



THE 8th EISA ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

CONCEPT NOTE

WORKING TITLE:

Explaining the Causes of Pre-Electoral Alliances and Political Party Coalitions and their Effects on Party Systems, Government, Democratic Consolidation and National Cohesion in Africa

1. Introduction

The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) is organising its 8th Annual Symposium to be held in September/October 2013. This gathering is a modest step towards explaining the causes of pre-election alliances and political party coalitions and their effects on variables such as the party system, government, democratic consolidation and national cohesion.

Pre-electoral alliances, also known as electoral pacts, and party coalitions have become a significant feature of contemporary African politics. Excluding the handful of African countries where competitive multi-party elections are not yet held for a variety of reasons (e.g. Eritrea, Western Sahara, Somalia and Swaziland), about 50% of African states have experienced pre-election alliances and coalition governments. The magnitude and recurrence of this political reality on the African continent over the past three decades sharply contrast with the scarcity of studies on the same. There is a need to reduce this knowledge gap by reviewing the experiences of African countries and other comparable countries with a view to improving our understanding of the prevailing patterns characterising this political phenomenon.

2. Problem Statement

Formation of pre-electoral alliances and political party coalitions has increasingly become part of the rule of the game in contemporary African politics. This makes the study of this phenomenon important and essential for the understanding of election dynamics and government building politics in Africa. In the period after the re-emergence of multiparty politics in Africa in the early 1990s, pre-election alliances and

party coalitions were formed for the purpose of securing enough votes and/or combining a sufficient number of seats in order to oust from power entrenched ruling parties and/or autocrats. Alliances and coalitions have also been formed by opposition parties with the intention to limit governing parties' majority and prevent them from unilaterally changing the constitution or introduce controversial policies.

Some election pacts and coalitions have undoubtedly contributed to consolidating individual countries' initial steps towards democratic development. Others have been accused of being 'unprincipled' because their members were perceived as political opportunists interested only in short-term office gains rather than long-term policy goals. It appears that, in socially divided African societies, electoral alliances and coalition governments may have also served to consolidate peace and national cohesion on the one hand, and have impacted, both positively and negatively, on the party system, government, democratic consolidation and national cohesion, on the other.

The scarcity of studies of pre-electoral alliances and political party coalitions in Africa can be explained by some of the following factors. First, in most African countries, multiparty politics were banned soon after independence in the 1960s and replaced by one-party systems. As a result, while early studies of government in Africa covered aspects of coalition government in countries such as Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Uganda which experienced coalition governments in the pre-independence and/or immediate post-independence periods, studies of political parties in Africa from the 1960s to the end of 1980s centred, with some rare exceptions, on single-party systems and related subjects¹.

Second, the scarcity of studies on election pacts and coalition governments is equally justified by the fact that such studies appear to be unattractive in presidential regimes, which most African countries have opted for, as such regimes tend to encourage the emergence of dominant parties which on the face of it do not require coalition building. This is more so where presidential regimes take the extreme form of presidentialism in which parliaments are weak and function like rubberstamping chambers especially where the political party of the President of the Republic enjoys an absolute majority in parliament.

In most parliamentary and semi-parliamentary regimes, in order to form a stable government it is necessary for a party to secure at least 50 per cent plus one of legislative seats. Where no single party enjoys an absolute majority in Parliament, coalition governments are generally formed in order to avoid having a minority government. This is particularly true in proportional representation electoral systems where no party has won an absolute majority, like in most of the parliamentary regimes of continental Western Europe. However, in a presidential system the formation of a government does not necessarily depend on securing an absolute majority in parliament since the president is elected by universal suffrage. The prevalence of presidential regimes in Africa has at least partly resulted in a limited interest by scholars of African politics in the study of party coalitions on the continent². Yet even in presidential and semi-presidential regimes, the control of the majority in Parliament by the party of the president of the republic is highly desirable for governmental cohesion and stability and easy processes of lawmaking and policy-making and, more broadly, for making the

state governable³.

Furthermore, the constitutional requirement that if none of the presidential candidates and, in some cases, legislative candidates secures at least 50%+1 majority of the votes in the first round, a runoff be organised has seen election pacts formed ahead of presidential elections in the continent. African presidential regimes provide an interesting niche for the under-studied field of pre-election alliance and party coalition politics.

A third reason is to do with the practical difficulty in gaining reliable primary source information on intra-party and inter-party matters. Party leaders are usually reluctant to disclose 'sensitive' information about their electoral strategies. Given the high risk nature of electoral alliances and the secretive nature of alliance negotiations, it is difficult for researchers to be certain which parties negotiated unsuccessfully or whether talks were abandoned at the exploratory stage⁴. Yet without such information which can only be gathered through interviews with key party leaders the study of alliances and coalitions would only scratch the surface.

All these factors have tended to discourage scholars from embarking on such demanding research, even in a single country. Yet about half of Africa's 55 countries have experienced pre-election alliances and party coalitions of various types, including but not limited to Benin, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. The need to deepen our understanding of the causes and effects of pre-electoral alliances and party coalitions in socially divided countries in Africa cannot be overstated. The Symposium will be a modest step towards the reduction of this knowledge gap.

3. Objectives of the 8th Annual Symposium

The overarching objective of the 8th Annual Symposium is to help reduce the knowledge deficit by examining pre-electoral alliances and party coalitions in socially divided African countries in an attempt to explain their patterns over the past three decades, starting in the early 1990s.

The specific objectives of this Symposium are to:

- Study the causes and effects of pre-electoral alliances and party coalitions in Africa
- Present and discuss country case studies of pre-election alliances and party coalitions in Africa
- Determine the impact of legal framework on pre-electoral pacts and party coalitions
- Compare the politics of election alliances and coalition governments in a number of countries in Africa
- Investigate the applicability of existing theories as a framework in explaining the formation, durability and collapse of pre-electoral alliance and coalition politics in Africa.

- Learn about other relevant experiences, such as India, a democracy characterised by deep social cleavages like Africa's emerging democracies
- Establish the consequences of electoral pacts and party coalitions on the party system, government, democratic consolidation and national cohesion in selected countries in Africa
- Collect the perspectives of party leaders and Members of Parliament from selected African countries on their own experiences with alliances and/or coalitions
- Gather the perspectives of academics and NGO professionals on the subject.

4. Methodology

Definitions of alliance and coalition

It is important to define “alliance” and “coalition” as they both relate to inter party politics. Andrew Wyatt 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 they can only estimate the electoral cost of an ideologically inconsistent alliance”⁵. What is implicit in this characterisation of an alliance and a coalition is that the former usually occurs before an election and the latter is built on the basis of the last election outcome. Agreeing with Wyatt I define an “alliance” 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 association of a minimum of two political parties to work together in parliament and/or in government on the basis of the election outcome. Both alliance and coalition 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-offs⁶.

Target countries

The symposium will target those countries that have had experience with pre-election alliances and party coalitions in at least two successive general elections and national referenda in order to examine how this political phenomenon has evolved over time and identify any emerging trends. It will also seek to include in the analysis a mix of parliamentary and presidential regimes in order to analyse how practice and theory apply in the two contexts. The gathering will also attempt to grasp election alliances and party coalitions in countries that use the first-past-the-post, proportional representation and other electoral systems in order to draw some general conclusions about the way particular electoral systems influence alliance and coalition building, survival and collapse in African societies characterised by social cleavages. The symposium also aims to understand the causes and impact of election pacts and party coalitions in Africa's five sub-regions (e.g. Central, East, North, Southern and West Africa) and how they play out in at least Anglophone and Francophone African countries.

It can be assumed that, with such a broad coverage of countries in all the sub-regions of the continent, some of the conclusions of the symposium will be relevant for most of the continent and possibly beyond.

Coalition theories

Coalition theories are essentially based on the experiences of Western Europe and are focused on predicting and explaining models of government formation and termination in parliamentary democracies⁷. They are centred 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 over time, including the 'minimal winning theory', which is based on the assumption that government coalitions should comprise as few political parties as possible and just enough to win the legislature's vote of confidence and have no passengers in order to maximise possible office benefits and minimise the number of political parties in the coalition because it is easier for a smaller group of political parties to reach consensus⁸.

The assumption on which policy-seeking theories are based is that party coalitions are justified by policy goals⁹ and that policy-oriented coalitions minimise the coalition's bargaining costs by forming only those winning coalitions that contain ideologically adjacent political parties given that ideologically diverse governments tend not to survive because of the greater policy compromises that coalition members have to make.

It is worth mentioning that the role of size and ideology of political parties in explaining coalition formation was matched by a new approach focusing on institutions. The new institutionalist theories emphasise the role of a variety of institutional procedures in structuring coalition formations and survival. In addition to these procedures, the rules and norms governing decision-making within the government itself are increasingly being taken into consideration. Two institutional procedures shape pre-government formation negotiations, including the power of the *formateur* who is the prime ministerial candidate, usually from the largest party, to consult and suggest his/her options on possible coalitions before bargaining over other proposals can begin. Predictive models emphasising the role of the *formateur* party have suggested that it has the ability to structure government formation outcomes by securing its own place in government and influencing the ideological composition of the coalition in its favour¹⁰. An important institutional hypothesis is the investiture rule, which is the requirement that a potential government be supported by a formal majority vote in Parliament. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that, in the presence of an investiture vote, only majority governments can be formed. Another version of the new institutionalism focuses on the institutions that shape post-formation government decision-making. It is based on decision-making within the coalition government rather than the rules and norms of the

process of coalition formation itself.

Additional theories have been developed and refined and are based on behavioural norms rather than institutional procedures. The first is that party pre-electoral commitments or pacts on governmental coalitions are likely to be constituted. The second is that publicly made party pre-electoral commitments not to enter into coalition with certain other parties (or 'anti-pacts') make it unlikely for coalitions with certain parties to be formed. The third theory is that coalitions with anti-democratic or anti-system parties are unlikely to be constituted, regardless of the existence or absence of anti-pacts¹¹.

Our preliminary reflection on coalition theories suggest that while these theories apply in several ways, they often do not deeply take into account in their theorisation important social cleavages which are very much in play in African contexts such as ethnicity, religion, language, race and class.

Interestingly, while most scholars argue that social cleavages such as race, religion, class and gender, have declined in political importance throughout the mature democracies¹² some scholars of party coalitions in those advanced democracies disagree, like Jeff Manza and Clem Brooks (2003) are of the opinion 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"¹³.

The experiences of countries such as India also 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) coming to power did not form, Andrew Wyatt argues that deep social cleavages partly made the negotiations difficult¹⁴. Here Wyatt shares Lawrence Dodd's theory of social cleavage according to which where political parties are organised along social cleavage line their key motivation will be to look after the interests of their respective constituencies and any efforts to find the middle ground with adversarial constituency will be discouraged and difficult to sustain (Dodd 1976 cited by Wyatt 1998)¹⁵. According to Wyatt, the social structure in the Uttar Pradesh state is highly stratified with the SP being strongly related to the middle castes and having adversarial relationships with the upper caste-dominated Congress Party; the BJP though drawing support from a more diverse constituency enjoyed much of the support of the upper castes which used to support the Congress Party; and the BSP appealing essentially to the middle castes, the same constituency than the SP¹⁶.

Because of the prevalence of deeply-rooted social cleavages¹⁷, the experience of India, the largest democracy in the world, is of interest to African countries where religious, ethnic, racial, linguistic, regional and class cleavages, among other social divides, are at the core of intra-party and inter-party politics. It is therefore essential to complement the existing coalition theories with the knowledge accumulated with pre-electoral alliances by countries such as India.

Expected outputs of the symposium

The symposium is expected to produce the following outputs:

- Case studies on the causes and effects of pre-electoral alliances and party coalitions in Africa produced
- Experiences from continental Europe and countries such as India drawn
- Publications emanating from the Symposium produced, harnessing lessons from the three decades of electoral pacts and party coalitions in Africa.

Sample of research questions

All presenters will be expected to cover most of the following questions unless indicated otherwise:

- What brings particular political parties together in pre-electoral alliances and party coalition (e.g. coalition governments and parliamentary opposition coalitions)?
- What keeps some political parties apart?
- What are the objectives of these alliances and coalitions?
- How are alliance and coalition partners selected?
- What is the legal basis of electoral pacts and party coalitions?
- How conducive are parliamentary rules for the functioning of parliamentary coalitions, including those composed only of opposition political parties
- How do electoral systems in use in the various countries impact on the nature and functioning of the pre-electoral alliances and party coalitions?
- How do political regime types impact on the nature and the functioning of pre-electoral alliances and party coalitions?
- What is the role of ideology in alliance and coalition building?
- What other possible factors explain alliance and coalition building in your country? Explain.
- How can a minority government survive in a given country's context?
- Which of the following social cleavages are relevant in the country under study: ethnicity, race, class, language, religion and ideology and how do they affect pre-election alliances and party coalition politics? Explain.
- Explain how such social divisions play a role in the formation (and collapse) of pre-electoral alliances and party coalitions?
- How does intra-party factionalism affect alliances and coalitions and vice-versa?
- What have been the consequences of particular alliances and coalitions on individual political parties?
- Has your country experienced major pre-electoral alliances and parliamentary coalitions by the opposition? What was their outcome and why?
- What have been the effects of pre-electoral alliances and party coalitions on national building or at least on national cohesion?
- What are the effects of alliances and coalitions on party systems?
- What are the consequences of alliances and coalitions on democratic consolidation?
- How do the existing coalition theories apply in each country's context? (*only for academics*)

Presentation outline

Papers on selected topics will be presented by academics, party leaders, Members of Parliament (MPs) and democracy building NGO professionals. However, in contrast to academics and NGO professionals, presentations by political party leaders and MPs will not be subjected to a rigorously structured outline and will focus on sharing their perspectives on the causes and the consequences of alliance and coalition formation, survival and collapse. Academics and democracy building NGO professionals presenting country case studies will adhere to the following outline:

- Introduction
- Brief presentation of the country (for study cases), with special attention paid to
 - Short political background
 - Description of the existing social cleavages and voter alignments in recent elections,
 - Description of political regime types
 - Description of electoral systems
- Legal frameworks governing alliances and coalitions of political parties
- Causes of pre-electoral alliance building, sustainability and collapse
- Causes of party coalition formation, sustainability and collapse
- Impact of pre-electoral pacts on party systems and government
- Impact of party coalitions on party systems and government
- Consequences of pre-electoral pacts on democratic consolidation
- Consequences of party coalitions on democratic consolidation
- Effects of pre-electoral pacts on national cohesion
- Effects of party coalitions on national cohesion
- Conclusion

5. The Symposium programme

The symposium will be conducted over two days. Presentations will be followed by a general discussion.

Day I

The first day will take a look at the patterns of electoral pacts and/or coalition politics in Western Europe and South Asia. It will also review the patterns of pre-electoral alliances and party coalitions in selected African countries. Such African countries may include Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia and Zimbabwe.

Day II

The second day will focus on drawing conclusions on some of the following themes based on the experiences of African countries with electoral pacts and party coalitions/coalition governments:

- Effects of the legal frameworks on alliance and coalition formation and collapse
- Causes of alliance and coalition building, sustainability and collapse in Africa
- Effects of political regime types and electoral systems on alliances and coalitions
- Consequences of alliances and coalitions on party systems and government
- Impact of alliances and coalitions in states on democratic consolidation and national cohesion

6. Participants' Profile

The Symposium will bring together academia, leaders of political parties, Members of Parliament, representatives of Electoral Management Bodies and the media, political party experts and democracy building NGO professionals. Representatives of the African Union, the Pan-African Parliament and Regional Economic Communities will also be invited to participate in the discussion and share their particular perspectives.

¹ Young, Crawford (1970) 'The Politics of Cultural Pluralism', Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press; and Low, D.A. (1971) 'The Mind of Buganda: Documents of the Modern History of an African Kingdom', London: Heinemann

² Kadima, Denis (2006) 'The Politics of Party Coalitions in Africa', ed. Johannesburg: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and EISA

³ Altman, David (2000). 'The Politics of Coalition Formation and Survival in Multiparty Presidential Democracies: the Case of Uruguay 1989-1999'. *Party Politics* 6(3), pp. 259-283.

⁴Wyatt, Andrew (1999), 'The Limitations on Coalition Politics in India: the Case of Electoral Alliances in Uttar Pradesh', *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, Volume 37 Number 2, pp. 1-21

⁵ Idem

⁶ Kadima, Denis (2006), "The Study of Party Coalitions in Africa: Importance, Scope, Theory and Research Methodology" in Kadima, Denis *The Politics of Party Coalitions in Africa* ed., Johannesburg: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and EISA pp 1-13

⁷ Gamson, William (1961) 'A Theory of Coalition Formation' *American Sociological Review* Volume 26, No. 3 (June), pp. 363-382; Dodd, Lawrence (1976) "Coalitions in Parliamentary Governments", Princeton: Princeton University Press; and Luebbert, Gregory M. (1983) 'Coalition Theory and Government Formation in Multiparty Democracies', *Comparative Politics*, Volume 15 No 2 (January), pp. 235-249

⁸ Axelrod, Robert (1970) *Conflict of Interest: A Theory of Divergent Goals with Applications to Politics*. Chicago MI: Markham; Leiserson, Michael (1968) 'Factions and Coalitions in One-Party Japan: An Interpretation Based on the Theory of Games', *American Political Science Review* 62, pp70-87; De Swaan, Abram (1973) 'Coalition Theories in Cabinet Formations', Amsterdam: Elsevier; Warwick, Paul (1994) 'Government Survival in Parliamentary Democracies'. New York: Cambridge University Press; and Martin, Lanny and Stevenson, Randolph (2001) 'Government Formation in Parliamentary Democracies', *American Journal of Political Science*, Volume 45 Number 1 (January), pp. 33-50

⁹ Riker, William (1962) 'The Theory of Political Coalitions', New Haven, Yale University Press

¹⁰ Baron, David (1993) 'Government Formation and Endogenous Parties', *American Political Science Review* 87, No. 1 (March), pp. 34-47.

¹¹ Debus, Marc (2009) 'Pre-electoral Commitments and Government Formation', *Public Choice*, Volume 138, Number 1-2, pp. 45-64; Strøm, Kaare (1990) 'Minority Government and Majority Rule'. Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press; Bergman, Torbjörn (1993) 'Formation Rules and Minority Governments' *European Journal of Political Research* 23, No. 1 (January), pp. 55-66; Combret, Christophe (1996) 'Minority Governments, Minimal Winning Coalitions and Surplus Majorities in Parliamentary Systems' *European Journal of Political Research* 29, no. 1 (January), pp. 1-29; Warwick, Paul (1994) 'Government Survival in Parliamentary Democracies'. New York: Cambridge University Press; and Martin, Lanny and Stevenson Randolph (2001) 'Government Formation in Parliamentary Democracies', *American Journal of Political Science*, Volume 45 Number 1 (January), pp. 33-50

¹² Dalton, Russell, and Martin Wattenberg (1993) 'The Not So Simply Act of Voting' in Finifter, Ada eds. *The State of the Discipline*, 2nd edition, Washington: American Political Science Association. Pp. 193-218; Hamilton, Richard (1972) 'Class and Politics in the United States', New York: Wiley; Franklin, Mark (1985) "The Decline of Class Voting in Britain", New York: Oxford University Press; Franklin, Mark (1992) 'The Decline of Cleavage Politics' in Franklin, M., Mackie, T. and Valen, H. "Electoral Change" ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp3-32; and Lawrence, David (1999) 'The Collapse of the Democratic Majority', Boulder Colorado: Westview Press.

¹³ Manza, Jeff and Brooks, Clem (1999) 'Social Cleavages and Political Change: Voter Alignment and US Party Coalitions', Oxford: Oxford University Press

¹⁴ Wyatt, Andrew (1999), 'The Limitations on Coalition Politics in India: the Case of Electoral Alliances in Uttar Pradesh', *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, Volume 37 Number 2, pp. 1-21.

¹⁵ Dodd, Lawrence (1976) "Coalitions in Parliamentary Governments", Princeton: Princeton University Press cited by Andrew Wyatt (1999), idem.

¹⁶ Andrew Wyatt (1999), idem

¹⁷ Adeney, Katherine and Sáez, Lawrence (2005) 'Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism', New York: Routledge; and Wallace, Paul and Roy, Ramashray (2011) 'India's 2009 Elections: Coalition Politics, Party Competition and Congress Continuity', New Delhi: Sage Publications.