

# Chapter 11

## Strides and Struggles of Coalition Governments in Southern Africa: The Case for Zimbabwe

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Coalition governments have emerged as a mechanism for peaceful resolution following disputed elections, offering insights into addressing political disputes and legitimacy crises. In Zimbabwe, historical contexts such as the Gukurahundi War, which exacerbated tensions between the Ndebele and Shona communities, underscore the significance of coalition governance. The Unity Accord between ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU provided temporary respite from tribal conflicts. Subsequently, the Government of National Unity (GNU) was established after the 2008 disputed election, aiming to transition towards fresh elections. Following Mugabe's tenure, Mnangagwa's victory amid accusations of election rigging prompted legal intervention. Mnangagwa's initiation of the Political Actors Dialogue (POLAD) aimed to incorporate ideas from losing parties, yet faced rejection by the main opposition. Criticism of the 2023 elections has intensified calls for a transitional authority or another GNU to prepare for reruns. This research will employ qualitative analysis, including historical review and document analysis, to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of coalition governments in Africa. Findings aim to provide valuable insights for political actors to make informed decisions in navigating political transitions.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Zimbabwe has been grappling on its knees since emergence of opposition politics during the early years of independence. Coalition among contesting political has since been appreciated as a model for resolving internal political conflict among political divides (Lijphart, 2012; Strøm, 2017). Political parties had

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to arrive at peaceful settlement in settling political disputes and legitimacy crisis (Laver & Schofield, 1990; Laver, 2003). This chapter gives Zimbabwe as a case study for Southern Africa. Soon after independence Zimbabwe experienced racial conflict which saw about 20 thousand Ndebele People in Matabeleland and some parts of Midlands perished in a war called Gukurahundi. That had left an indelible dent in relationships between the Ndebele people and the Shona people. That resulted in establishment of the Unity Accord between ZANU-PF (understood as frequented by the Shona people) and PF-ZAPU (frequented by the Ndebele). The Unity Accord temporarily resolved the tribal conflict since it did not fully address underlying grievances and tensions, such as unequal resource distribution and marginalization (Hazelhurst, 1988). After the disputed election of 2008, the Government of National Unity was established as a transitional authority in preparation for holding fresh elections (Murithi, 2014; Moyo, 2011). After the demise of Mugabe, Mnangagwa was heavily criticised for rigging the elections but the matter was handled by the courts and Mnangagwa was declared a winner (Mawowa, 2020) He however established the Political Actors Dialogue (POLAD) as a way of incorporating the ideas of those political parties and presidential candidates who lost during the elections. Critics argue that it served primarily as a political tool for Mnangagwa to legitimize his presidency and sideline more vocal opposition voices (Kapungu, 2019; Ndlovu, 2021). Considering that the elections of 2023 have been heavily criticized for not being free, fair and credible, there are rising hopes for the establishment of the transitional authority in preparation for re-run of elections or even another GNU. The main question is, What are the advantages and disadvantages of the establishment of coalition governments in Africa? This research may help all political actors make informed decisions (Mukumbira, 2021).

### **Problem Questions**

1. What are the key factors contributing to the success or failure of coalition governments in Southern Africa, with a focus on the Zimbabwean context?
2. How do ideological differences among coalition partners impact the effectiveness of coalition governments in addressing governance challenges in Zimbabwe?
3. What are the long-term implications of coalition governance on political stability, democratic consolidation, and socio-economic development in Southern Africa, particularly within the Zimbabwean context?

### **Objectives**

1. To analyze the historical evolution of coalition governments in Southern Africa, with a specific emphasis on Zimbabwe, to identify recurring patterns, challenges, and successes.
2. To examine the ideological and policy differences among coalition partners in Zimbabwean coalition governments and their implications for governance effectiveness and policy implementation.
3. To evaluate the impact of coalition governance on political stability, democratic institutions, and socio-economic development in Zimbabwe and draw lessons for enhancing governance mechanisms in Southern Africa.

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