

Review

Governments of National Unity (GNUs) and the Preponderance of the Incumbency: Case of Kenya and Zimbabwe

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Political contestation through elections is a vital tenet of democracy. In elections, the electorate seek to choose political leaders in line with international best practice. The disputed elections in Kenya (2007) and Zimbabwe (2008) had the propensity to degenerate into ethnic civil war and political acrimony respectively. It took mediation efforts of Koffi Annan and Mr Thabo Mbeki to cobble up ruling coalitions to govern each of the countries respectively. The paper deliberates on the fact that the transitional arrangements were a temporary reprieve to curtail violence, for political players to re-group and to make time to cool political temperatures. However, such arrangements pitted political foes into one government though the chances of fostering complete unison were evidently very remote. The paper argues that the outcome of the post-GNU dispensation in the two countries is rooted in the preponderance of the incumbency in which the major political players took advantage of their weaker coalition partners to manipulate the different public institutions for political gain. The paper concludes that the former opposition parties or their associates continue to play second fiddle and eventually lose the post-GNU elections.

Keywords: Conflict; Government of National Unity; Zimbabwe; Kenya; ethnic; peace-building

INTRODUCTION

While some authoritarian political leaders have remained adamant on the wake of rising dissent, others have given in by conducting flawed elections whose results have often been indecisive, resulting in the cobbling up of coalitions or governments of national unity (GNUs). Unity governments work best when countries are in a state of war or emergency, or when they are polarized by ethnic conflicts with no clear policy differences between contenders (Mesfin, 2008). The international community subsequently facilitated GNUs in Zimbabwe and Kenya during which time the countries would come up with a people-driven constitution as well as prepare for another round of elections after which the GNUs would be dissolved. It should be noted that the GNUs were established after disputed elections. This article deliberates on the GNUs in Zimbabwe and Kenya and

how the arrangement has come to pacify the potentially explosive situation in the countries.

It is common knowledge that GNUs have been established in various countries on the African continent in recent decades, from South Africa and Liberia in the nineties to more recently Kenya and Zimbabwe (Eaglestone, 2013). This has been as a result of notorious despotic ruling elites who have plunged their countries into civil wars in an effort to cling to power. Increased call for democratic reform through electoral processes has failed to bear fruit as in most cases the elections have been manipulated by the ruling elites using state resources at their disposal. This is the main argument of the preponderance of incumbency theory. The resultant conflicts have varied in intensity with some assuming grave proportions, while others have

Manifested themselves on the wake of leaders who seek to remain in power through manipulation of electoral processes. While some authoritarian political leaders have remained adamant on the wake of rising dissent, others have given in by conducting flawed elections whose results have often been indecisive, resulting in the formation of coalitions or governments of national unity (GNUs). GNUs work best when countries are in a state of war or emergency, or when they are polarized by ethnic conflicts with no clear policy differences between contenders.

Although electoral results in Kenya in 2007 and in Zimbabwe in 2008 indicated that the 'opposition' political parties were on the verge of taking over the control of the state, the ruling political parties in the two countries, which had based their credibility on liberation war credentials, attributed their waning popularity to western exploits and endeavours. This resulted in conflict in both Kenya and Zimbabwe as the incumbents refused to relinquish power, opting for ruling coalitions of governments of unity arrangements (GNUs). This article explains how the GNUs in were able to pacify the situation in different parties.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In deliberating on the genesis and tenure of the two GNUs in Kenya and Zimbabwe, the author seeks to respond to the question:

1. To what extent can the establishment of GNUs provide a temporary reprieve from political violations, mayhem and despondency?
2. To what extent does the GNUs in Kenya and Zimbabwe draw from the preponderance of the incumbency theory?

AIMS OF THE PAPER

The paper seeks to

1. establish the extent to which the establishment of GNUs in Kenya and Zimbabwe provided for a temporary political reprieve from political violence,;
2. assess the applicability of the Preponderance of the Incumbency Theory to the elections in the two GNUs.

THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY (GNUs)

The third wave of democratisation that manifested itself from the late 1980s culminated in most African countries adopting one-party state systems. Although Kenya and Zimbabwe officially adopted multi-partyism but they

continued under a dominant political party structure. In both countries decades of single party rule left a lasting impression on governance processes and led to a major imbalance of power (Eaglemore, 2013). This power imbalance often denied other political parties space. Furthermore, years of political dominance often leads to the development of legislation and systems that advantage the ruling party (Eaglemore, 2013). Such an arrangement has often undermined the effectiveness of voices of dissent or oppositional politics, thereby leaving little room for transparency or accountability processes. In states with ethnic tensions the ruling party often shows an ethnic preference, excluding those of a different ethnicity from access to power and resources, which reinforces social cleavages (Suttner and Marti, 2006). Failure to abide by or accept political pluralism has often led to refusal by longstanding political parties to provide a level playing field for other political players. In such cases, elections have been a smokescreen to hoodwink the international community into believing that democratic institutions are in place. Such disguise has led to the conduct of flawed electoral processes and disputed electoral results which have culminated from this lack of political will to dispense democratic practice. This how most GNUs were born.

It has also been noted that GNUs are seen as a transitional measure, a vehicle to reduce tension and to create the space to drive durable peace and sustainable change (Eaglemore, 2013). GNUs as a conflict prevention strategy seeks to curtail or minimise chances of political conflicts degenerating into civil unrest or fully-fledged wars. It has been realized that rebuilding a country after civil strife is not only about re-building visible infrastructure, but rebuilding emotional healing and stress management (Vengroff and Magala, 2001).

GNUs have become common in Africa and seem to be Africa's conflict resolution approach to intra-state violence caused primarily by ethnic conflict and political polarisation. These power-sharing transitional arrangements seek to create a stable and inclusive political environment through which reforms can be implemented (Eaglemore, 2013). In principle, GNUs have the propensity to engender a political and institutional framework based on democratic values and procedures. Despite the potential to curtail conflict, GNUs are a fragile form of institutional arrangement that does not guarantee peace but harbours a high risk of disintegration (Mapuva, 2010). Given that these are transitional arrangements, GNUs are often short lived operating within a specific timeframe. The cases of both Kenya and Zimbabwe have shown the fragility of GNUs insofar as democratic process are concerned and have been on several occasions been on the verge of collapsing.

The GNU arrangement usually involves a situation where one could envisage the myriad activities and challenges that need to be addressed to restrain the possibility of war-relapse. Peace-building cannot be

viewed simply as a “quick-fix-strategy” applied to people will have witnessed unrest or in failed states that are experiencing dysfunction in their structures and strategies. Peace-building initiatives, practices and procedures require a multi-faceted approach working to achieve “positive peace” in every aspect of social life (Saed, 2010). After the cessation of hostilities, people who arguably were fighting for the pursuit of justice and had high expectations of better experiences and life unfortunately meet with different realities on the ground, and Somaliland is not an exception (APD & INTERPEACE, 2008). Consequently, modern political scientists have envisaged the formation of unity governments (GNUs) as a precautionary and transitional measure to ensure short-term reprieve from strife (ibid).

In GNU arrangement all the major political parties in a country are part of the governing coalition. Given that GNUs are a fragile, acrimonious, usually transitional arrangement, they have a high risk of disintegrating at the slightest opportunity and can degenerate into conflict (Mapuva, 2010). Due to the simmering and enduring nature of conflict within the arrangement, it would fit within Lund’s Conflict Curve conundrum (1996). This type of government occurs in parliamentary systems. The politics of division alienates otherwise relevant constituencies and could create other consequences, including threat to security and political stability. The GNU is an attractive vehicle for reducing tension and managing differences within the polity. It has proven popular in many jurisdictions, including Canada, Israel, and the United Kingdom, during World Wars I and II, and the United States, during the American civil war when President Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, chose Andrew Jackson, a Democrat, as his Vice President. Most recently, the GNU has been adopted in South Africa, Togo, Macedonia, Sudan, and Iraq. In Nigeria, overtures have long been made to establish a GNU given the diversity of the country. In South Africa, Kenya, and, more recently, Zimbabwe, the concept of GNU was again reactivated with varying outcomes and consequences. Recent political developments have seen the formation of GNUs in Kenya and Zimbabwe, are a result of the exercise of discretion of leadership mandate by various political groups in those two countries.

PREPONDERANCE OF THE INCUMBENCY THEORY

Tendi (2013) has noted that there is a phenomenon in African politics called the preponderance of incumbency. According to this theory incumbent political leaders are able to manipulate the political terrain for political gain. The theory maintains that it is difficult to defeat an incumbent ruling elites in an election because they control the state institutions, which they can use to retain power. Tendi cites Zambia as among the very few countries where incumbent presidents Kenneth Kaunda

and Rupiah Banda lost in the 1991 and 2011 respectively. Elsewhere there is no established record of incumbents losing to an opposition challenger.

Although it can be acknowledged that democracy is as much about losing as it is about winning, but the preponderance of incumbency dictates that incumbents rarely lose elections. It has been asked how the incumbent can lose when he/she is controlling the referee. In many African countries, the electoral management bodies, while professing to be ‘independent’ have proved to be appendages of the ruling party, in most cases staffed with individuals with connections to the same ruling parties. In Swaziland the Electoral Boundaries Commission (IBC) is managed by individuals aligned to the royal family. Similarly, in most other African countries, most individuals appointed to be part of the electoral management bodies have military or security backgrounds, raising questions about their capacity to be neutral in the event of conducting free and fair elections. Consequently, the prospects of the incumbent winning an election are not only obvious, but seemingly kill any remaining flickers of hope within the electorate as it holds the prospects of establishing a one-party state by the winners (Franklin, 1983). Therefore in such cases elections are but window-dressing. Once such political leaders have manipulated the political environment, it is ease for them to win elections against their opponents. According to Tendi-Miles the preponderance of the incumbency maintains that it is difficult to defeat an incumbent president in an election because they control the state institutions, which they can use to retain power. Consequently many analysts have blamed the preponderance of incumbency for the latest electoral victory in Zimbabwe’s presidential election which led to his ZANU-PF party securing a two-thirds majority in parliament. However, Tendi-Miles has indicated that it is only in Zambia, where presidents Kenneth Kaunda and Rupiah Banda lost in the 1991 and 2011 respectively. It is therefore doubtful whether there is anywhere else or any record of incumbents losing to an opposition challenger. Other notable coalition scholars such as Franklin and Mackie (1983) have concurred that coalition politics find an “incumbency advantage” in government formation, but provides no clear explanation as to why this advantage exists. However, recent media revelations that the incumbent Zambian President Joyce Banda has contracted an Israeli is rather worrisome for the country which does not have a record of conducting flawed electoral processes as evidenced by the failure of Presidents Kenneth Kaunda and Rupiah Banda to manipulate their incumbency.

It is on the basis of the Preponderance of the Incumbency Theory that this paper seeks to explain whether the GNU arrangements in the two countries provided a temporary political reprieve from politically-motivated violence. The Theory also seeks to explain how and why the former ruling parties, through their

dominance of and/or influence in the political landscape during the tenure of the GNUs were able to win the electoral contest.

POST-ELECTION POWER-SHARING GOVERNMENTS AND THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

GNUs on the African continent have come to represent a short-cut to the prolongation of clinging to power and even promoting electoral inconsistency to achieve this objective. As a result, democracy has been dealt a heavy blow by the GNU phenomenon, which appears to have emerged in many countries where rival political parties unite after disputed elections to form an inclusive government in the interim and to implement structural political reforms. However, despite justifications for this form of political arrangement, political scientists have predicted that this formation could herald the demise of democracy on the continent (Maunganidze, 2009). Of immediate recall would be events in Kenya (December 2008) and in Zimbabwe, which vividly illustrate this emerging trend. The year 2008 goes down in history as the year in which the people of Kenya and Zimbabwe were deprived of their right to choose political leaders of their choice, as enshrined under Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human and People's Rights (1948) and Article 13 of the African Charter on Human and People's Right (Cogan and Sharpe, 1986), both of which state that:

"Every citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the government of his country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the provisions of the law"(UDHPR, 1948; ACHPR, 1986).

The politically-motivated violence, which followed these elections, if it is anything to go by, flies on the face of this freedom to people's right to choose political leaders of their choice. Almost all previous power-sharing agreements in Africa have followed armed conflicts as was the case in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, and Sudan - and not the elections. Debates around post-electoral power-sharing arrangements have mainly focused on the importance of preserving peace for the greater good of the nation and the presumed contribution of this arrangement to the attainment of peace, without due regard for the preferences of the electorate who, at the end of the day, are the decisive force on who should preside over their affairs. While there is no doubt that effective unity is desirable, especially in furtherance of democracy, it could be argued that the kind of unity that obtained in Kenya and Zimbabwe heralded the corrosion of democracy, where the elite unites to further their own interests and not those of the nation (Maunganidze, 2009). Additionally the 'unity' experienced in the two countries during the tenure of the ruling coalition was characterised by mud-slinging and hate speech through the media, leading to widening

political differences. However, Saed (2010) has come out strongly against GNU formations by arguing that the hasty nature, with which most GNUs are established, makes them susceptible to collapse. He points out that

"strong government institutions that internalize the rule of law coupled with the promotion of socio-economic and cultural aspects that had been disrupted and altered by the wars are schemes that do not need quick-fix approaches and policies, but need to be planned for generations" (Saed, 2010).

As a result, he recommends that there is need for actors to deliberate at length on the modalities and modus operandi of the GNU well in advance to prevent it from possibly collapsing.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, DEMOCRACY, AND GNU FORMATION

The prevailing practice has been that in many post-colonial African countries, there has been dominance by rulers inclined to share power only with a very small coterie of collaborators (Beetham, 1999). This is against the will of the electorate, who are destined to make appropriate choices as to who should preside over them. Consequently, forming a GNU would not befit the wishes of the electorate. A government of national unity, if properly instituted, is a form of democracy in that people of various political parties are able to bury their political, ethnical, and tribal differences and strive to build a democratic society where people enjoy freedoms and rights as enshrined in their constitution. It could further be argued that the institution of GNU formations should be regarded as an exception rather than a norm, especially in case where the incumbent president loses to the opposition, just like the cases in Kenya in December 2007 and in Zimbabwe, during the March 2008 elections. If the practice is not discouraged, the continent of Africa (currently having many autocratic rulers unwilling to cede power to the opposition) will be inundated by GNU formations. Budge and Keman (1999) concur that, generally, this arrangement is reached when the ruling party's confidence and legitimacy are severely weakened, even though it remains strong enough to exercise control over the most important institutions. In both cases of Kenya and Zimbabwe, the ruling parties have realized that they cannot govern alone, due to the fact that the opposition commanded large following and therefore more popular with the electorate. Meredith (2008) is in support of the power-sharing arrangement and points out that "... creation of a power-sharing arrangement has the advantage of conferring some sort of legitimacy to the ruling party without discrediting the opposition, while at the same time reducing the ruling

party's fear of losing everything and fear of future reprisals and allaying the opposition's anxiety that the ruling party might have somehow rigged the elections" (Meredith, 2008). Ake (2000) concurs that in recent times; democracy has become a unifying discourse which is supposed to tame national and international politics. This has proved to be too costly to the electorate, whose decisions have been manipulated by politicians for self-interest.

Legislation guiding electoral processes have been blamed for flawed electoral results. Under the Zimbabwean Constitution, Section 3 of the Electoral Act (Zimbabwean Constitution) it sets out that:

(a) the authority to govern derives from the will of the people demonstrated through elections that are conducted efficiently, freely, fairly, transparently, and properly on the basis of universal and equal suffrage exercised through a secret ballot; and that every citizen has the right-

(i) to participate in the government directly or through freely chosen representatives;

(iii) to participate in a peaceful political activity intended to influence the composition and policies of [the] government; [and],

(iv) to participate, through civic organizations, in peaceful activities to influence and challenge the policies of government.

The implications behind these constitutional prescriptions are that the citizens have the right to be incorporated into the political activities that determine their destiny. However, recent developments in Kenya and lately in Zimbabwe have widened the rift between citizen participation and the concept of democracy (Cook, 1999). While there is no doubt that the right to vote is the first primordial act of participation, the question that needs to be asked is to what extent these rights have been translated into credible participation of citizens in the day-to-day activities of the state in the SADC (Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, 2003) and, subsequently, into a democratically-elected political leadership (Maunganidze, 2013). Although democratic electoral processes should be associated with the conduct of free and fair elections, elections in Kenya, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere in Africa have, in recent times, been associated with accusations of violence, vote rigging and vote buying, such that, in the end, the results have not been credible. In Kenya, violence erupted, leaving many hundreds dead and several thousand displaced. The same scenario occurred in Zimbabwe before and after the 2008 elections, which resulted in contesting MDC boycotting the elections in the second round citing

violence on its supporters. Plattner (2005) justified boycotting of elections by saying that "...boycotting elections is a peaceful manner in which people may powerfully demonstrate their dissatisfaction". The UNDP Report (2004) envisages the extension of democracy from a democracy of voters to a democracy of citizens implying that electoral processes are not the ultimate democratic institutions in a country, but total involvement of citizens in all governing processes.

Most SADC countries (Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana, Malawi, and lately Zimbabwe) used the first-past-the-post system, which is limited in terms of representation, but is potentially able to offer a greater level of participation and accountability. The concept of first-past-the-post has even created more problems where losing candidates (mostly the incumbent presidents) would call for the formation of a government of national unity (GNU) for them to be accommodated in the new dispensation and possibly to avoid retribution for any human rights violations committed during their tenure of office. An election is all about numbers. The first-past-the-post formula is used to determine the winner. The fact that a political candidate failed to garner sufficient votes to become the president of a country implies that the electorate is not satisfied with his/her performance. Incorporating such a candidate in a government of national unity would ultimately be an insult to the very electorate who will have showed disapproval of his/her leadership. Recent events in Kenya, where a GNU was formed with a losing candidate, seems to have set a good precedent on the African continent because although elections were held and a controversial result came out, the fact that the warring parties decided to come together to support the drafting of a new constitution for the multi-ethnic country is good news for all pro-democratic forces on the continent. However, in this case, the GNU formation, it would appear, was reduced to an attempt by losing political candidates to get back into mainstream politics through the backdoor, and claiming to hold the mandate of the electorate. The precedent set by Kenya and Zimbabwe has been seen as a 'dent on democracy' (Bwanya, 2008) which is likely to open the floodgates of similar scenarios elsewhere in Africa the moment political elites realise that they can come back into the political fold even if they are defeated in an electoral contestation. The whole exercise of GNU formations contradicts the purpose of elections whose sole purpose is to give the winners opportunity to govern the country and the losers to exercise some tolerance, accept defeat and rally behind the winner for the country to develop. While GNUs are appropriate in multi-ethnic countries like Kenya, in Zimbabwe, the concept is inappropriate due to the monolithic demographic pattern in which the winner should be able to unite the nation. The result of a GNU formation in countries like Zimbabwe where sharp ideological differences prevail cannot take root, especially given that ZANU PF depends on its liberation war

credentials based on Marxist/Leninists while the MDC formed on the premise of workers' interests, is more capitalist-oriented. Finding the same political parties sharing the same platform in government forms an acrimonious marriage. (Rock, 2009) has argued that such an arrangement makes a mockery of the electorate's political choices.

DISENFRANCHISING CITIZENS THROUGH THE GNU

GNUs are a volatile formation with the propensity to cause a tumultuous situation if not carefully handled. Both in Kenya and Zimbabwe, while the GNU formations have remained fragile, the protagonists have tried to avoid direct confrontation with each other by resorting to issuing press statements, which can dispute and easily claim that they have been 'misquoted'. The most prevalent circumstance in which a nation may institute a government of a national unity is where there might be need to draw upon various parties after an election, where no one party can claim an overall majority, or where a winning party still feels it needs to draw upon expertise from beyond its own ranks. In recent times, GNU in Africa has been used to retain power through the back door. Despite the ruling parties having lost credibility in the elections, a power-sharing arrangement would be a compromise especially for the ruling party. James Hamill in (2008), has portrayed GNUs as a formation "... based upon a straightforward denial of the popular will", given that the portion of the people destined to govern are those who will have lost in the electoral process. While from the onset, the formation implies that unity is achieved, prevailing debates have indicated that is not the case. James Hamill (2008) has put forward three principal objections to the national unity argument as it is currently being advanced for Zimbabwe. First, Hamill asserts that a GNU impedes attempts to entrench democratic values on the continent - integral to which is the absolute necessity that parties (and governments) accept election defeat and orderly transfers of power. National unity is invariably couched in a noble rhetoric, but in reality it indulges those who are prepared to unleash terror and mayhem to impose themselves upon the people and secure in the knowledge, that, at the very least, they will have carved out a continuing role for themselves in the government by so doing. That is entirely incompatible with the democratic principles, which African states and African multilateral organizations have claimed to embrace since 2000. It has been pointed out that the paradox of the national unity governments is that they rarely produce national unity and certainly will not do so in Zimbabwe, against the backdrop of the huge citizen dissatisfaction. Instead, the likelihood is that it will produce a pantomime horse arrangement as two parties with profound differences are compelled to work together largely at the instigation of

outsiders. Kenya's arrangement is routinely paraded as though it is an unqualified success, but at what costs? The Government of National Unity formation seems retrogressive to democracy and brings into question whether the usual winner-takes-it-all situation in Africa is the right way to go (Gyimah-Boadi, 2008). Kenya is unique in that its heterogeneous demographic pattern has made it susceptible to a power-sharing deal. With reference to Zimbabwe, the power sharing arrangement has been described as a dead end implying that it is an unattainable arrangement given the animosity of the two political parties involved. Nevertheless, in the absence of civil leadership/disobedience, the options are so limited such that a GNU might be one of the fastest ways to a political solution out of the political quagmire.

THE GNU IN ZIMBABWE AND KENYA: THE GENESIS

It is almost crunch time for Kenya and Zimbabwe because both GNUs in the two countries have reached their lifespan. Kenya have already held elections, thereby heralding the end of its GNU. Zimbabwe has also undergone the various processes required of it in the transitional phase such the constitution making process as well as the referendum. What now remains for Zimbabwe to end its GNU arrangement are the elections which should be held anytime this year (2013), especially given that the new Constitution dictates that new elections will be held in 2013.

GNUs have been prevalent in many countries in recent years. What have been characteristics of these GNUs have been that they are a result of concessions after flawed electoral processes where no clear winner was recorded. This arrangement has also been conceived as a fraudulent way of 'rewarding the losers'. In some cases, failure to garner enough votes has also forced the winners to form a coalition with their political opponents. In some cases, the GNU formations have been necessary to avoid volatile situations, especially in those countries where ethnicity is more pronounced. In Kenya, more than 1,000 people lost their lives with many being displaced. This forced Mwai Kibaki and Odinga Odinga to cobble up a GNU to prevent the country from degenerating into further turmoil. In Zimbabwe, after many years of conducting flawed elections, Zimbabwe came to head in 2008 when closely contested elections saw the former opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) winning the elections on the backdrop of unprecedented levels of politically-motivated violence perpetrated by youth militia, war vets, and other rogue elements sympathetic to ZANU-PF. Military elements and other state security agents were also siphoned into the furore, leading to many casualties, mostly those perceived to be anti-ZANU-PF. What exacerbated the situation was the partisan nature of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, which withheld election results,

increased anxiety among the increasingly restless population and the international community. The anxiety degenerated into lawlessness as marauding youths and the military went about intimidating, beating, and even murdering people, resulting in a near-civil war scenario.

Upon assuming office, the GNU in Zimbabwe inherited a deeply scarred nation whose economy had ground to a complete halt, where social services were not functioning, and the public confidence had been shattered. It was with these enormous challenges that the Inclusive Government set about rebuilding the social, political, and economic fabric of Zimbabwe. Significant achievements made included the dollarization of the economy, where a multi-currency system was adopted and the stemming out of the black market, peace and stability (though pockets of politically-motivated violence persist), and the availability of basic commodities that had disappeared from the shops, as well as continuous talk to iron out political differences. Long queues for fuel and other commodities, which had gone scarce, have all disappeared, a manifestation of the initial successes of the GNU in Zimbabwe. However challenges have been presented by those from the old dispensation who had enjoyed the fruits of corruption, bad governance, and lawlessness.

As a result, to prevent the country from sliding into chaos, it took mediation efforts by, then, South African President, Thabo Mbeki, to help cobble up a GNU after which all outstanding issues would be resolved. The resultant Global Political Agreement (GPA) forced the contesting political parties into a marriage of convenience. However, the electorate feels that they have been short changed by this arrangement, which pitted them against those politicians that they had wanted to vote out of power.

If events in the two countries are anything to go by, then one is given the benefit of the doubt to pronounce that GNU are a negative trend in African politics. The developments that have taken place in the Kenyan and Zimbabwean cases are a cause for concern. The two cases have shown that GNUs are fraught with contradictions inherent in the political agendas of the leaders. While the rhetoric appears to be that unity will benefit everyone, the reality on the ground shows that the arrangements are only benefiting those in power and their self-interests. At best, it furthers disagrees and pushes the country on the verge of renewed tensions as leaders seek to out-manoeuvre or vilify each other. In the Zimbabwean case, despite the signing of the Global Political Agreement on 15 September 2008, which created for the formation, composition, and implementation of the inclusive government, there are hardliners of the old establishments who think that their social and political positions are being threatened. The possibility of bringing those who have violated human rights over the past three decades before the courts of law which again threatens to dismantle the GNU, as

these people fight for their political survival. In Zimbabwe, following the disputed March and July 2008 run-off elections, a political impasse that gravely continued to affect the country's ailing economy left the protagonists in the country no choice but to embark on a process of establishing a unity government to revive the country. On 11 February 2009, the wheels of the new government were set in motion as the former opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, was inaugurated as the country's executive Prime Minister. However, two months down the line, the new arrangement is still faced with an avalanche of challenges, including the resistance from ZANU-PF hardliners, some of whom have accused President Mugabe of letting them down by agreeing to join the GNU. Also some resistance to the new executive Prime Minister continues to undermine the good functioning of the new administration, while confidence among key political actors remains weak. This has also created further problems for the GNU arrangement. Challenges in Kenya have been different and have revolved around ethnicity. Politicians have manipulated the already volatile ethnicity environment, thereby forcing the country to be embroiled in unprecedented post-election violence after the disputed December 2007 presidential elections, in which ethnic differences were used as fuel. Reports put the casualty list at over 1,000 people who were killed and thousands more internally displaced. Faced with a humanitarian crisis and growing international condemnation, the two protagonists, the ruling Party of National Unity (PNU) and the opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), were forced to make a political compromise negotiated by mediators. They entered into a transitional power-sharing arrangement that saw the key opposition leader Raila Odinga of ODM being inaugurated as the country's Prime Minister, while Mwai Kibaki remained at the helm. In both countries, the aim of these arrangements have been to ensure sound constitutional reforms that will provide for institutional mechanisms aimed at avoiding the repeat of electoral violence. In Kenya, the power-sharing agreement has even led to a paralysis of the country as most political actors were more interested in preparing for the 2013 elections than in introducing the much-needed reforms envisaged in point 4 of the Kofi Annan-led mediation. The elections which were eventually held in 2013 sprung a surprise winner, none other than Uhuru Kenyatta, a dark horse that had an indictment by the ICC at The Hague hanging over his head for allegations of inciting ethnic clashes of 2007-2008.

Historically, numerous unity arrangements have predominantly been pre-electoral or post-war. In the former, rivals come together to form a unified front that runs for elections. The latter is illustrated by countries, such as post-apartheid South Africa, Sudan, and Somalia, which have embarked on this form of power-sharing. In Zimbabwe in 1980, the guerrilla movements of

Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African ZANU party, united with Joshua Nkomo PF-ZAPU, to form what is now known as Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). Mugabe's ZANU PF had a larger following and, through compromises made by the merging of these two ethnically diverse groups, a united front was formed that would govern Zimbabwe. Having assimilated PF-ZAPU into ZANU's ranks, Mugabe set out to win the 1985 elections and he became the country's first post-colonial democratically elected president. Almost 30 years later, the signing of the September 2008 Global Unity Agreement is reminiscent of the coming together of ZANU PF and PF-ZAPU. The only difference is that the MDC is a relatively new political grouping with no liberation credentials, making it seem like the little brother of this somewhat patrimonial arrangement.

In Zimbabwe, lessons drawn from the GNU formation have shown that the partners in the GNU have categorised themselves into senior and junior partners. Consequently the former opposition parties have continued to play second fiddle and the former ruling party lording it over the junior partners. On the contrary, the Kenyan GNU establishment has come and gone with minor incidences of intolerance to political reform. It would also not be alarmist to express that the circumstances in which the Zimbabwean GNU was negotiated and the compromises that both parties have had to make is an indication that all is not settled. Indeed ideological differences between Mugabe (of Marxist orientation) and Tsvangirai (of the capitalist disposition) have seen them and other senior government officials often contradicting each other publicly. There have also been accusations that elements within ZANU-PF were trying to sabotage the GNU, with specific reference having been made to the Joint Operational Command comprising service chiefs of the police, army, prisons, and the intelligence agency. In Kenya, the case is no different. In a country where ethnicity and cultural heritage has played a pivotal role in politics, it is not surprising that any unity government that attempts to bring ideologically dissimilar factions together is faced with tremendous challenges. The resignation, on 6 April 2009 of the Minister of Constitutional Affairs from the GNU may be a case in point. On 13 April, 2009, the Minister of Information and Communication in the Zimbabwean inclusive government, Hon. Nelson Chamisa, threatened to resign over the arbitrary action by the President Mugabe to usurp some of his ministerial powers and transferring them to a fellow ZANU PF hardliner, one Christopher Mushowe of the Ministry of Transport and Communication. Again, this is one of the myriad of events which have shaken the foundations of the inclusive government formation to date.

The constitutional debate, which has left out civil society, has been a disappointment, especially the National Constitutional Assembly, which initiated the constitutional reform debate in 1996/97. In an effort to be

party to the constitutional making process and to keep the coalition government in check, civil society (comprising, the Zimbabwe Human Rights Organisation (ZimRights); the Zimbabwe Election Network (ZESN) and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum have formed a coalition, known as the ZZZICOMP, and embarked on a parallel constitutional process. It has been noted that the resulting coalition of civil society groups, the ZZZICOMP has been more effective than the official Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC) when holding government to account (Bratton and Masunungure, 2011).

Civil society, especially in Zimbabwe, has accused the new GNU formation of side-lining them in the constitution-making process, a process which civil society initiated. Blame of side-lining the electorate and civil society has eventually been put on the new inclusive formation. It can thus be argued that post-electoral GNUs, as so far seen in Nairobi and Harare, are elite pacts that accord less consideration to the electorate. The aspirations of ordinary people who cast their ballot with the hope of establishing a new government or extending the term of the incumbent have largely remained unattended to. For these masses, democracy remains a pipe dream. Although some proponents of the GNU formation may maintain that this has been the best arrangement to pacify the warring factions in the two countries, but opponents of the system, there are also those who pursue the argument that one still needs to gather more empirical evidence to generalize it. But the short experience of Kenya and Zimbabwe, so far, indicates that free and transparent elections, after which the winner takes responsibility to rule democratically, remain the only sustainable condition for structural stability. However, in Zimbabwe, the constitution-making process was chaired by a government appointed commission. Civil society preferred the appointment of an independent individual (preferably a judge) to head the commission. In Kenya, the resignations are a bad omen on the future and viability of the GNU. Despite the mud-slinging and name-calling, what is needed in both cases is commitment on the part of those in the inclusive government for it to work, and Kenya has managed to endure the vagaries associated with collective governance until election time in 2013.

REFLECTIONS ON THE UNIQUENESS OF THE KENYAN AND ZIMBABWEAN CASES: WERE THEY REALLY VOLATILE FORMATIONS?

While the two GNU formations in Kenya and Zimbabwe attempted to remain balanced on a knife edge, they were a reflection that antagonists can co-exist as protagonists in a unity government. South Africa's national unity government came at the end of a long period in which the National Party and the ANC (itself comprising alliance

partners from labour unions and opposition political parties) had worked together to draft a new constitution and bring the new democratic South Africa into being. In this case, the ANC clearly won and invited relevant players on board. This was because in the South African case, the various stakeholders formed a broad-based alliance comprising the strong labour movement, COSATU, and various alliance partners including opposition political parties. Nothing remotely similar to this situation pertained in Zimbabwe and Kenya, where irregularities in the electoral process culminated in violence and casualties. The case of Zimbabwe is a diabolically different and uncompromising one because, unlike in Kenya where the President and Prime Minister have had a history of working together, here a situation was experienced where the Zimbabwean President and the (former) opposition leader are persons who have been displaying public enmity for a long period. Overdependence on liberation credentials by President Robert Mugabe and the army's pre-election statements that they "will not salute a leader who did not fight in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle" manifests the uncompromising position of both the military and President Mugabe and the latter's unpreparedness to hand over power to a winner. Therefore, it is justified that a government of national unity would be the lowest that President Mugabe and the military would sink to accommodate the (former) opposition MDC. Furthermore, it can be argued that in the Zimbabwean scenario, the ruling party has attempted to systematically liquidate its coalition partners. There is also a tendency by the proponents of GNUs to draw a comparison between Mandela and De Klerk on one hand and Mugabe and Tsvangirai on the other, but unfortunately, the comparisons do not hold because De Klerk saw the need to share power and this is not the case in Zimbabwe, where each political leader wants absolute and executive powers to hire and fire cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister (Ayittey, 2009). In Kenya, the concept of a government of national unity was facilitated by the existence of a multi-ethnic demographic pattern that dictates the necessity of ethnic representation in the government. This is supported by Rock (2009) who argued that in Africa, most states are undeniably plural societies marked by deep cleavages among a diversity of ethnic groups. Young (1995) concurs that elections seem to provide the opportunity to legitimize the political and economic pre-eminence of one group, to reward supporters of that group and compel them to adopt greater political conformity, and to re-impose a firm hand on challenging elements within or outside that group. The only comparative advantage that Kenya enjoys is its heterogeneous demographic aspect that no one political party can form a government on its own and needs the presence of other political parties. In the Zimbabwean case, the GNU formation portrayed a paradox of national unity governments that can hardly produce national unity

and certainly will not do so, against the backdrop of the ruling party's orgy of violence. In the Zimbabwean case, the ruling party, ZANU-PF, and the MDC are arch rivals whose co-existence within the same institutional framework would almost be impossible given their contradictory perceptions about salient issues, such as the land question. The two also seem to hold different and divergent foreign policy aspirations, with the MDC being pro-West, while ZANU-PF is anti-West.

TOWARDS THE END FOR COALITIONS IN KENYA AND ZIMBABWE

While it can be commended that both countries have made attempts to accommodate each other's political opinions, but there were more challenges, especially given that the ruling coalition partners had been rivals for some time. Taking cognisance of the fact that the GNUs had been transitional arrangements, the coalition partners sought to speed up the most important requirement of the GNUs which in both cases was the drafting and subsequent adoption of a new constitution for each of the countries in question. The adoption of the new constitution at the referendum went swiftly well in anticipation of elections which would eventually put to rest the coalition whose tenure had been characterised by mudslinging, accusations and counter-accusations. During the tenure of the GNUs in both countries (notably so in Zimbabwe) the preponderance of the incumbent prevailed in which the incumbent presidents in the two countries utilised the opportunity of being in charge of the country to make use of available resources for political gain. In the ruling coalitions, the political hegemony that obtained on the part of the incumbent presidents rendered the other parties in government junior partners. Despite the challenges that were encountered during the tenure of the GNUs it should be commended that the coalitions in the two countries managed to bring sanity to the respective countries by making good peace-building and stability. In both countries the unprecedented consensus that was struck during the constitution-making processes as well as the subsequent adoption of the resultant draft constitutions pointed to some level of political maturity akin to one found in mature democracies across the globe. It should also be noted that the conduct of elections in both countries was characterised by peaceful co-existence and engagement (though with controversy in Zimbabwe over voter registration and the state of the voters' roll). In addition, the elections sprung surprises because many political analysts' predictions were proved wrong. While in Kenya, Raila Odinga was tipped to win with a wide majority, a dark horse, Uhuru Kenyatta scooped the big prize by winning at the national polls. What surprised many is the fact that Uhuru Kenyatta and three other high ranking politicians had cases hanging over their heads as they were accused of

having fanned ethnic violence in 2007 which claimed more than 1000 lives. As a result they had been indicted by the International Criminal Court at The Hague. By virtue of these allegations, many people did not think that Uhuru would make it to State House.

In the case of Zimbabwe, it was widely predicted by political analysts that ZANU PF of President Mugabe was not going to make it, especially taking into cognisance the fact that it had lost a few years ago to Mr Morgan Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). However what many people did not realise is the fact that from the time ZANU PF joined the coalition, it started to campaign for the next elections which the MDC did not. The MDC, in government for the first time against ZANU PF which had been in power for three decades, began to bask in the false glory, hoping that what had obtained in the 2008 would be the same. They therefore did not see the need to campaign until the last minute when elections were called for. As a result they performed dismally. And that is how the GNUs in the two countries came to an end, leaving the junior partners leaking their wounds after a bruising electoral encounter.

LESSONS DRAWN FROM THE TWO GNUS IN KENYA AND ZIMBABWE

Firstly it should be acknowledged that the coalitions in the two countries managed to stem violence that had threatened the political stability in the two countries. Given that in Kenya, the few weeks after the disputed elections had claimed more than 1000 lives and displaced several thousands, it is most likely that had efforts not been made to establish a unity government, more casualties could have been realised. Therefore it should be noted that although the GNUs were a temporary reprieve to achieve political stability and peace, it also managed to enable different political parties to be tolerant of each other.

Secondly the GNUs brought to the fore the practicalities of the preponderance of the incumbent in which dominant political parties in a coalition manipulate existing institutions and resources for political gain and in the process, render the other political parties junior partners in the coalition. This could have accounted for the surprise electoral results in which the much touted coalition partners failed to equally stamp their authority and refuse to be regarded as junior partners.

Thirdly, the establishment of the coalitions in the two countries led to the writing of new constitutions and the abandonment of the Lancaster House Constitutions which were reminders of colonialism. Therefore through the establishment of GNUs in the two countries, the opportunity to come up with a home-grown constitution with no external influence or conditionalities enabled the people in the two countries to have an opportunity to determine their own destiny.

Fourthly, political parties involved in the GNUs should have learnt to be tolerant with each other. The GNUs also presented opposition parties with an opportunity to test the reins of power and for the first time to be at the epicentre of government activities. In the same breath, it can also be noted that political parties have learnt that violence does not translate into votes and that coercing the electorate does not guarantee success in elections. This realisation could possibly account for the peaceful electoral conduct in both countries.

Given that the GNUs in Kenya and Zimbabwe were tricky and complex, it gave the SADC, the AU as well as the UN the opportunity to put a tentative framework in place in the event that similar occurrences take place. Never before have these institutions been faced with such complex scenarios before, resulting in mediation efforts having to be roped in to curtail a possible civil war. Commenting on the failure by the SADC to decisively deal with Zimbabwe's political crisis which gave rise to the GNU, Cawthra (2010) has noted that the SADC region is not a 'security complex' where the security of one state is dependent on others, nor are there any strong social, economic and political ties that bind all countries together. This could explain the different levels of commitment by the different SADC countries to resolve Zimbabwe's political crisis. This already puts a damper on the SADC's propensity to actively reign in the feuding political parties in the country.

CONCLUSION

If political developments in Kenya and Zimbabwe's GNUs are anything to go by, then one is forced to take such ruling coalitions as transitional arrangements that temporarily guarantee stability and political sanity. In the two countries, GNUs have proved that no specific format can guarantee political stability in a country characterised by divergent political views. Even elections which are supposed to come up with one winner have failed to do so. While it is true that solutions to a country's political challenges are found within the country and by the people of that country, this has been true for Kenya and do not hold similar prospects for Zimbabwe where in this age and time, the military still wields so much influence in the political affairs of the country.

From events in various countries where GNUs have been established, the result has been dismal and, in some cases, courting bloodshed. In multi-ethnic countries, GNUs have manifested more ethnically-based violent eruptions. In Zimbabwe, the first GNU of the early 1980s resulted in a civil strife, which political analysts regarded as ethnic cleansing. Currently, the simmering political discord and mud-slinging revolve around wrestling for power, a feature common in most GNU formations. As a result, this author would recommend that such formations should not be allowed especially

given that elections is all about numbers and any political party they wins at the polls should be handed power, irrespective of by how many votes. The use of liberation war credentials have been abused and manipulated by those find themselves losing the confidence of the electorate due to poor performance at government level. If other countries see that a political party can lose an election and proceed to rule the country, such a trend is bound to recur in many African states where incumbent presidents disregard the will of the people and opt for a GNU, if chances of winning are slim, especially given that those who have lost, but made it back to State House through the formation of a GNU were successful.

While GNUs are an interim and transitional process, the precedence set in Zimbabwe is nothing more than disappointing. On the contrary, recent events in Kenya have shown the good side of a genuine GNU, where parties in the formation are honest enough to abide by the dictates and stipulations of the GNU prescriptions. Kenya should, consequently, be awarded an accolade for having put the interest of the generality of Kenyans above everything, including party politics and hunger for power.

Similarly, recent events that took place in Zimbabwean during the constitution-making process have left pro-democratic civil society organizations and peace loving people of Zimbabwe shell shocked. War veterans, the very people who fought for the liberation of the country, could be seen mobilizing, marauding ZANU-PF youth to disrupt the constitution-making process. This is not only a travesty of justice and human rights, but an absolute lack of vision. Citizens of Zimbabwe should take a cue from events in Kenya where the post-GNU period will be marked by strong democratic institutions emanating from a people-driven constitution that prevailed in Kenya. If it is fear of defeat at an election, then disrupting a people-driven process would not help things. Given Zimbabwe's high literacy rate coupled with the abundant natural resources that the country is endowed with, there are huge prospects that the country would need a very short time, to be on the path to recovery. It is even further blessed with the fact that it is not as multi-ethnic and multi-cultural as Kenya, where prospects of ethnic conflict are much higher. National healing and forgiveness are remedial measures that politicians, elders, and the general civilian populations have tried as a way to foster co-existence among political foes.

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