Chapter 3
A Comparative Study of Coalition Governments in Post–Conflict Societies

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ABSTRACT

The establishment of coalition governments as transitional arrangements on nations bedeviled by conflicts has become an automatic solution in many countries of the world. Multiparty electoral processes or processes that include as many contesting parties and interests as possible have for years been dubbed as important building blocks for peace and smooth transition, especially in countries devastated by civil wars or violence. This chapter argues that that single party governments make governing straightforward and keep the executive/legislatures fully accountable to voters as the incumbent governing party has nobody else, but itself to blame for mediocre performance. While multi-party governments involve bargaining informed by compromises on the interests of voters and coalition bargaining are fashioned more on the interests of the leaders and actors in the bargaining table. In the Third World countries, especially those experiencing violence or civil wars, exogenous superpowers mainly from the West are quick to broker coalition governance with externally imposed rules as panacea for progress. The chapter further argues that externally imposed coalition formations and rules more often than not benefit the interests of the outside superpowers than the domestic interests of citizens. While endogenously crafted, formulated, and implemented coalition processes are more likely to benefit domestic interest of the people than outside powers. The chapter seeks to contribute to the current literature on the formation of coalition governments as transitional arrangements and peace brokers for parties or groups in conflict. The chapter used desktop research to solicit information from peer reviewed journals and scientific research papers.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The phenomenon of coalition governments has become a dominant form of governing, especially areas where the parliament or municipalities are hung. It happens when no one party can form a government due to constitutional imperatives. In this case parties come together and form multi-party governments; hence, Resnick (2013) defines coalition government as a cabinet of a parliamentary government in which several parties come together using economies of scale to pull together resources (both human and financial) into a more substantial collection and conduct a larger campaign to form a unity government. However, coalition governments have also been employed as conflict resolution strategies that serves as transitional arrangements that create conditions for a matured democracies (Hamid and Daniel, 2022). This phenomenon is mostly adopted by countries undergoing civil wars or violent conflicts that are mostly on based on ethnic, religion and rationalistic based conflicts. In this instance, coalition governments are adopted to assist the country transit to democracy.

Coalition agreements have become a key aspect of governance throughout the world. Conti and Marangoni (2014) point out that a coalition agreement is an agreement negotiated between the parties that form a coalition government and it collates the most important shared goals and objectives of the cabinet. Conti and Marangoni (2014) add that a coalition government is one in which political parties enter into a power-sharing arrangement of the executive and that such governments usually occur when no single party has achieved an absolute majority after an election process based on proportional representation. Resnick (2013) defines coalition government as a cabinet of a parliamentary government in which several parties come together using economies of scale to pull together resources (both human and financial) into a more substantial collection and conduct a larger campaign to form a unity government. Coalition is the association of two or more parties who agree to work together to form government based on election outcomes (Mokgosi, Shai, Ogunnubi, 2017). Kadima (2014) argues that coalitions are objectives driven and are processes of organising coalition parties towards a common goal which is explicit agenda to control the executive. Negotiating such government arrangements does not only take time and resources but it also involves compromises.

While coalitions are not a choice, but a necessity, Conti and Marangoni (2014) argue that coalition governments are a potential high risk since they are based on serious compromise of the voters' mandate and their decision-making processes are tedious as parties must keep accommodating deviant parties for the purposes of maintaining the coalition. The ability of citizens to hold governments to account for their past actions is one of the pivotal functions of elections. However, Mokgosi, Shai and Ogunnubi (2017) contend that the complex political context of coalition governments is a hindrance to accountability. Single-party governments are homogenous and make governing a straightforward process that ensures more accountability to both the constitution and voters as the governing parties has no liberty to blame other parties for errant approaches taken by the government. In this case, opposition party strengthen accountability of the single governing party when they play their role as opposition parties more than they do when they are part of government (Mokgosi, Shai, Ogunnubi, 2017). However, Pottie, (2014) posits that coalitions represent a maturity of democracy and are important arrangements not only to prevent instability but to also ensure that small parties and all interests and all citizens feel accommodated, while improving the legitimacy of the government.

This is a comparative study of coalition governments in post-conflict societies of Sudan, Somali, Columbia, Brazil and Iraqi. The chapter is split into sections: (a) Introduction Background, (b) Conceptualising Coalition and coalition governance, (c) International perspective on Coalition governance; (d)

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