

Chapter 10

Challenges of Coalition Formations and Government: The Case of Some African Countries

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ABSTRACT

The establishment and existence of coalition governments, its theory, and practice have their roots and dominance mainly in the experiences of central, eastern, and western European countries. Coalition governments have become a norm in Europe. Between 1945 and 2014, 88% of the governments in Europe are regarded as coalition governments. Coalitions are mostly formed at any given time without establishing guidelines or a framework to work on. Coalition partners spend a lot of time managing coalitions rather than focusing on providing services to the people. This chapter is of the view that coalitions should be established to benefit the citizens and enhance governance and stability. Coalitions appear not to be working in most African states that are discussed in this chapter. Though there are many municipalities that are run through coalitions in South Africa, coalitions are blamed for instability and poor governance in the South African metros. The same can be said in the selected countries that are of specific focus in this chapter. This chapter will specifically look at the coalition governments in countries such as Mozambique, Lesotho, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The challenges associated with coalitions will be discussed and possible solutions will be provided.

INTRODUCTION

The concept and practise of coalition governments is new in African governments, and it is characterised by conflict and instability. Coalition governments are mostly created when there is no outright winner in the elections. Coalitions are more likely to be established when there no dominant political party. The emergence of new political parties and the shift in the voter patterns are the main reasons for the existence of coalition governments. The methodology that was used for data collection is the primar-

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ily qualitative research of purposive sampling. Research articles, books, newspaper articles and thesis relevant to the topic have been utilised. Politicians, analysts, and journalists have been interviewed to get information on the topic. This chapter starts by providing the context of coalition governments in Africa. Different theories are provided and analysed. The last part of the chapter identifies some of the main challenges of coalition governments and the solutions thereof.

BACKGROUND

Explaining Coalitions

According to Gautam (2018), a coalition government includes several political parties that cooperate to arrive at unanimous decisions, primarily to form a government or to conceptualize different public policies. A coalition arrangement may consist of two or more political parties to form a government. Coalitions are created only where various political parties agree to form a government. This view is also shared by Kadima (2014) in that a coalition government is the association of at least two or more political parties working together in parliament or government based on the election results outcomes. Coalitions are mainly formed after the elections. Parties arrange themselves in pursuit of a common goal. The critical element of the coalition is primarily to control the state's executive arm depending purposely and explicitly on the level of government. Mainly when parties compete during elections, they aim to control the government. Coalition agreements and arrangements would mostly take place after the elections. It is done post elections when the government is formed. Coalitions would require cooperation and compromise amongst political parties for stability in governance.

There are several reasons why coalitions are formed. According to Labuschagne (2018), a coalition group of rival political actors are brought together by perceiving a common threat or harnessing collective energies. Circumstances bring differing political parties together. They establish a coalition to achieve their goals because they might not achieve such goals when working separately. Therefore, for these parties to come together, it will require an intrinsic and complex set of negotiations leading to a coalition.

According to Kadima (2014) and Gautam and Schreiber (2018), the coalition government is associated with two fundamental issues. First, a coalition government is a form of government in which political parties cooperate, reducing the dominance of any one party within that "coalition." The usual reason for this arrangement is that no party on its own can achieve a majority in the election. Second, a coalition government is formed when no single party secures the absolute majority in the elections. In that situation, two or more parties come together to form a coalition government.

An indispensable feature is essentially a form of cooperation between two political parties or groups, not because this is what they desire, but because they are compelled to do so based on the elections results. Political parties' inability to get the most votes forced them to consider coalitions (Labuschagne, 2018: 101). In this case, coalitions are formed based on the results of the elections, and they happen very quickly as parties would be competing to get coalition partners to form a government.

Coalitions exist for many reasons that differ according to the political and legal landscape of a country's socio-economic, cultural, and institutional context and the time at which the coalition is formed in the electoral cycle. The traditional rationale for coalition formation is to win elections and hold office (Kadima, 2014). Coalitions allow other small political parties to participate in government effectively, in that due to their electoral performance and low percentage; they would not have been able to do so.

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