also delivered evidence of some coming together of racial streams in South African politics. The DA and the ID, in combining an at-the-time still substantially white party (the DA) and a party that had, by voter choice, become largely a coloured-support party (the ID), could be seen as also contributing to making the DA more racially inclusive. The IFP has reasonably consistently over time retained white South African support and leadership, albeit in small and decreasing numbers.

These modest developments may be seen in the context of the fact that the ANC has continuously experienced challenges in expanding into – or retaining its support where breakthroughs had happened – racial minority communities. As stated above, the DA from 2011 onwards claimed to have become the most racially balanced party in the country. The ACDP, with 'Christian' as its predominant

profile, remains micro, but has some non-racial presence. Other political parties, and predominantly the micro-parties such as the PAC, APC, Azapo and the NFP, along with the FF+ and MF, largely retained their racially exclusive character.

### *Party system and democratic consolidation*

The inter-party alliances and coalitions of democratic South Africa, and particularly the grander ones of the decade 1994-2004, involving the ANC, NNP and DA, reshaped the party political landscape. Primarily, the developments helped mop up the remnants of the dying NNP, whose 20% support in Election 1994 was fast being disseminated across a range of recipient parties. The substantial chunk that went to the DP-DA helped project this party as the biggest challenger (albeit lagging by a wide margin) to the ANC in the second decade of democracy. By mid-2014 indicators, it provided the trigger for South Africa's movement in the direction of a two-party system. Nevertheless, the EFF and the budding Numsa-related workers' party (especially if endorsed by Cosatu; see Forum for Public Dialogue 2013) could still challenge this two-party configuration.

Given the persistent high levels of inter-party activity among the small and micro opposition parties, a further trend also needs to be recognised: the co-existence of this emerging (but potentially challenged by the EFF and/or workers' party) two-party system and the world of much inter-party activity amongst the small parties.

By mid-2014 there was still little definitive evidence of new party political projects emerging. The experience with Cope, including its dismal fate in Election 2014, limited the appetite for splits and breaks from the predominant party – except in the case of the acrimonious fall-out between the ANC and the former ANCYL, now the EFF. With increased turmoil in the Tripartite Alliance, in the form of disunity within Cosatu, the possibility of this powerful formation being the source of future realignment also remains on the horizon.



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# ALLIANCES, COALITIONS AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN LESOTHO 2007-2012

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper assesses political party alliances and coalitions in Lesotho, focusing on their causes and their consequences for party systems, democratic consolidation, national cohesion and state governability. We agree with Kapa (2008) that formation of the pre-2007 alliances can be explained in terms of office-seeking theory in that the political elite used alliances to access and retain power. These alliances altered the country's party system, leading to conflict between parties inside and outside Parliament, as well as effectively changing the mixed member proportional (MMP) electoral system into a parallel one, thereby violating the spirit of the system. However, the phenomenon did not change state governability; it effectively perpetuated the one-party dominance of the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) and threatened national cohesion. The post-2012 coalition, on the other hand, was a product of a hung parliament produced by the elections. The impact of the coalition on the party system, state governability and democratic consolidation is yet to be determined as the coalition phenomenon is still new. However, state governability has been marked by a generally very slow pace of policy implementation and the party system has been both polarised and reconfigured while national cohesion has been strengthened. The major challenge for political leaders is to manage the coalition arrangement for the good of the country, which we strongly feel they must, since it seems that coalition governments are very likely to be a permanent feature of Lesotho politics.*

## INTRODUCTION

Whereas political party coalitions and alliances have been widely discussed in Western Europe and other regions (Riker 1962; Lipset & Rokkan 1967; Carroll 2004; Wiseman 2004; Kiss 2009; Lefebvre and Robin 2009), little research has been done into the value of these phenomena and why they form in Africa (Karume 2003; Khembo 2004; Kadima 2006; Kapa 2008). There is a gap in the literature, which this paper seeks to address using Lesotho as a case study, on the consequences for the party system, democratic consolidation, national cohesion and state governability of party coalitions and alliances.

The article is divided into five sections. The first provides a conceptual entry point to the subject before exploring theoretical propositions on political party formation as well as party coalitions and alliances. The second section explores the factors that lead to party coalitions prior to elections, in Parliament and in government. The third section provides empirical evidence of the experiences of Lesotho to judge whether it confirms or negates the theoretical considerations, and gives a brief background to the intra- and inter-party democracy within which coalitions and alliances are located. In the fourth section we look at the nature and structure of the two coalitions, the post-2012 parliamentary election ruling coalition and the opposition coalition, known as Bloc. The final section sums up the paper, highlighting conclusions and recommendations.

## THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUALISATION CONSIDERATIONS

Coalition and alliance are sometimes used interchangeably. This is because in both cases there is cooperation between political parties and little if any time is spent on understanding the nature and form of this cooperation, ie, the objective of the cooperation, its structure and the power distribution between parties? For the purposes of this article political party coalitions and alliances are considered to be groupings of parties which are pursuing a common goal.

The conceptual distinction between coalitions and alliances is borrowed from Kadima (2013, pp 1-2). He regards an alliance as the coming together of at least two political parties prior to an election in order to maximise their votes and a coalition as the coming together of at least two political parties to work together in Parliament and/or in government on the basis of the election outcome, especially when the elections have not produced an outright winner. Both these situations have arisen in Lesotho and we distinguish between the two for purposes of analysis, treating alliances as those entities entered into by political parties before the 2007 elections and coalitions as the post-2012 election arrangement between

the All Basotho Convention (ABC), the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) and the Basotho National Party (BNP).

In his pioneering work, *The Theory of Political Coalitions* (1962), William Riker indicates that politicians form coalitions that are just big enough to ensure a majority in Parliament, but no bigger or smaller. They are motivated in these decisions primarily by a desire for power or prestige. Thus there is no sense in sharing Cabinet posts among more parties than is necessary – hence the concept of a minimum winning coalition (Newton & Van Deth 2005, p 234). This theory is also called office-seeking or office-oriented (Kadima 2006, p 5). Oyugi (2006, p 54) expresses the rationale for the formation of coalitions very aptly when he writes:

If coalition formation involves a process which leads to sharing power as well as the material benefits that go with it, then coalition formation is a process which normally occurs because neither or none of the co-operating parties can manage to win an election and govern on its own. It is therefore a necessary evil – an evil in the sense that normally no party ever coalesces except in circumstances in which not to do so would deprive it of the chance to exercise power.

The theory applies in situations where political parties have close or convergent ideological orientations. But this is not a blanket rule. In his study of five African countries – Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, and South Africa – Kadima (2006, p 228) finds that ideological proximity has not been a factor in determining coalition formation. Rather, he believes, the formation of coalitions in South Africa and Mauritius has led to ideological harmony between the main parties. In both cases, ‘... all the main parties have embraced neo-liberal ideology, thus shifting to the centre’ (Kadima 2006, p 233). Sithanen (2003, p 7) observes that ‘in Mauritius, coalition formation and governance has been influenced by office-seeking strategy’ rather than any other considerations. In the 1982 general elections, for example, the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) and the Parti Socialiste Mauricien (PSM) joined forces to govern the country, albeit for only nine months (Kadima 2006, p78). The MMM again formed a coalition, this time with the Movement Socialiste Mauricien (MSM), in order to guarantee its electoral victory in 2000 (Kadima, p 228).

Politicians do not form coalitions exclusively to seek power but also to influence public policy in favour of their interests and those of their parties. Thus, when they are aware that they have no chance of winning elections politicians form coalitions to, at least, win a place in Parliament so that they can influence policy-making in their favour (Newton & Van Deth 2005, p 234). They will support a minority government as long as it is responsive to their interests. The outcome

of such a coalition will, in most cases, enhance democratic governance through consensus (Newton & Van Deth 2005, p 234).

Lastly, political parties enter into coalition agreements for the purpose of resolving political conflicts and contributing to the process of nation-building. This is common in countries characterised by ethnic, racial, and/or religious divisions, for example, South Africa after the first democratic elections, in 1994 and Mauritius since independence. Kadima (2006, p 233) finds that in Mauritius coalitions have been formed between the Labour Party (LP) and its rival, the Parti Mauricien Socialiste Democrate (PMSD) to help nation-building and reconcile the majority Hindu represented by the former and the mainly Creole people represented by the latter. This point is corroborated by Sithanen (2003, p 9), who submits that coalition governments in Mauritius have become important instruments for ensuring integration and participation in decision-making and empowerment, thus promoting national unity.

In South Africa a government of national unity consisting of the African National Congress (ANC), the National Party (NP) and the Inkatha Freedom party (IFP) was formed for the purposes of *nation-building* in the then racially and ethnically divided country (Kadima 2006, p 233). Kadima goes on to show that in the KwaZulu-Natal province the ANC and IFP formed a coalition to end the endemic violence between their supporters.

The formation of coalitions in Lesotho, however, cannot be explained by ideology, the influence of policy or nation-building (Kapa 2008). This is because Lesotho's political parties have no clear ideological differences and/or orientations and even those claiming to be left-of-centre in the political spectrum are either too minuscule to hope to win power or have made no significant impact on the country's politics since their formation. Thus, all politically significant parties seem to embrace, to a large extent, the reigning hegemonic world's neo-liberal ideology, which is marked by, among other things, a free market system and political pluralism.

None of Lesotho's political parties reflects any other ideology in its manifesto and almost all of them are nothing but instruments of elite circulation wherein the parties' names are different but the leading faces have been seen in the country's politics before, albeit under different appellations (Kapa 2008). None of these elites during their time in public office since the return to multiparty politics in 1993 has articulated or implemented any policies that are inconsistent with the neo-liberal ideology. The policy-influence thesis also seems to be less plausible in the context of Lesotho, as, indeed, is the case in other African countries (Oyugi 2006, p 63).

The only convincing explanation for the formation of alliances seems to be the office-seeking motives of political elites. Both those elites within the ruling party and those in opposition were motivated by the desire for access to state power

and, by extension, to the benefits that go with public office. Access to power in an environment where there are limited, if any, alternatives for wealth accumulation is a means of survival in a political economy characterised by extreme poverty and limited options. As a result, Lesotho has a history of throat-cutting electoral contests which have been followed by conflict, most notably, the near civil war that followed the 1998 elections.

The conflict was solved by the introduction in 2001 and adoption in 2002 of the mixed member proportional (MMP) electoral model in an effort to reform the country's discredited first-past-the-post (FPTP) political system which had over-rewarded the winners and unduly punished the losers.

Gallagher (2008, p 247) distinguishes between two variants of the MMP system – the proportional and the parallel – and highlights how parties benefit depending on their relative sizes. He submits that under the MMP:

The list seats are awarded in such a way as to rectify the under-representation and over-representation created in the constituencies, ensuring that a party's overall number of seats (not just its list seats) is proportional to its vote share. Typically, small parties fare badly in the single-member constituencies, winning hardly any seats, but are brought up to their 'fair share' overall by receiving the appropriate number of list seats, while the larger parties usually win more than their 'fair share' in the constituencies, are awarded few or none of the list seats because their constituency seats alone bring them up to or close to the total number to which they are entitled.

The above scenario reflects what happened in Lesotho after the 2002 elections. The smaller parties performed badly in the constituencies but were compensated by the list seats, and the big ones, particularly the LCD, did well in the constituencies but received no PR list seats. It is noteworthy that the MMP contains mechanisms for determining the maximum and minimum number of seats political parties can be awarded in each election. This is done through an agreed formula applied after each election. Roughly the formula is:  $\text{Total Votes} / \text{Total Seats} = \text{Quota}$ ,  $\text{Total Party Votes} / \text{Quota} = \text{Party Seats}$ . Thus there is no fixed formula for calculating the seats; each election produces a quota depending on, among other key issues, the voter turnout in each election. This enables what Bogaards (2013, p 14) dubs a 'majority ceiling and minority premium' (the maximum number of seats winners are allowed and the largest number the opposition can get to prevent dominance of the ruling parties and also to strengthen the opposition) to be accomplished to some extent, although not entirely, as he would prefer.

In Lesotho, while winning parties may have as many constituency seats as possible, the more they have the fewer PR seats they will get. This is



what happened in the 2002 elections in which the LCD won all but one of the constituency seats, with a total vote of 65.8% but received no PR seats. On the other hand, the number of seats a party gets depends on the quota after each election. The higher the quota the more 'expensive' the seat, and vice versa. One other issue is that the number of parliamentary seats remains fixed at 120, so all calculations must add up to this figure.

Against the backdrop of a new electoral system and its attendant constraints, as described above, political parties became less reluctant to join forces and resources both prior to and after elections (Kapa 2008, p 340). The country's biggest parties since independence, namely the BCP and the BNP (between 1993 and 1998) and later the LCD and the BNP (1998-2002), may have initially hoped to do well and to govern the country without the support of others. The smaller parties had also not entered into alliances among themselves or with the bigger ones. Following the 2002 elections, however, the parties realised they needed to coalesce in one way or the other to remain competitive.

### PARTY ALLIANCES

The phenomenon of political party alliances in Lesotho emerged in the run-up to the 2007 parliamentary elections. Lesotho's political parties were historically characterised by adversarial relations (Makoa 2005) with very limited, if any, propensity for cooperation despite the fact that Lesotho is a largely homogenous society with no ethnic or racial conflict (Kapa 2008). Hence we propose that the explanation for the formation of alliances prior to the 2007 elections is the office-seeking theory. The alliances that were formed are those of the Congress parties, the ABC/LWP/SDP Alliance, the LCD/NIP Alliance and the 'Big Five'.

#### *The Alliance of Congress Parties*

The Alliance of Congress Parties (ACP) was formed by leaders of the BAC, the Lesotho Peoples' Congress (LPC) and one faction of the BCP, led by a veteran BCP politician Ntsukunyane Mphanya, as an attempt to counter what they saw as a 'degeneration of democracy into a *de facto* one-party state' (ACP Press Statement 2006). The ACP had a well-defined structure and a memorandum of understanding (MoU) under which it contested the February 2007 elections. The parties indicated in their MoU that they did not have ideological differences because they were splinters of the BCP and therefore it was easy for them to form an alliance. They agreed to allocate resources, Cabinet and other senior portfolios if they won. Although ultimately the ACP did not make a dent in the ruling party's support, it performed better than all the smaller parties, which contested



the elections individually. Typical of alliances, which have a tendency to be short lived, the ACP collapsed when it failed to win the election.

### *The ABC/LWP/SDP Alliance*

Like the ACP, these three parties agreed to cooperate in the 2007 election. They agreed not to compete against each other and fielded their candidates under the ABC flag, apart from in the Matelile constituency, where the Lesotho Workers' Party (LWP) leader stood as a candidate. Candidates for party lists were nominated under the LWP and included the ABC leader and other senior members and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) candidates, although these were low on the list and could not go to Parliament. Only the ABC and LWP benefited, securing 17 FPTP and 10 PR seats respectively, giving them a total of 27 of the 120 seats. The alliance collapsed soon after the 2007 elections due to conflicts between the leaders

### *The LCD/NIP Alliance*

The agreement between the LCD and the National Independent Party (NIP) was contained in their MoU entitled 'Memorandum of Understanding between Lesotho Congress for Democracy and the National Independent Party on Strategic Partnership and Co-operation for the 2007 elections'. Article 3 of the MoU stipulated the manner of cooperation between the two parties. The LCD would compete for the 80 constituencies while the NIP competed for the 40 PR-based seats. The agreement was controversial because it was signed by the NIP's deputy leader and the party's central committee against the background of objections and court cases lodged by the NIP's founder and leader, AC Manyeli.

Manyeli is reported to have had strong reservations about the terms of the alliance, among them the stipulation that the NIP should only field PR candidates (Ramonotsi 2006, p2). Article 3(c)(i) of the MoU stated that the NIP would place its own candidates in the first five places and the LCD's candidates would occupy 'the next 6+4 places', which meant 'the top six LCD members, who would also be standing in the 80 constituencies, were being secured in the event that they failed to win. The other four candidates would be part of the entire PR list but would not be FPTP candidates.

Two observations can be made about this provision. Firstly, it provided insurance for some senior LCD leaders, who were obviously no longer guaranteed victory in the constituencies because of the split in the party which had led to the formation of the ABC, which had become a sudden threat to the then ruling party (Shale 2007, p 19). Secondly, the LCD, which had not benefited from the MMP electoral system since the 2002 elections because it had won almost all the

constituencies, made sure that it would benefit through this provision. The LCD's top leaders, who had hitherto only been elected on the FPTP ticket, now had the opportunity to secure the NIP's PR seats.

The alliance was simply a vote-pooling strategy as the two parties had nothing in common other than a bird as an electoral symbol. It was widely speculated that the symbols – a dove and an eagle – had confused rural voters in the 2002 elections because in both symbols the 'birds' were in a flying mode, with their wings spread wide. Thus it was possible that supporters of the LCD might have voted for the NIP in error (Kapa 2008, p 349). This apparent confusion resulted in an unusually large number of votes for the NIP, which had enabled the party to secure five PR seats while its performance in previous elections had been insignificant (Kapa 2008, p 349). The LCD only used the NIP as a strategic partner to maximise its chances of winning more parliamentary seats. Indeed, some members of the executive suffered humiliating losses in the election but went to Parliament through the alliance with the NIP, with the two parties claiming a total of 82 of the 120 seats (LCD 61 and NIP 21).<sup>1</sup>

### *The 'Big Five'*

The 'Big Five' alliance, which was formed after the 2007 elections, consisted of the ABC/LWP, BNP, the Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP) and the ACP. The motivation for the alliance was to allow the parties to elect an official leader of the opposition so the position would not go the deputy leader of the NIP, which, by virtue of its alliance with the ruling LCD, had 21 PR seats in the National Assembly against the ABC's 17 seats. Neither the ABC nor the NIP qualified for the opposition leader position as it requires a party or a coalition of parties to have at least 25% or 30% of National Assembly seats.<sup>2</sup>

Using their collective numerical strength of 33 seats, the 'Big Five' nominated the ABC leader for the post but this move was frustrated by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ntlhoi Motsamai (who was also a member of Parliament, representing the Hloahloeng Constituency under the banner of the ruling LCD). Motsamai ruled that the alliance should have been formed prior to the elections. This decision caused considerable disquiet among the opposition ranks and justifiably so, for the Speaker quoted in her ruling Section 3 of the Members of Parliament Salaries Act, 1998, which not only defines the official leader of opposition but actually recognises such an office (Kapa 2008, p 351).

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1 The LCD later won a by-election in Makhaleng Constituency No 45, where there had been a failed election earlier.

2 The ABC and NIP had 14.2% and 17.5% respectively.

What implications did the alliance phenomenon have for the party system, democratic consolidation, national cohesion and state governability? The next section considers this question, focusing exclusively on pre-2007 election alliances.

### ALLIANCES AND THE PARTY SYSTEM

The alliances did not break the old 'Congress-National' divide that has been a feature of Lesotho's politics; they entrenched this two-party system characterised by Congress parties (BCP since independence until 1997, and the LCD since 1997 until 2012) on the one hand, and the BNP on the other. In line with this dichotomy the ACP grouped some of the 'Congress Party family members', namely, the BAC, LPC, and a faction of the BCP (which are all offshoots of the BCP), while the BNP joined forces with its own splinter party, the National Progressive Party (NPP). The only variation was the ABC/LWP alliance – although the ABC is also an off-shoot of the BCP, it opted to work with the LWP, which does not have a clear history with either of the Congress or National parties. Thus parties with a common history coalesced. The alliances distorted the MMP system, turning it into a *de facto* parallel system (Matlosa 2008, p37), thereby undermining the spirit of proportionality in the allocation of parliamentary seats and the inclusivity of Parliament.

By distorting the electoral system the alliances effectively altered inter-party relations in and outside Parliament and perpetuated the dominance of the ruling LCD. This happened against the background of an already volatile environment in which the 1997 LCD usurpation of power through a 'parliamentary coup' was probably still fresh in the minds of the opposition parties. Relationships between the LCD/NIP and the opposition both in and outside the Seventh Parliament were marked by tensions (2007 to 2012) as shown below.

The tricky issue was that although the LCD/NIP and ABC/LWP alliance partners contested elections as alliances, in each case they had submitted joint PR lists to the IEC, but under the names of the junior partners – the NIP and LWP respectively. This raised problems for the IEC with regard to the allocation of the PR seats. The IEC resolved to treat these alliance partners as separate entities for the purposes of allocation. The MFP and other opposition parties protested, arguing that they had lost seats that would have gone to them had the MMP model been applied, as it had been in the 2002 elections. Their concerns may have been legitimate, given that each would have received additional PR seats, as follows: the ACP four seats instead of two; the Basotho Batho Democratic Party (BBDP) two instead of one; the BCP three instead of one; the BNP eight not three; the ABC/LWP would have had 12 not 10; the New Lesotho Freedom Party one instead of none; the LCD/NIP one, not 21; and the Popular Front for Democracy (PFD) four, not one (Matlosa 2008, p 39).

The MFP took the case to the High Court, which took more than 15 months to pass judgement on this crucial case although section 104 of the National Assembly Election Order Act of 1992, which was in force at the time, provided for a maximum of three months for the settlement of election-related disputes. The High Court dismissed the case on two technical grounds rather than on merit, namely that the MFP, which had lodged the case, did not have the *locus standi* or legal right to do so and that the court itself had no jurisdiction over the case (Kapa 2009, p 6). This ruling led to intractable conflict, which warranted the mediation of the Southern African Development Community and later of civil society organisations under the Lesotho Council of Non-governmental Organisations in partnership with the Christian Council of Lesotho.

The result of the alliance formation was that the party system changed because inter-party relations were altered significantly both in and outside of Parliament. Consequently, the legitimacy of members of Parliament (MPs) who were elected in terms of the PR list of the alliance partners was seriously questionable and opposition MPs called for them to be replaced. Parliament became deeply polarised, to the extent that, although the Lower House could easily pass Bills due to the numerical preponderance of the governing party buttressed by the NIP, the opposition objected to some key Bills and staged frequent walkouts.

The Senate also prevented the passage of the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution Bill, 2008, which was intended to make it possible to appeal election-related disputes, while the Constitution provides that the High Court is the final arbiter in such matters. The ruling party sought this constitutional amendment so that the case, which was before the High Court on the allocation of 40 PR seats, could be heard by the Court of Appeal. This was a very sensitive case with the potential to cost the LCD a total of 21 seats, leaving it with a slim majority of 62.

The senators' argument was that the Bill should wait until the High Court had made its ruling, lest it be construed as an attempt to pre-empt the outcome of the case. They further argued that passing the Bill at that stage would be tantamount to the abuse of power by the ruling party, designed to manipulate the Constitution in order to protect the government (Kapa 2013, p 81). All these developments poisoned relationships between parties in Parliament, resulting in destructive conflict instead of a healthy and competitive interaction and this adversely affected parliamentary business.

### ALLIANCES AND GOVERNABILITY

Alliances had no significant impact on the governability of the state (invoked, in this context, to include, among other factors, the pace of governmental decision-making and policy coherence both at the formulation and the implementation

stages). For various reasons the ability of the state to govern remained largely unchanged from the pre-alliance period. One reason is that the LCD/NIP alliance ensured a parliamentary majority of 82 of 120 seats, making it easy for it to pass any legislation except where the Constitution mandated a two-thirds majority in both the Lower and Upper houses. This majority was used to pass even the most controversial of Bills, including the Land Act Bill, 2010, which sought to change Lesotho's land tenure system from customary tenure to private ownership, which would allow foreign enterprises to own land.

The second controversial piece of legislation was the Public Meetings and Procession Bill, 2009, the thrust of which was to require any groups wishing to hold public meetings or embark on public processions to apply for permission either from the police or from chiefs of concerned areas (Kapa 2013, p 79). These officers were empowered to grant, refuse and even cancel any permit issued for these purposes. The opposition and some civil society organisations, which regarded the Bill as an infringement of freedom of association, could do no more than complain, Parliament passed the Bill regardless.

Alliances did not help democratise Parliament itself, at least in the sense of promoting an environment of genuine debate. They only benefited those who formed them in terms of gaining parliamentary seats. Although the LCD and the NIP were in alliance, their agreement was not designed to give the NIP Cabinet positions, it merely entitled it to parliamentary seats on a 50/50 basis, thereby serving only to perpetuate the LCD's domination of the political system. The protracted conflict between the LCD/NIP alliance and the government, on the one hand, and the joint opposition on the other, in which the IEC and the High Court were also embroiled, ultimately stalled the process of democratic consolidation. Instead of these key institutions operating in ways that would engender the trust and confidence of all political actors, democratic values were in question.

## ALLIANCES AND NATIONAL COHESION

Lesotho is a largely homogeneous society devoid of features that characterise other African societies such as ethnicity, religion and race – political party affiliation has historically been the key divisive element. All conflicts that have threatened national cohesion have had their roots in party affiliation. The 2007 election results threatened national cohesion. The government and opposition parties became embroiled in conflict, which culminated in protests staged by the opposition, among them massive stayaways and demonstrations, arrests, abductions, torture by the military, the exile of some opposition supporters and the declaration by the police of a curfew (Ambrose 2007, p 11). All these developments would probably not have occurred had it not been for the alliances and their effects on

the allocation of the PR seats. What of the post-2012 election coalition of the ABC, the LCD and the BNP?

### THE 2012 ELECTION OUTCOME

The May 2012 polls transformed Lesotho's political system and heralded a new era for the country's democratisation, arguably pushing it further on the path of consolidation. The elections were conducted in terms of the new National Assembly Electoral Act, 2011, which had effectively replaced the 'two-ballots-two-votes' that had been applied in 2002 and 2007 with the 'one-ballot-two-votes' principle. While two-ballots-two-votes encouraged the formation of alliances, this further electoral reform protected the letter and spirit of the MMP system. The polls produced an unprecedented hung Parliament, with the newly formed Democratic Congress (DC) obtaining a total of 48 seats (41 FPTP and 7 PR), short of at least 61 seats to form a government. It was followed by the ABC (30 seats), the LCD (26) and the BNP (5). Section 87(2) of the Constitution of Lesotho, 1993 provides that:

The King shall appoint as Prime minister the member of the National Assembly who appears to the Council of State to be the leader of the political party or *coalition of political parties* that will command the support of a majority of the members of the National Assembly [our emphasis].

This provision has not been used since the return of the country to multiparty politics in 1993 because elections have always been won by single parties. The BCP won the 1993 polls by 74.7%, taking all 65 parliamentary seats; in 1998 the LCD won 60.7% and 79 of 80 seats and, in 2002, in terms of the FPTP component of the MMP system won 54.8% (79 seats). In 2007 the LCD won again, but with a reduced majority of 62 seats. It was, however, able to increase this majority through its alliance with the NIP.

Soon after the IEC released the election results opposition parties, including the ABC, LCD, BNP, PFD and MFP, held a joint press conference in Maseru, where they declared their intention of forming a government in response the press statement made by the deputy leader of the DC that his party was preparing to form a minority government (Rakuoane 2013). In the midst of these developments the Prime Minister, Pakalitha Mosisili, tendered his resignation to the king in preparation for the installation of the new government. All the main political parties began negotiating behind closed doors with a view to forming a coalition government.



Although it had received the highest number of seats, the DC failed to convince other parties to form government with it. Thus the ABC, which held the second-highest number of seats, formed a government with the LCD and the BNP, based on a slim majority of 61 seats (Shale 2013, p 46). Based on an Agreement to Form a Coalition Government of Political Parties, signed in June 2012 by the parties' leaders, Motsoahae Thomas Thabane (ABC), Mothetjoa Metsing (LCD) and Thesele Maseribane (BNP), Thabane became prime minister, Metsing deputy prime minister and Maseribane senior minister. Consequently, on 8 June 2012, at the National Setsoto Stadium in the capital, Maseru, Lesotho witnessed an incredible, unprecedented, smooth and peaceful transfer of power from the outgoing prime minister, Pakalitha Mosisili (who had been in office for 14 years) to his successor, Motsoahae Thomas Thabane. On 14 June Cabinet ministers were appointed, completing the process of forming a government unique in the history of Lesotho.

The coalition government was formed on the basis of the outcome of the popular vote, rather than cobbled together by domestic political elites with assistance from external actors, as was the case, for example, in Zimbabwe after the 2008 elections and in Kenya after the 2007 elections. The phenomenon of a democratically elected coalition government together with the peaceful alternation of power from one government to another has been dubbed an 'enigma' in both Lesotho and in African politics (Kapa 2012). Whether or not the coalition will work according to its letter and spirit is unclear. What exactly did the parties agree on?

### *The coalition agreement*

The parties agreed to work together in Parliament and government; to form an inclusive government, allocating key positions in proportion to the number of seats each party had in Parliament; to form a Joint Monitoring Implementation Committee composed of two competent members of each party to ensure the implementation of the Agreement and to collaborate with the Bloc or other parties. The Bloc is not fully integrated into the coalition government, it sits between the coalition government and the opposition DC in Parliament and its constituent members retain their individual identity as distinct parties, just as the coalition members have done.

Although the leader of the PFD has been appointed Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly the Bloc has decided to support the coalition government in principle but also criticise it as necessary.

There are no legal and constitutional provisions governing the post-election transition period and the formation of a new government. In addition, Lesotho has had no history of coalition governments and there was little time for it to



consult and learn from countries which had such experience. Section 82(b) of the Constitution provides that Parliament should meet within 14 days after an election, leaving little or no time for inter-party consultation and negotiation about the formation of coalition government should the elections produce a hung Parliament, as was the case in 2012. This means that the political system becomes highly volatile, unpredictable and dangerous. This was the context in which the ABC, LCD and BNP coalition was formed.

The Agreement has been criticised by an official Commonwealth expert (whose services were solicited by the coalition government to advise on ways of strengthening the coalition) for having focused on the allocation of Cabinet portfolios and other senior positions in government rather than on the policies and programmes of coalition partners aimed at providing services to Lesotho's citizens. The expert correctly notes that:

in the absence of a focus on a policy programme and on clearly communicating the direction of the Coalition to the public, an impression has been created that the Coalition Government is 'territorialised', is developing in silos based on the allocation of Ministries to coalition Parties, and is taking too long to get started on the programme to prosperity, inclusivity and transparency the electors voted for.

Prasad 2013, p3

The above quotation is instructive in explaining the situation on the ground in Lesotho since the 2012 elections and the implications of the coalition arrangement for state governability, the party system, democratic consolidation and national cohesion.

## COALITION AND GOVERNABILITY

Although it is still early to make a conclusive assessment, it seems that the effect of the coalition phenomenon on the governability of the state has been largely mixed: positive in some respects and negative in others. In his inaugural speech on 8 June 2012 Prime Minister Thomas Thabane highlighted the key challenges confronting Lesotho. These included poverty reduction and shared economic growth and employment creation; the building of effective governance institutions; infrastructure development for facilitation of trade and access to services; investment in education; increased access to improved health facilities; improvement of agriculture and food security; effective and efficient dispensation of justice; escalation of the fight against corruption and all forms of crime (Thabane 2012a, pp 20-21).

The coalition government took some time to come up with a broad policy outline and its areas of focus: land allocation; poverty; the creation of employment; economic growth through the establishment of a National Planning Board to co-ordinate economic and development planning and utilisation of natural resources; education, health and social development; the fight against crime and corruption; youth, sports and gender equity; justice, public safety, employment, and media; foreign affairs (coalition government policy, nd). However, it did not outline coherent and explicit policies and not much has been achieved in these areas in the two years it has been in power. Problems such as poverty, unemployment, crime and corruption, access to health care and justice remain pressing.

However, three months after taking office, the prime minister declared a state of emergency with regard to food security and called upon development partners and friends of Lesotho to assist in redressing the situation, while also indicating the commitment of the government to play its part by providing subsidies to the farmers (Thabane 2012b). The government was able to implement a swift policy on food production in the 2012/2013 cropping period by increasing subsidies by about 43% on the 2011/2012 summer cropping period, for basic food stuffs to reduce hunger and starvation (Ketso 2013, p19). This move indicates some degree of cohesion among the parties.

There has also been some movement in the fight against corruption. The Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO), a state agency mandated to combat corruption and economic offences, seems to have acted against suspected corrupt individuals since the coalition government took over, suggesting some degree of support and political will from the government. The DCEO has investigated and publicised its efforts with regard to cases of fraud, including those in which former and serving ministers as well as some senior government officers have been implicated (see, eg, *Public Eye*, 5 July, 26 July, 23 August 2013). The outcome of these investigations is yet to be seen.

With regard to education, the government continued with the Free Primary Education Policy introduced by its predecessor, but revoked the policy of the previous government on the funding of higher education by increasing the quota of students to be funded by the government in local and foreign institutions of higher learning. This move has given more students than was previously the case continued access to higher education. In other areas, however, there has been slow progress and an apparent lack of cohesion / agreement between and among coalition partners.

A clear example is the higher education sector, which has been hit by incessant instability and industrial action by staff and strikes by students in response to what they regard as bad management and delays by the government in the payment of student bursaries since the last two years of the previous government. Institutions

affected include the National University of Lesotho (NUL), the Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, the Lerotholi Polytechnic and the Lesotho College of Education.

Given that this sector falls under the Ministry of Education and Training, which was allocated to the LCD under the Coalition Agreement, Prasad (2013) seems to be correct when he speaks of 'territorialisation of the government and the development of silos'. Solutions to these problems seemed to elude the coalition government as a whole and the LCD in particular. The government seems to be constrained by the fact that the sector falls into the LCD's 'territory'. This is not surprising because government seems to fit the description of a 'fragmented government', 'ministerial government' or 'model of coalitions, where power is dispersed among individual ministers rather than being concentrated in the office of the prime minister, and the principle of mutual non-interference in the affairs of other ministries by all ministers is adhered to' (Müller 2008, pp 196-197). The minister responsible for this sector seems to have been unable to resolve the problems.

The coalition appears to have divergent views on ways to resolve these problems. The ABC leader repeatedly stated at his political rallies before the elections and in the media afterwards that the cause of the problems, particularly at the NUL, was an expatriate vice-chancellor who had been recruited during the previous government, of which the LCD was part, with a specific mandate to restructure the institution. Although the restructuring process was highly controversial among sections of the population, particularly the university staff, the LCD was adamant that the vice-chancellor must stay.

Another apparently divisive issue has been the implementation of Phase Two of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, in terms of which Lesotho sells water to South Africa. It provides for the construction of dams in addition to the two completed under the first phase and for the generation of electricity for Lesotho. These two components of the project were negotiated by the LCD government in 2011, but have not been implemented. The current prime minister is reported to have been unhappy about the lack of progress and has decided to have the project transferred from the ministry headed by the LCD to his office, a move that is reported to have angered the LCD's executive committee because, in terms of the Agreement, such a decision should have been made by the coalition rather than the prime minister alone. The LCD's executive committee is reported to have instructed its party leader (the deputy prime minister) to write to the prime minister demanding a public reversal of this decision or the LCD will reconsider its position in the coalition government (*Lesotho Times*, 19 September 2013) – a clear threat to the survival of the government.

In a press statement the prime minister said the move had been made because the project was at a stage where it was necessary for the heads of state of the two countries to administer it and that it will be run by a sub-committee of ministers drawn from all coalition partners and chaired by Timothy Thahane, which reports to the prime minister (*Lesotho Times*, 19 September 2013). This statement seems to have appeased the LCD and prevented it from reconsidering its position in the coalition government.

The law-making process in Parliament has also been extremely slow. Since it opened in June 2012 it has considered only six Bills and passed only two (Rakuoane 2013). This is in sharp contrast with its predecessor, which passed 205 Bills and 196 motions during its tenure (Kapa 2013, p 80). However Rakuoane attributes the relatively large number of Bills passed by the previous Parliament to the pressure exerted on Lesotho by the American government, which pushed it to pass several Bills in order to smooth the implementation of the Millennium Challenge Account scheme, under which Lesotho received development assistance in several sectors. Some members of the Senate have expressed great concern about the lack of parliamentary business since the coalition government took office, lamenting that the Senate has considered only two Bills in more than a year (*Public Eye*, 13 September 2013).

The coalition has brought to an end the generally one-party-dominated Parliament and also created an unprecedented and very strong parliamentary opposition. However, this is not without challenges. For instance, in terms of Section 78 of the Constitution the law-making process entails a Bill going through a number of key stages and readings. These are the 'first reading', which is basically the introduction of the Bill, followed by the 'second reading', which involves debating the principles of the Bill. The third stage is the 'committee stage', where the finer details are dealt with. It is before and during the committee stage that the portfolio committees engage thoroughly with the Bill (Shale 2009, p 178).

The potential problem with the current situation is that the law-making process may oscillate between fast and slow depending on the strength of the coalition. If the coalition is not properly managed the disagreements will be seen at the committee level, where some partners may feign robust debate while they *ipso facto* asphyxiate progress as they use the law-making process as their bargaining tool. On the other hand, the process may go more smoothly and faster if the coalition partners agree on most issues. It is, however, difficult to assess the performance of the opposition in Parliament given that there has so far been limited parliamentary business, except that the quality of debate whenever there are issues is robust (Rakuoane 2013).

## COALITION, PARTY SYSTEM AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

The formation of the coalition government led to polarisation and reconfiguration of the party system. Polarisation became visible especially between the DC and the coalition partners. The DC leadership held rallies around the country, informing party supporters that it was not the coalition but the DC that had won the elections and that the DC had not been given time to negotiate with other parties and form a government.

The coalition, through the minister of communications, responded to these claims by effectively banning coverage by state media of DC rallies, arguing that the DC was threatening national stability. The relationship between the DC and its coalition partners has generally been acrimonious but that between the LCD and the DC has been even worse. Polarisation also affected the LCD itself in that some of its members were unhappy about being left out when government positions were distributed among coalition partners. They accused their party of having abandoned them after they had spent their personal resources campaigning for the party during the 2012 polls. They also complained that the positions had been allocated by nepotism and petitioned the party to call a special conference to consider a motion of no-confidence in some key members of the executive committee. The executive committee reacted by disbanding the executive of its Youth League (*Public Eye*, 26 April 2013). There were also some concerns among BNP Youth League members that the party had disregarded the candidate preferred by the executive committee and had appointed Felile Makeka as Lesotho's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom (*Public Eye*, 24 May 2013).

Reconfiguration of the party system became manifest in that the Bloc declared its support for the coalition of the ABC, the LCD and the BNP, while the DC found a partner in the minuscule Basotho Batho Democratic Party (BBDP), which has one PR seat in Parliament, thus projecting three grouping of political parties.

In sum, the coalition has led to alternation of political power. Without it power would have remained in the hands of Mosisili and his DC. The development has changed the course of Lesotho's politics towards coalitions and has broken the 19-year chain of one-party dominance, thus taking the country a step further towards consolidation of democracy, irrespective of future trends.

## THE COALITION AND NATIONAL COHESION

Although it was hastily created without any mandate from the general membership of the coalescing parties, the coalition has arguably contributed to national cohesion. For the first time Lesotho has three political parties from both sides of the national-congress political divide and the Bloc. This means that,

although proximity has been forced by the election outcome rather than their own free will, parties are closer than they have been at any other time. Unlike in past elections where the leaders of losing parties would fan post-election troubles and whip up the emotions of their supporters by alleging all sorts of irregularities, inciting them to engage in actions that threatened national cohesion, the post-2012 elections period has so far been unprecedentedly peaceful and tranquil.

This situation may be explained largely by the inclusive nature of Lesotho's political system, which has been able to accommodate many of the leaders in Parliament, thanks to the electoral and constitutional reforms the country has undergone since the post-1998 election crisis. Yet the parties' manipulation of the MMP electoral system through what is seen as unethical alliances indicates their unwillingness to accept these reforms. These notwithstanding, Basotho appear thus far to be a cohesive nation.

## CONCLUSION

This article sought to assess political party alliances and coalitions and explore their causes as well as to examine their consequences for party systems, democratic consolidation and the governability of the state. We have argued that the formation of the pre-2007 political party alliances can be explained in terms of vote-pooling strategies and office-seeking theory. The alliances had some impact on the country's party system, leading to relationships characterised by conflict between parties inside and outside Parliament, as well as effectively changing the proportional electoral system into a parallel one in violation of the spirit of the MMP system.

However, the alliance phenomenon did not necessarily change the governability of the state in that it effectively perpetuated one-party government and the domination of the country's political system by the LCD. The post-2012 coalition, on the other hand, was purely a product of the fact that the elections produced a hung parliament.

The impact of the coalition on the party system, the governability of the state and democratic consolidation is yet to be fully determined. At this stage it appears that governability has been negatively affected in that the pace of policy implementation has been slow and that the party system has been both polarised and reconfigured, while national cohesion has been strengthened. It will be interesting to see whether the Lesotho authorities will be able to manage the coalition arrangement for the good of the country, which we strongly feel they must, since it seems that no one party will, in the near future, win sufficient parliamentary seats to govern alone.



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# ALLIANCES, COALITIONS AND THE WEAKENING OF THE PARTY SYSTEM IN MALAWI

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## ABSTRACT

*In nascent democracies, like that in Malawi, with presidential regimes and plurality electoral systems, the emergence of fragmented political party systems is inevitable, characterised by ethnically polarised political behaviour, fragile institutions and minority governments. This ultimately leads to volatile and contentious legislative-executive relations, weak political party cohesion and the stagnation of democratic consolidation. Malawi's system inherently offers neither incentives for coalition formation nor mutual interdependence between the executive and the legislature. Hence, the latent conflicts, persistent governance crises, inertia and grinding executive-legislative confrontations. Among political actors and across minority regimes in Malawi recourse to coalition politics has not been embraced as an optimal democratic instrument and formal strategy for state governability since 1994. The Mutharika minority government (2004-2009), which was persistently frustrated by parliamentary paralysis, survived on the floor-crossing inducements of opposition legislators, extended judicial injunctions and the presidential prorogation of Parliament. In addition, the brief 'experiments' with government coalitions, 'collusions' and electoral alliances weakened cohesion within partner parties and hardly increased national cohesion, but promoted state governability and yielded marginal gains in democratic consolidation. This article argues that political institutions that are designed to encourage formal political coalitions and discourage floor-crossing (parliamentary systems and proportional electoral laws) serve to mitigate against state instability and enhance democratic consolidation.*

## INTRODUCTION

Although the terms alliance and coalition are, in practice, used interchangeably, especially among politicians themselves, existing literature treats them as similar but conceptually different. In attempting to retain this conceptual distinction it is essential to highlight what is common to the two and how, if at all, their constitutive elements separate them. It is imperative to mention that alliances and coalitions are phenomena associated with multiparty democracy and scenarios in which no single party can win an outright majority of legislative seats. Alliances and coalitions, therefore, facilitate the formation of a power-sharing government to ensure stable governance and increased legitimacy to govern and defuse executive-legislative tensions.

This article attempts to explore and explicate the causes of political party alliances and coalitions and how they affect (a) party systems, (b) democratic consolidation, (c) national cohesion and (d) state governability in Malawi.

The next section of the article contains a brief discussion of key theoretical aspects of this study, namely the definition and features of political alliances and coalitions. This is then linked to the conditions that rationalise the formation, maintenance and unmaking of alliances and coalitions. The section also presents an overview of the way in which floor crossing has substituted for formal coalitions in Malawi followed by a brief overview that seeks to explain whether specific institutional arrangements such as electoral systems, regime types and party systems promote or discourage political alliances and coalitions.

The second part presents Malawi's political profile, depicting the construction and status of its institutions and contextual conditions within which this discussion of alliances and coalitions is established. The third and fourth parts are fundamentally devoted to an empirical analysis of causes of party alliances and coalitions, systemic and political institutional considerations in party alliances and coalitions, and consequences for state governability, impact on the party system, democratic consolidation and national cohesion. Views expressed in this part are informed by documentary analysis of relevant publications, by the author's perspectives from his vast experience of working with political parties and previous research into coalitions in Malawi as well as by expert opinion. Short interviews were conducted in August and September 2013 on specific aspects with informants identified from the political parties that were most involved in coalitions in the country. The interviews were intended to solicit factual insights from the respondents' direct participation in alliances and coalitions. The final section summarises this discussion and concludes with reflections on future prospects for political alliances and coalitions in Malawi.

*Defining alliances and coalitions*

One of the major expository theoretical models dealing with the notion of political coalitions is the seminal work of William Riker (1962),<sup>1</sup> which, itself, built on the original thesis of Von Neumann & Morgenstern (1953). This model introduced the zero-sum game theory to abstract an established and stable institutional context which hypothetically contextualised how and when political parties would combine forces and synergies and form coalitions from the perspective of western established democracies.

The thrust of Riker's book, which attracted as many fervent admirers as critics, depicts a politician as a rational actor seeking to maximise the prospect of winning and maintaining political power (Wyatt 1999, p 5). Hence he argued that, of necessity, political actors will tend to strategically form a *minimal winning* coalition to maximise their share of governmental power and the spoils or pay-offs of ministerial and sub-ministerial positions (Riker 1962). As his critics observe, the 'coalition size' assumption did not receive sufficient empirical validation and theoretical support. Real life coalition models predominantly feature minority government coalitions such as those formed in the Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway and Denmark) and / or those formed on the basis of common ideological identities, while those in Italy and France (Grofman 1996, pp 265, 267; Wyatt 1999, p 5) are formed to structure and maximise harmony and predictability in policy choices.

There is an avalanche of definitions and typologies in literature on alliances and coalitions and it is beyond the intent and scope of this paper to exhaust them. A few will, however, suffice to show the vastness of the scholarship from which the working definition in this article is derived. Broadly, alliances and coalitions manifest in different forms and for varied reasons. They can be formal or informal, transient or lasting, in fragile or stable regimes, operate at national or sub-national level, at the political level or between and among civic groups. They may emerge to achieve altruistic (philanthropic or political) objectives or predatory interests in both democratic and autocratic governments (Leftwich & Laws 2010, p 2). Alliances and coalitions are formed in all societies for the attainment of social, political or economic aspirations otherwise unachievable by an individual organisation, group or society (Leftwich & Laws 2010, p 2). In the study of regime politics the analysis of coalition frameworks may be used to explain 'who sides with who, against who and over what' (Yashar 1997, p 15).

In advancing the argument that coalitions matter, Deborah Yashar defines them as 'alliances' or union arrangements among heterogeneous groups and social actors who wilfully sacrifice their divergent individual long-term interests for the

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1 See Leftwich & Laws 2012.

sake of mobilising and realising 'intermediate collective goals'. Notably, Yashar's concept, which treats coalitions as synonymous with alliances, further asserts that coalition members can, for instance, organise joint election candidates without there necessarily being a common ideological identity among the constitutive partners. The cardinal aspect of this definition is the pursuit of and passion for intermediate, collective political goals, even among groups with distinctive ideological orientations.

This article adopts the definition of alliances and coalitions as the agreement to a joint cooperation and common agenda of a minimum of two political parties. Fundamental to the distinction between an alliance and a coalition is the timing and basis of the agreement. An alliance is formed prior to elections to 'maximise' votes, while a coalition refers to a post-election formation of political parties in Parliament or government based on their respective electoral outcomes (Wyatt 1999). This differentiation between (pre-election) alliances and (post-election) coalitions is fundamental and is retained in the rest of this article. As Chaudhury (1969, pp 296-7) puts it, 'to share or not to share power is a dilemma when the alternative to sharing power is perhaps to lose it'.

From about the 1980s further refinements of coalition theory have extended the debate to institutional determinants of coalition formations, beyond the size and ideological considerations of the 1960s and 1970s (Kadima 2006, p 5). This theoretical dimension argues that the formation, management and survival of alliances and coalitions are equally conditioned by prevailing formal and informal institutional arrangements that define power configurations – how asymmetric power relations are structured in specific political environments and spheres. This quest explains ways and forms by which institutional factors promote, discourage or constrain political alliances and coalitions, as reviewed in the next section.

### *Institutional determinants of alliances and coalitions*

Institutions are understood here as generally agreed formal and informal rules, scripts or devices, which provide a template of incentives to guarantee a socially regulated, compliant and predictable human interaction and sequence of decision-making (Ostrom 1996, p 2).

The assertion here is that cognitive intuition, courtesy and moral appropriateness are necessary but not sufficient to constrain variability and flexibility of social behaviour. Formal institutions – official rules of procedure, statutes, agreements or contracts that are explicitly codified, relatively invariable, impersonal and externally enforced – are critical due to their inherent compelling incentives for compliance and constraining sanctions for deviance (North 1990, p 4; Lindberg 2010, p 153). Examples include constitutions, alliance or coalition



agreements, electoral laws, regime type, party system and parliamentary system (Bickers & Williams 2001, p 41).

Understanding the simultaneous influence of informal norms, practices and traditions provides an instrumental perspective and knowledge in accounting for ancillary structural factors and drivers of human interactions, especially in most African countries, which are noted to be operating on institutional-dualism, formal and informal. Informal norms are unwritten, tacit, interpersonal, reciprocal, normative codes, and habitualised routines generally accepted and self-enforced outside official systems (Helmke & Levitsky 2004).

Informal institutions that are competitive and substitutive tend to undermine compliance with formal rules. The social affection theory, as elaborated by Richard Emerson (1962) and Peter Blau (1964) is a model of the 'economy of affection' that captures the essence of informal norms by explaining the existence of the asymmetric social relations and interdependence that are ubiquitous in underdeveloped economies, emerging or hybrid democracies and classless societies in South East Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa, where reliance is on a 'hand-shake rather than a contract' (Hyden 2006, pp 72, 85; Scott 1972, p 91). Where they exist, individuals invest in lateral and reciprocal relationships for the attainment of desired aspirations which are deemed to be otherwise unattainable (Hyden 2006, pp 72, 85; Scott 1972, p 91).

With regard to institutional factors that affect coalition formation in Africa, there is ample evidence in the literature to suggest that some institutional contexts are more compatible with the formation of alliances and coalitions than others. For example, Mauritius is one of the few African countries to have met Samuel Huntington's 'two-turnover test' of democratic consolidation (Logan & Cho 2009, pp 3-4) and that the multi-ethnic island's economic development and political stability are attributable to the institutional design adopted at independence that encourages coalition compromises and regime alternation (Bräutigam 1999, p 138).

Elsewhere in Africa alliances and coalitions are uncommon in presidential regimes with centralised executive power that coexists with and enhances patronage politics (Clark & Gardinier 1997; Chabal & Daloz 1999). Alliances and coalitions are unfamiliar in plurality electoral systems, unitary states where the party system is also fragmented, such as Malawi, Zambia, and Kenya. As the Malawi case shows, floor crossing seems, remarkably and routinely, to replace formal alliances and coalitions at the risk of heightened executive-legislative acrimony and state instability. Further, dominant-party systems such as those in Mozambique, Tanzania, South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana also have no tradition of alliances and coalitions and there are limited prospects for regime alternation with parties that have won transition elections maintaining an obstinate grip on state control (Van de Walle 2003, p 301).



It is evident that even at times of unprecedented post-election volatility and extended governance crises, as seen in Malawi from 2004-2009 and 2012, Zimbabwe from 2003-2008 and Kenya, 2007-2008, there is an emerging trend away from formal coalitions towards collusive, exploitative and elite-centred political settlement mechanisms such as 'governments of national unity' or the 'power-sharing' arrangements seen in Zimbabwe and Kenya (Matlosa & Shale 2013, p 19).

Owing to a combination of extremely limited mutual trust, non-exhaustively negotiated partnership terms and severe democratic deficits anchored in patronage and vague agreements, such power-sharing arrangements collapse for lack of long-term legitimacy and binding commitments to balance political cooperation with political competition. In sharp contrast, political coalitions manifest more in minority governments of parliamentary systems, federal governments and proportional representation electoral systems, which also have relatively stable and cohesive party systems such as those in Israel, Italy, Germany, Belgium and Mauritius.

### *Floor crossing as a substitute for coalitions*

Floor crossing, or party switching, is defined and classified differently in different political contexts (Lembani 2013, pp 76-78). In this article floor crossing refers to the regulated or discretionary movement of a legislator from his or her electoral party to another. The extent to which this practice occurs and is therefore regulated also varies significantly according to the stage of democratic development and institutional conditions that regulate political behaviour, as seen in table 1.

As is apparent from table 1 floor-crossing laws 'are more peculiar and prevalent in emerging democracies but rare in established democracies' (Lembani 2013, p 76). The reason is that emerging democracies are often beset by unstable party systems and ineffectively enforced party laws in addition to limited intraparty democracy and unclear ideological distinctions among parties (Goeke & Hartmann 2011, pp 264-265).

In their analysis of floor crossing in Africa Goeke & Hartmann (2011) state that in nearly all cases of floor crossing in Africa 'MPs move from the opposition to governing parties, mostly lured by incumbency incentives of patronage and clientelism' (Lembani 2013, p 76). Induced by private benefits such ministerial appointments, business tenders and increased popularity through more targeted constituency development projects from government, opposition MPs in Malawi cross the floor to support the government with regard to legislative Bills, constitutional amendments and the approval of public appointments (Patel 2008, p 27).

**Table 1**  
**Nations with laws against parliamentary party defections**

Type of democracy, 2007	Number of nations	Number with floor-crossing laws	Nations with floor-crossing laws
Older democracies	36	4 (14%)	India, Israel, Portugal, Trinidad & Tobago
Newer democracies	54	13 (24 %)	Belize, Bulgaria, Ghana, Guyana, Hungary, Lesotho, Mexico, Namibia, Romania, Samoa, Senegal, Suriname, Ukraine
Semi-democracies	58	19 (33 %)	Armenia, Bangladesh, Fiji, Gabon, Kenya, Macedonia, Malawi, Uganda, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Zambia
Non-democratic	4	4 (9%)	Congo (Democratic Republic), Pakistan, Thailand, Zimbabwe
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>40</b>	

Source: Janda 2009, p 4, compiled by author

More than 25 by-elections held between 1994 and 1999 resulted from floor crossing (Patel 2008, p 27). More legislators crossed the floor between 1999 and 2004 during the then President Bakili Muluzi's third-term bid (see below). The largest number of defections, involving more than 65 legislators, took place after President Bingu wa Mutharika fell out with the United Democratic Front (UDF), the party that had elected him, in 2005 and formed his own party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) (Patel 2008, p 27; Goeke & Hartmann 2011, p 275; Resnick 2012, p 8). The epitome of the practice was the massive movement of more than half of all DPP MPs to support President Joyce Banda's People's Party (PP) after the death of Mutharika in April 2012 and the relegation of the DPP to the opposition. As elaborated below, these defections have served as a substitute for formal coalitions in Malawi.

The above synthesis has attempted to set the theoretical scope and broad political context within which to locate and examine institutional and structural factors which explain the processes, challenges and scenarios of political alliances and coalitions in general. The discussion in the next section focuses on institutional,

political and structural factors in Malawi and how they have enhanced or impeded alliances and coalitions. Using both documentary analysis and empirical evidence, the rest of the discussion in this article interfaces institutions, actors and strategies with political alliances and coalitions in Malawi and the implications for democratic consolidation, state governability and national cohesion since the transition elections in 1994.

### POLITICAL CONTEXT AND PROFILE

Malawi reverted to multiparty democracy in 1994 after 30 years of post-independence single-party rule under President Kamuzu Banda and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP). Until 1964, and before the country was officially declared a one-party state, three other parties were registered but were effectively delegalised in 1966 after their poor performance in the first multiparty elections in 1962.

The 1966 Constitution replaced the parliamentary system of government left by the British colonial regime with a presidential system, while retaining a first-past-the-post (FPTP) or plurality system along with a constituency-based voting system for parliamentary representatives (Lembani 2011, pp 6-8). Multiparty politics was reintroduced in 1994 under a new and overly permissive law enacted in 1993. The retention of the FPTP system, however, provides the incentive for aspiring presidential candidates to anticipate securing the coveted executive presidency with marginally more votes than other contestants, even without an electoral alliance. This was particularly discernible when Mutharika became president with about 35% of the total vote in 2004 while the other votes were split among the four other presidential hopefuls.

**Table 2**  
**Malawi's political features and social indicators**

Electoral system	Plurality or First-Past-The Post
Regime type	Executive presidential system
Parliamentary system	Unicameral
Party system	Fragmented
Population	14.9-million
Life expectancy	54.8 years
Urban population	20 %
Real GDP Growth	4.3% in 2012, 9% in 2009
Human Development Index rank	170 out of 187

Although the 2008 national population census put the population at 13.09-million (NSO 2008, pp 3-11) (regionally distributed as 13.1%, 42.1% and 44.8% for the north, centre and south, respectively), while the 2012 HDI and BTI estimate the population at nearly 15-million. When disaggregated across religious affiliations, the 2008 census report indicated that 83% were Christians and 13% Muslims, while those subscribing to other religions and without religious affiliation comprised 2% each. Even though the role of religious leaders, especially the Catholic and Anglican bishops, has been very significant in Malawi's politics, religion itself has not been a politically divisive or decisive factor. Further, the literacy rate – defined as the ability to read and write in any language – was 64%, though with only 16% of the total population having at least attained secondary education. Thus, the national population remains significantly semi-literate. About 80% is rural-based, poor and mostly engaged in subsistence agriculture (ICEIDA 2012, p 12). The country's economy is based on intermediate exports of tobacco, tea and groundnuts, limited extractive mining and processed cane sugar.

### *Political institutions and party system*

Politically, Malawi is a unitary state with three regional administrative centres – north, centre and south – with no legislative autonomy. The unicameral National Assembly consists of the country's 193 constituency seats, whose representatives are directly elected under the plurality system. The Senate (ss 68-72 of the 1995 Constitution) was abolished in 2001 by a unanimous vote of Parliament to consolidate executive power in the single-chamber Parliament in defiance of the dominant public view and unsuccessful petitioning for its retention (Patel 2008, p 5; EISA 2007, p 30; Cammack 2009, p163). Both the president and the legislators serve five-year terms, renewable every five years for the MPs and for a maximum of two terms for the president (Malawi Constitution 1999, ss 67, 83 pp 1-3).

The party system remains fragmented and weakly institutionalised. Organisationally, political parties are challenged by legacies of patronage and serious democratic deficits, especially over leadership succession and primary elections for legislative candidates. It has been contended that political patronage, clientelism and nepotism are preserved by and embedded in formal rules which centralise power 'in the hands of the President (vis-à-vis parliament, the judiciary, and parastatals, local and district government, ruling party machinery, and chiefs)' (Cammack 2011 p 2; 2009, p 155). In addition, since 1995 there have been recurrent incidents of floor crossing or party switching from the opposition to support minority governments. Political parties are transient, with muted, vague or non-existent ideologies and no deterministic effect on voters' choices (Lembani 2011, pp 12-13; Phiri 2000, p 68). All parties employ unstructured methods of

mobilising their members, predominantly using public rallies. Party ownership remains personalised in the president, who is the main financier of party activities, while the identification and estimates of membership are imprecise and intuitively based on party colours (Khembo 2004, p 105). The legislative performance of all political parties across four general elections is reflected in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**Performance of Malawi's Political Parties in Four General Elections**

Political Party	1994	1999	2004	2009
United Democratic Front (UDF)	85 (48%)	93 (48%)	49 (25%)	17 (8.8%)
Malawi Congress Party (MCP)	56 (31.6%)	66 (32.6%)	58 (30%)	27 (14%)
Alliance for Democracy (AFORD)	36 (20%)	29 (15%)	6 (3%)	1 (0.5%)
Malawi Forum for Unity and Development (MAFUNDE)	N/A*	N/A	N/A	1 (0.5%)
National Democratic Alliance (NDA)	N/A	N/A	8 (4.1%)	N/A
Republican Party (RP)	N/A	N/A	15 (7.8%)	0
Peoples Progressive Movement (PPM)	N/A	N/A	8 (4.1%)	0
Movement for Genuine Democracy	N/A	N/A	3 (1.6%)	N/A
People's Transformation Party (PETRA)	N/A	N/A	1 (0.5%)	0
Democratic Progressive Party	N/A	N/A	N/A	114 (59%)
Independents	N/A	4 (2%)	39 (20%)	32 (16.6%)
<b>Total Number of Parties</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Total number of Seats</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>192</b>

Source: Compiled by the author from Malawi Electoral Commission results, various years

\*N/A=non-existent – either the party/group was not registered or was abolished

Table 3 shows that the number of parties changed from three (between 1994 and 2004) to eight (between 2004 and 2009) and to five after the 2009 elections. It also shows the significant increase in the number of independent MPs from four in 1999 to 39 in 2004 and 32 in 2009. This is attributed to flawed party primary elections, in which the candidates favoured by the parties were different from those preferred by the voters (Khembo 2004, p 11). Legislative turnover was high in the 1999, 2004 and 2009 elections, averaging 75%. In the 2004 and 2009 elections there was a marked decline in support for the parties, particularly the UDF and the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), who lost their seats, mainly to splinter parties and independent candidates (Mpesi 2011, p 27).

The configuration of political parties in the legislature, especially after 2004, is indicative of party fragmentation and the status of the parties' organisational capacity to counter rising unpopularity (Kadima & Lembani 2006). There were three reasons for President Mutharika and the DPP's victory in securing nearly 60% of the legislative seats and 66% of the presidential votes in 2009 evenly distributed across the country.

The first was a protest vote against the MCP and the UDF over their MPs' conduct when they were pressured to pass the national budget between 2005 and 2008 (Chinsinga 2009, p 148).<sup>2</sup> During this period opposition party leaders stubbornly insisted on linking the passage of the budget prior to the dismissal of parliamentarians who, in supporting Mutharika's minority government, were deemed to have crossed the floor. Traditional leaders were marshalled along with civil society groups and university students to compel MPs to pass the budget two months into the new financial year. The opposition relented on its 'No Section 65, No Budget' slogan and reluctantly passed the budget only when it was apparent that the electorate was becoming increasingly enraged (Chinsinga 2009, p 132).

The second reason was that since Mutharika had come from a narrow and humble political background his only option was to advance policies that would generate the necessary political support. Thus, his agricultural inputs subsidy programme, launched in 2005/2006 on the back of good weather conditions, was widely credited by the general public as well as donors with having spurred increased productivity and food security (Mpesi & Muriaas 2012, p 10). Increased food security was complemented by improved road infrastructure, sound macroeconomic policies and favourable donor inflows, which led to superior economic growth – the gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate averaged 8% between 2005 and 2009. These factors may have fundamentally contributed to the DPP's landslide victory (Chinsinga 2009, p 149).

The third reason was that out of the disorganisation and chaos that followed the Electoral Commission's eleventh-hour rejection of Muluzi's candidacy the UDF found itself stranded with no presidential candidate. Muluzi was rejected by the EC because he was constitutionally not eligible for a third presidential term, having served in that position for two successive terms between 1994 and 2004. Muluzi's subsequent signing of an electoral alliance agreement with the MCP less than 72 hours before the elections raised more curiosity and controversy than hope among both UDF and MCP followers. It ultimately restricted the choice of sceptical MCP/UDF voters of a presidential candidate

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<sup>2</sup> Based on the 2008 Afrobarometer study, which showed that 76% of the people believed that Parliament should prioritise the passing of the national budget over floor crossing, Chinsinga notes that the 2009 election results were a backlash against the opposition parties.

since the two alliance partners were unable to develop sufficient mutual trust and campaign for their joint presidential candidate, the MCP's John Tembo. The desperate and illusory hopes of the two parties were premised on the hope that they would garner sufficient presidential votes from their parties' respective regional enclaves (Chinsinga 2009, p 148). Cumulatively, the above factors may have swayed popular support towards the DPP's massive election victory in 2009.

### *Legislative configurations across four elections – the case for coalitions*

With the exception of the overwhelming victory of the DPP in 2009 all other elections had resulted in combined majority legislative seats for the opposition parties and a minority party for the president controlling the executive – a scenario referred to as *divided government*. Logically, this state of affairs justified the formation of formal coalition governments to ensure governance stability. Yet the Muluzi and Mutharika governments survived their tenures without any meaningful government coalitions and, after about 18 months in government and six months before the 2014 elections, the Joyce Banda administration seemed set to do the same.

The regional spread of legislative seats for all parties in the 1994/1999 elections is shown in Table 4. The results illustrate that the party of the state president-UDF had no decisive parliamentary majority despite the fact that the number of constituencies increased from 177 in 1994 to 193 in 1999. The table also shows that the election results for the three legislative parties between 1994 and 2004 were regionally based, with AFORD, the MCP and the UDF winning more than two-thirds of the votes in the north, centre and south (Mpesi 2011, p 27) respectively.

On this basis government coalitions were justified to ensure state governability, national cohesion and an enhanced party system. Yet, as the following sections show, each administration resorted to patronage politics and opportunistic Cabinet appointments of MPs who pledged support to the Muluzi and Mutharika administrations (Chinsinga 2009, p 143). The legislative dominance of the MCP and the UDF was remarkably contracted in the 2009 elections, mainly by what seemed to be a decisive vote against the opposition parties' 'stubbornness' in the inter-election period, giving the DPP a windfall of 'sympathy' votes. The MCP's legislative seats diminished from 59 to 26, while its 2009 alliance partner, the UDF, won 17 seats, down from 49 in 2004. As for AFORD, they were reduced to one seat from the six they had won in 2004. By contrast, the DPP moved from six seats in 2005 – all won through by-elections, to a comfortable majority of 114 seats spread across all regions.



**Table 4**  
**Regional share of legislative seats across three parties in 1994 and 1999**

Party	1994				1999				2004			
	N	C	S	Total	N	C	S	Total	N	C	S	Total
UDF	0	14	71	85	1	16	77	94	3	8	38	49
MCP	0	51	5	56	4	54	8	66	0	57	2	59
AFORD	33	3	0	36	28	1	0	29	6	0	0	6
DPP	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
RP	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	0	9	15
NDA	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	0	7	8
PPM	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	0	1	6
MGOE									3	0	0	3
PETRA									1	0	0	1
CONU									0	0	1	1
INDEPENDENTS					0	1	3	4	6	6	29	39
Total	33	68	76	177	33	72	88	193	9	65	40	193

Source: Author's compilation from Malawi Electoral Commission results, various years

N/A – either the party/group was not registered or it was abolished

N – North; C – Centre; S – South

RP – Republican Party; NDA – National Democratic Alliance; PPM – Peoples Progressive Movement; MGOE – Movement for Genuine Democracy; PETRA – Peoples Transformation Party; CONU – Congress for National Unity

## CAUSES OF PARTY ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS

Apart from the 1999 and 2004 elections, in which both opposition parties and the party in government at the time (the UDF) formed separate electoral alliances, as discussed above, the phenomenon of electoral alliances and coalitions has not gained popular appeal in Malawi. Thus it is critical to start answering the question whether opportune junctures existed in Malawi for alliances and coalitions. The answer is 'Yes!' and more than once. Different opportunities emerged for potential alliance and coalition formations. However, partners opted to align with each other or stay apart for various reasons including:

- Revenge by opposition majorities against minority governments whose electoral victory was contested;
- A perceived common political 'enemy' of the allied parties based on personal victimisation, trumped up treason charges and /or 'political persecution';
- Sheer malevolence or hunger for power – 'if not us in government, then no one else'; and
- External influence of concerned civic and religious leaders pressuring for a change of government in the face of deteriorating socio-economic and political conditions.

The first electoral alliance, mooted prior to 1994, was led by the UDF with five smaller political parties (Kadima & Lembani 2006, p 122). None of the five small parties secured a parliamentary seat and disappeared into oblivion as their leaders were offered appointments in parastatals or diplomatic missions. Since the alliance disbanded soon after the elections this article does not discuss it. This analysis limits itself to: the 1994-1995 MCP / AFORD coalition and the 1994-1995 UDF / AFORD coalitions; the 1997-1999 AFORD / MCP-led Mgwirizano alliance; the 2003-2004 Mgwirizano alliance and the 2004-2005 UDF / DPP coalitions; the 2009 MCP / UDF alliance and the mid-2012 PP-led government of national unity with the UDF, MCP and AFORD, formed after the death of President Mutharika in April 2012.

### *The MCP-AFORD coalition (1994-1995) and the UDF-AFORD coalition (1995-1996)*

The 1994 presidential and parliamentary election results showed two major trends. First, a distinct split of votes on regional lines. Second, the governing party, the UDF, did not win a clear legislative majority. Consequently, AFORD and the MCP

formed an informal coalition or 'collusion' to effectively impede government business in Parliament. To resolve the state of un-governability posed by recurrent parliamentary boycotts and sabotage a constitutional provision (s 80(5)) was created for the position of a second vice-president to insulate government coalitions (Cammack 2009, p 163).

A government coalition was established in 1995 between the UDF and AFORD, in which AFORD's leader, Chakufwa Chihana, was made second vice-president of the Republic and six MPs received ministerial positions (Kadima & Lembani 2006, p 123). Although this 'minimum winning coalition' was short lived – Chihana resigned in 2006 amid allegations of widespread corruption in government – the coalition was hailed as the most objectively conceived to date. It facilitated speedy legislative decision-making, ended recurrent opposition boycotts and therefore stabilised state governance and enhanced national cohesion, at least in the short term (interviews with Dan Msowoya, Boniface Chibwana and Ian Nankhuni).

Four additional outcomes were apparent. First, with the six AFORD MPs still in government, the coalition left AFORD's internal cohesion fractured and weakened since the six 'rebel' MPs would support the government agenda, which AFORD would naturally oppose. Second, it was revealing that ideology played no part in opposition coalitions or the government's coalition with any of the partners. For AFORD, the MCP, whose one-party regime it had described in its pre-1994 campaign as the party of 'darkness and blood', was now to become an opposition legislative ally before and after its alignment with UDF. The 'making, unmaking and remaking' of these paradoxical political alignments partly explains the insignificant influence of ideological considerations in electoral alliance and post-election coalitions. Third, they are driven by convenience not substance among rational actors aimed at maximising private and short-term incumbency gains for the leaders and their lieutenants.

The 1995 government coalition collapsed because pressure was building up against Chihana because of unmet promises of further ministerial appointments (interview with Dan Msowoya). This is linked to the fourth factor – patrimonialism and patronage politics, which are intricately embedded in the political culture of democratic Malawi to the extent that they significantly determine political associations. President Muluzi used appointment inducements to lure AFORD MPs who had pledged their loyalty to Chihana. Some informants observed that what influenced the six MPs to accept Cabinet positions was the intrinsic personal financial security, for which they exchanged cooperation and support for Muluzi and the UDF (interviews with Humphrey Mvula and Dan Msowoya). Several other MCP and AFORD MPs declared themselves independent when in fact they had been lured by various favours from the UDF to improve its position in Parliament

(Kadzamira 2000, p 59). This supports the view that neo-patrimonialism is discernible where 'power and legitimacy are built on politics of personalities, centred on big men and their networks rather than parties with clear ideologies and programmes ... [and] fluid political alliances [are] primarily based on the quest for power rather than issues or principles or norms ...' (Chinsinga 2009, p 121).

#### THE AFORD/MCP-LED MGWIRIZANO ALLIANCE (1997-1999)

The interchangeable use of the terms *coalition* and *alliance* in Malawi's contemporary politics was most prominent in 1999 and 2004 when the pre-election alliance codenamed Mgwirizano (literally meaning unity) was referred to as a coalition. Based on the conceptual clarifications above, the rest of this article accordingly refers to it as an alliance. Initially formed between the MCP-Chakuamba faction and AFORD in the hope that their combined forces would produce a landslide victory in the 1999 general elections and unseat the UDF, the motivation was a shared grave disenchantment with the Muluzi administration (interview with Ian Nankhuni).

Chihana and MPC president Gwanda Chakuamba dominated Malawi's experiments with alliances and coalitions until 2004. The initial pairing in 1997 prepared the ground for the two parties' electoral alliance in 1999. Although the alliance was a rational office-seeking option it effectively accentuated the pre-existent leadership rift in the MCP which resulted in divided loyalties between the factions ranged behind John Tembo and Gwanda Chakuamba, especially when the latter nominated Chihana as his running mate in 1999 (Khembo 2004).

In terms of the way the 1999 alliance partners were identified it was clear that civic and religious leaders, especially Christian church leaders including the Catholics, Anglicans and Evangelicals, conceived the idea and decided who would comprise the alliance partner in order to unseat Muluzi in the midst of deteriorating governance and grave economic policy malaise (Kadima & Lembani 2006, p 123). As expected, the religious groups were reprovved by the Muluzi administration. Although the UDF retained power in 1999, the results reflected in Table 5 (a 7% margin between Muluzi and his immediate rival, Chakuamba) show that a substantial number of voters wanted a change of government in favour of the MCP-AFORD coalition.

It is also evident that the axis of the MCP's factionalism, especially after Chakuamba chose Chihana as his running mate, was inimical to its internal cohesion (Khembo 2004). Table 6 shows that while presidential contests are increasingly competitive, splits, alliances and coalitions are affecting political parties negatively and further weakening the fragile party system.

**Table 5**  
**Presidential Election Results**

1994		1999		2004	
Candidate	Votes (%)	Candidate	Votes (%)	Candidate	Votes (%)
Bakili Muluzi (UDF)	1 404 754 (47.16)	Bakili Muluzi (UDF)	2 442 685 (51.37)	Bingu Wa Mutharika	1 119 738 (35.8)
Kamuzu Banda (MCP)	996 353 (33.45)	Gwanda Chakuamba (Mgwirizano Alliance)	2 106 790 (44.3)	John Tembo (MCP)	833 027
Chakufwa Chihana (AFORD)	562 862 (18.90)			Gwanda Chakuamba (Mgwirizano Alliance)	802 386
				Brown Mpinganjira (NDA)	272 172
				Justin Malewezi (Independent)	78 892

Source: Compiled by the author from Malawi Electoral Commission results, various years

The regional share of votes and seats for each party across all election years makes it evident that 'ethnicity and regionalism remain a source of political cleavage in Malawi' (Khembo 2004, p 113).

Soon after Muluzi was declared the winner of the closely contested 1999 election Chakuamba swiftly abandoned the Mgwirizano electoral alliance group, announcing his alignment with Muluzi, leaving the other alliance partners, who were challenging the allegedly 'stolen' election, dejected and disillusioned. Chihana's 'weird flexibility' with alliances and coalitions was visible as he yielded to the call to join Muluzi's open-term agenda in 2002, which sought to remove the constitutional limitation of two five-year presidential terms.

This campaign, which began soon after the 1999 elections, gained momentum, proved politically divisive and significantly strained national cohesion. Although

the June 2002 AFORD national convention resolved neither to join the UDF government nor to support its open-term agenda, Chihana unilaterally defied the decision, was restored as second vice-president of the Republic (interview with Dan Msowoya) and, along with some AFORD MPs, voted for the proposed removal of the limitation, a decision that ripped AFORD apart.

*Post-1999-2004: The UDF/MCP/AFORD coalitions and the Mgwirizano alliances*

The move to extend Muluzi's tenure gathered momentum when Chihana and Tembo supported it after 2001. Tembo, then Leader of Opposition, and his MCP MPs, along with nearly all the AFORD MPs, acting as informal pro-government legislative coalition partners, voted in support of the amendment in July 2002 (Kadima & Lembani 2006, p 125). Other progressive MCP MPs, led by Ishmael Chafukira, called for Tembo's resignation from politics, believing that his support for an extended term signalled that he was not ready to take the MCP into government. At the same time a 'hybrid' alliance comprising civic leaders, political pressure groups like the NDA, non-governmental organisations, activists, the Forum for the Defence of the Constitution (FDC), academics and constitution-minded individual citizens opposed to the removal of presidential term limits emerged (Kadima & Lembani 2006, p 125).

The resurgence of bad governance between 2001 and 2004, coupled with growing concerns about corruption in government, declining social indicators, deteriorating road infrastructure, nepotism and politicisation of the police service prompted civic and religious leaders to identify and approach pre-2004 opposition alliance partners – the MCP, RP, PPM, MAFUNDE, the National Unity Party (NUP), the Malawi Democratic Party (MDP), PETRA and MCODE to form an electoral alliance.

Partly inspired by the success of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in Kenya, which ended the 39-year rule of the Kenya African National Union (KANU), the motivation was to replace Muluzi and prevent him from controlling state affairs through Mutharika beyond 2004. Common among these opposition parties was the one political enemy, the UDF regime and Muluzi's hegemony. The UDF-led electoral alliance, on the other hand, aimed to retain power and maximise its legislative seats through Mutharika, their second-best option in view of the failure of the bid to extend Muluzi's term of office.

The MCP refused to join the 2004 Mgwirizano opposition alliance, saying that as the biggest opposition party it would only join if its leader, John Tembo, was made presidential candidate for the alliance. Mpinganjira's NDA, a faction that broke away from the UDF over Muluzi's undemocratic succession, ambitiously

claimed to be popular enough to face the polls alone. The party claimed that it controlled a large share of the populous southern region. MCODE, a fragment of AFORD and the Republican Party (RP), from the MCP, had broken away from their parties because of leadership disputes. It was obvious that Tembo and Chakuamba's irreconcilable personality clashes, rooted in the past, were decisive reasons why the two would never be able to work together and the combination of malevolence, bad blood, opportunism and egotistical presidential ambitions came at a huge cost for the opposition.

Table 5 shows that had Tembo and Chakuamba agreed to work together under the Mgwirizano Alliance they would have won nearly twice the number of votes that went to Muluzy's handpicked successor, Mutharika. Mutharika's win in 2004 was, therefore, a classic consequence of the attitude 'if not us in government, then no one else' which constitutes part of Malawi's political culture of envy and he assumed the presidency with a mere 35.8% of the total votes cast. The majority of the voters had rejected the UDF and its candidate, yet the plurality electoral system gave him the presidency and, along with it, a legitimacy crisis within the UDF (Dulani 2004, p 14).

Sensing this disaffection, reflected in the more than 64% of the vote that had gone to opposition candidates, Mutharika opted to resolve the looming legitimacy crisis by suggesting a government of 'national unity', not a formal coalition with all the opposition parties in the legislature. The 2004 post-election coalition reconfiguration, engineered by Muluzy, was unusually swift but consistent with what Diana Cammack (2009, p 153) refers to as being an 'opportunistic and duplicitous nature [with the] chameleon-like character of multiparty era politicians, who, with ease, castigate opponents one day and welcome them with open arms the next day'. The RP and the MCODE, motivated by access to state resources, joined the UDF-led coalition government. Patronage politics took its toll with ever-expanding Cabinet appointments, mainly from among opposition legislators, to smooth the progress of government business in Parliament (Chinsinga 2009, p 143).

Events accelerated and Malawi next had to cope with Mutharika's defection a few months after the election from the UDF, which had nominated him, and his establishment of his own party, the Democratic Progressive Party. The resentments and power struggle that followed the UDF's relegation to the opposition and the perils that emanated from Mutharika's resignation have been cogently documented by many scholars (see, eg, Ott & Kanyagolo 2009). Table 6 shows that the decline in the regional share of votes for the MCP, UDF and AFORD is attributed to the increase in breakaway parties and independent candidates in regions which share a common ethnic identity with the established parties (Khembo 2004, p 113).



**Table 6**  
**2009 Presidential Election Results**

Candidate(s)	Regional share of the total valid votes			Total valid votes (%)
	North (%)	Centre (%)	South (%)	
Bingu wa Mutharika (DPP)	650 791 (95)	937 163 (52.6)	1 358 149 (68)	2 946 103 (66)
John Tembo (MCP / UDF Alliance)	20 829 (3)	780 522 (44)	568 693 (28)	1 370 044 (31)
Kamuzu Chibambo (PETRA)	2 496 (0.3)	14 912 (0.8)	17 759 (0.9)	35 167 (0.7)
Loveness Gondwe (NARC)	3 974 (0.5)	13 697 (0.8)	14 489 (0.7)	32 160 (0.7)
Stanley Masauli (RP)	2 163 (0.3)	15 620 (0.9)	16 104 (0.8)	33 887 (0.7)
James Nyondo	1 999 (0.3)	12 803 (0.7)	12 526 (0.6)	27 328 (0.6)
Dindi Gowa Nyasulu (AFORD)	3 936 (0.6)	6 444 (0.4)	9 771 (0.5)	20 151 (0.4)
<b>Total</b>	<b>686 188</b>	<b>1 781 161</b>	<b>1 997 491</b>	<b>4 464 840</b>

Source: Compiled by the author from Malawi Electoral Commission results, various years

### *The 2009 UDF/MCP alliance*

By 2009 the main opposition parties in Parliament, the UDF and the MCP, seemed to be conspiring against Mutharika's administration. As collaborators they were approaching the elections with one goal – to remove Mutharika by the ballot, having desperately but unsuccessfully attempted to remove him through legislative impeachment (Chinsinga 2009, pp 128-129). However, their anti-government legislative machinations shifted public sympathy towards the widely perceived political 'victim', Mutharika, and increasingly isolated the two opposition parties from popular good will as the 2009 elections drew closer.

After the MEC rejected Muluzi as a candidate the UDF found that it had no presidential candidate. This was not surprising as Muluzi may have foreseen this scenario but deliberately failed to provide the party with an alternative candidate who would consolidate his power once in government and frustrate the ascendancy of Muluzi's son, Atupele, who was being earmarked for the

presidency by Muluzi himself (interview, Humphrey Mvula). Considering Tembo a better enemy than Mutharika, Muluzi and Tembo agreed that Tembo would be the torch bearer for the MCP/UDF electoral alliance, with the UDF's Brown Mpinganjira as his running mate.

Like the earlier electoral alliances this one was hurriedly put together, its contents shrouded in secrecy and negotiated by trusted elites of Tembo and Muluzi (Chinsinga 2009, p 148). Paradoxically, the arrangement saw the two parties conducting a few joint rallies and whistle stops in Lumbadzi, Mponela, Dowa and Kasungu, all MCP strongholds (interviews with Boniface Chibwana, Humphrey Mvula and Ian Nankhuni). The message at the rallies was consistent with the parties' common agenda – a desperate electoral alliance resolved to remove Mutharika at all costs. Hitherto, their informal legislative cooperation had been the result of shared bitterness at finding themselves in opposition after the allegedly stolen 2004 election. Nonetheless, the alliance did not create mutual trust between these hitherto bitter political rivals.

It seemed that there was neither the time nor the intention to resolve unsettled questions between the two alliance partners, including who was to field which candidate and where. Intriguingly, the alliance agreement was signed only after the campaign tours and a mere 72 hours before the elections – a factor certain to precipitate an electoral showdown. Accordingly, both parties found themselves with a reduced number of parliamentary seats – two-thirds fewer for the UDF and a decisive 50% loss for the MCP. Like all other previous alliances and coalitions this was another elite-centred 'collusion' with no consultation with party members and no substantive shared national agenda. Strikingly, even patronage politics and campaign handouts were insufficient to reverse the electoral fate of the two parties and deliver the presidential vote needed for the MCP/UDF alliance to torpedo Mutharika.

### *The mid-2012 PP-led coalition government*

On 5 April 2012 President Mutharika died of cardiac arrest, barely two years into his second and final term in office. According to the constitutional order, the then vice-president, Joyce Banda, ascended to the presidency with her People's Party as a minority party in Parliament, while Mutharika's DPP, despite its majority in the legislature, was relegated to the opposition, thereby creating a mid-term regime alternation.

Taking a cue from her mentor, Mutharika, Banda had founded the PP along with legislators such as Anita Kalinde and former DPP second vice-president Khumbo Kachale, who, like Banda, had been expelled from the DPP because of allegations of involvement in setting up parallel political structures across the

country, purportedly to prevent Peter Mutharika from inheriting the presidency from his older brother in 2014. The position of vice-president had been reduced to a symbol, affording Banda more time in 2011 to establish nationwide PP structures. She was overtly and covertly supported and encouraged by those within and outside of the DPP who were similarly opposed to the planned 'family succession' to the presidency. In mid-2011 the PP was officially registered under High Court orders after the DPP had covertly sabotaged its official registration by the Registrar of Political Parties, who rejected it. The tensions and acrimony between the two parties heightened as Mutharika made fruitless efforts to remove Banda from her vice-presidential post.

The report of a Commission of Inquiry into Mutharika's death and the alleged attempt by the DPP to prevent Joyce Banda from assuming the presidency was submitted to President Banda in March 2013 (Nyasatimes online). As a result, Peter Mutharika, along with the chief secretary to the president and six former DPP ministers, dubbed the 'Midnight Six', were arrested and charged with attempted treason and intent to conceal the death of Mutharika, who, they had said at a press conference held close to midnight after Mutharika's death, was still alive but in a critical condition.

Not surprisingly, more than 40 DPP MPs defected to the PP (malawivoice online). Fifteen members of the 32-member Cabinet that Joyce Banda announced on 26 April 2013 were DPP MPs. The rest were mainly members from the MCP, AFORD and the UDF, including the UDF's 2014 presidential candidate, Atupele Muluzi. Only 13 were in Cabinet for the first time, an indication that not much would change (Dulani 28 April 2012). The ensuing political discontent from the UDF, DPP and MCP and some quarters within AFORD suggested that there was no openly negotiated intra-party agreement for a government of national unity. Instead there was collusion to support the PP government in exchange for Cabinet appointments and their attendant benefits. The few seats that had been taken by the UDF and MCP in 2009 were further decimated as their occupants switched to the PP (maravipost.com) in a move reminiscent of Mutharika's jilting of the UDF and formation of the DPP.

Not long after Joyce Banda appointed her first Cabinet the excluded political parties petitioned the Speaker to dismiss from Parliament all MPs who had switched their allegiance and support to the PP government. For their part, the 'floor crossers' obtained court injunctions restraining the Speaker's actions (malawivoice online 22 June 2012). Ironically, Mutharika himself had survived between 2004 and 2009 primarily because MPs were induced to cross the floor to join the DPP-led government and Muluzi exploited similar collusions with AFORD and MCP defectors between 1995 and 2004. Despite the existing anti-floor-crossing laws and the multiple violations of those laws in almost two decades of Malawi's

democracy, only two legislators have lost their seats as a result of crossing the floor (*Malawi Voice* 19 February 2013).

### THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PARTY ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS

As indicated above the only piece of legislation that comes close to anticipating and catering for formal coalitions is the constitutional provision that creates the office of the second vice-president. Section 80(5) states:

Where the President considers it desirable in the national interest so to do, he or she may appoint a person to the office of Second Vice-President and may do so upon taking his or her oath of office or at any time thereafter or upon a vacancy in the office of Second Vice-President; and, where no person has been appointed to the office of Second Vice President then ... *Provided that where the President was elected on the sponsorship of a political party, then he or she shall not appoint a Second Vice-President from that political party* [Author's emphasis].

The emphasised portion suggests that the second vice-president must belong to a different party from that of the president. Apart from this provision, neither the electoral law nor any other legislation makes direct or implied statutory provision for political coalitions. In fact, the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) determined in 1999 that where the presidential candidate and his or her running mate come from separate political parties (as in electoral alliance partnerships) only the symbols and emblems of the presidential candidate's party will be printed on the ballot papers and any other MEC election materials except for those of the running mate's party.

As stated above, Malawi's presidential system, with its inherent expansive appointment powers, does not offer any effective incentives for the formation of political coalitions. Once the president is elected, even with a minority of votes, his or her survival and tenure does not depend on the sustained trust and confidence of the legislature. Further, while parliamentary rules of procedure do not officially provide for and acknowledge the existence of legislative coalitions, they do not explicitly inhibit them. The creation of the office of the leader of the opposition in Malawi's National Assembly denotes an explicit understanding that, hierarchically, all opposition parties in Parliament are both formally and informally headed by the leader of the opposition. This hierarchy is observed, for example, in the fact that the leader of opposition is the first to respond to the presidential address to Parliament on the State of Nation at each official opening

of a parliamentary session. Similarly, parliamentary procedures and practice require that the leader of opposition is the first to respond to the national budget estimates presented by the minister of finance.

### *Consequences for party coalitions and alliances*

The brief UDF / AFORD government coalition in 1995 / 1996 minimised opposition confrontations and legislative-executive tensions and expedited decision-making about government's policy proposals. In essence, the coalition was both the cause and the result of the constitutional amendment providing for the appointment of a second vice-president from a party other than that of the president when the president's party has a minority of seats. Although it does not specifically make this provision compulsory, the section formalises political coalitions that may potentially resolve legitimacy crises without necessarily weakening party discipline and violating the anti-floor-crossing legislation.

Section 80(5), if used to de-escalate ethnic tensions and ease state governability, could also enhance national cohesion. For example, after Chihana was appointed second vice-president in 1996, President Muluzi was freely able to hold public meetings in the AFORD stronghold of the north and indicate that the north, the centre (from which first Vice-President Malewezi came) and the south (Muluzi's homeground), were jointly running government affairs.

However, nearly all subsequent alliances and coalitions either deterred or undermined democratic consolidation, further fragmented the party system and created an increasing public aversion to alliances and coalitions. For example, most undemocratic constitutional amendments were introduced and swiftly passed during periods of pro-government legislative coalitions, with absolute disregard for resolute objections from NGOs, media, civic groups and the general public.

Among the controversial amendments were:

- The removal of the recall provision (s 64) from the Constitution in 1995 to ensure that MPs are not recalled by their constituency until the following election;
- The abolition of the Senate provision (s 68) in 2001 to ensure that the presidential open terms Bill would not be blocked by the second chamber;
- The amendment to the floor-crossing clause (s 65) in 2001 to ensnare MPs who opposed Muluzi's bid for limitless presidential tenure; and
- The 2001 amendment to section 50, in which the quorum required for the legislature to pass constitutional amendments was reduced from two-thirds to 50+1%.

Thus legislative majorities obtained through formal or informal agreements proved detrimental to democratic consolidation. In times when the country was governed by a minority party it is evident that alliances and coalitions enhanced the size and cohesion of legislative opposition parties to the extent that if these majorities supported government business that was in the national interest. On the other hand, whenever the majorities worked to advance personal and partisan interests and unconstructively blocked government business in Parliament, including the appointment of senior public officers, diplomats and approval of the national budget, such behaviour collided with public opinion, with costly electoral consequences. Thus, intra party discipline and cohesion was threatened by subsequent factions and splits emanating from public pressure on some MPs to extricate themselves from such extreme and narrow partisan positions. Under such circumstances, the already fragmented party system weakened further, making opposition parties scarcely viable alternative governments in waiting.

### *Prospects for alliances and coalitions in Malawi*

The prospects for electoral alliances and coalitions in Malawi remain bleak. For slightly more than a year Nyasatimes ran an online opinion survey on the question, 'Should Malawi opposition parties form a Grand Alliance in 2014?' Arguably, online surveys have inherent multiple methodological and sample representation challenges which include being exclusive to the participation of the minority literate with access to the internet, while the opinions of majority voters are hardly represented. It is both striking and illustrative, however, to note that the survey results show that just under two-thirds (64%) of the respondents oppose an opposition electoral alliance.

The survey began before the change of government in April 2012 and before any of the major political parties (MCP, UDF, DPP and PP) had held their conventions. Yet this general perception was not reversed or altered by the political events that took place in the year during which it ran. The signal was clear: there was no significant political support for an opposition alliance in 2014.

**Table 7**  
**Should Malawi Opposition Parties Form a Grand Alliance in 2014?**

Responses	Percentage vote (%)	Absolute votes
No	64	2 253
Yes	30	1 061
Not sure	6	219
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3 533</b>

Source: Nyasatimes



The view reflected in Table 7 is shared by some of those interviewed for this study. Asked about their hopes for alliance partnerships before the 2014 elections one respondent opined: 'Trends are not explicit, the population is indifferent, they have to be incited by church leaders or NGOs early enough ... they may likely respond favourably' (interview with Dan Msowoya). Other interviewees observed that they were not hopeful about the prospects for electoral alliances, given the discouraging history and effects of previous electoral and coalition pacts. Notwithstanding these opinions, and given that politicians in Malawi do not seem to learn from their or others' past mistakes, it is probably that political and electoral entrepreneurs will soon come to centre stage. Predictably, some small factional parties will dissolve and merge with bigger parties for a free ride over campaign expenses. Indeed, the political culture of opportunism and neo-patrimonialism may be reactive and manifest again to influence the formation of the most improbable, elite-centred 'collusions', with no ideological basis or common ideals.

#### TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS: THE EFFECTS OF PARTY ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS

Unlike most of Africa's emerging democracies where successive elections have often resulted in a majority vote for the president and the creation of a dominant governing party, Malawi offers unique insights. The results of the first three elections (1994, 1999 and 2004) resulted in the party in government having a minority of seats in the legislature. This provided a favourable and legitimate basis for formal coalition formations backed by section 80(5). Strikingly, these opportunities were under exploited or conveniently ignored in favour of systematically induced floor crossing. Thus, with the exception of the UDF/AFORD coalition (1995/1996), all minority governments have survived their tenure through the support of opposition MPs who have defected to and supported the government, thereby negating the essence of formal coalitions.

Pessimism about and indifference to formal alliances and coalitions are perpetuated by an exploitative culture of informality, deference to hierarchy, political opportunism, neo-patrimonial reciprocities and a legal vacuum to encourage and regulate political coalitions by increasing the costs. Since 1994 the shifting and transient political alliances and coalitions have mainly been influenced by the flexibility and personal quest for power of Gwanda Chakuamba and Chakufwa Chihana. Experiments with electoral alliances were not based on ideological considerations but on narrowly defined short-term opportunism compounded by scarcely defined, extensively negotiated and mutually binding partnership agreements between and among political parties. Such transparently



negotiated and electorate-centred alliance and coalition agreements anticipated and resolved the implications for electoral competition and support for mutual candidates and averted party fragmentation. They also set realistic targets and proximate attainable gains from such partnerships to inform the development of joint and winning electoral campaign strategies.

By contrast, the alliance and coalition experiments in the last four general elections yielded unintended and costly negative results for the partner parties, especially the smaller ones, thereby accentuating frustration and delusion. While smaller parties secured no seats in Parliament and eventually disappeared into oblivion, the regional political parties suffered remarkably, with diminishing legislative seats and severely compromised party cohesion.

From an institutional perspective, presidential regimes offer no incentives for mutual dependence and cooperation in executive-legislative relations. By design the president and the legislature are given mutually exclusive electoral mandates and tenures by the voters. This encourages executive arrogance, tyranny and unilateralism, which engender systemic paralysis until the expiry of the full term of office, without the option of dissolving the government and holding fresh elections, as is the case in parliamentary regimes. Mutharika's first term is a classic case in point.

In addition, the presidential system also concentrates extensive appointment and other constitutional or statutory powers in the president. This reinforces neo-patrimonialism, personalised power and patronage politics. Further, the winner-takes-all electoral law permits the creation and survival of minority governments, executive unilateralism and intolerance. This law neither anticipates nor sufficiently tackles the legitimacy crises of minority governments and the repercussions for political stability in settings where the majority, who have voted for losing candidates, are governed by a winning president who has received a minority vote.

The unencumbered and strategic exploitation of the court system and the floor-crossing clause (s 65) by successive minority governments undercuts the need for coalitions. Opposition MPs declare themselves independent in *de facto* defection to support minority governments in exchange for public appointments or other forms of private return. This substantially weakens the cohesion of opposition parties, and promotes bad governance as it compromises horizontal and vertical accountability.

Cumulatively, the above factors have led to a further decline in internal party cohesion, augmented fragmentation of the party system and increased the volatility of executive-legislative relations, leading to instability in state governance and ultimately undermining democratic consolidation.

On the basis of the probability that future elections will produce minority governments the lessons of the 1995/1996 UDF/AFORD coalition remain instructive as it served a strategic purpose. Formal coalitions based on mutually acceptable and realistic agreements are the ultimate option for a negotiated post-election political settlement. They enhance the legitimacy of the coalition government, promote trust between coalition partners, diffuse latent conflict and therefore improve state governability and encourage democratic consolidation and party and national cohesion.

### POSTSCRIPT

While the paper on which this article is based was prepared for and presented at the EISA symposium in September 2013 it is being published after Malawi's May 2014 tripartite elections for the president, members of the national legislature and councillors for local government assemblies. A few outcomes of these elections are significant in relation to the question of electoral alliances and the prospects for post-election coalition formations.

Without going into the details of historical regional (ethnic) voting patterns and, indeed, leaving aside the controversies that surrounded the management of the elections and the announcement of the results, the 2014 elections were highly competitive, with 1 292 legislative candidates from 17 political parties and 417 who featured on non-partisan (independent) tickets. Twelve candidates stood in the presidential race, only one of them representing the Tisintha Alliance (TA), a formation of six small political parties with George Mnesa, president of the Malawi Forum for Unity and Development (MAFUNDE) as its torch bearer. The other parties were the Congress for National Unity, the Republican Party, the New Republican Party, the MDP and the NUP.

On the other hand, the AFORD and the PP had forged an alliance, with the PP president Joyce Banda as its joint candidate. Notably, the individual and collective support for the Tisintha Alliance was insignificant, as measured by its electoral performance. For example, none of the TA partners was able to secure legislative representation. As Table 8 shows, Mnesa received only 0.2% of the total valid votes. Importantly, most political parties preferred not to form electoral alliances.

Table 8 shows the comparative share of the vote of eight of the 12 candidates. Each of the other four received 0.2% or less. Table 8 shows that nearly 63% of voters did not favour the DPP presidential candidature of Peter Mutharika. The legitimacy of President Mutharika's government is further challenged by independent MPs, who secured 52 seats (27%), while the DPP has 50 (27%), the MCP 48 (25%), the PP 26 (13.5%) and the UDF 14 (7 %).

**Table 8**  
**Share of Votes per Candidate in the 2014 Presidential Election**

Candidate	No of Votes	% of Vote
Peter Mutharika (DPP)	1 904 399	36.4
Lazarus Chakwera (MCP)	1 455 880	27.8
Joyce Banda (PP)	1 056 236	20.2
Atupele Muluzi (UDF)	717 224	13.7
Kamuzu Chibambo (PETRA)	19 360	0.4
Mark Katsonga Phiri (PPM)	15 830	0.3
John Chisi (UP)	12 0848	0.2
George Mnesa (MAFUNDE and TA)	11 042	0.2

Source: Compiled by author from Malawi Electoral Commission 2014 election results

Given the fact that Malawi has no tradition of formal government coalitions, there are four possibilities for the hung Parliament. First, the MCP, PP and UDF will informally show a common front in opposing or supporting specific legislative proposals. This is likely to result in legislative instability.

Second, the opposition MCP will discernibly fortify its control of legislative business by ensuring that one of its members becomes Speaker, while its president, Lazarus Chakwera, remains leader of the opposition.

A third possibility is that the opposition parties, the MCP, PP and UDF, will seek to dominate portfolio committees, which will probably result in legislative paralysis. The fourth possibility is that the DPP will circumvent the dominance of the opposition by wooing independent MPs with Cabinet appointments and other incentives in exchange for their legislative support for government business.

It is also likely that some opposition MPs will cross the floor to support the DPP in exchange for executive largesse. The number of independent MPs has grown steadily from none in 1994, to 4 in 1999, 39 in 2004, 32 in 2009 and 52 in 2014. There is a similar configuration in the share of seats in the local assembly, as is evident from Table 9. Notably, the combined share of seats among the opposition parties exceeds the combined share of seats held by DPP and independent councillors.

To avert any future post-election legislative instability arising from the emergence of minority governments and legitimacy challenges, a lasting solution lies in the reform of the electoral law. Specifically, Malawi needs to introduce a two-round system of elections that will ensure that the winning president has at least 50+1% of the total valid votes (see Aubi 2014). Similarly, tighter anti-floor-crossing legislation and the reintroduction of the recall provision for legislators who change parties will enhance intra party cohesion, thereby reducing party fragmentation.

**Table 9**  
**Parties' Share of Local Assembly Seats**

AFORD	1
NASAF	1
CCP	2
INDEPENDENT	35
UDF	57
PP	65
MCP	131
DPP	165
<b>Total</b>	<b>457</b>
Remaining wards	5
<b>Total wards</b>	<b>462</b>

Source: Compiled by author from MEC LGE Results, June 2014

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### **Interviews**

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- Dan Msowoya, Publicity Secretary / former Secretary General, Alliance for Democracy AFORD, Mzuzu. Interviewed 21 August 2013.
- Humphrey Mvula, former Director of Campaign and Strategy, United Democratic Front UDF, Blantyre. Interviewed 21 August 2013
- Hon. Lingson Belekanyama, MP, Director of Research, Malawi Congress Party MCP, Lilongwe. Interviewed 23 August 2013.
- Ian Nankhuni, Publicity Secretary, Peoples Party PP, former Secretary General for Mgwirizano Alliance 1999-2004, Zomba. Interviewed 21 August 2013.
- Ms. Chatinkha Nkhoma, MCP, Interviewed 20 September 2013.

# KENYA'S DECADE OF EXPERIMENTS WITH POLITICAL PARTY ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS

## *Motivations, Impact and Prospects*

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### ABSTRACT

*This article explains the causes, factors and motivations influencing the formation (the survival and the collapse) of pre-electoral alliances and coalition governments in Kenya. It also looks at the consequences of alliances and coalitions for national cohesion and the party system. The paper demonstrates that alliances and coalitions contribute to national cohesion in Kenya by bringing together polarised political parties and ethnic groups and ensuring a more equitable sharing of national resources. Conversely it argues that while party alliances and coalitions do contribute to a degree of national cohesion their disintegration may, in certain circumstances, undo the progress achieved in building national cohesion. Finally the study shows that party alliances and coalitions tend to weaken smaller parties and the party system in favour of the larger parties.*

### INTRODUCTION

This article is an attempt to understand the causes, factors and motivations influencing pre-electoral alliance building and collapse and to explain the impact on the party system and national cohesion of those alliances that may transform into governing coalitions.

A decade ago a broad-based pre-electoral alliance, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), won the national elections in Kenya, thus changing the face of contemporary electoral and government politics in that country. Since the 2002 general elections Kenyan politicians have realised that political parties that are serious about winning a national election or referendum and forming a government have no option other than to make a broad-based electoral pact and form parliamentary and governmental coalitions. The 2005 constitutional referendum, the 2007 general elections, the 2010 constitutional referendum and the 2013 general elections all followed this pattern and were fought by major pre-electoral political party alliances.

Shortly after the NARC's December 2002 election victory serious disagreements emerged between the constituent parties of the NARC, the National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK) and the Rainbow Coalition, also known as the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the two main groupings which came together and signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) creating the NARC (Kadima & Owuor 2006). The disagreements arose over the implementation of the MoU, dividing the coalition along its initial lines. This dispute almost paralysed Parliament until the end of the five-year term. The experience of NARC has provided many lessons for Kenyan party leaders and has served to influence the subsequent nature, character and functioning of alliances and coalitions in the country, as well as shaping the strategic approach of individual parties when making decisions to affiliate to a coalition.

In this article 'alliance' is defined as the coming together of at least two political parties prior to an election in order to maximise their votes and 'coalition' refers to the association of a minimum of two political parties to work together in Parliament and/or in government on the basis of the election outcome (Kadima & Owuor 2006). Therefore, an alliance is formed before an election and a coalition is generally built on the basis of the last election outcome. These definitions are consistent with Andrew Wyatt's characterisation of alliances and coalitions in which he argues that 'in forming coalitions, politicians leading disciplined parties have a clear idea of their respective strengths whereas politicians forming electoral alliances work with less certainty as they only have an estimate of the strength of their electoral support and how it might be affected by a potential alliance (Wyatt 1999).

The article will try to answer two research questions, namely: What are the causes and factors that motivate political parties to form alliances? Do the alliances and coalitions ultimately strengthen or weaken the country's party system and national cohesion?

To answer these questions, party leaders and representatives as well as selected academics and non-governmental professionals were interviewed. The

interviews were based on a semi-structured questionnaire covering the questions mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

This article is subdivided into six sections, namely:

- Introduction: the study, its aim, approach and content;
- Historical overview of party alliances and coalitions in Kenya;
- Legal framework governing party alliances and coalitions in Kenya;
- Factors and motivations explaining party alliances and coalitions in Kenya;
- Effects of party alliances and coalitions on national cohesion and the party system;
- Conclusion: some conclusions and the possible future of party alliances and coalitions in Kenya.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PARTY ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS IN KENYA

### *The 1992 and 1997 elections: Coalitions and alliances at the dawn of multiparty elections*

The historical context of party coalitions in Kenya is inextricably linked to the event that characterised the quest for the restoration of multiparty democracy in Kenya in the early 1990s. Towards the end of the 1980s serious agitation for political pluralism gripped the country in response to the political freedoms that had been curtailed by the then ruling party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) (Maina 1997). While the centralisation of power in the executive and a powerful presidency were introduced at the dawn of independence, it was not until 1982, when Kenya became a *de jure* one-party state via a constitutional amendment (1982 Section A), that multiparty politics were outlawed. As a consequence KANU became the only party, a move that was also characterised by the concentration of executive authority in the president, effectively fusing the power of the state and the party.

In response to the shrinking political space a collaborative effort involving civil society organisations, religious organisations and political pressure groups coalesced under the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (Ford) and began demanding inclusive and participatory governance. The efforts of these groups were aided by the political reorganisation of the international sphere, marked by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The *modus operandi* that had for so long determined the nature of politics – sacrificing good governance at the altar of loyalty to the East-West divide that characterised the Cold War era – was replaced by the demand for more accountable and transparent governance.

The political pressure exerted by the pro-reform group (Ford) was met with repression by the KANU government, which preferred to maintain the status quo and not concede any substantial political space (Kadima & Owuor 2006). However, the relentless push by pro-reform organisations led KANU to convene an urgent National Governing Council (the Saitoti Committee of 1991) meeting which recommended the repeal of Section 2A of the Constitution and the introduction of multiparty politics.

While the reintroduction of multiparty politics gave political groups an opportunity to consolidate and present a unified force to counter KANU's hold on power, opposition leaders who were spearheading the return to multiparty politics equated multiparty democracy with the proliferation of political parties. Ford, which had emerged as a broad-based coalition, was faced with myriad problems and leadership wrangles that eventually led to a split and the registration of Ford factions as Ford-Kenya, led by Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, and Ford-Asili, led by Kenneth Matiba. By the time of the elections in December 1992 a total of 12 parties had been registered. This fragmentation and proliferation of parties split voter loyalties, allowing a relatively easy KANU victory in both the 1992 and the 1997 elections, with President Daniel arap Moi continuing as head of both party and state.

KANU's victory was not occasioned merely by the split of the opposition, a number of other factors contributed. To begin with, the constitutional amendment that reintroduced multiparty politics was not accompanied by comprehensive reforms. A key problem was the failure to curb the excessive concentration of power and authority in the office of the president. Hence, the country embraced multiparty democracy with laws that were suited to a one-party state (Kadima & Owuor 2006). Secondly, President Moi was not barred from contesting the multiparty elections despite having been in power for over a decade. Thus he contested both the 1992 and 1997 elections with all the privileges of incumbency. The powerful presidency also ensured that key appointments to electoral institutions were made by the president, who retained undue advantage in the composition and operation of these institutions.

KANU won both the presidential and the parliamentary elections in both 1992 and 1997. In 1992 President Moi won with 38% of the total votes while KANU won 99 of the 188 parliamentary seats. The combined opposition parties won a total of 89 parliamentary seats and the largest share of the presidential votes, which were divided among them. A similar scenario was repeated in 1997 elections, where KANU won the presidency with 40% and scooped a total of 113 seats of the increased number of 222 (including 12 nominated). KANU's victory was guaranteed by the direct presidential election and simple majority electoral system that had been in place in Kenya since independence. Owing to

the incumbency privilege and the skewed constituency delimitation that had favoured KANU strongholds, victory was virtually assured.

**Table 1**  
**Results of the 1992 Presidential Election**

Candidate and Party	No of Votes	% of Votes
Daniel arap Moi (KANU)	1 964 867	36.8
Kenneth Matiba (Ford-Asili)	1 430 627	26.8
Mwai Kibaki (Democratic Party)	1 064 700	20.0
Oginga Odinga (Ford-Kenya)	944 564	17.7
Others	43 037	0.8

Source ECK results 1992

**Table 2**  
**Results of the 1997 Presidential Election**

Candidate and Party	No of Votes	% of Votes
Daniel arap Moi (KANU)	2 500 856	40.51
Mwai Kibaki (DP)	1 911 472	30.97
Raila Odinga (NDP)	667 886	10.82
Michael Wamalwa (Ford-K)	505 704	8.19
Charity Ngilu (SDP)	488 600	7.91
Martin Shikuku (Ford-A)	36 512	0.59
Katama Mkangi (KNC)	23 554	0.38
George Anyona (KSC)	16 428	0.27
Kimani Wanyoike (Ford-P)	8 306	0.13
Koigi wa Wamwere(KENDA)	7 745	0.13
Munyua Waiyaki (UPPK)	6 194	0.10
Godfrey Mwereria (GAP)	4 627	0.07
Wangari Maathai (LPK)	4 196	0.07
Stephen Oludhe (EIC)	3 691	0.06
Joseph Kangethe (UPPK)	3 584	0.06

Source: ECK official results 1997



*The 2002 elections and the NARC coalition*

The lessons learnt by the opposition parties from the 1992 and 1997 general elections underpinned the preparations for the 2002 elections. The reality that a fragmented opposition could not win against a well-established and entrenched incumbent party that had been in power since independence became apparent to opposition parties and compelled them to initiate talks geared towards forming an alliance. The realisation that President Moi, who had served his two five-year terms, was ineligible to contest subsequent elections stirred KANU, which had been in power, into considering some form of alliance with other parties.

In the run-up to 2002 elections two competing alliance-building initiatives were pursued simultaneously. The first involved KANU and the National Development Party (NDP), which had resolved to form an alliance after the 1997 elections. The second involved opposition parties, among them the Democratic Party (DP), Ford-Kenya and the National Party of Kenya (National Alliance for Change).

The culmination of the KANU and NDP alliance was the merger in February 2002 that saw the NDP's Raila Odinga dissolve his party and merge with KANU. This merger was, however, short lived. In a bid to craft his own succession plans President Moi announced his endorsement of Uhuru Kenyatta and unilaterally declared him KANU's presidential candidate, a move that upset the more established leaders of KANU. Raila Odinga spearheaded opposition to the move and signalled a desire to oppose Uhuru Kenyatta. Disgruntled figures within KANU announced the formation of the Rainbow Alliance, whose name signified the diverse composition of the group. Prominent personalities coalescing under the Rainbow banner included George Saitoti, Raila Odinga, Kalonzo Musyoka, Musalia Mudavadi and Joseph Kamotho.

Meanwhile, progress in the opposition coalition led to the transformation of the National Alliance for Change into the NAK, led by Mwai Kibaki, Kijana Wamalwa and Charity Ngilu.

Towards September 2002 the problems within KANU reached a point of no return. The Rainbow group, which had by then registered a party called the Liberal Party (LDP) of Kenya, defected en masse from KANU and joined hands with the NAK to form NARC, with President Mwai Kibaki as its presidential candidate (Kadima & Owuor 2006). NARC was a mass movement and a coalition of various sectors that united purposely to defeat KANU and Uhuru Kenyatta in the 2002 election. The coalition agreement that brought the various factions of NARC together was embodied in the Memorandum of Understanding which was to provide the blue print of governance for the NARC administration.

NARC overwhelmingly won the 2002 presidential elections and also won the majority of seats in Parliament.

**Table 3**  
**Results of the 2002 Presidential Election**

Candidate	No. of Votes	% of Votes
Mwai Kibaki (NARC)	3 636 783	61.3
Uhuru Kenyatta (KANU)	1 837 479	30.2
Simion Nyachae (Ford –People)	3 62 668	5.9
James Orengo (SDP)	24 340	0.4
Waweru Ng'ethe (Chama Cha Umma)	9 941	0.1

Source: ECK official results 2002

### THE COLLAPSE OF NARC

From the outset it was clear that the overriding factor that had led to the formation of NARC was the need to defeat KANU and win political power. Despite the fact that the NARC MoU outlined issues of governance the leadership was not committed to fulfilling the pledges contained in the NARC manifesto and the power-sharing agreement reached between the two parties.

The most contentious issue was the position of prime minister, which had been earmarked for Raila Odinga<sup>1</sup> of the LDP. Most of the leaders close to President Kibaki saw the elevation of Odinga to the prime ministership as a challenge to them. To avoid this, some of them sought to discourage President Kibaki from establishing the position. Connected to the disagreement over the creation of the position of prime minister was the 50-50 power-sharing arrangement between the LDP and NAK factions of NARC that had been contemplated in the MoU. Based on the appointments made by President Kibaki the NAK faction received a disproportionate share of Cabinet positions, which was contrary to the pre-election deal between the two coalition partners.

Another contentious issue was the enactment of a comprehensive constitution, which formed a key pillar of the NARC manifesto. During the campaigns NARC had pledged that the new constitution would be enacted within the first 100 days of its assumption of office. Since NARC had come to power under the old Constitution, which had concentrated power in the presidency, members of the executive arm of government, who, themselves, wielded substantial powers,

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1 Raila Odinga was credited with endorsing Kibaki and ensuring that NARC held together.

saw nothing wrong with governing under the old Constitution. Procrastination and disagreement over the completion of the constitutional review process persisted throughout NARC's five-year term and contributed significantly to the final breakup of the coalition during and after the 2005 constitutional referendum.

Following years of corruption and ineptitude NARC came to power on the basis of the twin promises of zero tolerance of corruption and the efficient use of state resources. However, soon after it assumed power allegations of corruption threatened NARC's survival, with key personalities named as allegedly complicit in corrupt practices. The epitome of the corruption scandals was the Anglo Leasing scandal that implicated key people surrounding President Kibaki, and which was ostensibly engineered to amass the campaign money required to re-elect Kibaki in 2017.

The split within NARC was also caused by disagreement over policy issues. The policy positions contained in the NARC manifesto<sup>2</sup> were not the product of broad consultation or participation by the constituent parts of the coalition. The time constraint imposed by the election date led the party to craft policy positions whose implementation could not be guaranteed. Further, the entrenched positions held by the affiliated NAK and LDP on key issues were not harmonised, resulting in different expectations among the coalition partners of the way in which the government's mandate would be executed.

Despite the challenges faced by NARC the coalition managed to hold for two and half years amid growing discontent, until 2005. The final split was caused by the acrimonious and divisive campaign that surrounded the 2005 constitutional referendum. In the run-up to the referendum a clear fault line over the proposed new Constitution pitted the two factions of NARC against each other. The LDP wing opposed the Constitution, citing massive manipulation of the draft Constitution by the government, and the NAK wing supporting the draft Constitution as amended by the Wako Committee.<sup>3</sup> During the campaigns for the passage of the new Constitution, the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) inadvertently created two symbols – orange for those who were opposed to the Constitution and banana for those who supported it. The orange symbol was soon transformed into the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), which eventually became a political party. In the ensuing campaign the ODM succeeded in mobilising nationwide support and emerged victorious in the referendum campaign, effectively defeating the passage of the new Constitution.

Upon the defeat of the Constitution President Kibaki swiftly dissolved the Cabinet, a move that was ostensibly intended to purge political dissenters and get

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2 The LDP wing, for example, preferred devolution, while the NAK wanted to retain the centralised system of governance.

3 A committee appointed by President Kibaki and headed by former Attorney General Amos Wako.

rid of the Orange members still in the Cabinet and who had opposed the passage of the new Constitution. The president also began to entice the KANU leadership, led by Uhuru Kenyatta,<sup>4</sup> who was in opposition but who had begun to warm to the government. When Kibaki reconstituted the Cabinet, all the Orange members led by Raila Odinga and Kalonzo Musyoka were left out, precipitating the formation of a new alliance in anticipation of the 2007 elections and Kibaki's re-election.

### *The 2007 elections: Party of National Unity and the Orange coalition*

The 2005 constitutional referendum set the tone and pace for the 2007 general elections. The polarisation, divisions and tensions that had emerged during the campaigns by the ODM, allied to Raila Odinga, and the government coalition headed by President Kibaki left nothing to chance as they criss-crossed the country galvanising votes in an attempt to forge a winning coalition.

Realising that the NARC coalition had completely collapsed, President Kibaki and his inner circle immediately began to shop for a 'party vehicle' with which Kibaki could contest the 2007 elections. The dilemma faced by the Kibaki side of the divide was how to persuade Charity Ngilu, who was the registered chairman of NARC but was in the Odinga camp, to give up the leadership of the party. When these efforts failed, those with an interest in Kibaki's re-election registered a number of new parties, among them NARC-Kenya and the Grand National Union (GNU) to provide Kibaki with a party platform. The problem, however, was that these parties were formed by people who were close to Kibaki, thereby depriving them of national appeal. President Kibaki recognised that to effectively challenge the ODM, which had transformed itself from a mass coalition into a single political party, he needed a party that could appeal to the diverse ethnic communities in Kenya, and regionally across the then eight provinces. Shortly before the 2007 election the Party of National Unity (PNU) was formed and Kibaki immediately declared that he would defend his seat on a PNU ticket.

The Orange Movement, too, faced a number of problems, especially that of transforming itself from a mass movement into a political party. The challenges of managing public expectations and leadership differences within the ODM, reminiscent of the schisms within NARC, threatened the survival of the movement. The first complication was that, while the leadership was still busy campaigning for the referendum under the Orange Movement, which was then a loose organisation, individuals aligned with the Kibaki government side registered a political party called the Orange Democratic Movement Party (ODM) to pre-empt any such registration by the leadership of the Orange Movement.

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4 Although Uhuru Kenyatta opposed the Constitution he was reluctant to join ODM party that had been formed soon after the referendum.

As a counter strategy, the leadership of Orange registered the Orange Democratic Movement of Kenya (ODM-K) to contest the 2007 elections. However, in the run-up to the elections a leadership row involving two prominent Orange leaders, Raila Odinga and Kalonzo Musyoka, created problems for the new party. The bone of contention was who would be the presidential candidate and the process by which that candidate was to be selected.

When reconciliation talks failed Raila Odinga entered into negotiations with the leadership of the Orange Democratic Movement, whose leaders agreed to relinquish the leadership of the party. Odinga and the majority of ODM-K members defected to the ODM, effectively weakening the ODM-K and reducing it to just a small portion of the Eastern Province of the country, from where Kalonzo Musyoka hailed. The 2007 general election, therefore, became a two-horse race involving the Party of National Unity, headed by President Kibaki, and the ODM, headed by Raila Odinga, with the ODM-K, headed by Kalonzo Musyoka, playing the role of a small but crucial 'third force'

**Table 4**  
**Results of the 2007 Presidential Election**

<b>Candidate and Party</b>	<b>No of Votes</b>	<b>% of Votes</b>
Emilio Mwai Kibaki (PNU)	4 578 034	46.38
Raila Amolo Odinga (ODM)	4 352 860	44.10
Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka (ODM-K)	879 899	8.91
Joseph Ngacha Karani (Kenya Patriotic Trust Party)	21 168	0.21
Pius Muiiru (Kenya Peoples' Party)	9 665	0.10
Nazlin Omar (Workers Congress Party of Kenya)	8 624	0.09
Kenneth Stanley Matiba (Saba Saba Asili)	8 049	0.08
David Waweru Ng'ethe (Chama Cha Umma)	5 976	0.06
Nixon Jeremiah Kukubo (Republican Party of Kenya)	5 926	0.06

Source ECK results 2007

*2008 post-election violence and the emergence of the grand coalition government*

On 27 December 2007 Kenya held its fourth general elections since the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in 1991. Although the campaign period and election day were generally peaceful, the process of counting, collation, and transmission of results by the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK), Kenya's former election management body, was delayed, sparking tension and unrest that cast doubts on the credibility of the process. On 30 December 2007 the ECK declared President Kibaki the duly elected president, despite bitter protests from the ODM and questions from the European Union's observation mission about the integrity of the count.

According to the ECK, President Kibaki polled slightly over 4.5-million votes, while Raila Odinga garnered approximately 4-million. Kalonzo Musyoka came third, with slightly more than 800 000 votes. The announcement of the results sparked violent demonstrations characterised by the destruction of property and ethnically targeted killings and population displacement that lasted for a full seven weeks, with the social political and economic consequences lingering for much longer. The crisis precipitated a massive and unprecedented process of reform of the political structure and system.

Fearing the potential for a sustained violent conflict a team of Eminent Africans<sup>5</sup> under the leadership of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, aided by Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete, brokered an Africa Union (AU)-sponsored peace deal that returned Kenya to some level of stability. The mediation led to the signing of the National Accord and Reconciliation Act which established the Grand Coalition Government, bringing together the two parties (The Party of National Unity – PNU and the Orange Democratic Movement) as the main coalition partners. ODM-K formed a post-election coalition with the PNU, a move that saw Kalonzo Musyoka appointed vice-president.

In the light of the experience of contestation and subsequent conflict after the NARC MoU, the National Accord was entrenched in the Constitution and its provisions safeguarded both in the Constitution and through an Act of Parliament,<sup>6</sup> thus avoiding the need to solve potential conflicts over the exercise of power and authority. The salient features of the Accord included, among other factors, the creation of the position of prime minister, which was earmarked for Raila Odinga, and the sharing of executive power between president and prime minister; the sharing of Cabinet and government positions on a 50-50 basis

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5 Other members of the team included Benjamin Mkapa and Graça Machel.

6 Constitution of Kenya Amendment Act of 2008 and the National Accord and Reconciliation Act 2008.



and consultation in all the affairs of government. The Accord further provided mechanisms for the dissolution of the coalition. Of utmost importance was the constitutional protection of the Accord, which insulated it from arbitrary and unilateral interference by the political class.<sup>7</sup>

The Panel of Eminent Africans also recommended measures to accelerate long-term institutional reform of the judiciary, Parliament, the electoral system and land tenure practices. These were embodied in the Agenda 4 Item.<sup>8</sup> The gist of these reforms was the attempt to address historical injustices touching on ethnicity, employment and income disparities (to be implemented over the period of a year). At the centre of the Agenda 4 Reforms was a comprehensive review of the Constitution. The constitutional review process began in 2009 and was completed on 4 August 2010, when the country overwhelmingly supported the new Constitution in a referendum. Within the context of electoral reform the Constitution contained detailed provisions concerning elections and political parties and recommended timelines for enacting election-related legislation.

For the most part, the Grand Coalition Government was credited with many achievements. It succeeded in restoring peace after the disputed 2007 election and the violence that followed. It was also instrumental in passing a new Constitution, something that had eluded the country for decades. The Constitution provided a new institutional framework for reform of election management, the state governance system, the distribution and devolution of powers and the administration of justice, among other elements. Of particular importance was the enactment of the election sector laws that facilitated the 2013 elections.

The Grand Coalition government was not without its challenges. The two centres of power (President Kibaki and Prime Minister Odinga) created by the Accord were a constant cause of friction and the legislative agenda of Parliament was often hamstrung by partisan politics, even though the tenth Parliament passed a record number of laws. While peace had been restored the coalition government did very little to promote national healing and reconciliation. Malpractices associated with the past, some of which, especially corruption, had become embedded and inscribed as modes of institutional practice, were proving difficult to unravel and stamp out.

### *Entrenching party coalition in the law: 2013 elections, Jubilee and CORD coalitions*

The 2013 elections marked a significant departure from those of the past in several ways. To begin with, the elections were held against the backdrop of the 2008

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7 Decision informed by both the 2002 KANU-NDP merger and the NARC coalition.

8 The fourth agenda item identified by the panel that involved comprehensive reforms in the country to redress past imbalance and inequalities.



post-election violence. They were also held under the new constitutional, legal and administrative legislation (Owour 2012) enacted in 2011 in compliance with the new Constitution. The complex nature of the 2013 elections was compounded by a number of factors: the new Constitution introduced a higher threshold for electing the president by providing for an absolute majority and a 25% support threshold across the newly introduced 47 counties. It also introduced new elective offices at national level and in the devolved government. Undoubtedly, the increased number of elective offices created a logistical nightmare for political parties and the IEBC, as evidenced by the logistical challenges experienced during the elections. The transitional nature of the elections and the fact that the International Criminal Court (ICC) proceedings in relation to the 2008 post-election violence and killings were ongoing at The Hague, compounded the problems.<sup>9</sup>

Within the context of coalition politics the new legal framework provided a mechanism for structured formation of party coalitions – in a major departure from past practice, in which coalition formation was merely premised on a gentleman's agreement, the Political Parties Act made provision for party coalitions and set down the timelines for concluding coalition agreements.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Political Parties Act and recognising that no political party would make it on its own without forming a coalition or alliance with others, preparations for 2013 elections, as with all past multiparty elections in Kenya, was characterised by talk of coalition formations. The two main coalitions (the PNU and the ODM) which had contested the 2007 elections had, to all intents and purposes, split and new factions formed within their ranks. In the ODM a split between erstwhile allies Raila Odinga and William Ruto had caused divisions within the party. Ruto declared that he would contest the election on a different party ticket; first joining the United Democratic Movement (UDM) and later the United Republican Party (URP). In the run-up to 2013 the ODM split further when the first deputy party leader, Musalia Mudavadi, defected and formed the United Democratic Forum (UDF).

Because President Kibaki was not seeking re-election, having served his constitutional term limit, the PNU split and the affiliate parties that supported the re-election of Kibaki disintegrated into various factions. During the initial stages ODM Kenya's Kalonzo Musyoka was involved in discussions with Uhuru Kenyatta in a bid to form an alliance. As the election date approached parties that had supported Kibaki tried desperately to woo Kenyatta to seek the presidency on their ticket. Kenyatta, however, rejected all attempts and registered The National Alliance Party (TNA), which he used to contest the presidency.

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9 The ICC indicted six individuals, among them William Ruto and Uhuru Kenyatta, over the 2008 post-election violence.

Another factor that contributed significantly to coalition talks was the ICC trials in The Hague. The ICC had indicted both Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto as co-perpetrators of the violence that followed the 2007 election. The pre-trial chamber of the ICC later confirmed the charges. The unintended effect was to bring together Ruto and Kenyatta, who began to mobilise support around the ICC process. Given the fact that the two leaders come from two large communities in Kenya, their communities were mobilised in solidarity with them. The prayer meetings and the mass rallies addressed by the two leaders convinced them that they could form a formidable coalition to contest the 2013 elections.

Upon leaving the ODM the new UDF leader, Musalia Mudavadi, joined hands with Kenyatta and Ruto in the hope that the two ICC indictees would consider endorsing him to run for the presidency as a compromise candidate. The three leaders were convinced that to defeat Odinga and the ODM they needed to forge a broad-based coalition. The negotiations among the three leaders led to the formation of the Jubilee Coalition but due to disagreement over the presidential candidate Mudavadi decamped from Jubilee to the Amani Coalition, which brought together the UDF, KANU and New Ford-Kenya, which fielded Mudavadi as its presidential candidate.

The formation of the Jubilee Coalition effectively locked out Kalonzo Musyoka of the Wiper Party, who had toyed with the idea of forming a coalition with Kenyatta and Ruto. It also sent a strong message to the ODM, where Raila Odinga had been isolated. Odinga was left with no choice but to team up with Musyoka and Moses Wetangula of Ford-Kenya and form the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD). Another coalition that emerged shortly before the 2013 elections was the Eagle Coalition, headed by Peter Kenneth.

In the 2013 elections the Jubilee Coalition, headed by Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto, emerged victorious with slightly more than 6.7-million votes and also won the majority of parliamentary and senatorial seats. CORD, headed by Raila Odinga and Kalonzo Musyoka, emerged second, with more than 5.3-million votes. CORD also won the majority of the gubernatorial seats – 24 of 47. Musalia Mudavadi's Amani Coalition came third, with 483 981 votes.

Following the Jubilee victory parties aligned to both the Amani and Eagle coalitions hastened to form a post-election coalition with Jubilee. While the justification for the coalition was presented as the need for cohesion and participation in governance the main motivation was to benefit from various government appointments. Soon after the election the parties signed a coalition agreement with Jubilee, which was deposited with the Registrar of Political Parties (RPP). This coalition increased Jubilee's numerical strength in Parliament to 233 of 349 seats, 16 seats fewer than required for a two-thirds majority. CORD, for its part, resolved to remain in opposition as the house minority<sup>10</sup> (official opposition).

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10 The Constitution of Kenya 2010 provides for house majority and minority leadership.

**Table 5**  
**Results of the 2013 Presidential Election**

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>% Votes</b>
Uhuru Kenyatta (Jubilee Coalition)	6 173 433	50.5
Raila Odinga (CORD Coalition )	5 340 564	43.7
Musalia Mudavadi (United Democratic Forum)	483 981	3.9
Peter Kenneth (Kenya National Congress)	72 786	0.6
Mohammed Dida (Alliance for Real Change)	52 841	0.4
Martha Karua(NARC-Kenya)	43 881	0.4
James ole Kiyapi (Restore and Build Kenya)	40 998	0.3
Paul Muite (SAFINA)	12 580	0.1

Source: IEBC 2013

## THE CONSTITUTIONAL, LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK GOVERNING PARTY ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS IN KENYA

### *Overview*

While party coalitions, alliances and mergers have been a permanent feature in Kenya since the advent of multiparty politics in 1991 it was only with the promulgation of the new Constitution in 2010 that the constitutional and legal framework underpinning coalition formation was enacted.<sup>11</sup> In the old constitutional dispensation the lack of clear legal provisions governing political parties and party alliance and coalition formation led to parties coming up with 'innovative ways' of securing an electoral advantage. A common feature during this period was the formation of inter-ethnic and geographical alliances that were geared to winning elections. This was evident during the 1992 and 1997 general elections, when President Daniel arap Moi of KANU consolidated his political base by forming a broad-based coalition comprising minority tribes in Kenya to forestall the threat posed by the large number of Kikuyu and Luo<sup>12</sup> who had aligned themselves with the newly-formed opposition parties.

<sup>11</sup> Political parties were registered under the Societies' Act.

<sup>12</sup> In the 1992 and 1997 elections Kikuyus supported Ford-Asili and the Democratic Party, while the Luos were mostly aligned to Ford-Kenya and National Development Party in 1997.

In the absence of a law governing political parties in Kenya between 1992 and 2002 the management, regulation and operation of political parties fell within the general provisions of the Constitution, the Societies' Act and the National Assembly and Presidential Elections Act (CAP 7).

In view of the fact that the struggle for the 'Second Liberation' was about the reintroduction of multiparty democracy, the absence of a law governing the functioning of political parties was a major omission that contributed to weakening the parties and defeating the hopes of Kenyans for a multiparty political dispensation.

In addition, the constitutional amendment that allowed for multiparty democracy in 1991 merely repealed Section 2A of the old Constitution, which had outlawed multiparty politics, and left intact the laws and institutional framework that had perpetuated single-party rule. Thus, in 1963 and 1991 multiparty politics in Kenya was not anchored on strong pillars that could nurture the development and institutionalisation of political parties to play an effective and constructive role in a democracy.

The constitutional possibilities of alliance and coalition formation in Kenya became apparent as a result of the following factors: KANU's victory in the 1992 and 1997 elections with a minority of votes owing to a fragmented opposition which won a combined total of 60% of the votes but still lost; the electoral system, a first-past-the post majoritarian system that aided minority victory, and the presidential political system, which raised the stakes in the electoral landscape. The constitutional provision that a winning presidential candidate had to garner more votes and at least 25% in at least five of the eight provinces also contributed to coalition and alliance formation as candidates sought to forge alliances to meet this constitutional threshold.

As mentioned above the first real political party coalition in Kenya emerged in 2002 with the formation of NARC, which brought together the National Alliance Party and the Liberal Democratic Party. The realisation of NARC's dream was made difficult by the fact that whereas nothing prohibited political parties from coming together to form a coalition the law did not explicitly provide the mechanism by which parties in coalitions could operate and contest elections. To circumvent this legal hurdle an existing affiliate party, the NAK, the National Party of Kenya, changed its name to NARC and both the NAK and the LDP became corporate members of NARC, which, by virtue of its registration, had legal status. NARC won the presidential election and a majority of seats in Parliament, but the precise relationship between the affiliate parties and the inability of NARC to resolve various disputes, coupled with the challenges of governance, became

unmanageable, leading to dysfunctionality in the coalition and its collapse in the run-up to the 2007 elections.<sup>13</sup>

*Implications of the 2010 Constitution and legal framework for election and party alliances and coalitions*

The 2010 Constitution contained chapters that had great bearing on the elections and on political parties. The significance of elections and political parties is entrenched in the election sector laws, among them, the Elections Act 2011 and the Political Parties Act 2011.

Article 4 (1) of the Constitution<sup>14</sup> recognises political parties and provides that Kenya shall be a multiparty democratic state. The fact that the new constitutional order was intended to strengthen the electoral process and political parties is further evidenced in Chapter 6 on Leadership and Integrity, Chapter 7 on the Representation of the People, Chapter 8 on the Legislature, Chapter 9 on the Executive, Chapter 10 on the Judiciary and Chapter 11 on the Devolved Government.

Articles 90 and 91 of the Constitution<sup>15</sup> make elaborate provision for the formation, conduct and operation of political parties. The importance of these sections is that political parties are not only recognised as key players in Kenya but have their foundations firmly established in the Constitution. The implication of the Constitution and the Political Parties Act for coalition formation is clear. To begin with, the electoral system, as it applies to the election of the president, almost certainly obliges parties to consider forming coalition or alliances. Article 138 (4) of the Constitution provides that:

A candidate shall be declared elected as President if the candidate receives:

- a) more than half of all the votes cast in an election; and
- b) at least twenty-five percent of the votes cast in each of more than half the counties.

The intention of Article 138(4) was to compel parties to have a national outlook and to seek votes beyond their traditional ethnic strongholds. Given the ethnic and geographical base of political parties in Kenya, compliance with this provision necessitates the formation of alliances. The coming together of the National

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13 The Party of National Unity (PNU) of President Kibaki and the Orange Democratic Party (ODM) led by Raila Odinga were the main parties to contest the 2007 elections.

14 Chapter 2, Article 4 (1) Constitution of Kenya 2010.

15 Chapter 7, Representation of the People.

Alliance Party (TNA) and the United Republican Party (URP) to form the Jubilee Coalition and the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD), which brought together the ODM, Ford-Kenya and the Wiper party, are examples.

The 2010 Constitution established a pure presidential system and a bicameral legislature comprising the Senate and the National Assembly. Senators are elected in accordance with Article 98 of the Constitution, which provides for 47 senators elected in 47 counties, 16 women senators nominated by political parties and four senators representing youth and people with disabilities. Election to the National Assembly is based on 290 contested parliamentary seats, plus 47 women representatives and 12 nominated members representing special interest groups, bringing the number of MPs to 349.

The presidential system conferred substantial powers on Parliament, reinforcing its legislative and oversight functions. The fact that control of the legislature in addition to winning the presidency became imperative forced parties to form pre-election alliances. In the immediate post-election period parties were also forced to form coalitions to consolidate their advantage in Parliament. Apart from winning the majority of seats in the two houses, the Jubilee Coalition was able to boost its majority by entering into a coalition with the United Democratic Forum (UDF) and other small parties, increasing its representation in the National Assembly to 233 of 349 seats.<sup>16</sup>

Chapter 11 of the Constitution establishes the devolved government, comprising the county executives and assemblies. The intention of the two-tier<sup>17</sup> government structure was to prevent the situation created by the previous Constitution in which power and development were centralised at the national level with little regard to the provincial and local governments. By devolving political, social and economic power to the counties the fight for political supremacy was not restricted to the national level but extended to control of the county governments. Both Cord and the Jubilee Coalition heavily contested the country elections, with Cord winning in 24 counties and Jubilee 23. In winning the majority of county gubernatorial seats Cord showed that, in terms of the new Constitution the winner does not necessarily take all, a factor common to most presidential systems.

Apart from the constitutional provisions, implementation of party coalitions in Kenya is provided for in the Political Parties Act (PPA 2011),<sup>18</sup> which states that

Two or more political parties may form a coalition *before or after an election* and shall deposit the *coalition agreement* with the Registrar of

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<sup>16</sup> This is 16 seats fewer than those required for a two-thirds majority.

<sup>17</sup> National and county governments.

<sup>18</sup> Section 10 Political Parties Act 2011.



Political Parties. A coalition agreement entered into before an election shall be deposited with the Registrar at least three months before that election. A coalition agreement entered into after an election shall be deposited with the Registrar within twenty-one days of the signing of the coalition agreement. A coalition agreement shall set out the matters specified in the Third Schedule [our emphasis].

In a bid to consolidate party coalitions and to avoid the problems associated with past coalition attempts, the Political Parties Act provides a clear framework and guidelines within which party coalitions may be structured. Coalition agreements must be executed and sanctioned by the governing coalition and the coalition agreements must comply with the guidelines provided for in the Third Schedule of the Political Parties Act, which deals, among other things, with the rules and procedures of coalitions; the coalition's policies, evidenced in writing; election rules for coalitions and nomination rules and procedures.<sup>19</sup>

In the run-up to the 2013 elections four main coalitions emerged: Jubilee, CORD, Amani and Eagle. Their agreements were deposited with the Registrar of Political Parties on 4 December 2012.

### *Legal mechanisms for dispute resolution within party coalitions in Kenya*

The legal framework for resolution of disputes relating to elections and political parties are provided for in the Constitution of Kenya, the Elections Act (2011), the Political Parties Act (PPA 2011) and the IEBC Act (2011), which, in the first instance, confer jurisdiction for resolving political and election disputes to the political parties by invoking the internal mechanisms provided for in their respective constitutions. The institutions involved in the resolution of disputes are the Registrar of Political Parties, the Political Parties Dispute Tribunal (PPDT) and the IEBC. The legal resolution of electoral disputes is naturally the responsibility of the judiciary. The High Court deals specifically with disputes related to elections at county, governor, Senate and National Assembly levels, while the Supreme Court has jurisdiction over disputes related to presidential elections.

Dispute resolution during the pre-election phase was largely informed by the political and electoral context, namely, weak political parties, a lack of internal democracy within the parties, undemocratic party nomination processes and the absence of dispute resolution mechanisms within the parties. These factors informed the debate that surrounded the enactment of legislation relating to political parties (1997, 2002, 2007 and 2011). In an attempt to resolve pre-election

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19 PPA 2011, 3<sup>rd</sup> Schedule.



disputes expeditiously they are dealt with in terms of the PPA and the Elections Act. Section 39 of the PPA establishes the Political Parties Dispute Tribunal (PPDT), which makes determinations in cases of disputes.<sup>20</sup> The PPDT has both original and appellate jurisdiction over disputes between a member and a political party, disputes between political parties, disputes between an independent candidate and a party, disputes between parties in a coalition and appeals arising from the decision of the Registrar (PPA, s 40). Section 74 of the Elections Act mandates the IEBC to resolve disputes related to or arising from nominations. The jurisdiction of the IEBC with regard to nomination disputes was recently invoked in a Senate by-election in Makueni involving the Jubilee and Cord coalitions.<sup>21</sup>

The legal framework for party coalitions and coalition dispute resolution has provided a structured approach to coalition formation and management. This becomes evident in a comparison between the NARC coalition and the Jubilee and Cord coalitions. As indicated above the NARC coalition was never anchored in a sound legal and constitutional framework and mechanisms for resolving the plethora of disputes the coalition faced were inadequate. By contrast, both the governing coalition, Jubilee, and the opposition coalition, Cord, were established after rigorous consultations and in compliance with Kenya's legal framework for political parties.

### FACTORS MOTIVATING ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS

This section attempts to answer the question, 'what motivates political parties to form alliances and coalitions and what causes these groupings to collapse?' To do so one must identify both the reasons that motivate political parties to coalesce and the factors that stimulate alliance and coalition formation.

Past election results, the electoral system, constitutional term limits, the political system and the country's ethno-linguistic features are among the factors that influence the building of party alliances and coalitions in Kenya.

#### *Past election results*

In 2002 several factors favoured pre-election alliance building. It is well documented that in 1992 and 1997 KANU won marginal electoral victories, taking advantage of the inability of the opposition of the time to join forces in a pre-election alliance. Politicians realised that if the Democratic Party (DP) of Kibaki and the National Development Party (NDP) of Odinga had come together

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<sup>20</sup> Section 39 of the PPA includes disputes arising from parties involved in a coalition.

<sup>21</sup> The IEBC nullified the nomination of Kethi Kilonzo of Cord, a decision that was later upheld by the High Court.

they would have won the 1997 elections. Ethnic competition and the personal ambitions of the leaders explained why they chose to stand separately. The key divisive issue, which the opposition failed to address prior to 2002, was the lack of compromise over who should be the presidential candidate.

Gradually the opposition began to learn the lessons of the last two multiparty elections, realising that, when put together, the fragmented opposition had secured an average of 60% of the vote in 1992 and 1997 but had still lost the election to President Moi and KANU. The expectations of citizens and their message to the opposition parties stated loudly and clearly that they had to unite in order to win, motivating them to form a broad-based alliance.

In subsequent elections past results were the basis for determining the relative strength of the various alliance partners and the allocation of electoral tickets at national and local (provincial and county) levels. For example, in the 1997 presidential election the fact that Kibaki won more vote than Odinga resulted in his selection as the NARC's presidential candidate in 2002. Similarly, when Odinga achieved more votes than Musyoka in 2007 he was chosen to head the CORD presidential ticket.

### *The electoral system*

The 1992 Constitution provided that for a presidential candidate to win he or she had not only to secure a simple majority of the national vote but also to garner at least 25% of the votes in at least five of the eight provinces. The 2010 Constitution made this provision even more stringent, requiring that the winning presidential candidate receive at least 50% +1 of the vote and a minimum of 25% of the votes in 24 of the 47 counties. If no candidate meets any of these thresholds a run-off is to be organised between the two candidates with most votes.<sup>22</sup> Since it is very difficult, given the regional and ethnic character of political parties in Kenya, for a single presidential candidate to meet these thresholds candidates sought to forge alliances.

The legislative elections in Kenya are based on the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system. In addition, Kenya is characterised by political parties that are not grounded in ideology, the lack of well-established nationally-based parties and the predominance of ethnically and regionally-based parties. The combination of the electoral system and the character of the party system made politicians with national ambitions realise that their chances of winning nationally would be slim if they did not form pre-election alliances in the face of KANU's formidable electoral machinery. The process of forging unity and building an electoral pact

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22 Constitution of Kenya 2010, Article 138 (4).

began soon after the 1997 elections, accelerated in 2001 (Kadima & Owuor 2006) and culminated in the formation of the NARC in 2002. Since then, and for the past decade, broad-based pre-election alliances have become a common feature in Kenyan politics.

### *Constitutional term limit*

Another important factor is the constitutional limit of two five-year terms, which offers a unique opportunity for alternation of power for all major political leaders, opening wider the competition given the removal of the often undue advantage enjoyed by incumbent presidents. This explains the intense jostling and alliance bargaining that characterised the electoral environment in the run-up to the December 2002 and March 2013 presidential elections, when the two five-year presidential terms of Moi and Mwai Kibaki came to an end.

### *The political system*

The type of presidential system Kenya has opted for defines clear areas of responsibilities for both government and Parliament. This makes it essential for the executive to seek the cooperation of the legislature if it is to work effectively. The lack of such cooperation would lead to an impasse or to a bumpy law-making process. This is why, in order to create political stability, easy processes of law and policy-making and, more broadly, state governability, presidential regimes require control by the governing party or a coalition of the majority in Parliament.

### *The Ethno-linguistic factor*

Electoral and government politics in Kenya are dominated by ethnic arithmetic as parties mobilise around tribal numbers. The choice of alliance and coalition partners is based on ethnicity and, more specifically, on the combination of ethnic constituencies to create a broader support base, given that, in the current situation, no single party can govern alone. In view of the ethnic base of political parties, ethnicity, tribe and region are of essence in this process.

An examination of the various combinations of parties and their leaders shows clearly that diverse ethnic groups come together through ethnically-aligned political parties in order to win the majority of the vote. On the basis of the last census, conducted in 2009, Kikuyus are the largest tribe, followed by Luhyas, Kalenjins, Luos and Kambas in that order. In the context of elections it is these five large tribes that play an important role and determine who will win the presidential seat. In the run-up to the 2013 elections Mutahi Gunyi, a political

scientist, coined the phrase ‘tyranny of numbers’ to explain the ethnic calculations that motivated the formation of Jubilee Coalition. Table 6 shows clearly the ethnic calculation at play.

**Table 6**  
**Ethnic calculations in perspective**

Candidates	Party / Coalition	Ethnic Communities
Kibaki, Wamalwa, Ngilu	National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK)	Kikuyus, Luhyas, Kambas
Odinga, Musyoka, Saitoti	Liberal Democratic Party	Luos, Kambas, (Kikuyus, Maasais)
Kibaki, Odinga, Wamalwa, Ngilu, Kalonzo, Saitoti	National Rainbow Coalition (NARC)	Kikuyus, Luos, Kambas, Maasais, Luhyas
Kibaki, Kalonzo, Uhuru	PNU Coalition (2008)	Kikuyus, Kambas
Kibaki, Musyoka, Uhuru + Raila, Ruto, Musalia	Grand Coalition Government	Kikuyus, Luhyas, Kalenjins, Kambas, Luos
Uhuru + Ruto	Jubilee Coalition	Kikuyus, Kalenjins
Raila + Kalonzo, Wetangula	CORD Coalition	Luos, Kambas, Luhyas + Support from Coast Region

The table also shows that there is hardly a place for ideology. Alternatively, it can be argued that all parties have moved swiftly to the centre and there are apparently no major incompatibilities in terms of the policy positions of the different political parties. Our respondents put it more strongly, claiming that although Kenyan political parties claim to have an ideology they do not, in fact, subscribe to one. The focus is on putting together the winning (ethnic) combination. There is widespread belief among Kenyan politicians that the ethnic and geographical diversity of the country requires the accommodation of different political and ethnic interests. The best vehicle for that accommodation is alliances and coalitions. It appears, too, that religion plays a limited role compared to ethnicity.

### *Office-seeking motivation*

Theories of office-seeking argue, in essence, that the main goal of coalition building is to access power (Gamson 1961; Riker 1962; Leiserson 1968). The single most-important motivation for forming electoral alliances and coalition governments

is to hold public office. This is often expressed by political leaders in benevolent and disinterested terms. In 2002 opposition parties argued that they came together to block a common 'enemy', KANU, following what they saw as decades of excessive presidential powers that resulted in political and economic abuses and the favouring of one ethnic group at the expense of the others.

In 2007 the former leader of the NARC, President Kibaki, formed the PNU in order to retain power after the NARC disintegrated. Similarly, the ODM's aim was to win the 2007 elections. The violent post-election dispute between the supporters of the leaders of the two parties is a demonstration of the desire to win at all costs. Therefore it goes without saying that the *raison d'être* of political party alliance and coalition-building in Kenya, as elsewhere in Africa, is to access or maintain a grip on power and its attendant benefits, such as privileges and the control of public resources. The grand coalition government formed in 2008, a win-win power-sharing solution, lasted for a full five-year term.

In order to safeguard their individual interests Kibaki and Odinga shared executive power in the grand coalition, in which the former was the president of the Republic and the latter the prime minister. Similarly, the TNA and the URP came together ahead of the March 2013 elections in order to win and share power. Positions have been shared in both the executive and the legislature among these two main political parties and their junior partners. The Senate majority leader is from the TNA and the majority leader in the National Assembly is from the URP. Similar arrangements were made regarding the allocation of parliamentary committees. Smaller political parties in the Jubilee Coalition have also been accommodated.

### *Policy seeking*

The assumption of policy-oriented theories is generally that party coalitions are motivated by the quest to achieve policy goals (Axelrod 1970; De Swaan 1973; Warwick 1994; Laver & Schofield 1990; Strøm 1990). Robert Axelrod suggests that office-driven coalitions pursue the maximisation of their benefits while minimising the coalition's bargaining costs by forming only those winning coalitions that contain ideologically adjacent parties (1970). As indicated above, this is not the case in Kenya.

### *Why do party alliances and coalitions collapse?*

Having explored the motivations for political parties forming alliances and coalitions it is also useful to try to understand a related issue: the implementation of coalition agreements. Disagreements lead some party leaders to feel that they have not received the advantages they were promised.

The case of NARC is rich in lessons. NARC was formed in such a hurry that the parties to the alliance did not have the same understanding or commitment to the agreement. The leaders were unable to discuss and agree on the finer details of the MoU and the pre-election agreement was rushed through, with several issues in the MoU being assumed rather than thoroughly discussed and agreed upon. The most fundamental disagreement related to the clauses whereby Odinga was to be appointed prime minister. Related to this was the provision that a new Constitution would be finalised and adopted by Parliament within 100 days of the inauguration of the new government. This Constitution was to provide for the post of prime minister, sharing executive powers with the president of the Republic (Kadima & Owuor 2006). The general assumption was that the NARC, which was largely expected to dominate Parliament, would easily be able to amend the Constitution in order to accommodate the post of prime minister. However, Kibaki was not prepared to see his executive powers shared and therefore reduced.

This disagreement caused serious tensions and paralysed the coalition for most of the five-year term, resulting in major factionalism. The only thing that prevented a formal split was the fact that all NARC candidates had been voted in on the NARC ticket and no faction was prepared to take the risk of standing in a by-election. However, the Odinga faction began to operate as a separate political entity within NARC. Unable to pass legislation, the Kibaki faction reached out to the opposition, KANU, appointing some of its members to the NARC government (Kadima & Owuor 2006).

There was a similar disagreement between Prime Minister Odinga and William Ruto regarding the identification and appointment of ministers and other high ranking officials. It was also reported that Ruto felt that Odinga was not supportive enough of his case at the International Criminal Court (ICC). This led to factionalism within the ODM, with Ruto siding in Parliament with the PNU. In the PNU, too, the terms of the alliance had not been set out properly and divergent interpretations of the agreement and personal ambitions caused a subsequent split.

Another reason for the weakening, and sometimes the demise, of coalitions is the presidential two-term limit, as could be seen when President Moi stepped down in 2002 and President Kibaki in 2013. These rare opportunities raised the stakes, given that the elections took place without any presidential candidate enjoying formal incumbency.

#### THE CONSEQUENCES OF ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS FOR NATIONAL COHESION AND THE PARTY SYSTEM

The study of pre-election alliances and coalition governments in Africa is in its infancy. An aspect of alliances and coalitions that is even less studied is the

consequences of party alliances and coalitions for variables such as the party system and national cohesion. This study has tried to reduce this knowledge gap.

### *National cohesion*

This section explores whether alliances and coalitions have contributed to achieving national cohesion in Kenya, which was distorted by the colonial legacy of divide and rule, by which the various ethnic groups of the country were defined in terms of stereotyped strengths and deficiencies and made to compete among themselves. Each of the Kikuyus, Luos, Luhyas, Kalenjins, Kambas, was attributed some social, intellectual, behavioural and physical features, causing divisions among them. Kambas and Kalenjins, for example, were recruited to the army. Kikuyus were typecast as entrepreneurial and business minded, while Luos were generally regarded as the educated elite.

At independence the creation of ethnically- and regionally-based political parties exacerbated these communal cleavages, leading to tensions and even political violence. Upon attaining independence Kenya identified nation-building as a priority. The single most important barrier to national cohesion was ethnicity. Post-colonial leaders have continued to use these divisions to their political advantage, thus further politicising identity and ethnicity.

Colonial administrations subdivided the country into provinces, which were essentially created along ethnic lines (Mulei 1997). The first nationalist party, KANU, formed in March 1960, was perceived as an alliance of the then largest ethnic communities, namely, the Kikuyus and the Luos. Among its founders were Jomo Kenyatta (Kikuyu) as its president; Jaramogi Odinga (Luo), vice-president, and Tom Mboya (Luo), secretary-general. Fearing domination by the big tribes, and with the support of the colonial administration, smaller ethnic groups formed the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) to counter KANU. Thus, the 1963 election was essentially a contest between the big tribes coalescing around KANU, which advocated a centralised unitary state, and the small tribes coalescing around KADU, which, fearing domination by the bigger tribes, preferred a federal state which would guarantee the provinces significant autonomy. In the ensuing election KANU won a majority of votes and subsequently formed the government (Kadima & Owuor 2006).

When multipartyism was restored in 1991 the Kikuyus, the Luos and other big tribes came together to form the pressure group Ford. It alleged that KANU's machinations led to the split of Ford into two parties – Ford-Kenya, which was mostly associated with the Luos, and Ford-Asili, which was seen as Kikuyu-dominated party. The subsequent registration of other political parties also, for the most part, took on a tribal pattern (Kadima & Owuor 2006). In the same vein, the



results of the 1992 and 1997 elections reflected ethnic affiliations. Similarly, in 2002, tribal considerations came into play. The victory of the NARC was due to affiliate parties bringing their ethnic and regional votes into the NARC basket, effectively guaranteeing a victory. The eruption of violence after the announcement of the disputed presidential results was symptomatic of the existence of unaddressed ethnic divisions.

Electoral competition has resulted in regular ethnic violence, which attests to the ethnicisation of politics in Kenya. The centre of gravity of electoral violence has been in the Rift Valley and has pitted Kikuyu and Kalenjin against each other. The two groups have been fighting over land, and elections have served as a trigger for violence. It has been observed that every time Kikuyus and Kalenjins have been on opposite sides of the political divide (1992, 1997 and 2007) there has been violence. In 2002 there was no violence because President Moi (a Kalenjin) had chosen Uhuru Kenyatta (a Kikuyu) as his successor. Similarly, in 2013, Uhuru Kenyatta and Ruto (a Kalenjin) formed the Jubilee Coalition.

Since party politics in Kenya is notoriously ethnically based, to what extent do alliances and coalitions contribute to national cohesion? It can surely be argued that, by bringing together different and even conflicting ethnic groups, political party alliances and coalitions make such a contribution and that these groupings contribute to cementing the nation, as demonstrated by the nationwide enthusiasm generated by the formation of NARC. Coalitions have also allowed for a more equitable sharing of resources nationally. It has also been observed that grand coalitions like NARC (2002) and PNU-ODM (2008-2013) contributed to national cohesion because they were about the politics of inclusion, while smaller coalitions make sections of the population feel they are not represented in government. Conversely, the building of grand coalitions almost annihilates opposition, thus limiting checks and balances.

While electoral alliances ensure rapprochement among various ethnic groups, two main alliances tend to emerge. As a result, the country is frequently politically polarised and, under certain circumstances, for instance, when there are entrenched inter-communal divisions and when such groups are in opposed alliances, the rivalry may turn violent.

The NARC coalition undoubtedly contributed to a degree of national cohesion among Kenya's ethnic groups. On the other hand, the disintegration of the coalition, following a long and bitter rivalry between Kibaki and Odinga in the 2007 elections, and the post-election violence in 2008 saw the reversal of the gains made. Much of the violence in 2008, as indicated above, pitted Kikuyus against Kalenjin in the Rift Valley owing to the strong competition between the two groups over land ownership.

Interestingly, in the March 2013 elections an alliance between Kenyatta and

Ruto resulted in more peaceful elections and improved inter-communal relations between the two ethnic groups. The relative peacefulness of the elections could also be attributed to solidarity between the two party leaders and their communities in the face of the ICC charges, which had a deterrent effect, especially on leaders who capitalise on the mobilisation of ethnic militias and organised groupings to cause chaos. The charges facing Uhuru Kenyatta, for example, involved his coordination and sponsorship of the Mungai militia to commit retaliatory attacks in Naiveté and Nauru against perceived ODM supporters. Aware of this fact, many leaders refrained from using organised gangs for political purposes during the 2013 elections.

From the above it can be concluded that party alliances and coalitions do contribute to a degree of national cohesion, just as their collapse may, in extreme cases, lead to politically-motivated ethnic violence, which, in turn, could culminate in undoing the progress achieved in national cohesion. It is hoped that party leaders in Kenya have learned since the 2008 hostilities that organised violence will not go unpunished.

### *The party system*

Do party alliances and coalitions weaken or strengthen the party system and individual affiliated political parties? The NARC was Kenya's first experience with broad-based alliances and coalitions and it is believed that it, and subsequent coalitions, weakened the affiliated political parties and ultimately the party system, because once the coalition is in power the main leader negates some of the aspects of the agreement and does not fulfil promises made to coalition partners. Party leaders have therefore learned from this experience.

During the time NARC was in power all NARC parliamentarians were elected on the NARC ticket and could therefore not legally defect to their affiliate parties without having to face a by-election. This weakened the smaller parties and explains why, despite severe squabbles in the coalition, no affiliate party left it. The result was that most parties that entered into subsequent alliances and coalitions joined the grouping with full knowledge of the implications of losing the seat and therefore declined to be on the electoral ticket of the alliance but chose instead to be on that of their own party. Each leader chooses to keep and service his or her own party as a bargaining chip or in order to secure nomination if he or she fails to be nominated by the electoral alliance. This is how the PNU worked, as an umbrella party with its affiliate parties such as NARC-Kenya, Ford-Kenya and others, operating as individual parties and preferring to strengthen their own parties. In contrast, the ODM seemed to have learned from its NARC experience and integrated its members into a single party.

In substance, it appears that when the coalition is strong its affiliate parties tend to be weaker. Conversely, when affiliate parties are strong, the coalition tends to be weaker (PNU). The challenge is to strike the right balance. On the other hand, since coalition leaders are the main beneficiaries of coalitions (eg, Kibaki in NARC, Odinga in ODM and Kenyatta in Jubilee), they tend to prefer a centralised and even integrated structure for better control of and discipline within the coalition while junior coalition partners favour a decentralised structure in order to keep their bargaining power and flexibility. This quest for independence by party leaders has resulted into a highly fragmented, unstable and weaker party system in Kenya.

## CONCLUSION

This article has demonstrated that the building of party alliances and coalitions in Kenya is motivated by factors such as previous election results, the electoral system, the constitutional term limit, the political system and the country's ethno-linguistic characteristics. It has also shown that political parties form pre-election alliances and post-election coalitions as a vote- and office-seeking strategy. On the other hand, it shows that alliances and coalitions contribute to national cohesion in Kenya by bringing together polarised political parties and ethnic groups and a more equitable sharing of national resources. It also notes that the politics of inclusion which characterise grand coalitions like NARC (2002) and PNU-ODM have contributed greatly to national cohesion while smaller coalitions make sections of the population feel that they are under-represented in the institutions of the state. The building of grand coalitions almost annihilates opposition, thus limiting checks and balances. While party alliances and coalitions do contribute to a degree of national cohesion their disintegration may, in certain circumstances, lead to politically-motivated ethnic violence and therefore to undoing the progress achieved in national cohesion.

The study has also shown that party alliances and coalitions tend to weaken smaller parties and the overall party system in favour of the larger parties. This is due to the fact that junior alliance and coalition partners are generally focused on short-term gains like appointments to lucrative posts, while the main parties focus on consolidating their parties and voting base precisely by poaching from their junior partners.

One of the effects of coalition politics in Kenya is the actualisation of the concept of power sharing in government and political office. The winner-takes-all situation normally associated with FPTP electoral system has somehow been ameliorated by the new coalition politics. By formalising the coalition agreement between the URP and the TNA, the current Jubilee government is

evenly constituted on a 50-50 basis. Power-sharing arrangements under the new dispensation are more vividly manifested in the sharing of different tiers of government between the Jubilee and CORD coalitions. One of the most remarkable achievements of the new Constitution was the creation of a two-tier government consisting of the national government and the 47 county governments (devolved government) across the county.

The results of the last election effectively gave the Jubilee Coalition control of the national government while CORD controls 24 of 47 counties. The fact that devolution in Kenya involved fiscal, political and social devolution of power will, in turn, ensure that CORD will remain an important player in the governance of the country and will secure its relevance in the next five years. This is a departure from past practice, where, upon losing power, opposition parties were almost consigned to oblivion, which also explained their refusal to accept election outcomes in the past.

This power-sharing arrangement is new. It is worth observing the consequences of Kenya's party alliance and coalition politics over an extended period, from one election to the next, provided the alliances and configurations remain largely constructed along current lines.

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# THE CAUSES OF POLITICAL PARTY ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON NATIONAL COHESION IN INDIA

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## ABSTRACT

*Electoral politics in India has long been considered a challenge for comparative politics; from the distinctiveness of the transition and consolidation of democracy and through the understanding of the way in which the socio-economic complexities of such a heterogeneous society have adapted to and interacted with the institutions of parliamentary politics. Since the 1990s India has experienced the conjunction of a period of complex electoral fractionalisation with considerable and sustained economic growth. This has confounded expectations that the political context that is most conducive to economic development is one of strong and stable government. Rather, the contemporary experience of Indian development has occurred against the backdrop of a dynamic and regionalised party system, with coherence provided by a weakened central executive which has had to limit direct control over economic and social policy. To some extent this has been achieved because of an institutional structure of governance which has responded to the evolution of popular politics, providing a framework of governance which has reflected some of the national diversity and filled some of the power vacuums left unfilled by the fiercely competitive but often corrupt and inefficient party political system. However, a major factor has been the way in which electoral alliances and government coalitions have become an accepted feature of Indian democratic politics, forcing acceptance that compromise, power-sharing, and recognition of diversity are essential elements of successful government.*

## INDIA IN A COMPARATIVE CONTEXT

‘India,’ Arend Lijphart (1996, p 258) notes, ‘has long been a puzzle for students of comparative democratic politics.’ He points out that the successful maintenance

of democracy has confounded expectations that such a system would be unsustainable in the light of widespread poverty and illiteracy and such pronounced ethnic and linguistic diversity. Seventy years on from independence, Indian democracy is robust and vibrant, and satisfies the conditions for democratic consolidation: 'the most surprising and important case of democratic endurance in the developing world' (Diamond 1989, p 1).

There have been a number of attempts to explain the pattern of democratic consolidation in India in terms of the institutional development of the state and the way in which the Indian state has reacted to challenges to its legitimacy and authority. Lijphart (1996) argues that the success of Indian democratic consolidation lies in the way ostensibly majoritarian democratic institutions have tended to accommodate, rather than override, challenges from regional, religious and linguistic protest movements.

While the Congress Party achieved electoral dominance in the post-independence elections, the party and the prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, did not use this dominance to override opposition. Instead, 'the Congress system has served as the foundation for a consociational grand coalition' (Lijphart 1996, p 260). This willingness to share power rather than impose majoritarian policies is put down to factors such as 'prudent and constructive leadership', the socio-economic diversity of India, successful linguistic federalism and traditions of compromise and accommodation which foster consociationalism (Lijphart 1996, pp 262-3). Lijphart recognises that his interpretation of Indian consociationalism is not fully entrenched and notes the destabilising threat of the more autocratic leadership under the prime ministership of Indira Gandhi, a federal framework which has been vulnerable to central interference, and political challenges to minority accommodation. Yet he argues that consociational politics has endured in practice and has ensured the stability of democratic government.

The lack of formally consociational institutions in India – with no provision for proportional representation, no minority vetoes, and weak entrenchment of federalism – have led to criticism of Lijphart's argument. Steven Wilkinson (2000) disputes Lijphart's reading of Indian political history, suggesting that the constitutional framework was a lot closer to the consociational model prior to independence, under British rule. Rather than consociational, Wilkinson argues that the post-independence Indian state managed ethnic and separatist in a repressive way, refusing to concede claims for minority rights that challenged the authority of the centre unless forced to do so.

He suggests that the Congress system of the post-independence period is better characterised as a *control* state (see Lustick 1979), 'in which lower castes, religious minorities, and linguistic minorities within states were denied cultural rights and largely excluded from government jobs and political power' (Wilkinson 2000, p 270).



The characterisation of the Indian state as a consociational system of government does not live up to empirical scrutiny. In pre-independence India the extent of representative government was so limited that any notion of power-sharing institutions in any democratic sense is inappropriate. The British rulers held the power and the provincial legislatures and inclusion of Indians in executive bodies was largely a pragmatic response to the limited legitimacy of the colonial state and the need to operate a functioning administration. After independence the Indian National Congress dominated the Constitutional Assembly, and the Constitution which emerged was based essentially on the majoritarian Westminster model.

The INC's dominance of electoral politics from the 1950s provided little opportunity for effective parliamentary opposition. While an essential element of the 'Congress system' of government was accommodation of a wide range of groups and opinions and a willingness to recognise issues on which there seemed to be widespread discontent, this was only partial and on the Congress leadership's terms.

In his *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Barrington Moore Jr (1966, chapter 6) searched India in vain for the social upheaval he associated with the struggle for democratic freedoms. His account is suffused with indolent Hindus, hidebound by caste and village conventions, whose only effort is to prevent any agricultural surplus being diverted into industrial production. Atul Kohli (1990, p 3) notes:

For nearly four decades now democracy in India has appeared somewhat of an anomaly. India is a multinational, agrarian society with a rigid and hierarchical social structure. The existence in such a setting of periodic elections, constitutional government, and freedom of expression and association has posed an intellectual puzzle.

Although the distribution of patronage was initially dominated by the Congress machine, new parties emerged to challenge for the right to distribute the spoils of government. For Kanchan Chandra (2004), the power of Indian officials to channel government resources to particular individuals or groups of voters on a partisan basis characterises it as a 'patronage democracy'. She argues that the size and partiality of the administration in democratic India provide a context in which politicians and political 'fixers' focus on mobilising along ethnic lines, and voters respond to these cues in order to try to tap into the stream of government resources.

Chandra argues that such a conceptualisation of Indian politics is not necessarily detrimental to democratic consolidation. Rather, in a competitive

electoral arena, identities are mutable and manipulable. Moreover, 'where electoral outcomes can be transformed by political manipulation, we are less likely to see the permanent exclusion of minority groups and the destabilising violence associated with permanent exclusion' (Chandra 2004, p 287). This conception of Indian identity as fluid and subject to complex patterns of politicisation and mobilisation fits in with James Manor's analysis of the nature of ethnicity in politics in India. He suggests (1996, p 463) that:

Because Indian society is so heterogeneous, and because the country and its population are so large, people there have a wide array of identities available to them. These include at least three different kinds of caste identities (*varna*, *jati*-cluster and *jati*), religious identities (including loyalties to sects within larger religious groups) and identifications with clans and lineages – as well as linguistic, class, party, urban/rural, national, regional, subregional and local identities, and sometimes varying types of 'tribal' identities too ... As a result, tensions do not become concentrated along a single fault-line in society, and do not produce prolonged and intractable conflict – 'ethnic' or otherwise – that might tear democratic institutions apart.

This analysis of the politicisation of identity explains the competitiveness and volatility of modern Indian electoral politics, as well as giving an insight into the periodic outbreaks of communal violence. As Manor notes, one of the ways in which the Indian system has limited the spread of destabilising and violent uprising has been through the federal system, which has acted to 'quarantine and confine most severe conflicts within single regions' (Manor 1996, p 473).

The strength of the Indian federal system does not lie in its constitutional entrenchment, which is weak and leaves residual and reforming power at the centre. The Nehruvian constitutional settlement provided for a strong centre, and state autonomy was constrained by limited fiscal autonomy and political interference, most ostensibly through the frequent imposition of 'president's rule'. However, from the 1950s, the centre was challenged through regional mobilisation, notably through the agitation for the reorganisation of the federation along linguistic lines. When effective electoral challenges emerged against Congress they did so in a regionally segmented manner, with different parties and coalitions gaining power at the state level. Even in the 1990s, when the Hindu-nationalist Indian Popular Party (BJP) emerged as a powerful national party, its support base was largely limited to a few major states and it expanded and gained power through alliances with a large number of state parties (Heath 1999).

Again, this can be explained in terms of the complex nature of Indian identity. Juan Linz, Alfred Stepan and Yogendra Yadav (2007) conceptualise this in terms of the 'state nation', where political institutions reflect multiple but complementary socio-cultural identities. Indian voters are more likely to relate to state parties and politicians, yet this does not necessarily weaken the attachment to national unity and identification with central institutions.

In a system of electoral federalism, the state level has emerged as the main focus for party competition in Indian national elections, and national election results are increasingly the amalgamation of regional contests. This process has seen the weakening of Congress as the dominant national party and the prevalence of national coalitions and electoral alliances. The role of prime minister has also weakened, selected as convener of a government coalition rather than a dominant personality. These changes have led Subrata Mitra (1999, pp 420-1) to describe a 'puzzle of political stability', 'explained by the existence of a relatively fair and effective electoral process, which has become an agent of the creation of a stable and legitimate political order'. The need to form effective alliances and coalitions has forced parties to 'concede, coalesce, compromise, and come to a consensus'.

The political science literature on coalition formation in parliamentary systems has tended to focus on two elements of governmental power: office-seeking and policy direction. These two elements clearly overlap – a particular government portfolio tends to bring with it responsibility for a particular policy area. Office-driven models tend to focus on the quantitative distribution of a fixed number of governmental benefits. Policy-driven models have focused on how coalition membership is determined by, and influences, ideological position.

As Terrence Cook (2002, p 4) summarises it, theory suggests that a party leader should seek a coalition which is '(1) winning, (2) minimally so, (3) able to cover median policy space, (4) ideologically connected and closed, and (5) expected to pay off partners by the proportionality rule'. These central tenets of coalition theory have provided a basis for an extensive empirical literature that has examined their applicability to European parliamentary systems.<sup>1</sup> This applied analysis has emphasised a number of (interconnected) conditions which are key to understanding the formation and durability of coalitions within particular states; including the institutional structure, the nature of the party system which has evolved, and the ideological context in which political parties operate.

An attempt to locate coalition analysis within the broader context of party systems is presented by Lawrence Dodd (1976). Dodd examines the durability of coalition governments, looking at the conditions which enable stable coalition

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1 Examples include de Swaan (1973), Pridham (1986), Laver & Schofield (1990), Laver & Budge (1992), Müller & Ström (2000).

governments to exist. He accepts that minimum winning coalitions are more likely to endure than either over- or under-sized groupings, but suggests three intervening factors relating to the structure of party competition: the degree of cleavage conflict, fractionalisation and stability. The degree of cleavage conflict influences the extent to which parties are willing to bargain over coalition membership,<sup>2</sup> while instability and fractionalisation affect the certainty of information and hence the likelihood of a satisfactory (or stable) outcome (Dodd 1976, chapter 3). In the Indian context, Andrew Wyatt (1999, pp 10-11) uses Dodd's analysis to explain the failure of parties in Uttar Pradesh to form apparently mutually beneficial electoral alliances and government coalitions. He suggests that parties appealing to antagonistic caste constituencies (the Bahujan Samaj Party – BSP – and the Samajwadi Party – SP) have added constraints on their ability to form coalitions since these would be unpopular among their core support group.

Dodd's approach reflects a tendency to circularity in much of the party system literature, whereby the outcome of party negotiation is a reflection of the structure of the party system, which, in turn, is determined by the nature of party negotiations. This is different from the endogeneity issue raised by Bueno de Mesquita (1975), whereby trade-offs between long- and short-term preferences influence the success of coalition bargaining (see Browne, Frenreis & Gleiber 1984, pp 173-4). However, Dodd's approach does highlight the issue of voter attitudes to coalition membership and the associated costs/benefits in terms of core party support. Further, if broad party system associations are exchanged for party specific variables such as the nature of party organisation and the vote base of a party, a clearer set of party systemic variables can be used to examine the relationship between parties and coalition strategy. Such an approach is developed by Gregory Luebbert (1986, p 46), who stresses the variety of conflicting goals faced by party leaders when entering negotiations over coalition formation:

These goals include the desire to retain the leadership, to maintain party unity, to participate in a government, to participate in a majority government, to preserve policy preferences, to see the preferences enacted as public policy ... From this perspective, the leaders' task is to insist on preferences that are sufficiently focused that they generate the widest possible support within the party, but sufficiently vague and opaque that they do not engage in government formation the disagreements that are a constant feature of any party.

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2 Cleavage conflict is related to the ability to maintain support from a party's voters when entering a coalition: if joining a coalition is likely to alienate a party constituency, the costs are likely to outweigh any benefits (Dodd 1976, p 59).

This allows Luebbert to model coalition preferences in relation to 'party profiles', which are defined by a party's support base, ideology, and organisational structure. Primarily concerned with maintaining this party profile, leaders will face a trade-off between the benefits of government participation and the need to protect their own position and party identity.

Luebbert's conceptualisation of coalition bargaining provides a countervailing explanation to models which suggest that ideological coherence will be a characteristic of coalition governments. Indeed, he suggests (1986, p 64) that:

It follows from their concern to maintain their distinctiveness that party leaders will, all other things being equal, prefer cooperation with a party whose preferences are tangential to cooperation with a party whose preferences are convergent.

In competitive party systems the tension between compromising identity and government participation will enable an open bargaining process and encourage parties with tangential or even conflicting policy preferences to join. Such coalitions are likely to be characterised by multiple veto options, with minimum member majorities following vague or segmented policy options.

Theory has suggested that successful coalitions are likely to be made up of the smallest number of parties needed to consolidate a government majority. Such a prediction is based on the assumption that this will allow each party's share of the benefits of government incumbency to be maximised. The threshold of support required for a majority in the Lok Sabha (national Parliament), required by any prospective government, is roughly 273 seats.<sup>3</sup> The BJP-led coalition governments in 1998 and 1999 were based largely, but not exclusively, on the successful electoral alliances the BJP constructed in the aftermath of its failure to form a government after the 1996 elections. In 1998 the BJP-led alliance failed to win a majority of seats and was forced to negotiate with a number of opposition parties in order to secure support in a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha.

The BJP secured the support of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Haryana Lok Dal, and Arunachal Congress in a parliamentary vote of confidence, which it won with 274 votes. In 1999 the BJP-led alliance did secure a majority of seats and the post-election negotiations were used to garner the support of some minor parties,<sup>4</sup> which consolidated the parliamentary strength of the National Democratic Alliance.

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3 Just over 50% of a membership of 545. The exact threshold is complicated by the provision of two nominated seats to represent Anglo-Indians, and the role of the Speaker. In 1998 the position in the Lok Sabha was further complicated because the results from a number of seats were delayed, due to elections being postponed because of adverse weather conditions and the Election Commission forcing re-polls.

4 The Kashmir National Conference (which won 4 Lok Sabha seats), the Manipur state Congress Party (1), Sikkim Democratic Front (1) and the Mizo National Front (1).

Events in 1998 support the theory that minimal winning coalitions will form, while, in 1999, it appears that the government formation was slightly larger than was absolutely necessary to secure power. However, the position is complicated by two factors: the coherence of the BJP-led alliance as a unitary voting bloc and the role of parties that voted for the government but refused to take government office. Examining these two factors suggests that arguments related to ideological coherence have limited applicability to the Indian case and that this, in turn, weakens the strength of any expectation of strict conformity to the concept of the minimal winning coalition.

The alliances with which the BJP fought the 1998 and 1999 elections were formed mainly as part of a strategy of pragmatic cooperation, whereby ideological distinctiveness was traded for the benefits (noted above) of co-ordination under the SMP electoral system. Whilst some alliance partnerships had some historical and ideological resonance, most were the outcome of a willingness to gang up against a common enemy. The BJP had fought in previous elections alongside the Shiv Sena, sharing a common agenda of Hindu assertiveness and, in the Punjab, the Jana Sangh (a forerunner of the BJP) and the Akali Dal had reached accommodations in previous elections. In most cases the BJP gained from alliances with ideologically distinctive partners, sharing a common electoral enemy.

In states such as West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Orissa, and Karnataka, the BJP forged alliances with a combination of regional parties and breakaway factions of the Congress and Janata Dal. This enabled the BJP to extend its influence, not only in terms of regional reach, but by tapping into previously hostile social bases of support (Heath 1999).

In some cases these pragmatic alliances proved extremely successful. In Tamil Nadu the 1998 alliance with the All India Anna Draavida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and assorted minor parties (Pattali Makkal Katchi – PMK, Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam – MDMK) saw the combine winning 30 of the 39 seats. In Orissa, the alliance with the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) saw the alliance win 11 of 13 seats in 1998 and, in 1999, increase this to 12. In some states alliances proved less successful. The 1998 alliance between the BJP and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP)(NTR) in Andhra Pradesh was a conspicuous failure, while in West Bengal the arrangement with the charismatic ex-Congress leader Mamata Banerjee yielded eight seats (7 Trinamul and 1 BJP) in 1998 and nine (7 Trinamul and 2 BJP) in 1999, of a possible 42.

Electoral gains did not necessarily mean that the BJP and its allies would share a common government agenda. Indeed, regional breakaways from Congress or the Janata Dal shared many ideological similarities with their former partners in Congress, United Front, and National Front governments. In a political system characterised by instability and political defection little weight could be given to



any *a priori* assumption that a successful electoral alliance would translate into a coherent government coalition.

It was only in the run-up to the 2004 Lok Sabha election that the Congress embraced a strategy of forging a broad electoral alliance. The success of this strategy was consolidated in the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition government and was continued through to another electoral victory in 2009. The Congress had previously resisted pre-electoral alliances, concerned that they would challenge the identity of the party as the dominant electoral force.

By 2004 the steady decline in Congress's vote share and the strength of regional parties (often formed from breakaway Congress factions) saw the leadership accept that the gains from alliance formation across a wider range of states outweighed the loss of distinctiveness. Tactical alliances were forged in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Bihar, Assam, and Andhra Pradesh.<sup>5</sup> As Sridharan (2004, p 5425) notes, these were opportunistic partnerships, driven by a shared response to a BJP/NDA electoral threat and the potential benefits of office.

Any attempt to characterise Indian political parties into a coherent ideological schema and to identify any median political position/space is fraught with difficulty. Whereas Western political systems have tended to be characterised along a left-right ideological spectrum this is much harder to apply to an Indian context where class, caste, and communal identities tend to cross-cut each other, and these aspects vary across a regionally segmented polity.

In its heyday the Congress could easily claim to occupy a median policy space, but in the 1990s the party's institutional centrism, devalued secularism, and association with economic liberalisation left it hard to position in any ideological spectrum.<sup>6</sup> The BJP's upper-caste support base and association with Hindutva, which placed it on the extreme of the communal political spectrum, was tempered by a vague commitment to a swadeshi economic policy and regional autonomy (notably a commitment to restrict the use of president's rule in state politics). Where to fit the multiplicity of regional parties into any ideological spectrum is problematic, since manifesto commitments tend to be vague or non-existent.

Eliciting ideological proximity through coalition or alliance partnerships reveals the lack of any clear barriers to electoral or government cooperation. The CPM has maintained a traditional refusal to compromise its ideological distinctiveness through a refusal to participate in coalition governments containing the BJP, which goes back to the earlier era when it stood aside from any state government formation containing the Jana Sangh or Swatantra Party (Bueno

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5 Details of 2004 alliances can be found in Sridharan 2004.

6 In their analysis of the support base of the Congress party in the late 1990s, Heath & Yadav (1999) show that the vote for Congress varied across Indian states according to the opposition it faced, marginalising its appeal as a catch-all party.



de Mesquita 1975, p 59). However, it did support the National Front government of V P Singh, which also had the outside support of the BJP, and the United Front government supported by the Congress.<sup>7</sup> At the limit there appears to be only one degree of separation between communists and communalists: the TDP fought the 1998 election in alliance with the CPM and, in 1999, with the BJP.

As Luebbert (1986) has described, in competitive party systems the coalition preferences of party leaders are not necessarily driven by ideological proximity but rather by the desire to retain control of their party organisation and maintain their distinctiveness with respect to their core support. For leaders of parties which had broken away from the Congress, such as the Trinamul Congress, Tamil Maanila Congress (Moopanar), or (in 1999) the National Congress Party, this presented a conflict in that association with the former party would weaken their attempt to create a new 'Congress' identity in a state. A similar consideration was faced by the offshoots and remnants of the Janata Dal, which had largely been forged through an anti-Congress agenda. For a party such as the TDP, which fought the 1998 elections in opposition to both the Congress (the traditional and strongest opponent), and the BJP (which had a small support base within Andhra Pradesh), the prospect of some sort of accommodation with the BJP was more attractive than that of the Congress. This was despite the concern that association with the BJP could alienate some sections of the TDP support base – most prominently Muslim voters.

While theoretical predictions of minimal winning and ideologically coherent coalitions are ideals, in practice there are countervailing pressures and constraints which require consideration. First, as Luebbert (1986) suggests, in a competitive party system the need to preserve distinctive party identities may lead to parties associating with partners who are not ideologically close. Second, in a segmented polity, where national elections can be seen as the outcome of numerous regional contests, it is often necessary to examine the component outcomes as an amalgamation of smaller interactions, rather than simply at the aggregate level. This approach chimes with Tsebelis's theory of nested games (1990). Both of these factors tend to weaken any expectations of ideological coherence in national coalition formation and emphasise the varying strategic contexts in which parties are competing.

The case of the TDP in Andhra Pradesh illustrates a further aspect of coalition formation which makes the Indian context distinctive. This is a tendency for parties to support governments but not participate in the formation of Cabinets. Most theories of coalition formation presume that the benefits of participation

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7 The CPI has tended to take a more pragmatic approach to participation in coalition governments, which has seen it tolerate cooperation with both Congress and the Jana Sangh.

will come in the form of policy influence and governmental patronage, yet the federal and diffused nature of the Indian political system and electoral behaviour mean that parties are often willing to support a government in New Delhi but not to accept ministerial posts. Minority governments, in which the government coalition has formed a sub-set of a broader parliamentary coalition – with some parties supporting the government while taking no ministerial posts – have become increasingly prevalent.<sup>8</sup> These governments have tended to be short lived, which fits in with the expectations of coalition theorists.

The situation of the TDP after the 1998 and 1999 elections is set out by Rob Jenkins (2003, p 611), who describes a situation in which parties are

more interested in controlling their respective state governments than they are in having cabinet representation in New Delhi ... [T]he primary reason the TDP was willing to join hands with the BJP in 1998-99 was its desire to win a majority of state assembly seats, and thereby retain control over the formidable machinery, including most law-and-order matters, of state-level government. What the TDP got for its parliamentary support of the BJP in New Delhi was the BJP's willingness to take political action within Andhra Pradesh designed to thwart the state's main opposition party, Congress, from ousting the TDP from power at the state level.

There was a similar situation in Haryana, where the Lok Dal fought against the BJP in 1998 and then supported the government, while refusing ministerial positions. In both the Andhra Pradesh and Haryana situations the BJP had allied with partners who did not deliver electoral gains (in Andhra the TDP (NTR), in Haryana the HVP). Given the proven electoral strength of the TDP and Lok Dal, the BJP was willing to ditch its previous allies and accept a subordinate role in the 1999 elections. The state parties were allowed to reap the benefits of a close association with the government in New Delhi while maintaining the right to criticise the national government from a slightly disassociated position.

As Jenkins (2003, p 611) describes, the TDP maintained '(a) a limited amount of influence on national coalition policy, derived from the TDP's credible exit option; and (b) the retention of the TDP's right to complain publicly about any aspect of national government policy out of political convenience.' In a similar way, the Lok Dal, led by Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala, obtained

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8 At the national level such a situation occurred in 1979, when the Congress supported the government of Charan Singh; in 1989, when the Left Front and BJP supported the government of V P Singh; in 1990, when the Congress supported the government of Chandra Shekhar; and from 1996, when Congress supported the Deve Gowda and I K Gujaral governments.

the protection of the New Delhi administration while using its position outside the government to voice its unhappiness with rises in the price of diesel announced by the union government (Venkatesan 1999, p 24).

The institutional context has clearly influenced the outcome of coalition formation through the operation of the electoral system, the nature of the overlapping federal responsibilities of national and state governments and the role of the president in government formation and dissolution. In turn, this influences the preferences of party leaders over coalition membership.

Support from 'outside' indicates that parties feel that the gains from accepting a ministerial role from the national government are outweighed by the freedom given by some ideological or programme distance. As Laver & Schofield (1990, p 105) note, government participation can lead to 'tainting', whereby the association with unpopular policies can harm future electoral performance. In the Indian context parties primarily concerned with the control of state governments have been willing to forego the direct patronage of central government and maintain a distance from policy decisions at the national level in order to consolidate their state-wide support base.

From 2004 the overt Congress commitment to alliances and coalition politics made it easier for parties which had originated in state-level breakaways. The acceptance that Congress might not be the dominant player in a state and might try to co-opt parties with localised strength made it a more reliable alliance partner. This was reflected in successful alliances with the Nationalist Congress Party in Maharashtra (2004 and 2009) and Trinamool Congress in West Bengal (2009). This also enabled a more coherent ideological basis to the alliance formation, with a broad commitment to a 'secular' approach to politics bolstered by co-ordination between parties drawing on similar support bases.

### THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The single-member plurality system (SMP, or first-past-the-post), used for elections to the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabhas (the state parliaments), has a fundamental influence through the relationship between votes received by a party and the number of seats won. Because it is a majoritarian, rather than proportional, system small fluctuations in the number of votes won can lead to large differences in terms of parliamentary seats. While the practical impact of this method of voting is often expected to promote two-party systems, this tends to be due to a misunderstanding of the properties of such a system and its operation in the United States and United Kingdom.

Duverger's Law, which associates such electoral systems with two-party systems, suggests that voters will focus on the two strongest parties, since there

is only one possible winner (Duverger 1963). However, this effect is restricted to the constituency level of voting and says little about the overall aggregation of seats. Further, even at the constituency level there are reasons why voters' ability to identify the two leading candidates in a constituency, let alone strategically co-ordinate vote choice, will be imperfect, in particular a lack of accurate information about which candidates are in a potentially winning situation.<sup>9</sup> For this reason, although a strong overall party performance can provide a focus for voter co-ordination on party candidates across constituencies the overall impact of Duvergian influences is weak. In particular, parties with strong constituency- or regional-based support can benefit from the disproportional returns inherent in the SMP system.

For much of the post-independence period the Congress was able to exploit the SMP system to change a minority of the vote into a majority of seats in the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas. However, opposition to the Congress tended to be divided among a number of alternative parties, mainly with a regionally confined support base. The decline of the Congress exposed the fractured nature of the electoral arena, particularly when seen from a national perspective (Sridharan 2002). This enabled a large number of political parties to win seats in the Lok Sabha and, in situations where no one party has an overall majority of seats, has created a situation where there are a large number of potential governing coalitions.

Whilst Duverger's analysis tended to focus on tactical voting, with voters opting not to vote for their first preference in favour of a candidate who is in a position to win a seat, an alternative method for concentrating votes on potentially winning candidates is through electoral alliances. Two (or more) otherwise competing parties may agree to withdraw candidates in certain seats in order to focus support on candidates from one or other party. The success of an electoral alliance depends on satisfactory negotiations over which party will contest each constituency and the transferability of the votes of supporters of one party to an alliance partner. Such arrangements are particularly attractive in non-proportional systems such as SMP, whereby small increases in the number of votes can lead to much larger returns in terms of seats.

Electoral alliances have been widespread in Indian politics (see Sridharan 2002, pp 497-501), and a key element of the success of the BJP in transforming votes into parliamentary seats in the 1998 and 1999 Lok Sabha elections. Electoral alliances do not necessarily translate into government coalition partnerships. However, they do indicate some strategic or ideological commonality which suggests a working relationship can be carried through into government and

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9 This is particularly relevant in the Indian context, where constituencies tend to be very large (both terms of geographical size and number of voters), and where information from opinion polls is notoriously inaccurate and only available at state or national levels.

provide important reputational information as to which parties are likely to join in government coalitions.

The weak federal character of the Indian Constitution has been reinforced by the emergent electoral federalism, bolstered by more interventionist rulings of the Supreme Court. This has focused electoral competition at the state level. As Yogendra Yadav (1999, p 2399) suggests, 'Now people vote in the parliamentary election as if they are choosing a state government.' The interaction between state- and national-level electoral influences and coalition formation is the focus of Andrew Wyatt's (1999) analysis of politics in Uttar Pradesh in the late 1990s. Wyatt notes the dynamism of electoral alliances, varying across an electoral cycle that is broken by both Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections.

Given that in most states these two elections do not coincide (following the delinking of national and state elections in the early 1970s), there tends to be a perpetual readjustment reflecting the different strategies used to approach each election. This complicates the analysis of coalition politics in two particular ways: changing the temporal range of party interests and adding an additional layer of incumbency/opposition factors.

The first effect reinforces the importance of short- and long-term influences on party strategies: as Wyatt (1999, p 13) suggests, 'we can see the BSP and the SP sacrificing immediate payoffs in the hope that eliminating other parties will enhance their future share of post-election spoils'. The second effect can change the nature of pay-offs when considered only at one level. Tsebelis (1990, p 9), in his model of nested games, describes a 'logic of apparently sub-optimal choice', noting that 'an optimal alternative in one arena (or game) will not necessarily be optimal with respect to the entire network of arenas in which the actor is involved'. However, viewing coalition negotiations at the national level as the outcome of a series of nested games provides analytical clarity as well as reinforcing the segmented nature of electoral competition across the whole country.

The central institutional aspects of the Indian political system impinging on coalition formation and durability include the electoral system, the role of the president (and state governors) in government formation and the relationship between Parliament and the government. The impact of the electoral system is examined below and related to the broader context of the party system. The institutional influence of the president (and state governors) over coalition formation centres on the role of selecting which party leaders are invited to form governments. Where a party emerges from an election with an overall majority this is a straightforward task, but in the case of a hung parliament it can be more controversial. The expectation is that the largest party will be given the opportunity to show it can form a working majority, and this should give the largest

party an advantage in attracting potential coalition partners, given that they can claim to have a greater sway over potential patronage and power.

In the aftermath of the 1996 Lok Sabha elections there was some confusion over who the president should invite to form the government. The BJP, which was the largest party, was eventually invited to form a government by President Shankar Dayal Sharma, and did so as a minority administration for 13 days before being forced to accept that it could not win majority support.<sup>10</sup>

In 1998 the new president, K R Narayanan, acted more circumspectly, requiring evidence that any prospective government could win a vote of no-confidence. This change of presidential behaviour meant that the largest party had less influence as a *formateur* of a working coalition.<sup>11</sup> A presumption that the largest party will be invited to form the government gives it an advantage in offering trade-offs to potential partners.<sup>12</sup>

The change in the interpretation of the president's role in coalition government formation illustrates the contingent effect of institutions. Where the constitutional position is not clearly laid down there remains room for personal interpretation. For this reason coalition formation takes place within an institutional context which is itself open to manipulation. Tsebelis (1990, chapter 4) notes that institutional design cannot always be seen as an exogenous factor, but that actors can seek to change the rules and structures which govern political interactions. In the Indian case it is clear that the choice of president or state governor can play an important part in future handling of government formation. While presidents and governors are supposed to act impartially it is clear that some are more impartial than others. Influence over appointment or election to these positions can clearly be used to affect future expectations of favourable

10 The role of the president and governor has been formally linked by the Supreme Court to the role of the Crown under the British parliamentary system, which, according to AG Noorani (1996), suggests that the claim of the largest party to form a government should be subservient to the rule that a proposed ministry should have the confidence of the Parliament. The role of the president in government formation and dissolution has been a frequent source of controversy, notably in 1979 when the collapse of Morarji Desai's administration saw President Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy invite Y B Chavan, then Charan Singh to form an administration. Charan Singh formed a minority government with the support of the Congress Party. When this government fell in August 1979 the president rejected Jagjivan Ram's attempt to form a government and, instead, dissolved the Lok Sabha (Venkatesan 1996). After the 1989 election V B Singh formed a minority government, with outside support from the BJP and the Left Front. This government lost a vote of no confidence in 1990, and president R Venkataraman invited Chandra Shekhar to form a minority administration, supported by the Congress. In the aftermath of the resignation of Chandra Shekhar in 1991 Venkataraman delayed the dissolution of the Lok Sabha, ostensibly so government business could be concluded (Hardgrave & Kochanek 1993, pp 71-2).

11 For a discussion of the role of the *formateur*, see Browne, Frendreis & Gleiber 1984, pp 188-9.

12 A further institutional benefit given to the party asked to form a government after a general election is influence over the nomination of two additional members of the Lok Sabha, ostensibly to represent the Anglo-Indian community under Article 331. The nomination of these members, both of whom supported the BJP-led government, helped achieve a majority in the Lok Sabha in 1998 and 1999.



outcomes. At a wider level, the endogeneity of the Constitution can be brought into the interpretation of coalition politics. The BJP has been vocal in its criticism of the operation of the Constitution and established a National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC) in 2000. While the outcome of this exercise was a bureaucratic and intellectually incoherent muddle, it showed that the rules of the political game were not simply taken as given, but that the government was interested in changing the institutional structure.

Less controversially, but with much more political impact, the Constitution was amended in order to persist with the restrictions on a full delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies (see McMillan 2000, 2001a, 2001b). Starting in the mid-1970s, the practice of delimitation – adjusting the allocation of Lok Sabha seats among states and changing the boundaries of the constituencies in order to try to reduce the disparities in populations across Parliamentary seats – was postponed. This postponement was due to lapse after the 2001 Census and a full delimitation was due to take place. According to the original constitutional rules (Article 81) such a delimitation would have had a significant impact on the distribution of seats across the states and this would, in turn, have an impact on the outcome of general elections.

States which have seen higher than average population growth over the last 30 years (such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal) would have had their allocation of Lok Sabha seats increased, while states with lower population growth (such as Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu) would have faced a reduction in their representation. Any such redistribution of seats would clearly have implications for the regional balance of representation, with an increased representation of the Hindi-belt states. This would have a knock-on political impact. Simulations suggest that, had a full delimitation of constituencies been carried out in the 1990s, the BJP would have benefited from its strong support base in states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan (McMillan 2000, p 1275).

It would clearly have been advantageous for the BJP to let a full delimitation take place, under the original constitutional guidelines. However, presumably under pressure from representatives of those states and coalition partners who would have lost out under any redistribution of seats, the government pressed through the Constitution (Eighty-Fourth) Amendment Act in 2001.<sup>13</sup> This restricted future delimitation to intra-state reallocation of seats and kept the number of seats allocated to each state at the existing level. A measure (the lapse of the

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13 Confusingly, the Eighty-Forth Amendment Act was the outcome of the Ninety-First Amendment Bill. Operational effect was given through the Delimitation Act 2002.



delimitation postponement) which would have, by default, given the BJP a large potential electoral advantage was not allowed to be sustained. The *status quo* was reimposed through further constitutional amendment. This indicates that, in the current political context, the interests of regional balance and coalition partnership are sufficient to block institutional reform which could benefit the largest party.<sup>14</sup>

The Indian parliamentary system of government invests executive power in a Cabinet and Council of Ministers, who have to have the support of a majority of the Lok Sabha. Legislation is mainly instigated by the government, presented to Parliament by ministers and voted on by the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha (The Upper House, or Council of States).<sup>15</sup> As a federal system, government functions are divided between the national and state levels according to the provisions of the Constitution (Part XI). In practice, Parliament has a very limited role in scrutinising government legislation and administration, and much of government policy is implemented by presidential decree. Under the governmental system developed under Congress domination in the post-independence period, the prime minister provides a strong personal and centralised focus for the administration, and institutions such as the Planning Commission control much executive policy direction at a step removed from Cabinet control. Thus the formal mechanisms for Cabinet government are weakened and, instead, power is centralised with the prime minister and otherwise diffused through a variety of executive agencies and ministries, with limited scope for parliamentary influence.

While the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha have extensive formal authority over the passage of legislation, in practice Parliament has provided only a weak institutional check on governments. According to Hardgrave & Kochanek (1993, p 81), MPs 'are indifferent to executive abuse of the system, ignore poor drafting of legislation, and provide minimal scrutiny of the budget'. In the absence of a powerful system of parliamentary committees, there are few significant legislative roles available outside the executive. One important position is that of Lok Sabha Speaker, because of the duties surrounding the timetabling of government business and, increasingly important since the passing of the Anti-defection Act, in determining the legitimacy of defections and party splits. The Speaker, who is chosen by the Lok Sabha, is expected to play a non-partisan role in looking after the conduct of the House. However, the government has an interest in the Speaker being sympathetic to the passage of government business.

In terms of the impact of the system of parliamentary government on

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14 In terms of regional redistribution, the reallocation of seats is essential. This could be disguised by increasing the total number of seats to be redistributed; a tactic that has been used in every previous delimitation (McMillan 2000, p 1273).

15 The Rajya Sabha consists of 238 members selected by indirect election from an electoral college made up of legislators from the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabhas, plus 12 members nominated by the president.

coalition formation and maintenance, the Indian system is largely centred on the office of the prime minister, who controls the formal and informal routes through which patronage is exercised and policy direction given. Ministerial positions offer competency over particular areas of government functions, although such competency has to be contested with state governments and other executive agencies. Policy is usually developed through bilateral negotiations between ministers and the prime minister rather than collectively in Cabinet, although this varies across policy issues and ministerial portfolios. The executive structure plays an important part in the allocation of portfolios amongst coalition partners and in the attitudes of parties supporting the government in the executive and legislature. This aspect of coalition government will be examined further below.

Under the Congress system, relations between the national and state governments were largely controlled through the internal structures of a centralised Congress Party. The formal mechanisms for allocating revenues and responsibilities between the two main tiers of government were set out in the Constitution but, under a dominant party system, the partisan interests of the Congress were served through a centralised system of spending, largely controlled by the Finance and Planning commissions, and an aggressive policy of intervention in state politics, often leading to the imposition of direct rule from New Delhi.

As Congress hegemony has waned, the formal federal structure has become more firmly entrenched. This has led to a greater degree of autonomy for state governments, although the system is still heavily centralised (see Austin 1999, chapter 30). This has meant that state governments still benefit from friendly relations with the central government, but there is less direct interference, and formal structures and Supreme Court intervention have enabled state governments run by opponents of the central government to cohabit with more comfort.

A core assumption of coalition theory is that parties benefit from being in government:

If a party participates in government, not only do the psychological rewards of wielding power accrue to the party elite and its backbenchers, but also the party is in a position to use the power of the state to reward its friends and punish its enemies.

Browne & Franklin 1973, p 453

The way in which government power and patronage is shared between the members of a government coalition has important consequences both for the cohesiveness of the government and the policy direction it adopts. Two competing models of portfolio allocation have been developed: one which suggests that

government offices will be distributed proportionately between coalition partners and one which predicts that the distribution will reflect the bargaining power of each of the partners (Laver & Schofield 1990, chapter 7).<sup>16</sup> Additional consideration can be given to the nature of particular portfolios and their relative importance and relation to particular policy areas. Laver & Shepsle (1996) have developed this approach into a detailed model of the nature of coalition formation and how it relates to policy compromises amongst political actors.

Whereas some descriptions of coalition government (see, eg, Dodd 1976) view Cabinet and coalition membership as coterminous, the Indian situation is complicated by the willingness of some parties to support the government yet refuse to accept government office. In 1998 and 1999 the most conspicuous case of this was the attitude taken by the TDP. Other parties, such as the Lok Dal, shared this caution about too close an association with the national government, while leaders such as Mamata Banerjee swung between accepting office and remaining apart over the course of the parliaments. For the TDP, rejection of government office was partly offset by the selection of one of their party members (G M C Balayogi) as Speaker of the Lok Sabha.<sup>17</sup>

The fact that much of the argument put forward in this article has tended to downplay the role of ideology in the coalition politics of recent governments of India is partly the result of a deliberate neutralisation of ideological issues. While much of the practical policy direction of government is established through portfolio allocation and ministerial application, the wider ideological framework for government is set out in the process of electoral campaigns and manifesto commitments. Coalition partners will seek to establish certain foundations on which to co-operate as part of a functioning government, both through inter-party negotiations conducted in private and through publicly endorsed coalition policy documents. As Paul Mitchell (1999) has argued, public commitments are designed to establish basic aspirations and the ideological context in which a coalition government will operate. In this way, common ground is established between coalition partners, as well as an openly agreed set of constraints on the future ideological direction of government policy.

It can be seen that much of the Hindutva programme, which provided much of the ideological focus for the BJP up to 1996, was explicitly neutralised through coalition policy documents. Part of the negotiating process following the inconclusive 1998 Lok Sabha election involved the drafting of the National

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16 However, Bueno de Mesquita (1975, p 26) argues that there is no association between the size of parties and their payoffs from participation in government.

17 When Balayogi was killed in a helicopter crash in March 2002 the TDP did not press its claims over the selection of a new Speaker, and Manohar Joshi of the Shiv Sena was elected as Speaker in May 2002. This was seen as part of the TDP's wish to distance itself from the BJP government, in the aftermath of the Gujarat massacres.

Agenda for Governance, while the 1999 election was fought under a common National Democratic Alliance manifesto.

To an extent, these documents simply reflected the strategic shift that had taken place after the 1996 election. In 1996 the BJP election manifesto had stated that 'Hindutva, or cultural nationalism, shall be the rainbow which will bridge our present to our glorious past and pave the way for an equally glorious future' (cited in Hansen & Jaffrelot 1998b, p 2). The failure of the BJP to win a working parliamentary majority, or attract new coalition partners to support it in government, exposed the limitations of a militant electoral strategy and saw the party's appeal restricted to a sub-set of states and a limited social catchment. These limitations were acknowledged and were evident in the move to an electoral strategy which reached out to new alliance partners and presented a more moderate ideological approach.

The presentation of the moderate Atal Behari Vajpayee as prospective prime minister contributed to the softening of the BJP agenda. However, the 1998 BJP manifesto still included Hindutva as one of the five elements which constituted the 'core content and ideological pillars of the BJP', as well as the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution providing for the special treatment for the state of Jammu and Kashmir (chapter 3) and a commitment to 'facilitate the construction of a magnificent Shri Ram Mandir at Ram Janmasthan in Ayodhya' (chapter 2). None of these core elements of BJP ideology appeared in the National Agenda for Governance, which, instead, stated that:

Governance must become unifying, not divisive, in its practice. It is this mindless manner of the domination of the majority that has led to bitterness, hostility and confrontation ... We will, therefore, strive to develop national consensus on all major issues confronting the nation by involving the opposition parties and all section[s] of society in dialogue. We will also try for a consensual mode of governance as far as practicable.

By the time of the 1998 NDA manifesto the distance from any divisive agenda was further reiterated:

We reach out to the minorities and even at the cost of repetition proclaim that we will safeguard the rights as enshrined in our Constitution. NDA is the political arm of none other than the Indian people as a whole: No one will be cast aside; fairness and justice will be rendered to one and all and we assure you that there will not be any discrimination.

As well as emphasising the non-divisive agenda of the coalition government, The National Agenda for Governance asserted the collective nature of the coalition formed in 1998: 'This is our joint commitment, an assurance that we give together to the entire country.' In the 1999 NDA manifesto the cohesive nature of the coalition project was acknowledged, stating that 'with a consensus on a common cause and a common set of principles we have sunk our differences to weld ourselves into a solid phalanx of a single dominant political formation'. In this way the documents recognise the fact that they are the outcomes of a process of compromise, delineating common ground on which the government can operate.

The role of coalition policy documents in 1998 and 1998 was to impose constraints on the range and direction of government policy and, in particular, to restrict the BJP's implementation of policy based on the Hindutva ideology. These documents acted as a public commitment to a moderate agenda. In return, the BJP was able to elicit a positive statement of cooperation from its coalition partners. While neither document could be seen as binding in any way and commitments to religious tolerance and harmonious government looked particularly thin in the light of attacks upon Christians and massacres in Gujarat, they presented a public agenda against which the performance of the BJP and coalition partners could be judged.

For any constraint to be binding there needs to be some enforcement mechanism. The role of coalition policy documents is to tie participants to a public commitment to a basic government programme and, in doing so, increase the costs of defection – either through policy initiatives that break the consensus, or through exit from the coalition.

The analysis of coalition formation suggests that expectations of minimal-winning and ideological coherent coalitions, in which all supporting parties co-operate in the distribution of government patronage and formation of government policy, are not necessarily going to be realised. In a competitive party system party leaders may seek to maintain a distinctive identity by forming coalitions with parties appealing to a divergent, rather than coherent, ideological support base. And in a segmented party system apparently illogical coalition groupings may take place at the aggregate level because of rational strategic decisions within smaller political arenas. It is argued that the institutional context of a SMP system and a federal system of government has fostered such outcomes. These factors have created countervailing tendencies which have worked against the formation of coalitions built upon ideologically coherent policy programmes. Similar considerations have allowed regional parties to offer support to central government coalitions, while resisting the benefits that accrue from the acceptance of ministerial office.

## CONSEQUENCES OF PARTY ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS FOR NATIONAL COHESION

The electoral success of alliance politics has had the somewhat paradoxical effect of reducing the disproportionality associated with the SMP electoral system. By forcing parties to negotiate over the number of seats that they contest and segmenting the electoral arena at the state level, alliances have produced outcomes in terms of seats that are more representative of the pattern of vote shares at the national level.

Alliances have also tied national parties to regional and state parties in ways which allow geographically disparate parties a say in national government, both through the co-operation entailed in alliance formation and through the sharing of power and influence in government coalitions in New Delhi. This power-sharing is effective even when state parties choose not to take office in governing coalitions. The effective distribution of veto power across a range of parties has restricted the ability of the national parties, the BJP and the Congress, to act unilaterally.

This power-sharing could be seen to restrict the ability of the central government to act decisively, but it can more clearly be seen as the mechanism behind an effective distribution of responsibility between central and state governments – a process which can be termed ‘electoral federalism’. With little change in the constitutional distribution of power there has been an effective devolution of domestic policy to state level, while foreign affairs and macro-economic policy remain functions of the national government.

The consequences for social cohesion remain contested. The relationship between the alliance and coalition partners of the BJP, working together as the National Democratic Alliance, was widely seen as a moderating factor, limiting the more communally charged aspects of the Hindutva agenda. However, this interpretation was challenged by the weak response of coalition and alliance partners in the aftermath of the communal riots in Gujarat in 2002. The BJP state government in Gujarat was seen to be complicit in the targeting of Muslim areas and the BJP-led national government seen as failing to intervene effectively to prevent the atrocities. Yet, as Sanjay Ruparelia (2006, p 333) notes, the alliance partners did not act effectively: ‘The failure of these parties to exercise a credible political veto against the BJP enabled Hindu nationalist cadres to severely challenge their professed secular credentials and test the limits of India’s democratic regime.’

It could be argued that the events in Gujarat in 2002 tainted the BJP brand and made the party a less attractive alliance partner in 2004, but the evidence is sketchy. Concern on these lines persists today, both within and without the BJP, but was not enough to stop the party endorsing Narendra Modi, Chief Minister



of Gujarat in 2002 at the time of the massacres, as prime ministerial candidate for the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, in which the BJP-led NDA won a resounding victory.

While the formation of alliances and coalitions has been characterised as more opportunistic than ideological, this partly reflects the multi-dimensional ideological basis of politics in India. Parties are not simply aligned on a left-right basis, there are important secular-communal, individual/group rights, centre-periphery, and caste-based cleavages which intersect with and segment party competition. At a basic level alliance politics enhances the pluralistic aspect of electoral politics by bringing together often 'ideologically' disparate parties (for instance, in Punjab, where the Sikh-based Shiromani Akali Dal has allied with the Hindu BJP). The electoral effectiveness of catch-all parties has been shown to be vulnerable to geographically and socially concentrated challenges, and alliance politics has allowed these two types of parties to co-ordinate effectively.

It is further argued in this article that Congress's commitment to the principle of alliance and coalition politics, the party's strategy since 2004, has bolstered ideological coherence. In the past regional parties with support bases which were similar to the traditional Congress support (often state-level breakaways from the Congress) were reluctant to become partners with the national party for fear of co-option. This often drove them into alliance with the BJP, where ideological distance was countered by an appeal to very distinct support bases. However, the Congress's commitment to co-operation at the state level has given some reassurance to the state-level parties that there could be a stable working relationship bolstered with the benefits of office-holding. This has resulted in important regional breakaway parties, such as the Nationalist Congress Party and Trinamool Congress, working with the Congress both electorally and in national government.

In terms of the general pattern of democratic responsibility and accountability it is hard to see a direct effect of coalition government. This is more to do with the general weakness of parliamentary government at national and state level than with a particular facet of alliances and coalition government. The governments of the NDA and UPA have both been rocked by corruption scandals and the general delivery of policy and programmes has been poor, but this does not compare particularly badly with previous examples of single-party government.

Indian electoral politics in the period from 1998 to 2014 has been characterised by the acceptance and evolution of alliance and coalition politics. The coalition governments elected in 1999, 2004, and 2009 have each served a full five-year term and the period has coincided with high and sustained economic growth. The Indian electorate has come to accept alliances and coalitions as part of the democratic process and the political parties have adapted to the dynamics of



electoral alliances and coalition formation and the compromises and power-sharing required to sustain co-operation.

Indian elections have a powerful representative purpose and instil a crucial element of accountability and responsiveness in the political process. There are still major issues with the functioning of parliamentary democracy and the delivery of public policy programmes, but also a widespread recognition that alliances and coalition politics reflect the regional diversity and social complexity of the country. For this reason, electoral alliances and coalition politics are key to the representative role of democracy in contemporary India.

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# ALLIANCES ET COALITIONS DE PARTIS POLITIQUES EN REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO

## *Causes et Conséquences*

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### ABSTRAIT

*En 2006 et en 2011 la tenue des élections générales, législatives et présidentielles ont donné lieu en RDC à la formation des alliances et des coalitions des partis politiques autour particulièrement des candidats Joseph Kabila et Jean Pierre Bemba (2006), et entre Joseph Kabila et Etienne Tshisekedi (2011). Les raisons à la base de cette pratique n'auront pas été celles relatives aux objectifs de consolidation de la démocratie, de la gouvernabilité de l'état ou de la cohésion nationale. Seule la volonté de réunir le plus grand nombre de suffrages et de conquérir le pouvoir présidentiel aura été la véritable motivation. La conséquence en fut la paralysie de la démocratie parlementaire d'une part et de l'autre la fragilisation de la cohésion nationale. Les alliances et les coalitions dans ce cas n'ont pas été un facteur du développement institutionnel, du parlementarisme congolais. La pratique congolaise constituerait en soi un faux modèle qui n'invalide cependant pas les théories des alliances et coalitions mais exige des améliorations.*

### INTRODUCTION

Le champ politique congolais longtemps transformé en théâtres de rebellions, de guerres civiles et d'agressions armées et qui serait en restauration, détermine fortement la vérité du jeu des alliances et de coalitions des partis politiques.

C'est à tort que l'on lirait dans les tableaux des expériences électorales de la République Démocratique du Congo (RDC) le triomphe d'une logique purement institutionnelle. La forte militarisation du leadership politique congolais dessert fortement l'efficacité institutionnelle des organisations politiques qui structurent le jeu des acteurs dont les partis politiques.

La question des alliances et des coalitions politiques peut être abordée à partir de l'esthétique du parlementarisme pour en décrire le décor ou en valider le principe,<sup>1</sup> ou alors à partir de son importance stratégique comme un exercice de jugement et de l'intelligence politiques à travers leur usage, et, la force de leur contribution à l'efficacité institutionnelle. C'est cette deuxième approche qui a été retenue dans cet article. Nous nous référons à la sociologie politique française<sup>2</sup> qui s'intéresse à ces stratégies d'action électorale et gouvernementale pour de raisons de rationalisation du parlementarisme.

Depuis son accession à l'indépendance et à la souveraineté nationale et internationale, la RDC s'est révélée comme un état à vocation parlementaire. Toutes les fois que l'élan démocratique s'est manifesté au cours de son histoire (Table ronde, Conclave de Lovanium, Conférence nationale souveraine, ou Dialogue inter-congolais), le parlementarisme a été logiquement posé comme fondement politique. Pourtant, le parlementarisme rationalisé à la française aura été le choix de la Constitution du 18 février 2006, soit un régime semi-présidentiel. La loi fondamentale consacre un exécutif dualiste en ce que le premier ministre engage la responsabilité du gouvernement devant la représentation nationale, tandis que le chef de l'état détient le pouvoir de dissolution du parlement.

Le parlementarisme est, par nature, une variante de la démocratie libérale qui suppose que c'est finalement le parti politique ou le groupe de partis qui obtient la majorité, au terme d'une compétition électorale, qui est censé gouverner le pays, même si la qualité de cette majorité, parfois minorité, ne confère pas les mêmes responsabilités devant la représentation nationale.

L'autre point important concerne l'alchimie électorale et gouvernementale qui varie selon qu'il s'agit d'un système bipartisan ou multipartisan. Si dans le bipartisme le jeu des alliances ou coalitions relève de l'exception, dans le multipartisme, par contre, les alliances et coalitions sont inévitables, indépassables à la fois pour conquérir le pouvoir et pour l'exercer par la suite. 'Ces alliances entre

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1 L'appréciation du jeu des alliances devrait tenir compte de l'état de santé de l'expérience démocratique d'un pays ; en RDC, le principe serait moins orthodoxe faute de croissance des partis politiques.

2 Particulièrement à l'ouvrage de Serge Sur, sur le système politique français, PUF, 1971. Celui-ci estime que les notions de majorité et d'opposition, coutumières aux démocraties anglo-saxonnes restent toutefois originales, ni aussi claires, ni aussi complètes, ni aussi réversibles qu'en ces pays érigés en modèles ... En effet, l'Assemblée nationale en RDC en 2006 et en 2011 ne connaît pas de vraie majorité ; bien plus, majorité et opposition seraient arithmétiques plutôt que des forces.

partis ont des formes et degrés très variables ; elles peuvent revêtir un caractère occasionnel ou fortuit ou constituer une union durable tantôt organique ou plutôt inorganique (Duverger 1976).<sup>3</sup>

En RDC, et particulièrement la pratique institutionnelle de la troisième République, révèle et confirme la tradition du recours aux alliances.

Il y a lieu de constater que depuis les élections de 2006, la vie politique en RDC est rythmée par des alliances et coalitions formées autour, soit d'une personnalité ou d'une formation politique (Loka-ne-Kongo 2001 ; Mdaywel à Nziem 2010). La plate-forme Alliance de la Majorité Présidentielle (AMP) – Parti Lumumbiste Unifié (Palu) – Union de Démocrates Mobutistes (UDEM) formée autour de Joseph Kabila – qui a remporté le scrutin présidentiel au second tour face à Jean Pierre Bemba soutenu par la plate-forme Union pour la Nation – n'avait pas simplement des finalités électorales; elle s'est reportée au sein des institutions du pays à travers le jeu des groupes politiques ou parlementaires géniteurs des gouvernements. La majorité parlementaire détenue par cette plate-forme a garanti une stabilité agitée aux gouvernements d'Antoine Gizenga et d'Adolphe Muzito durant le premier quinquennat de la troisième République. Cette stabilité institutionnelle aura surtout dépendue de la solidarité de l'alliance Kabila–Gizenga en l'absence de l'alliance entre leurs partis politiques respectifs, le Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie (PPRD) et le Palu .

Cette culture a prévalu en 2011 dans un contexte politique complètement remanié<sup>4</sup> tant au niveau des acteurs que du système électoral. L'amendement de quelques articles de la Constitution et spécialement de l'article 71 en janvier 2011 a entraîné un changement brusque du régime électoral s'agissant du président de la république; celui-ci devrait désormais être élu à la majorité simple et non plus à la majorité absolue à un ou deux tours.

L'on a assisté, dans la perspective de ces élections, à une refonte des alliances aussi bien dans le camp de la majorité au pouvoir que dans celui de l'opposition. L'alliance AMP-Palu-Udemo a été dissoute au profit de la Majorité Présidentielle (MP) et du côté de l'opposition, deux camps se sont constitués : l'aile 'Fatima' et l'aile 'Sulutani' (en référence aux lieux où se sont tenues les réunions pour

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3 Maurice Duverger considère que l'alliance est organique lorsqu'elle s'appuie sur un programme commun et aboutit à la création des institutions qui peuvent se placer sur le terrain électoral, où elles dirigent la propagande des alliés et surveillent l'application des accords, ou sur le terrain parlementaire où elles s'efforcent d'établir une communauté d'attitudes et une discipline des votes des groupes adhérents. Les alliances inorganiques ne comportent point de telles institutions et ne s'appuient pas non plus sur un programme commun: chaque allié tient à conserver sa liberté d'action.

4 Des suites de la modification de la Constitution par la loi n°11/002 du 20 janvier 2011 portant révision de certains articles ; (textes coordonnés). La modification de ces articles avait pour but non avoué de déconstruire en fait l'alliance et la coalition parlementaire occasionnel de 2006, la Majorité Présidentielle reconfigurée en 2011 n'ayant pas accepté le Palu et l'UDEM en son sein.



la constitution des dites alliances). La première s'est formée autour d'Etienne Tshisekedi, considéré comme figure de proue de l'opposition politique congolaise, mais dont l'unanimité était déjà problématique parce que deux groupes se sont constitués dans le sillage de ce dernier à savoir le SET (soutien à Etienne Tshisekedi) et la DTP (Dynamique Tshisekedi Président). Et l'autre camp était fortement dominé par Vital Kamhere, président national de l'Union pour la Nation Congolaise (UNC) et ancien membre de la majorité présidentielle et aussi Léon Kengo wa Dondo.

Des observateurs avertis de la politique congolaise avaient remarqué que l'absence de l'alliance ou de la coalition de l'opposition laissait un boulevard à la majorité présidentielle et affaiblissait du coup le rôle des alliances dans le choix électoral de 2011. La formation de nombreux partis politiques acquis au Président Kabila, destinée à éviter le naufrage des candidats de la majorité aux législatives affaiblissait aussi le jeu des alliances, parce que c'est après coup que l'on a voulu former une coalition des partis alliés PPRD. En effet, face au constat de l'absence de majorité de parti au parlement, le PPRD organisa l'Alliance coalition de ses sous-traitants pour revendiquer le poste du Premier Ministre.

Hélas, la messe électorale de 2011 avait tourné à la tragédie. Les scrutins présidentiel et législatif national se sont déroulés dans une ambiance délétère et les résultats publiés par la Commission Electorale Nationale (CENI) ont été décriés par l'ensemble des intervenants au processus. Cette débâcle électorale a constitué un sérieux revers pour la jeune démocratie congolaise et a plongé le pays dans une crise politique persistante qui, à tort ou à raison, a servi de mobile à la relance de la guerre à l'Est du pays avec le M23.<sup>5</sup> L'unité nationale a été fortement ébranlée à la suite de ce raté politique et le destin politique de la nation en a pris un coup.

Il s'agit d'examiner la réalité de ce jeu politique en RDC depuis que la démocratie électorale fonctionne de nouveau. Les partis politiques étant des éléments majeurs de toute démocratie électorale et les alliances et coalitions politiques naissant de la volonté agissante de ceux-ci, nous nous interrogeons sur leur portée réelle dans le fonctionnement de la vie de la nation congolaise. Il s'agit de dire comment les alliances politiques en tant que procédés stratégiques sont perçues en République démocratique du Congo et quelle influence exercent-elles sur le système des partis, la consolidation de la démocratie naissante, sur la gouvernabilité de l'état ainsi que sur la cohésion nationale ?

En guise d'hypothèse, la problématique des alliances et coalitions politiques en RDC serait celle se rapportant à la composition du champ politique d'une

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5 Le M23 ou le Mouvement du 23 mars fait référence à l'accord de paix signé le 23 mars 2008 entre le gouvernement congolais et la rébellion du CNDP. Une branche de ce mouvement a repris la lutte armée en 2012 accusant Kinshasa de ne pas respecter ses engagements.



part, et celle de la dynamique institutionnelle d'autre part, en d'autres termes, la dynamique de la mise en œuvre du projet démocratique. La naissance et la formation des partis en RDC ne participent pas à l'exigence du développement institutionnel, comme l'aurait pressenti Crawford Young déjà dans les années 1960. Le recours aux alliances ou à la fédération de groupes armées ou de groupes culturels (coteries) pour la constitution des partis explique aussi la stratégie de regroupement des partis pour la conquête et l'exercice du pouvoir. Le syndrome Young Crawfordien agirait encore aujourd'hui et prive de sens cette esthétique parlementariste. Le parlementariste congolais serait un faux modèle.

L'intérêt de la question en RDC serait moins celui du principe démocratique autour duquel l'unanimité ou le consensus paraît irrévocable, que celui plutôt de la pratique qu'on en fait dans la vie publique. Les coalitions et les alliances qui animent l'arène politique congolaise depuis le début de la troisième République constituent-elles des multiplicateurs ou des additifs de forces ou du désordre politique, pour la conquête et l'exercice du pouvoir? Leur efficacité ou faiblesses rendent compte du mal de croissance des partis politiques à la base de leur fortune pratique. La question de savoir quelle force module ou gouverne la vie politique et institutionnelle congolaise ne manquerait pas de pertinence au regard de l'histoire du jeu des alliances politiques en RDC : qui gouverne en RDC ? Les partis, les coalitions internes ou externes?

En effet, aucun parti politique congolais n'aurait réellement la capacité de gagner seul les élections et de disposer d'une majorité absolue pour diriger le pays; aussi, le regroupement en cartel ou en plateforme s'est-il imposé, plus en 2006 qu'en 2011. On peut rappeler que la Conférence Nationale Souveraine aura été la période la plus fertile en alliances et coalitions du fait du phénomène des partis dits alimentaires (Loka-ne-Kongo 2001). Le jeu d'alliances et de coalitions politiques en RDC ne serait pas assez déterminant de l'évolution institutionnelle à cause des faiblesses structurelles évidentes.

L'une de ces plus grandes faiblesses de la stratégie d'alliances et des coalitions en RDC serait leur caractère opportuniste du fait de l'absence criante des idéologies politiques. Les partis politiques congolais n'existent que pour conquérir le pouvoir mais non pour défendre ou faire triompher des causes sociales ou historiques.

Pour le démontrer, la présente étude procédera d'abord en un état des lieux synthétique du jeu des alliances et coalitions politiques en RDC, et ensuite, à la recherche de sa base légale, et enfin en évaluation de leur fonctionnement ou leur pratique récente dans la troisième République. Nous discuterons après des mobiles réels à la base de la formation de ces plateformes politiques ainsi que de leurs répercussions sur le système des partis, la consolidation de la démocratie, la gouvernabilité du pays et la cohésion nationale.

## ETAT DES LIEUX DES ALLIANCES ET COALITIONS POLITIQUES EN RDC

Le jeu d'alliances et de coalitions est réellement une constituante de l'histoire politique de la RDC du fait du multipartisme, même si pendant des longues périodes, le pays a vécu sous la coupe d'un régime monolithique, qui avait freiné l'élan démocratique dans le pays. Car, à chaque fois que les circonstances ont permis l'organisation des scrutins, les alliances entre partis politiques se sont avérées indispensables voire indépensables. Etil est devenu un lieu commun dans le contexte politique congolais qu'aucune formation politique, quelle que soit sa taille ou ses ressources ne pourrait envisager de se présenter seule ou de faire cavalier seul, lors des échéances électorales; c'est-à-dire, de briguer en solitaire la conquête du pouvoir. La scène politique congolaise est tellement mouvante que la mobilité des acteurs politiques fait souvent bouger les lignes. Les partis politiques congolais seraient confrontés à un mal de croissance qui les prive de compétitivité d'une part, et de l'autre, le défaut de culture politique et surtout de programmes politiques affaiblit les arguments de compétitivité et d'adhésion. On assiste en RDC à une recomposition politique permanente et continue ; on va de mouvance en mouvance, à gauche comme à droite. Depuis 1960, tous les gouvernements qui se sont succédé de façon démocratique ou non ont été et restent des gouvernements d'alliances ou de coalitions,<sup>6</sup> répartis en cinq périodes principales.

### *De 1960 à 1965*

Le jeune état congolais est né dans un contexte politique polarisé mettant aux prises les 'séparatistes constitués fondamentalement des fédéralistes' et des 'unionistes qui étaient essentiellement unitaristes'. Les alliances entre partis politiques tournaient essentiellement autour de la nature de l'état congolais (unitaire ou fédéral) doublé d'un sentiment ethnique.

Les élections de mai 1960 ont donné lieu à des alliances étonnantes; au Katanga, la Balubakat (association des Baluba du Katanga) s'était d'abord allié à la Convention Nationale du Katanga (Conakat), puis à l'idée d'un Congo uni à cause de l'exclusivité ethnique et des accointances européennes de cette dernière.

Au Kasai, l'Union Nationale Congolaise, parti des Lulua, fut dans une alliance avec le Mouvement National Congolais/Lumumba (MNC/L) une protection contre la dominance du Mouvement National Congolais/Kalonji

6 Les alliances et coalitions politiques formées depuis 2006 ne répondent pas aux critères de l'unité idéologique: l'alliance de la majorité présidentielle réunissait les sociaux-démocrates avec les libéraux, les indépendants et les fédéralistes; et la coalition AMP-Palu -UDEMO étaient entre kabilistes aux idéologies multiples, les lumumbistes (perçus comme gauchisants) et des mobutistes (perçus comme droitistes).

(MNC/K) et son caractère tribal luba. A Léopoldville, c'est la rivalité du Parti Solidaire Africain (PSA) et de l'Alliance des Bakongo (ABAKO) qui détermina en grande partie l'attitude des deux partis, et c'est notamment le fait que le PSA soupçonnait l'Abako d'intentions séparatistes qui l'amena à se rallier aux partis appuyant l'idée d'un Congo unitaire (Young 1965).

L'unitarisme ayant pris de l'ascendant sur le fédéralisme aux élections de 1960, cette tendance politique a pris des dimensions affectives se rapportant sur des leaders politiques. Et c'est autour des personnalités que se nouaient désormais les alliances et coalitions. C'est à la suite d'ailleurs de la confusion et d'épreuves ouvertes entre, d'un côté, la majorité parlementaire de la Convention des nationalistes congolais (CONACO)<sup>7</sup> favorable au premier ministre sortant Moïse Tshombe et, de l'autre côté, l'opposition composée de députés du Front démocratique congolais et supportant Evariste Kimba, nouveau premier ministre nommé par le Président Kasa-Vubu en 1965 que, le Général Joseph-Désiré Mobutu fera son coup d'état et va justifier celui-ci par la menace d'une guerre civile nourrie par les ambitions personnelles et mal gérées des politiciens (Banyaku 2013).

#### *De 1990 à 1997<sup>8</sup>*

Mobutu instaura un régime de parti unique de 1965 à 1990 avant de permettre la réintroduction du multipartisme. A l'occasion de la Conférence Nationale Souveraine les partis politiques et les organisations de la société civile s'organisèrent en plateformes politiques, autre nom de cartels ou alliances politiques. La transition démocratique fut dominée par le principe du 'partage équitable et équilibré' du pouvoir entre le cartel de l'opposition (union sacrée de l'opposition et alliés, USORAL) et le cartel des partis de la mouvance présidentielle constitué par les Forces politiques du conclave (FPC). L'émergence d'une opposition dite modérée au sein de l'union sacrée de l'opposition libérale et démocratique à partir de 1994 va occasionner une trilatéralisation du jeu politique, permettant au Maréchal-arbitre, de désigner librement dans l'un de ces regroupements le coordonnateur d'un gouvernement que l'on qualifiait désormais de 'panier à crabes'. Comme les élections démocratiques n'eurent pas lieu durant cette longue transition vers la troisième République il ne fut pas possible de tester la force politique de

7 La CONACO est la dénomination adoptée par les membres de la Conakat lorsque leur leader Moïse Tshombe accéda à la primature après la sécession Katangaise. Cette nouvelle appellation était une réponse aux critiques formulées par les détracteurs de ce parti qui le jugeaient tribal et à la solde de la Belgique qui envisageait de balkaniser le Congo.

8 La formation de plateformes politiques autres noms des alliances et coalitions politiques autour de la Conférence Nationale Souveraine (CNS) n'était pas la conséquence d'une dynamique parlementaire mais plutôt la conséquence de la logique du partage de pouvoir ou encore de la manipulation politicienne.

ces alliances et coalitions politiques, la distribution du pouvoir ayant relevé du pouvoir discrétionnaire du chef de l'état. Toutefois cette géographie politique nationale offrait au chef de l'état la possibilité d'opérer des reconfigurations des forces politiques sur l'échiquier, par un recyclage non avoué de l'ancien régime.

### *De 2002 à 2006*

Les forces politiques qui vont aux élections en 2006 sont d'origines politico-militaires ayant participé au dialogue inter-congolais de Sun-City en Afrique du Sud. Ce sont des composantes politico-militaires appelées à se transformer en partis politiques et des entités qui tiendront lieu des coalitions politiques formatrices d'un gouvernement négocié et dont le fonctionnement des institutions n'obéira pas au principe de la séparation du pouvoir.

Le gouvernement partagé ou de cohabitation provisoire (1 président + 4 vice-présidents) 1+4 issu du dialogue inter-congolais a reposé par contre sur un principe de cohabitation. Toutes les sensibilités politiques armées et non armées y compris la société civile ont été incluses dans les institutions sur la base des quotas négociés. A la tête de ce gouvernement se trouvait un collège présidentiel dont chaque membre délégué par sa composante avait la charge d'une commission spécifique. Le président de la république avait le devoir au regard de l'article 80 de la Constitution de développer un leadership responsable. Seule l'UDPS a renoncé unilatéralement à faire partie de ce gouvernement et même de participer au processus électoral organisé par ce gouvernement en 2005 et 2006.

### *De 2006 à 2011*

Les élections de 2006 – censées mettre un terme à la plus longue transition politique sur le continent et inaugurer la troisième République – ont été organisées sur la base des principes établis par la constitution du 18 février 2006. La principale innovation de cette loi fondamentale est l'accès au jeu ou à la concurrence politique accordé aux personnes sans attaches politiques appelées 'indépendants'. Le régime électoral prévoyait en effet un suffrage universel direct dans lequel le président de la république serait élu à la majorité absolue au premier tour, et à défaut, on procédait à un second tour dans les quinze jours suivant la proclamation des résultats. Le mode de scrutin ainsi que les conditions d'éligibilité pour d'autres fonctions électives devaient être fixés par la loi électorale.

Deux grandes alliances se sont constituées au premier tour de ces élections couplées (présidentielles et législatives) qui se sont tenues le 30 juillet 2006: L'Alliance de la Majorité Présidentielle (AMP) créée officiellement le 24 juin 2006 dominée par le PPRD (parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et la démocratie) et

le Regroupement des Nationalistes Congolais (RENACO) chapeauté par le MLC (mouvement de libération du Congo) de Jean Pierre Bemba. Aucun candidat sur les 33 retenus n'a pu obtenir la majorité absolue à l'issue du vote. Suivant les résultats publiés par la Commission électorale Indépendante (CEI) le 20 août 2006: Kabila (44,8%), Bemba (20,0%), Gizenga (13,0%), Zanga Mobutu (4,8%) et Oscar Kashala (3,5%). Aucun autre candidat ne franchit la barre de 2% (Obotela & Omasombo 2007). L'AMP plus le Parti lumumbiste unifié (Palu) et l'Union de mobutistes (l'Udemo) a pu cependant disposer de la majorité absolue à l'Assemblée nationale soit 338 sièges sur les 500 qui étaient à pourvoir (De Villers 2009).

L'intermède entre les deux tours a été l'occasion de nouer des alliances et de reconfigurer l'espace politique. Ainsi par la déclaration du 19 septembre 2006, le Palu a apporté son soutien à Joseph Kabila. La signature officielle de l'accord AMP-Palu est intervenue le 30 septembre 2006. La sortie de l' 'Union pour la Nation', plate-forme de soutien à Jean-Pierre Bemba, a eu lieu le 23 septembre. Le 16 octobre 2006 l'AMP signe un protocole d'accord avec l'Udemo de François Joseph Nzanga Mobutu. Le second tour de l'élection présidentielle couplée aux législatives provinciales eut lieu le 23 octobre 2006.

La publication des résultats le 15 novembre 2006 donna pour vainqueur Joseph Kabila (58,05%) contre 41,95% pour Bemba Gombo. En déclarant non fondée la requête du MLC, la cour suprême de justice a confirmé le résultat dans son verdict du 27 novembre 2006 (Obotela & Omasombo 2007). Sur les 632 sièges à pourvoir dans les Assemblées provinciales, l'AMP qui a bénéficié des nouveaux ralliements depuis les scrutins du 30 juillet 2006 obtint 259 sièges (dont 132 pour le PPRD) contre 182 sièges pour l'UN (dont 104 pour le MLC). Et pour l'élection des sénateurs organisés peu de temps après, l'AMP a obtenu 58 sièges sur les 108 à pourvoir (De Villers 2009).

Suivant les clauses d'un accord extraparlamentaire d'alliance électorale au second tour, la primature fut dès lors confiée au Palu, Cet accord scella les équilibres institutionnels instables et ne permit qu'imparfaitement la consolidation de la démocratie et le respect de la séparation du pouvoir.

### *Après 2011*

Les élections de novembre 2011 ont connu une ambiance particulièrement chaude en amont et en aval. La surchauffe observée était la conséquence de la précipitation, de l'improvisation, de l'intransigeance et de la méfiance qui ont caractérisé les parties prenantes au processus électoral et particulièrement les partis politiques. C'est la révision de l'article 71 de la Constitution qui a le plus posé problèmes d'autant plus qu'il consistait au changement du mode de scrutin pour l'élection du président de la république.

Du suffrage majoritaire à deux tours, le président de la république devrait désormais être élu à la majorité simple. Ce qui modifiait complètement le jeu politique par rapport à 2006. La problématique du contexte s'associait à celui des acteurs car, si l'AMP a renouvelé son attachement à Joseph Kabila, l'opposition a vu émerger d'autres acteurs que ceux qui l'ont représentée aux échéances précédentes. Etienne Tshisekedi de l'UDPS et Vital Kamhere de l'UNC ont remplacé Jean Pierre Bemba en détention à la Haye par la Cour International Pénal. Une redistribution des cartes s'est opérée dans les deux camps.

L'opposition politique congolaise n'a pas réussi dans ses tentatives de vouloir présenter un candidat unique à la présidentielle du 28 novembre 2011. Deux camps se sont nettement constitués: l'aile 'Fatima' et l'aile 'Sulutani'. La première s'est formée autour du leader de l'UDPS, Etienne Tshisekedi, considéré comme figure de proue de l'opposition politique congolaise; et l'autre camp a été fortement dominé par Vital Kamhere, président national de l'UNC et ancien membre de la majorité présidentielle.

Le point commun entre tous ces regroupements de l'opposition aura été sans doute leur hostilité au régime de Kabila. L'opposition a fait de la bonne gouvernance son crédo, estimant unanimement que la gouvernance a été lamentable durant ce premier quinquennat de la troisième République. Le changement était, à leur entendement, tributaire de l'alternance impérative au sommet de l'Etat.

La majorité de son côté s'est faite de plus en plus centrifuge. Il s'est dégagé une nette volonté de certains alliés comme le parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et la démocratie (PPRD), l'alliance pour le renouveau du Congo (ARC) et bien d'autres partis de faire cavalier seuls. Le Palu qui a fait sensation en 2006 était en perte de vitesse et risquait à tout moment de basculer dans une crise d'identité du fait de la sénilité de son leader. Le Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie-Kisangani Mouvement de Libération (RCD-KM) a tout simplement fait défection et l'UDEMO s'est retrouvé pratiquement en cessation d'activités. L'alliance a été traversée par plusieurs scandales et a été remplacée par une nouvelle structure dénommée Majorité Présidentielle (MP) (Biyoya Makutu 2011).

Les résultats chiffrés et provisoires publiés par la Commission Electorale nationale et Indépendante se présentaient comme suit :

Nombre total d'électeurs inscrits	32 024 640
Nombre total de votants	18 911 572
Taux de participation	58,81%
Bulletins blancs ou nuls	768 468
Nombre total de bureaux de vote	63 865

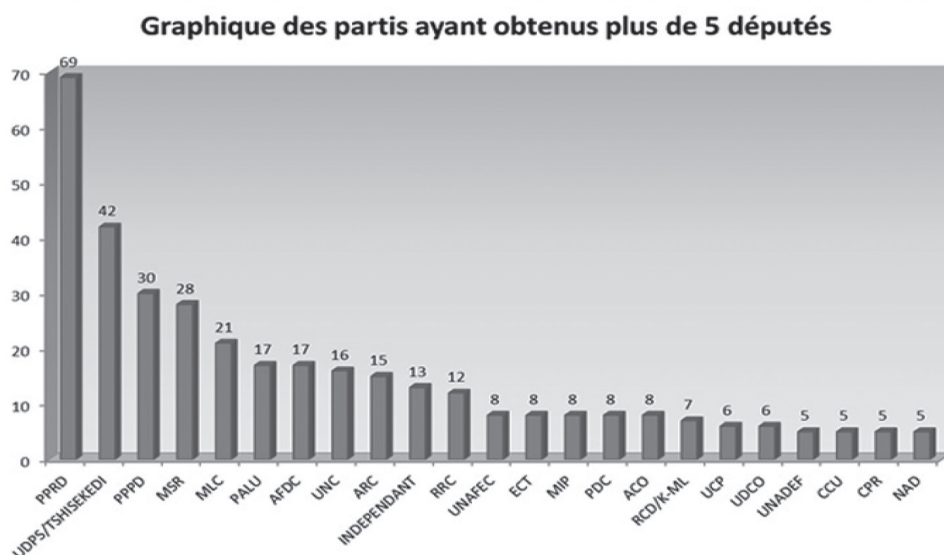
Nombre total de bureaux de vote compilés	60 417
Taux de compilation	94,60%
Suffrages exprimés	18 143 104

Les suffrages obtenus par les candidats étaient les suivants :

1. Andeka Djamba jean	128 820 soit 0,71%
2. Bombole Intole Adam	126 623 soit 0,70 %
3. Kabila Kabange	8 880 944 soit 48,95%
4. Kakesa Malela François Nicephore	78 151 soit 0,43%
5. Kamerhe Lwa-Kanyiginyi Vital	1 403 372 soit 7,74%
6. Kashala Lukumuena Oscar	72 260 soit 0, 40%
7. Kengo Wa Dondo Léon	898 362 soit 4,95%
8. Mbusa Nyamwisi Antipas	311 787 soit 1,72%
9. Mobutu Nzanga Ngbangawe François Joseph	285 273 soit 1,57%
10. Mukendi Kamana Josué Alex	78 151 soit 0,43%
11. Tshisekedi Wa Mulumba Etienne	5 864 775 soit 32, 33%

Source: Commission électorale nationale indépendante septembre 2011

S'agissant de l'élection des députés nationaux, la CENI a publié dans l'histogramme ci-dessous la liste des partis ayant obtenu plus de cinq députés.





Ces élections, organisées dans un environnement politique malsainne pouvaient que très logiquement tourner à la tragédie. Et la crise politique actuelle au Congo Kinshasa était prévisible et imputable aux indécidables de la classe politique congolaise. Elle paraissait préprogrammée d'où l'unanimité autour de la débâcle électorale et l'obligation de réparer, à travers les sanctions prises contre la CENI et son Comité directeur.

La CENI en RDC a été tenue pour responsable du raté électoral de 2011 du fait de sa politisation à outrance. Cette institution aura été entièrement détournée de son rôle d'organe technique pour devenir un élément du rapport des forces entre les différentes familles politiques. Sa réforme postélectorale ne semble pas comporter de garanties d'un réel redressement, le nouveau comité directeur de la nouvelle CENI reconduisant le déséquilibre des rapports des forces entre Institutions (Sénat et Assemblée Nationale) et entre partis politiques. A moins qu'il se donne pour enjeu principal de regagner la confiance de la population. Question de corriger l'image dans l'opinion du tripatouillage dans les compilations des résultats qui ont choqué et désillusionné plus d'un. Le sentiment général de l'opinion c'est que les élections seraient une simple formalité et un risque de perte de temps et d'argent désormais.

C'est une importante remarque à retenir, s'agissant du rôle de la CENI dans l'étude des conséquences des alliances et coalitions dans la vie politique en RDC, où visiblement les résultats proclamés à l'issue des opérations électorales souffriraient de fiabilité et de crédibilité.

La légitimité des institutions politiques a été dangereusement entamée et pourrait faute de réformes courageuses et d'un engagement citoyen sincère, hypothéquer l'avenir des prochains scrutins.

Il faut souhaiter la restauration d'un climat général de confiance entre acteurs électoraux pour que les alliances demeurent dans le jeu politique et de la gouvernabilité de l'état, le recours indispensables. La préoccupation dans ce cas serait d'assurer le développement institutionnel de la démocratie congolaise.

#### CADRE LEGAL DES ALLIANCES ET COALITIONS POLITIQUES EN REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO

Les lois congolaises, dont la Constitution du 18 février 2011, s'appliquent aussi aux partis politiques. La loi fondamentale qui consacre le principe de la gouvernance politique, organise les compétitions électorales entre les partis et crée, de ce fait, un espace politique concurrentiel des partis politiques qui peuvent à tout moment recourir aux alliances et coalitions aux fins de conquête ou d'exercice du pouvoir.

En RDC, comme dans tout état à régime multipartiste, les alliances et coalitions politiques sont de deux ordres: les alliances électorales et les alliances

gouvernementales. Les premières se constituent dans la perspective de la compétition politique à travers les urnes et les secondes supposent une synergie autour d'un programme commun de gouvernement. Leur constitution ou formation soulève le problème de leur base juridique(1); celle-ci devrait éclairer leur fonctionnement.

*Les textes juridiques de référence en matière d'alliances et coalitions politiques en RDC.*

Les alliances et coalitions sont, en théorie et en pratique, des procédés stratégiques imaginés par les partis politiques soit pour conquérir le pouvoir, soit pour l'exercer. La loi et les règlements dans ce cas déterminent les conditions de l'exercice des libertés des acteurs et des structures en la matière. Ce sont eux qui fixent les conditions et critères de formation des alliances et des coalitions politiques.

Il s'agit principalement de :

- la Constitution de la République ;
- la loi sur les partis politiques; et
- la loi électorale ainsi que des règlements de l'Assemblée nationale et de différentes assemblées provinciales.

**La Constitution du 18 février 2006**

La Constitution du 18 février 2006 fixe les principes de base du fonctionnement du système politique congolais dans son ensemble en mettant un accent particulier sur les acteurs qui doivent animer le système politique. Ce sont les articles 5, 6, 7 et 8 qui plantent le décor de la vie politique démocratique en RDC (souveraineté du peuple, régime de l'électorat, le multipartisme politique, la liberté d'expression et la concurrence politique, la pénalisation du monopartisme ainsi que la sacralité de l'existence et du fonctionnement de l'opposition).

**La loi sur les partis politiques**

La loi sur les partis politiques est une loi organique voulue par l'article 6 de la Constitution de la République qui dispose que 'les partis politiques concourent à l'expression du suffrage, au renforcement de la conscience nationale et à l'éducation civique. Ils se forment et exercent librement leurs activités dans le respect de la loi, de l'ordre public et des bonnes mœurs.' Il s'agit notamment de la loi n° 04/002 du 15 mars 2004 portant organisation et fonctionnement des partis politiques.

Cette loi ne s'applique qu'aux partis politiques et laisse de côté les regroupements politiques que ceux-ci créent ou auxquels ils consentent d'adhérer

librement. Le législateur a délibérément exclu les regroupements politiques du champ d'application de ladite loi. En effet, ces regroupements sont, en réalité, des associations ou des coalitions momentanées formées au gré de la conjoncture politique, parfois sur base d'un simple protocole d'accord. Leur vie est, par essence, des plus précaires, et, il ne convient pas, par conséquent, de les assujettir à un formalisme excessif et rigide au risque de les vider de leur pertinence.<sup>9</sup>

Dans l'esprit de cette loi, les alliances et coalitions politiques sont considérées plutôt comme des simples mécanismes, stratégies, que comme des structures ou organisations à part entière. La législation s'applique au producteur plutôt qu'aux produits du fait de la contingence dans le positionnement des partis politiques. C'est-à-dire, que le législateur a voulu laisser aux partis politiques une marge de manœuvre beaucoup plus grande dans la prise d'initiatives et le choix des familles politiques auxquelles ils veulent appartenir au gré des événements. En d'autres termes, la loi n'érige pas l'alliance ou la coalition en directive politique laissant ainsi aux partis de rempiler, de mobiliser et de tout attraper si possible. Car c'est seulement lorsqu'ils ne le peuvent pas qu'ils peuvent y recourir.

### **La loi électorale**

Contrairement à la loi n° 04/002 du 15 mars 2004 portant organisation et fonctionnement des partis politiques, la loi électorale de 2006 et 2011 considère cependant le regroupement politique comme une entité autonome dans le contexte strict des élections. Les articles 12, 13 et 14 sont clairs à ce sujet.

Le candidat se présente, hormis pour les scrutins uninominaux, soit individuellement pour le candidat indépendant ; soit sur la liste d'un parti politique ou d'un regroupement politique de la circonscription électorale qu'il a indiquée dans sa déclaration de candidature.

Art 12

Aux termes de cette loi, on entend par liste, un document établi par les partis politiques ou regroupements politiques comportant plusieurs noms de candidats ...

Art 13

La même loi définit le regroupement politique comme étant 'une association créée par les partis politiques légalement constitués en vue de conquérir et d'exercer

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<sup>9</sup> Exposé des motifs de loi n° 04/002 du 15 mars 2004 portant organisation et fonctionnement des partis politiques.

le pouvoir par voie démocratique'. La commission électorale indépendante ainsi que l'autorité administrative en sont immédiatement informés.<sup>10</sup>

Le principe de l'information comme base de l'existence et de la reconnaissance des regroupements politiques ne semble répondre qu'à une nécessité protocolaire, c'est-à-dire, d'identification de ces entités dérivées sur les listes électorales. Ainsi entendu, la loi électorale n'énervé nullement celle portant organisation et fonctionnement des partis politiques.

### **Les dispositions réglementaires**

Les dispositions réglementaires sont prises dans le cadre des institutions politiques nées des urnes. Les regroupements prennent dans le cadre du jeu institutionnel, une connotation différente devenant ainsi des organes au sein des assemblées nationales, provinciales et locales. C'est le 'mécanisme de groupes politiques ou parlementaires'.

La compréhension et les missions de ces groupes sont les mêmes dans ces différentes assemblées, mais, leur taille varie d'une institution à une autre. Il s'agit, en effet, d'un regroupement ou d'une association des élus constitué sur la base des affinités ou d'opinions politiques durant la législature en vue de défendre des intérêts qu'ils jugent nécessaires, interdiction faite, des intérêts particuliers, professionnels, locaux, claniques, tribaux ou ethniques, ou de tout autres contraires à la Constitution, aux lois de la République, à l'ordre public et aux bonnes mœurs.

Tout élu d'un parti politique est membre du groupe politique auquel appartient ce parti. Il ne peut faire partie que d'un seul groupe. Ceux qui n'appartiennent à aucun groupe peuvent s'apparenter à un groupe de leur choix, avec l'agrément du bureau de ce groupe.<sup>11</sup>

En définitive, les alliances et les coalitions non institutionnelles ne font pas l'objet d'une codification particulière en République démocratique du Congo. Ces structures conjoncturelles, informelles, sont considérées davantage comme des moyens politiques plutôt que comme des acteurs à part entière du jeu politique. Elles constituent, en effet, l'expression matérielle du libéralisme politique souhaité par les participants au dialogue inter congolais et consacré dans la constitution du 18 février 2006.

### *L'expérience Bi-Quinquennale du Jeu Des Alliances et Coalitions Politiques en RDC*

Il est important de préciser d'entrée de jeu que l'expérience du système des

10 Loi modifiant et complétant la loi n° 06/006 du 09 mars 2006 portant organisation des élections présidentielle, législatives, provinciales, urbaines, municipales et locales.

11 Règlements intérieurs de l'Assemblée nationale juillet 2012 et du Sénat 2006

coalitions et des alliances dans la période susmentionnée ne porte que sur les institutions nationales et provinciales, étant donné que les restes des scrutins n'ont jamais été organisés. Les assemblées locales n'ont jamais existé et les responsables des entités territoriales ont été nommés par ordonnance présidentielle pour assurer la continuité de l'état.

En effet, le premier constat qu'on peut établir lorsqu'on analyse l'espace politique congolais, c'est celui du dédoublement entre les alliances et coalitions politiques (institutionnelles), et celles dites extra-institutionnelles ou extra-parlementaire. Le législateur du 18 février 2006 a perçu en avance la disparité entre ces deux types d'alliances ou coalitions (électorale et gouvernementale). L'article 78 de la Constitution dispose que:

le Président de la République nomme le premier Ministre au sein de la majorité parlementaire après consultation de celle-ci. Il met fin à ses fonctions sur présentation par celui-ci de la démission du gouvernement. Si une telle majorité n'existe pas, le Président de la république confie une mission d'information à une personnalité en vue d'identifier une coalition. La mission d'information est de trente jours renouvelable une seule fois.

A la vérité, en 2006 comme en 2011, l'observance de cette disposition n'aura pas été de stricte application, la frontière entre la majorité parlementaire et celle présidentielle n'était que fictive. La pratique des institutions en RDC n'est pas souvent traductible de l'esprit des institutions. En conséquence, les chefs de différents gouvernements qui se sont succédés n'auront été ni députés ni responsables de la majorité présidentielle en tant que plateforme. Antoine Gizenga, le premier chef du gouvernement de la troisième République, par exemple, a dû sa désignation à la tête du gouvernement à sa position au premier tour des élections de 2006; son parti, Palu, disposait d'un sénateur et de 27 députés ou représentants dans la chambre basse. Le premier ministre Matata Mponyo, cadre du parti PPRD était ministre des finances; c'est dire que le principe de la coalition gouvernementale n'a pas été respecté, et aussi les programmes de ces deux gouvernements n'ont pas été ceux des coalitions parlementaires identifiées ...

Sans anticiper, on peut affirmer que l'exercice du pouvoir dans ces conditions peut échapper au principe de l'orthodoxie institutionnelle.

Dans ce cas, la stabilité institutionnelle du gouvernement aura dépendu de la loyauté de tous au président de la République, mieux de la subordination de la majorité parlementaire à la majorité présidentielle. La majorité parlementaire a, à plusieurs reprises, cherché à déstabiliser le gouvernement responsable devant le parlement. D'où plusieurs motions de censure contre le gouvernement, initiées

des fois par la majorité, mais dont aucune n'a abouti à déchoir un ministre ou à renverser le gouvernement à l'issue du contrôle parlementaire. La motion de censure initiée par l'opposition à l'encontre du gouvernement Matata Mponyo, par exemple, a été étouffée dans l'œuf grâce aux consignes de vote et surtout aux pressions de la hiérarchie de la majorité présidentielle à retirer les signatures.

Dans les assemblées provinciales désormais contrôlées presque par la majorité présidentielle, l'opposition ne parvient pas à obtenir de faire élire le gouverneur (ni à Kinshasa, à l'Equateur ni au Kasai-Occidental).

Les alliances politiques de 2006 n'ont pas tenu longtemps. L'Union pour la Nation est entrée dans une phase d'hibernation depuis l'incarcération de JP Bemba à la Haye. Le SET et le DTP qui se sont constitués autour d'Etienne Tshisekedi ont implosé du fait d'une absence de vision commune. L'Alliance de la majorité présidentielle a disparu au profit de la majorité présidentielle coordonnée par un secrétariat général. Une partie de l'opposition est regroupée au sein d'une coalition dénommée des Forces Acquisées au Changement (FAC).

Cette petite sociologie du jeu des alliances de la majorité et de l'opposition politique en République démocratique du Congo soulève logiquement la question des raisons véritables de la formation de ces regroupements ainsi que des conséquences possibles qui en résultent dans la vie de la nation.

#### LES CAUSES ET EFFETS DU JEU DES ALLIANCES ET COALITIONS POLITIQUES EN RDC

Notre démarche jusque-là a consisté à démontrer que les alliances et les coalitions sont des procédés ordinaires de toute démocratie pluraliste et parlementaire. Cette réalité est aussi observée dans la politique congolaise depuis son accession à l'indépendance.

Mais l'écart entre l'objectivité formelle et l'objectivité matérielle autour de la démocratie ou du processus démocratique congolais serait réel. L'impact du jeu des alliances et coalitions serait hypothétique voire décevant aussi bien sur le système de partis, la consolidation de la démocratie, la gouvernabilité de l'état que sur la cohésion nationale. Ce qui doit forcément avoir une explication.

#### *Les mobiles de la formation des alliances et coalitions*

On peut établir les causes des alliances et des coalitions politiques existant en RDC, en trois niveaux essentiellement: niveaux psychosociologique, politique et économique.

#### **Les causes structurelles**

Young (1965) estime que les partis politiques congolais sont plus des club d'amis

que de véritables organisations poursuivant des buts politiques ou défendant des intérêts ou des causes autres que le partage de pouvoirs. Ce qui expliquerait du reste l'absence en leur sein de la référence idéologique. Ce défaut de structure rendrait les alliances aléatoires. A ajouter, l'impact du contexte à l'origine de la création des partis politiques en RD Congo qui fit transformer les mouvements de masses en mouvements politiques (Alliance des Bakongo, Asserco – Association des Ressortissants du Haut-Congo), la Confédération des tribus du Katanga (Conakat), et ainsi de suite.

Loka-ne Kongo, Isidore Ndaywel et nombre de spécialistes des élections et de l'évolution des partis politiques en RDC sont unanimes à reconnaître les limites du jeu des partis à partir de leurs conditions de formation et de reconstruction, les limites de la culture politique des acteurs et aussi de l'électorat, lesquelles déterminent la compétitivité des partis. Il n'existe pas de partis populaires et souvent la croissance des partis se fait par émiettement et par dispersion. Visiblement, les partis politiques en RDC ne fonctionnent pas avant tout comme des machines à gagner des élections. Les victoires électorales en RDC pour les présidentielles dépendent de beaucoup de facteurs dont le choix de bailleurs de fonds.

Les caractéristiques d'un club d'amis, d'une mutuelle tribale ou régionales se dégagent du fonctionnement de partis en marge des principes démocratiques; la position du leader qui appelle un alignement religieux de tous les autres membres. Ceux qui rechignent sont considérés comme traîtres et sont contraints par des manèges sordides à quitter le parti. Samuel Eboua (1999) mettant en exergue le facteur ethnique considère en effet que,

le pouvoir en Afrique, c'est dans une certaine mesure la propriété d'une tribu, d'une ethnie, celle dont l'un des membres est au pouvoir. Chaque ressortissant de la tribu se croit investi d'une mission : assurer, à son niveau, comme les autres membres de la tribu, la sécurité de ce patrimoine.

### **Les causes politiques**

Dans le contexte congolais, l'antagonisme politique exacerbé de certains candidats ou la rivalité ethnique ou régionale (provinciale) peut expliquer le recours aux alliances pour barrer la route aux velléités des uns et des autres (Katangais – Kasaiens dans la perspective électorale post-conférence nationale). Mais l'hypothèse ne serait pas généralisable. On s'unit soit pour conquérir le pouvoir soit pour l'exercer: la première, l'alliance (électorale) suppose certainement un accord négatif contre un adversaire, la seconde, un accord positif sur le programme, exige une ressemblance plus profonde (Duverger 1976).



Si l'on considère le caractère imprévisible du scrutin véritablement démocratique, il serait dès lors indiqué d'appréhender les alliances comme des procédés stratégiques résultant des calculs probabilistes de triomphe d'un camp sur un autre.

Dans les pays en processus démocratique où la culture électorale n'a pas encore atteint un seuil de crédibilité acceptable, l'issue du vote semble connue à priori. La stratégie adoptée par le camp au pouvoir est généralement celle du 'ballotage favorable' qui a fait ses preuves presque partout en Afrique. Celle-ci consiste à créer une situation de primeur de type non réversible quelles que soient les négociations qui seront menées à posteriori ou comme en RDC la formule consacrée est celle qui consiste à dire par exemple que, 'les irrégularités constatées pendant les opérations de vote et de compilation ne remettent pas en cause l'ordre d'arrivée des candidats' (Biyoya Makutu 2011).

Cette réalité incongrue explique le fait que les alliances numériquement fortes, les mieux organisées et disposant des ressources suffisantes pour mener campagne sont celles qui se créent autour du candidat 'président-sortant' qui est d'avance assuré de remporter le scrutin et de disposer d'une majorité confortable dans les chambres. La certitude d'obtenir un poste au gouvernement ou dans une autre structure du pays même par simple figuration motive l'alignement du parti sur la majorité présidentielle: 'le pouvoir c'est dans la majorité'.

Les alliances de l'opposition sont très souvent lâches et sans ressources réelles, leur capacité d'attraction est réduite et beaucoup redoutent que ce ralliement soit source d'ennuis dans la phase post-électorale. C'est la 'psychose du lendemain' qui justifie les désertions dont font l'objet les alliances et coalitions de l'opposition.

Ndaywel a fait remarquer aussi le fait de la jeunesse des partis politiques qui participe aux élections et qui rendent le processus démocratique fragile. Le PPRD premier parti de la RDC n'a pas plus de 15 ans d'existence et ne relève pas d'un héritage politique quelconque.

Au regard des faiblesses intrinsèques des partis politiques, la volonté de se maintenir au pouvoir et de se réserver les privilèges des délices du pouvoir conduit les partis dominants à capitaliser le recours aux alliances électorales et aux coalitions de gouvernement par formalités ou habitudes.

Tout ceci porte à croire que les politiciens tant de la majorité que de l'opposition désirent plus le pouvoir que la démocratie elle-même. Les réflexes et attitudes développés dans les deux camps trahissent nettement le refus de tout conditionnement démocratique et une malveillante intention de maintenir le statu quo dans la logique de conquête du pouvoir. Du coup, le pays s'enferme dans une pseudo-démocratie, une démocratie cosmétique, ou encore ce qui est qualifié de 'démocratie sans démocrates' ou démocrature.

L'on peut de manière générale retenir des partis politiques congolais ce qui suit:

- Faiblesses intrinsèques des partis politiques congolais, faits privés qualifiés des clubs d'amis par Young (1965), structures opportunistes, sans emprises sociales, sans idéologies et créés pour négocier les positions ou le partage des pouvoirs et peu préparés à gouverner;
- Partis souvent émiettés et dépendant des 'idéologies' tribales;
- Défaut de programme politique;
- Non implantation sur l'ensemble du territoire, tous étant basé à Kinshasa;
- Rapports inorganisés et mal structurés avec les masses;
- Absence de démocratie au sein des partis.

### **Les causes économiques et financières**

Les dépenses de campagnes, des déplacements à travers le territoire national pour la présidentielle, des exigences d'un électorat appauvri ou pauvre, le souci de l'efficacité autant de réalités qui exigent de bonnes finances. L'argent est aussi le nerf de la politique. Les campagnes électorales sont des occasions pour les uns de se ranger du côté de la 'majorité à priori gagnante' pour motif économique et pour les autres dans l'espoir d'obtenir une promotion, ou un accès facile à un statut social confortable. La politique est au fil des ans devenu la seule entreprise véritablement rentable en RDC.

Ce qui ne manque pas d'affecter négativement la qualité de la démocratie congolaise. L'honnête homme congolais se garde de 'faire de la politique', pour éviter d'être éclaboussé de fange! les gens de bonne volonté ayant tenté l'expérience s'en sont repentis, laissant alors le champ libre aux surnois, aux cyniques, aux clowns en tous genres, sans foi ni loi; sans moralité ni morale ... l'essentiel pour la majorité de cette classe d'opérateurs politiques, c'est de devenir Président de la république, Ministre, Député, gouverneur ou Président Directeur Général, etc. dans une opulence exacerbée... et qu'importe si les autres végètent misérablement.

Mbwebwe 2004

### **Les conséquences des alliances et coalitions politiques**

Les alliances et coalitions politiques en République Démocratique du Congo ne seraient pas comme ailleurs dans les démocraties consolidées ou non une modalité pratique de conquête ou d'exercice de pouvoirs, encore moins une recette destinée à construire le sens démocratique ou à assurer les équilibres politiques nécessaires à la stabilité des institutions et aussi à la cohésion nationale. Le jeu des alliances et coalitions politiques sont liées en RDC à l'essence même de la politique congolaise et à la nature particulière du pouvoir politique qui en découle.

Ce jeu qui prend dans cette contrée le nom de front commun (1960, négociation de l'indépendance), d'alliance (nom de partis) ou de regroupements politiques (lois électorales) de mouvement national (nom de partis) de coalitions (constitutions) de majorité ou d'opposition, de forces démocratiques ou d'union sacrée, apparaît lié à la construction même du champ politique avant de concerner les pratiques du pouvoir politique.

Pour le besoin de l'exercice nous avons choisi de lire l'expérience en RDC de 2006 et 2011 à partir d'une grille de sociologie française dans une perspective comparative pour en montrer ou ressortir le caractère spécifique.

### *Jeu d'alliances et système de partis*

Au regard de la Constitution du 18 février 2006 et de la loi sur les partis politiques, le jeu d'alliances aurait pour vocation de garantir le multipartisme en vue de faciliter la mise en œuvre du parlementarisme rationalisée destinée à stabiliser la gouvernance républicaine et démocratique. Les alliances devraient exercer leur fonction stratégique de faire des élections de 2006 et de 2011 des occasions véritables de choix. Car, c'est le fait qu'aucun parti ne put en lui-même constituer une alternative de rechange qui obligea à ces additions qui pourtant ne réussirent pas à restaurer le champ politique de compétitions électorales tant attendue.

Les partis politiques, les alliances et coalitions ont en effet manqué à leur devoir de se constituer en véritables machines de production de victoire pour le compte des candidats autour desquels ils se sont prétendument formés. Leur utilité fonctionnelle aura été sérieusement compromise.

En 2006, comme en 2011, les alliances et coalitions n'ont pas pu régenter les compétitions électorales et pour le prouver, le candidat de la majorité aux présidentielles s'est présenté deux fois de suite en candidat indépendant tandis que les candidats de l'opposition étaient dans l'impossibilité de désigner le plus compétitif d'entre eux. Les alliances entre candidats n'auront pas été celles entre les formations politiques.

Aux élections de 2011 nombre de ces alliances n'ont pas pu fonctionner; l'ancienne Alliance de la Majorité Présidentielle (AMP) s'est muée en plate-forme dite la majorité présidentielle (MP) obligeant le Palu à s'obliger vis-à-vis du président de la république au nom de l'arrangement politique de 2006 d'où l'Udemo de Zanga s'était retiré ...

L'UDPS ou Tshisekedi dû bénéficier des alliances du Soutien à Etienne Tshisekedi (SET) et de la Dynamique Tshisekedi Président (DTP) à l'impossibilité d'une alliance ou union de l'opposition, le problème ayant été celui de désigner un candidat unique. Le contexte de misère et de pauvreté ne rendait pas possible la formation des alliances car à droite comme à gauche, tout le monde était en

recomposition. La tactique pour les partis au pouvoir avait été la multiplication à l'infini des partis politiques pour miser sur la préférence tribale et/ou locale, au détriment de la compétitivité globale qui aurait permis d'évaluer leur capacité de mobilisation et de persuasion de l'électorat. Les alliances ont plus été des facteurs de dilution des partis plutôt que d'être des espaces de partenariat politique dans lesquels chaque allié aurait dû conserver sa marge de manœuvre au regard des attentes et par rapport au projet ou programme politique auquel il aurait librement souscrit. Ce qui aurait pu permettre aux partis politiques d'adapter leurs orientations et leurs alliances dans le cours de la législature sans forcément provoquer une crise.

La période postélectorale de 2011 par les contestations intempestives des résultats de présidentielles et de législatives, de façon généralisée et indistincte, par les acteurs de l'opposition et aussi bien ceux de la majorité (pour les législatives) ont révélé que les alliances étaient en crise et en évolution des alliances des partis vers des alliances des familles de candidats. Dans beaucoup de cas, le choix des suppléants des candidats députés est devenu une question familiale. Le parti, l'alliance ou la coalition politique sert encore à la réunion de moyens de campagne mais moins à la réalisation des objectifs de la gouvernabilité de l'Etat et de la cohésion nationale. La politique se dépolitisant en se privatisant, la sociologie des alliances congolaise devient difficile à comprendre.

La composition politique par le jeu d'alliances et de coalitions obéirait en RDC aux calculs d'opportunités tactiques dépourvus d'exigence de doctrines et d'idéologies qui auraient eu besoin de profondeurs stratégiques. Mais il reste vrai cependant qu'en RDC, comme en France, la dialectique majorité-opposition, en dépit du fléchissement qu'elles peuvent connaître, conserve une portée régulatrice du jeu politique.

### *Jeu d'alliances et consolidation de la démocratie*

La consolidation de la démocratie suppose la stabilisation du jeu des institutions par le respect du principe de la séparation des pouvoirs. Les branches législative, exécutive et judiciaire doivent jouir chacune d'une certaine autonomie fonctionnelle pour clarifier le jeu politique et renforcer la consistance institutionnelle. Ce principe d'autonomisation n'aura pas été effectif en RDC, les pouvoirs législatif et judiciaire étant totalement subjugués par l'exécutif et spécialement à l'institution président de la République.

Le gouvernement de la République à l'issue des élections de 2011 à l'instar de celles de 2006 aura été constitué de façon extraparlamentaire. Le premier ministre n'est toujours pas le chef de la majorité parlementaire et la correspondance de la majorité parlementaire avec la majorité présidentielle n'est pas pour assurer le

triomphe du parlementarisme rationalisé. Car, du fait que le premier ministre ne soit pas issu de la coalition parlementaire et que son programme d'action ne résulte pas des programmes des partis coalisés, a favorisé une inclinaison vers le présidentielisme n'assurant pas la séparation du pouvoir et moins encore le respect de la constitution.

Le pouvoir judiciaire encore en transition n'est pas véritablement indépendant. L'armature judiciaire telle que définie dans la constitution de 2006 n'étant pas encore effectivement mise sur pied, les procédures devant les cours et tribunaux subissent des intrusions intempestives. A cette allure, l'avènement d'un état de droit et protecteur des droits de l'homme devient problématique sinon hypothétique.

### *Jeu d'alliances et gouvernabilité de l'Etat*

En RD Congo le jeu d'alliances et de coalitions politiques n'est pas seulement lié au fait électoral mais plutôt à la réalité du pouvoir politique souvent partagé. Les différents régimes politiques ont généralement été dominés par des oppositions gouvernantes – celle des nationalistes aux mobutistes, celle des mobutistes aux kabilistes, celle des kabilistes aux partis de l'étranger – l'espace politique demeurant fragmenté, militarisé et en équilibre toujours instable. Les élections de 2006 et de 2011 avaient dès lors pour finalité la restauration de la légitimité institutionnelle devant faciliter la gouvernance républicaine et démocratique. L'organisation des jeux de gouvernement devrait dans ce cas s'opérer essentiellement au sein de l'assemblée nationale dont le groupe majoritaire qui aurait librement formé un gouvernement aurait eu également le devoir d'appuyer le programme et les décisions de ce même gouvernement pour garantir la pertinence de la rationalité publique. Le jeu de gouvernement aura été en marge de ce principe durant ces deux quinquennats.

Les arrangements particuliers par lesquels se sont constitués les gouvernements ont empêché le fonctionnement normal du parlementarisme dualiste consacré par la constitution du 18 février 2006 et fondé sur le principe de la responsabilité ministérielle et le droit de dissolution. Ces arrangements politiques auraient même bloqué la constitution d'une coalition parlementaire autour des partis de la majorité. Le Palu tout en gouvernant, aura été boudé par les vrais partis du pouvoir, et la ligne entre l'opposition et la majorité est restée de ce fait difficile à tracer. Le Gouvernement Matata Ponyo aura également été constitué en marge du jeu parlementaire, le président de la République ayant préféré un technocrate à la place du chef de file du PPRD, parti dominant autour duquel se sont formées les majorités présidentielle et parlementaire).

Le contrôle parlementaire étant devenu purement protocolaire, le premier

ministre, chef du gouvernement, aura été davantage responsable devant le président de la République que devant l'Assemblée Nationale. Les initiatives parlementaires de défiance ou de censure ont à chaque fois été bloquées par des injonctions et des consignes de vote qui paralysent l'Assemblée Nationale.

Pour faire passer certaines décisions essentielles, le premier ministre et les ministres sont obligés de marchander avec les parlementaires. Les consultations répétées de Kingakati<sup>12</sup> auront substantiellement aussi contribué à faire passer certaines décisions ou encore à maintenir ces genres d'arrangements.

### *Jeu d'alliances et cohésion nationale*

Le jeu des alliances et coalitions politiques en RDC traduit plus les rapports de force entre partis politiques qu'il ne serait destiné à stabiliser le jeu des institutions, à consolider la démocratie puisque sans impact sur la croissance de partis et le système des partis qui du multipartisme évolue ou consacre le bipartisme. Se préoccupant plus de rapports de force que de la stabilité, le jeu d'alliances alimente un état d'esprit qui dessert l'objectif de l'unité et de la cohésion nationale qui se traduit dans le fait par la radicalisation d'une certaine opposition militante et combattante et finalement par la militarisation des revendications politiques qui donnent lieu à de mouvements militaro-politiques.

Les stratégies des partis politiques et des alliances, reposant essentiellement sur des espérances des ralliements ethniques à défaut de la compétitivité et de la persuasion idéologique, ont fini par briser les liens de solidarité existant entre les communautés. Le désir congolais du vivre ensemble aura été fortement entamé au point de faire peser sur la république le risque de partition ou balkanisation.

### CONCLUSION

En guise de conclusion, on peut relever que depuis 2006 la logique des alliances et coalitions politiques en RDC ne paraît pas conciliable avec l'objectif de rationalisation du régime parlementaire opérée par la Constitution du 18 février 2006. Les gouvernements successifs de la troisième république ont été constitués de façon extra-parlementaire, exacerbant des tensions entre l'exécutif et le législatif. Les alliances électorales ainsi que les coalitions parlementaires n'auront contribué qu'à accroître ou à accentuer les déséquilibres institutionnels entre le sénat et l'Assemblée Nationale autour par exemple de la loi concernant la réforme de la CENI, et à l'intérieur de chaque camp. Les élections de 2011 ont

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12 Kingakati fait référence à la ferme du chef de l'état situé aux confins de la capitale où se tiennent les consultations entre ce dernier et les parlementaires se réclamant de la majorité à la veille de l'examen de certains dossiers sensibles ou d'un vote décisif.

révélé d'énormes difficultés pour l'opposition à se rassembler ou à s'unir autour d'un candidat unique, comme option stratégique face au candidat de la majorité présidentielle, tandis que la majorité présidentielle ne réussissait pas à dégager une réelle majorité, que les calculs électoraux subordonnaient aux résultats électoraux. Pour avoir raison de l'opposition et de l'électorat difficile, les partis se réclamant de la majorité avaient préféré le fractionnement de la coalition par la démultiplication des partis. Ce cas témoigne si besoin de la particularité de la pratique et de la théorie congolaises du jeu des alliances et coalitions politiques.

L'alliance et la coalition étaient postposées et destinées à grossir après les opérations de vote le nombre de députés devant se réclamer avant tout du PPRD qui se voulait majoritaire ou dominant au sein de la majorité présidentielle pour la formation d'un gouvernement sous son égide. Mais, conscient de l'insignifiance de la coalition majoritaire plutôt numérique qu'une force, un cadre du PPRD a été désigné premier ministre en dehors de l'Assemblée Nationale et de la coalition parlementaire et investi avec un programme de gouvernement non issu de la coalition parlementaire. L'Exécutif ne gouverne pas avec l'appui du parlement dont la majorité se sent proche du président de la République pourtant irresponsable devant le parlement, et le premier ministre est menacé constamment de motions de censure.

L'avenir de cette dialectique majorité-opposition en RDC dépendra de réformes de la loi sur les partis politiques qui devra imposer les partis politiques populaires et attrape-tout, et aussi de la constitutionnalisation des partis comme en République fédérale d'Allemagne; et aussi de la réforme du système électoral qui devra être décentralisé et conçu pour garantir la compétitivité électorale et le triomphe de la vérité des urnes pourvue que d'autres réformes interviennent pour donner à la démocratie congolaise une dimension plus consensuelle.

Avec des partis faibles et non compétitifs, la dévolution du pouvoir en RDC demeurera un facteur d'instabilité et de crises politiques récurrentes.

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# SOME PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS ON THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF POLITICAL PARTY ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS IN AFRICA

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## INTRODUCTION

The papers brought together in this issue of the *Journal of African Elections* were presented at EISA's Eighth Symposium, held in Johannesburg in September 2013. At this event academic specialists joined politicians and electoral officials from a wide range of settings within and outside Africa to reflect on the experiences of forming political party alliances and coalitions and governing through them. Their contributions to the symposium addressed five key questions: How do we define electoral alliances or coalitions? Which circumstances favour their formation? Why do parties form coalitions? What have been their effects? And, finally, which are the key issues that future researchers should address? This concluding essay brings together the main insights that were generated by the presentations and the discussions they prompted.

## HOW DO WE DEFINE ELECTORAL ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS?

In the papers in this issue you will find differences in the ways in which authors employ the terms alliances and coalitions. Certain articles use the terms interchangeably. Denis Kadima, however, suggests that alliances are different from coalitions. Pre-election coalitions differ from post-election coalitions and, of course, not all of the latter are the product of agreements before elections. And willing post-electoral coalitions are different from imposed or coerced governments of national unity, though their internal dynamics can be just as fretful.

And then there are mergers, which are sometimes considered as alliances, though Danielle Resnick believes that for a merger to embody an alliance or a coalition it must maintain the separate entities it brings together. So, for example,

the formations that have contested the last two elections in Kenya are mergers by Resnick's definition, for within them they still retain separate organisational hierarchies for each of their components.

A Nigerian presentation to the symposium, not included in this issue, supplied an illuminating study of a party merger of quite a different kind (Ibrahim & Idayet 2013). Here, although the Nigerian All Progressive Congress (APC) continues to describe itself in its publicity as an alliance its initial constituents dissolved their own separate organisations to become, at least notionally, a single new party. So the APC replaced the four parties that joined to form it with a single party; accordingly its constituents had their operating licences withdrawn by the Nigerian Independent Electoral Commission and the new formation now recruits its own members. New defections from the ruling party have expanded the APC's parliamentary caucus to nearly half the seats in the House of Representatives. Whether it will maintain its growth remains uncertain, though; the four parties that make it up themselves emerged from defections from other groups and Nigerian parties are often internally unstable and lack tight localised organisation.

Earlier Nigerian mergers of this kind have often broken apart, as Jibrin Ibrahim and Hassan Idayet detailed in their paper. By Danielle Resnick's definition, the APC would not represent an alliance but, in reality, the formative organisations, though dissolved, may still constitute distinct networks within the new organisational structure and if this is the case the APC may remain vulnerable to fission and defection, as was the case with the incomplete integration of the Democratic and National Parties in South Africa after the formation of the Democratic Alliance.

A looser usage of alliances might also include 'loyal oppositions' that agree to support the government in Parliament, but hold back from joining it. An example is provided in Samson Lembani's Malawian analysis, in which opposition parties between 2005 and 2008 supported the national budget in return for the dismissal of floor-crossing MPs by the minority governing party, a decision that would prove very unpopular with voters in 2008. In a comparable vein alliances might also include the informal arrangements that result after floor crossing, as noted in Susan Booysen's article. For example, in 2009 Themba Godi, a breakaway or crossover MP from the Pan Africanist Congress, agreed to support the ANC government as the sole representative of the African People's Convention and was accordingly rewarded with a Select Committee chair.

If we follow the spirit of Mexican usage, alliances are less regulated formations than coalitions. There, pre-election coalitions are very tightly arranged agreements in which parties or fronts commit themselves to fielding common candidates. Alliances are less formal kinds of cooperation, over supporting legislation or policy in legislatures in presidential systems, for example (Navarro 2013).

More generally, at the symposium presenters tended to distinguish between alliances, which are informal kinds of cooperation, and coalitions, which are more formal, governed by memorandums of understanding and so forth. Perhaps we should adopt the distinction that Denis Kadima borrows from Andrew Wyatt's work (Wyatt 1999). In this usage, alliances are simply about maximising votes, whereas post-electoral coalitions must involve agreement to work together in government and/or Parliament after the election. Samson Lembani's paper in this issue has a variation of this understanding: in the Malawian setting alliances are understood to embody agreements about pre-election cooperation whereas coalitions are about what happens after the election.

These differences matter analytically. For instance, they affect how we count coalitions and hence they will influence the kind of quantitative study undertaken here by Matthijs Bogaards. Analytical precision is important if you are going to make rules about how coalitions should behave.

#### WHEN DO ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS FORM?

From the experiences reviewed at the symposium we learned that the formation of alliances and coalitions can be facilitated by different conditions and circumstances. Durable pre-election coalitions are easiest to start if you have large opposition parties with plenty of electoral experience, Bogaards suggests, though he is not sure why. With respect to experience, perhaps political actors need time to learn that coalitions and the compromises that they require are prerequisites for victory. After all, as Raila Odinga recalled in his keynote address at the start of the symposium, Kenyan opponents of the ruling party only joined forces after two defeats in which the winners obtained office with a minority of the votes.

The dynamics of coalition formation vary with differences in party systems. In other words, as Bogaards shows, different party systems create different incentives for coalition formation. For example, in a dominant-party setting in which small parties have no hope of winning elections, they may still join forces simply because this may enable them to reach the thresholds required in certain countries before they can obtain seats and the livelihoods that these provide. In Mozambique a 5% threshold that operated up to 2009 prompted ten smaller parties that failed to win seats in 1994 to line up in a pre-election alliance with the main opposition group, RENAMO.

Then, as Denis Kadima has noted, differences in electoral systems affect the likelihood of coalition formation. There are better prospects for pre-election coalition formation in first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral systems in which parties agree with each other not to contest particular constituencies, an option unavailable in national list style proportional representation (PR). The second

round in presidential run-offs is an obvious inducement for coalitions. As Sheila Bunwaree and Tanya Diolle told the symposium, the Mauritian variant of FPTP, with its three-member constituencies and triple ballots favours coalitions and fosters collaboration between the main parties (Bunwaree & Diolle 2013).

Kadima has found that coalitions – before and after elections – are more sustainable in parliamentary than in presidential systems. In parliamentary systems there are sanctions if parties dishonour undertakings made before elections. If elected executive presidents fail to honour undertakings to second-round allies these have little recourse, as became all too evident in early post-democratisation Kenya.

The threat of national disintegration may prompt the establishment of the sorts of consociational arrangements that call for post-electoral coalitions. In this issue Phillipe Makutu and Rossy Tshimanga offer us an illuminating study of the way this happened in Congo after 2003 as a consequence of the South Africa-brokered negotiations at Sun City. Similarly, certain democratisations have imposed limitations on the number of parties that can be formed, in effect making coalitions an institutionalised requirement. This happened when Senegal became a multiparty system, Abdoul Aidara noted at the symposium (Aidara 2013). Carlos Navarro's discussion of the Mexican case supplied an example of institutional arrangements, legally regulated, that prompt and facilitate alliance and coalition formation. These include a rare instance of the kind of representative ceiling proposed by Matthijs Bogaards that compels even large parties to form coalitions if they seek, for example, to achieve amendments.

We also learned from the Mexican experience, in which coalitions have now functioned routinely over several decades, that ideology and ideological similarity have become progressively less important as a consideration that facilitates coalition formation. Indeed, as Alistair McMillan's Indian analysis in this issue suggests, parties may have good reasons not to try coalition formation with ideological soulmates – preserving their separate identity may be easier in a coalition with an ideologically distant partner. In practice, in India the most common alliances or coalitions are between nationally prominent parties and regionally focused parties: these matches often bring together ideologically disparate partners. They work because strong regional partners can help national parties gain the edge over their main national rivals in the national legislature, while, at the same time, the regionalists can obtain protection from their national ally for their more parochial concerns.

In both India and Mexico, as well as in Nigeria occasionally, the federal structure functions as a coalition driver because it offers opportunities for partnerships between actors whose primary concerns and interests are located at different levels of government. In South Africa coalitions of opposition groups in

the national legislature have succeeded in winning executive power in provinces and municipalities.

Voter preference may also drive coalition formation. The Indian evidence suggests that a sophisticated electorate favours coalitions – and understands and tolerates the ideological and policy trade-offs that coalitions require when they bring ideologically distinct parties together. Ibrahim & Idayet's research indicates that Nigerian public opinion may also be shifting in favour of coalition formation. For voters in certain countries a key concern might be stability, not ideology. In India, voters punish coalition-exiters. Susan Booysen's paper refers to voter-led dynamics of coalitions, particularly in the formation of the Democratic Alliance in 2000, after voters abandoned the New National Party in 1999 in favour of the Democrats. The Independent Democrats' phased merger' with the Democratic Alliance also followed the direction of 'voter migration' in 2009.

The Nigerian case also tends to support Bogaard's observation that durable pre-election opposition coalitions are easier to establish if you have in place large opposition parties with plenty of electoral experience. There is a process of lesson learning or, as one contributor from the floor put it, eye opening, that parties need to undergo which may take them through several electoral defeats before they recognise the coalition imperative. This may explain why Nigerian parties find it so difficult to form and sustain coalitions: too many of the opposition parties are new and small. And even the larger parties are organisationally inchoate and constituted around personalities or 'godfathers', as Ibrahim and Idayet put it. They lack the internal discipline that is necessary to maintain coalition arrangements. Each of the three pre-coalitions that were formed before previous Nigerian elections collapsed shortly before or after the poll. Three years before the next election the Nigerian APC seems to be forming too early.

On the other hand, when *all* the parties are small and built mainly around regional concentrations, as is the case in the pulverised Benin system, then the coalition imperative becomes immediately obvious. In Benin, as Atayi-Guedegbe (2013) reminds us, the necessity for parties to join forces was acknowledged at the inception of multiparty politics, in 1991. In Benin, coalitions – or alliances – are geared to the operations of a presidential system; they primarily serve a vote-maximising function.

#### WHY DO PARTIES FORM ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS? WHAT ARE THE COMMON MOTIVES?

In international experience office-seeking explanations of coalitions are very frequent. From this perspective, political party leaders join forces in the hope that in so doing they can win control over patronage and the material rewards



that accompany office. Office-seeking is not always such a compelling prompt, though, as the papers presented at the symposium showed. In India, regional parties that combine with national entities are not seeking to maximise office opportunities, rather, as Alistair Macmillan observes, they are trying to protect their own regional agendas through trade-offs between their parochial concerns and national interest imperatives.

Co-option by large parties of smaller potential rivals once prompted ruling party initiated coalitions in Mexico, though they do not do so as often now. In South Africa, during the Mandela administration, the mandatory coalition of the African National Congress (ANC) and the New National Party (NNP) had the effect of alienating the NNP from its own support base, and subsequent coalitions between the ANC and the NNP in the Western Cape's provincial government, in Booysen's words, 'advanced the ANC's project to gain dominance' while weakening the NNP still further in its former stronghold.

In South Africa, then, coalition formation by the ruling party may be prompted by the recognition that coalitions can eviscerate junior partners. So, for powerfully dominant parties which face no prospect of losing elections, forming coalitions with small parties might be an appealing venture simply because in doing so they effectively co-opt and demoralise such groups, removing or immobilising any entities that might otherwise in the long term constitute threats.

A slightly different consideration for the ANC in offering coalition opportunities might have been to appear to be all-embracing so as to cultivate a loyal opposition. The ANC has offered deputy ministerships to right-wing Afrikaner groups, for example. More generally, Samson Lembani has referred to the need to invest in social relationships as a spur to coalition-building. Coalition formers may genuinely be motivated by a concern for national unity. Not all politicians are greedy and self-serving and in any case it is possible under certain circumstances to satisfy both self-interest and patriotic imperatives, as may have been the case with the rump NNP leadership when they joined the ANC government in 2003.

In very fragmented party systems a survivalist strategy may prompt alliance coalitions, as when very small groups partner to maintain parliamentary representation. As Booysen notes, the 'survivalist initiatives' that have brought together micro-party alliances have 'only secondarily [been] about building some form of power to challenge the ANC'. However, alliances may also form when opposition parties combine in Parliament to challenge and obstruct minority government business, as in Malawi. In this case coalitions may form on the basis of shared ideological perspectives and this may make them easier to sustain. Coalitions may be prompted by recognition that they are the only way in which opposition groups can win power, as happened in Kenya in 2002. Denis Kadima



maintains that small parties tend to have short-term motives for going into coalitions and alliances whereas large parties that form coalitions have longer-term more strategic aims.

#### WHAT HAVE BEEN THE EFFECTS OF ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS?

It is still quite unusual in Africa for opposition coalitions to win elections, though, over time, coalition formation may be making alternation of parties in government more frequent. This may help to explain why assessment of the effect of coalitions on the functioning of the party system and of government more generally was quite sharply divided at the symposium.

More negatively, in Abdoul Latif Aidara's evocative phraseology, coalitions facilitate the 'pollution' of the political arena by 'telephone booth' groups that are not really political parties at all. Post-election coalitions are likely to govern badly because it is difficult to make good consistent policy decisions, Danielle Resnick concludes from the comparative literature. As Aidara puts it, 'coalitions are a hindrance to government'. They weaken party institutionalisation. During coalitions parties may become more internally volatile and unstable. With respect to Lesotho's recent history of party splits, Motlamelle Kapa and Victor Shale (2013) have shown that coalitions seriously undermined party cohesion in that country. They may weaken opposition generally as well. In fact, they may remove opposition altogether, as happened in Mauritius in 1982 and 1995 when the main parties formed coalitions that won all the seats.

In Mauritius they have tended to under-represent women, though this shortcoming can be and is addressed in Africa through quota requirements. Coalitions in power might arguably result in the inclusion of mediocrities in government; they certainly help to constrain meritocratic considerations in the making of Cabinet appointments that might otherwise operate when a single party constitutes a government. They may function in other ways that block democratic advance. For example, McMillan shows how Indian state parties have managed, through alliances, to prevent fresh delimitations of constituencies, resulting in sharp inequalities in representation.

In a more positive vein, pre-election coalitions tend to soften conflict. At the symposium we heard plenty of testimony from the politicians on the Zimbabwean panel to this effect, though they disagreed about other things. The Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)'s Paul Mangwana and the Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T)'s Lovemore Moyo concurred that decisions about constitutional reform were shared amicably enough, though implementation of other commitments in the Global Political

Agreement were blocked, in the view of the MDC's Nhlanhla Dube, by the 'incumbent party's reluctance to concede' (Mangwana, Dube & Moyo 2013). Indeed, at least one academic commentary on the recent Zimbabwean experience of power-sharing government noted that the former opposition parties had 'little capacity to restrain the authoritarian excesses of their ruling party partners' (LeBas 2011). And though power-sharing coalition arrangements may be indispensable in bringing about peace settlements, once in place they are not always effective in ending conflict. At least one critic of the DRC accord has suggested that the power sharing arrangements might have provided incentives that helped to motivate future violent rebellions (Tuli & Mehler 2005).

In other, less ideologically polarised, post-conflict settings, coalitions might offer better prospects for 'consensual' democracy, though perhaps at the cost of efficiency: in Kenya the post-2008 coalition 'has led to greater state spending and larger cabinets' as well as public perceptions of increased corruption (LeBas 2011). Such costs are, of course, outweighed by the damage arising from armed conflict, but in more stable contexts maintaining consensus can restrict desirable policy options – as in Mauritius. Sheila Bunwaree and Tania Diolle's Mauritian study presented us with a very telling case of coalitions as key instruments in the political management of ethnic cleavages, in moderating their effects, though they seemed to think that managing ethnicity has become too overriding a preoccupation for Mauritian politicians. But if a post-election coalition breaks down in a climate of latent political tension this can accentuate the risk of severe conflict, Denis Kadima warns.

In certain settings, coalitions are fundamental to the working of the political system, indispensable to governability, as Booysen terms it. In Benin coalitions are prevalent and presidents could not be elected without them. So, in highly fragmented political settings coalitions may have an integrating function, contrary to common theoretical suppositions. In South Africa, over time, coalition formation has tended to concentrate opposition in the Democratic Alliance. Booysen's view is that coalitions have helped to foster in South Africa an evolving two-party system and, in effect, this may also be happening in Kenya. As Yunusa Tanko, one of the Nigerian panelists, observed, when coalitions repeatedly contest elections, offering voters the same party combinations, they are probably engaged in a lengthy process of merger.

The longer-term evidence we have from India and Mexico suggests that coalition administrations are not noticeably less efficient than single-party administrations. This may be a reflection of the fact that the coalitions in these countries are primarily formed around pragmatic concerns rather than ideological affinities. More generally, coalitions seem to have the effect of reducing ideological polarities. Indian evidence also confirms that, to an extent, coalitions have softened

or blunted the sharper and more aggressive communalist agendas of certain parties that represent religious or ethnic groups as an effect of the expedient constraints that arise from coalition membership.

### WHAT DON'T WE KNOW?

We need to know more before we can be certain whether coalitions advance or retard democratic consolidation. In Africa our experience with them is still too short. We could learn from elsewhere, though.

We don't know enough yet about when and why it becomes likely that a pre-election coalition can win an election. Danielle Resnick calls for more systematic comparative research on this topic.

Do we need more legal regulation with respect to the formation and management of coalitions? Kadima, Odinga, Makutu and Aidara think we do. Resnick does not – she does not want coalitions to become institutionalised. Bogaard's proposal for ceilings and premiums would, in effect, facilitate coalition formation. Kapa and Shale, with their comments on the way coalitions have distorted the intentions that underlay Lesotho's adoption of mixed member PR, alert us to the risks of trying to engineer outcomes through institutional design.

We need to know more about the best ways coalition participants can look after their party concerns while still helping government to perform its functions smoothly. How best should they keep supporters on board? As we know from European experience, governing coalition engagement usually harms junior parties, and this seems to be confirmed by the Zimbabwean experience.

Finally, if participation has the effect of weakening small parties, might not this be a good thing, because then coalitions would be helping to bring about a more coherent and less fragmented party system. This would be a development that might enhance democratic consolidation.

### AND, WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

In brief, at the symposium and in the papers published in this issue of the *JAE*, the most common usages imply that alliances are less formalised arrangements than coalitions and that the latter normally embrace agreements by different parties to join forces in government.

Coalitions are most likely in settings inhabited by experienced and well organised parties that compete through first-past-the-post elections in a parliamentary system.

Ideological proximity is not a common feature of coalition partners, despite evidence of growing voter predisposition favouring coalitions.

In Africa and the other settings reviewed in this issue, the motives that prompt alliance- and coalition-formation are more complicated than mere office-seeking. Regional parties may seek national allies to protect their local concerns, dominant parties might seek to co-opt and compromise possible future rivals, and small parties might band together simply to survive.

In this issue of the *JAE* there is sharpest disagreement about the consequences of coalition and alliance formation, in and out of government. Critical views of coalitions focus on those instances in which they have fragmented the party system, weakened opposition and produced indecisive government. In the articles brought together in this issue these perspectives are countered by case studies of coalitions that have alleviated conflict, promoted a more cohesive party politics and supplied relatively efficient government. In short, we need to know more.

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