Do Electoral Coalitions Facilitate Democratic Consolidation in Africa?

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Abstract

In a region where democratization has led to a proliferation of opposition parties, pre-electoral coalitions represent an obvious means for reducing excessive party fragmentation in Africa. However, this paper examines whether such coalitions facilitate democratic consolidation, both in terms of contributing to incumbent turnovers as well as creating competitive, institutionalized party systems. Election data for all opposition coalitions formed in Africa's electoral democracies since 2000 reveals that coalitions rarely result in incumbent defeat. In addition, I find that a sizeable share of a country's total electoral volatility often is due to fluctuations in voting for opposition parties that enter and exit coalitions, indicating the inability of coalition members to build loyal constituencies and become institutionalized over time. I argue that this is because many of these coalitions primarily are office-seeking and consist of parties that predominantly are distinguished by the personality of their leaders rather than a distinct political program that is relevant to the concerns of African citizens.

Introduction

In July 2008, five Ugandan opposition parties announced the formation of the Inter-Party Cooperation coalition to compete against President YoweriMuseveni in the country's 2011 elections. Similarly, in early 2011, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) considered forming a coalition in an attempt to defeat the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria. South Africa's opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Independent Democrats (ID) likewise agreed in mid-2010 to an electoral alliance for forthcoming local and national elections in a bid to undermine the dominance of the ruling African National Congress (ANC).

These cases represent only a few recent attempts by African opposition parties to form electoral coalitions tochallenge entrenched ruling parties. In a region where democratization has led to a proliferation in parties, electoral coalitions represent a strategy for reducing excessive party fragmentation. In fact, the international democracy assistance community often expounds on the advantages of coalition formation for opposition parties (Carothers 2006). Yet, in African countries where multi-party elections occur with some regularity, do opposition coalitions actually facilitate the difficult task of democratic consolidation?

Consolidation can be defined in both narrow and broad terms. In the narrow sense, consolidation involves having at least two turnovers whereby the opposition party that ousts an incumbent is also defeated in subsequent elections (Huntington 1991: 266). A broader and arguably more meaningful conceptualization requires, among other things, the

institutionalization of party systems (Kuenzi and Lambright 2005; Mainwaring and Scully 1995). In order to become institutionalized, parties need to be competitive by demonstrating congruence with citizens' policy priorities. Opposition parties in particular must therefore represent 'credible democratic alternatives,' which requires retaining an independent ideological and institutional existence (Stepan 1990:44, emphasis added).

This paper argues that opposition coalitions in African elections rarely foster consolidation in either sense of the concept discussed above. Indeed, in only a few notable cases have opposition coalitions resulted in incumbent turnovers. More worryingly, opposition parties in Africa often lack any ideological differentiation on issues relevant to citizens, andcoalitions only exacerbate this tendency by precluding parties from developing distinct platforms. Often, coalition members only are motivated by an office-seeking agenda and simply coalesce around a shared goal of ousting the ruling party. At best, this reinforces the existing tendency of voters to select parties according to the personalities of their leaders rather than their policies. At worst, it prevents parties from garnering loyal constituents and may ultimately increase voter disillusionment over the lack of genuine party alternatives.

This paper focuses exclusively on pre-electoral coalitions rather than on governing coalitions.[1] Moreover, I use the term pre-electoral coalitions to refer to two types of arrangements: 1) the coalescence of two or more political parties under one party banner for the purposes of either presidential or legislative elections or 2) negotiated pacts whereby parties compete under their own individual banner but agree not to compete against their coalition partners for the same legislative seats.[2] Explicit attention is devoted to pre-electoral coalitions

[1]See Oyugi (2006) for an overview of post-electoral coalitions in Africa.
[2]The terms coalition, electoral pacts, and alliances are used interchangeably in this paper but collectively referto the same concept elaborated here.

by opposition parties rather than incumbents in light of the importance of opposition parties for democratic consolidation.

As Powell (2000: 644) notes, theoretical and empirical work on pre-electoral coalitions remains relatively limited. Indeed, research on coalitions largely has focused on bargaining by parties within governing coalitions after elections have occurred (e.g. Baron and Ferejohn 1989; Laver and Shepsle 1990; Müller and Strøm 2000). Moreover, the scarce literature that does exist on pre-electoral coalitions tends to be concentrated on politics in industrialized countries (e.g. Carroll and Cox 2007; Debus 2009; Golder 2006). Notable exceptions in the African context include Kadima's (2006) work on coalition survival and collapse and Arriola's (2008) analysis of why some multi-ethnic coalitions succeed while others fail.

This paper aims to contribute to this nascent literature on African coalitions by examining their impact on consolidation in general and on election outcomes, party behavior, and voter attachment in particular. The paper first reviews the two main challenges facing opposition parties in Africa, which are the electoral advantages enjoyed by incumbents and the absence of distinct policy orientations. Survey data from Afrobarometer confirms that citizens do not readily trust or identify with the region's opposition parties. Then, the theoretical advantages of pre-electoral coalitions in addressing the first challenge are elaborated. Data on opposition coalitions formed across Africa's electoral democracies since 2000 reveals, however, that they demonstrate little empirical success at defeating incumbents. Subsequently, the paper focuses on the second challenge, discussing why coalitions in the region exacerbate parties' lack of distinct policy orientations and reviewing key cases, such as Senegal, as illustrations. Election data then reveals that shifts in support for opposition coalitions and for their member parties account for a large share of a country's total electoral volatility, suggesting low levels of voter

attachment. The final section concludes with broader implications for democratic consolidation in Africa.

Challenges for Opposition Parties in Africa

High expectations existed when democratic transitions swept across Africa during the 1990s. However, scholars subsequently lamented the trajectory of these transitions (e.g. Bratton 1998; Carothers 1997; Fomunyoh 2001). Foremost among these critiques was that the political party which won its country's first multi-party elections had, in most cases, retained power (Nohlen et al. 1999; van de Walle 2003). In fact, Doorenspleet (2003) argued that most African democracies could be characterized as 'one-party dominant' since the ruling party consistently wins presidential elections and garners a majority of seats in legislative ones.

Although the problem is particularly pronounced in countries such as Mozambique, Namibia, and South Africa, where the ruling party emerged from a liberation movement and therefore has a unique legacy, other factors have also fostered the entrenchment of incumbents. First, with greater access to state media and financial resources than their counterparts, ruling parties can host more elaborate electoral campaigns and more easily extend their reach into remote rural areas. This is particularly true in those countries where political parties do not receive any public financing for campaigns (see Bryan and Baer 2005). Secondly, opposition parties proliferated after multi-party transitions, thereby enhancing the advantages enjoyed by ruling parties. For example, there are approximately 103 parties in Burkina Faso while the equivalent figure is 94 in Mali and 77 in Senegal (Adejumobi 2007). Not surprisingly, the sheer number of opposition parties means that many receive negligible support from voters.

Public opinion data provides a useful means of assessing citizens' perceptions of their expanding party options. The Afrobarometer project, which relies on a standardized survey

instrument to assess public opinion across more than a dozen African countries, provides such data. Based on survey responses from the fourth round of surveys, which were conducted in 2008 and 2009, African voters appear to support greater involvement of the opposition in politics, but they are not especially impressed by the opposition parties that exist.[3] On average, 66 percent of respondents believe that many parties are needed to ensure that citizens have real choices in who governs them, and 61 percent believe that a democracy contains either minor or major flaws if elections never lead to a change in the ruling party.[4] However, as seen in Table 1, respondents claim to be, on average, more trustful of the ruling party than of opposition parties. Moreover, almost 40 percent of voters claim they are not attached to any party. Among those that do have an attachment, more respondents are close to the incumbent party than opposition parties. A comparison with the third round of surveys collected in 2005 reveals that these attitudes have changed very little over time. This self-expressed attachment to no party or incumbents becomes even more notable given that the opposition party category collectively encompasses many parties and therefore, the level of affinity to any one specific opposition party is even lower.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Thus, while voters believe that multiple parties are important for democracy, there is not a very high level of trust of, or identification with, the opposition. This reinforces the fact that the opposition has not been able to successfully gain the loyalty of voters in many countries.

[3]See http://www.afrobarometer.org/. Afrobarometer focuses on Africa's more liberal regimes and includes all which regularly hold multi-party elections. Since Burkina Faso and Liberia were not included in Round 3, they were also excluded in Round 4 in order to ensure comparability.
[4]These numbers are the average of the weighted responses for questions 32 and 42C.

Indeed, most opposition parties are small in membership and prone to internal struggles. Yet, even those with a substantial membership base often lack a defined policy stance on important issues that distinguishes them from both the ruling party and other opposition parties. Many of these opposition parties were not launched to fill a policy void but rather as vehicles for the personal ambitions of political elites, many of whom were previously members of their country's ruling party (Olukoshi 1998).

This in turn highlights a second common challenge for political parties in African democracies, which is their lack of distinct political programs. Instead, parties predominantly are characterized by their leader's personality and background, thereby making them highly personalistic entities (e.g. Manning 2005; Randall and Svåsand's 2002; van de Walle 2003). Moreover, as van de Walle and Butler (1999) note, even those few parties that have campaigned on a traditional left-right ideological spectrum have encountered little success in gaining votes. Avowedly socialist and Marxist parties within the region, such as Ghana's Convention People's Party (CPP) or Senegal's *Parti de l'Indépendance et du Travail* (PIT), fail to articulate a message that exhibits much relevance to the lives of many African voters, who predominantly labor in a very heterogeneous informal sector rather than represent a unified, salaried working class.

Thus, while democratization has created the space for many new opposition parties to emerge, their electoral success remains hindered by two major challenges: the many advantages enjoyed by incumbents and the absence of well-articulated, relevant policy platforms that would help distinguish them from their competitors.

Coalitions and Incumbent Turnover

Electoral coalitions represent a plausible means of addressing the first challenge through economies-of-scale. Disparate parties can pool their meager financial resources into a more substantial collection and launch a larger campaign. In addition, through a coalition, a party can appeal to a broader constituency beyond its original base and thereby mitigate the possibility of splitting the opposition vote to the incumbent's benefit. In ethnically-divided societies, coalitions may have the added benefit of encouraging dialogue among parties that transcends their individual ethnic, linguistic, or religious orientations (Salih and Nordlund 2007). In fact, Horowitz (2002) notes that pre-electoral coalitions are more amenable to attracting votes across group lines than post-electoral compromises.[5]

Moreover, parties may assume that voters choose candidates strategically rather than sincerely. In other words, they believe voters are influenced by the prospects of a party and are thereby loath to 'waste' their vote on candidates who may not win, even if they personally favor that candidate over all others (see Cox 1997). In such cases, a coalition of either a large number of parties or a few of the better-known ones provides the electorate with the sense that change is possible, encouraging opposition sympathizers to vote accordingly. Likewise, the expectation of an opposition coalition becoming a serious contender can attract funding from the private sector, providing the opposition with additional resources and creating momentum that could last well up until the election day. Howard and Roessler (2006) further note that opposition coalitions are more likely to prevent ruling parties from employing 'divide and rule' tactics.

Although some argue that the likelihood of pre-electoral coalitions depends on prevailing electoral institutions, no clear consensus exists on what institutions are most conducive to coalitions. For instance, Manning (2005) argues that the power accorded to executives in

[5] However, forming coalitions across ethno-linguistic or regional lines often ensures that these coalitions break down along those lines as well (Kadima 2006: 228).

African countries often discourages the formation of coalitions in presidential elections because party leaders do not want to forfeit their chance at the presidency. Where coalitions do occur in presidential elections, Rakner and van de Walle (2009) believe this is more likely in two-round systems since candidates that failed in the first-round of voting are more willing to support the opposition front-runner in the second round. Kadima (2006) instead argues that first-past-the-past (FPTP) systems place greater pressure on voters to avoid wasting their votes, and this realization encourages parties to form coalitions.

In legislative elections, proportional representation (PR) systems are considered less likely to encourage pre-electoral coalitions because votes are not necessarily wasted in the traditional sense.[6] Exceptions, however, can occur if threshold levels for gaining representation are relatively high, such as Mozambique's former five percent threshold level (Kadima 2006). Indeed, reflecting on the European experience, Oyugi (2006) suggests that coalitions are actually more likely in PR systems.

In order to examine these claims, Table 2 presents the range of pre-electoral coalitions formed by opposition parties in Africa over the last decade. This table only focuses on those coalitions formed since 2000 due to both data availability, given that most countries transitioned only in the 1990s, and because opposition coalitions tended to proliferate after the party which defeated the one-party regime began to appear dominant. Moreover, this table only includes countries considered electoral democracies. Specifically, those included have had at least two consecutive rounds of competitive elections since 2000 in years during which they were classified as 'electoral democracies' by Freedom House and have not subsequently experienced

[6]Strøm*et al*. (1994) also make this claim with respect to Western Europe, arguing that disproportionality advantages larger parties and therefore creates incentives for pre-electoral alliances.

any type of electoral breakdown such as a military coup or civilian takeover.[7] The analysis is limited to electoral democracies because the challenges of defeating incumbents and articulating a distinct policy agenda often are impossible when elections are not free and fair and where opposition parties lack the freedom to campaign.[8]

Seventeen countries fit these criteria, 14 of which have had pre-electoral coalitions by opposition parties in presidential and/or legislative elections.[9] Given the focus of this paper on opposition parties, Table 2 excludes coalitions that include incumbent parties.[10] In countries where a two-round system is used to elect the president, the opposition coalition refers to one that had already formed prior to the first round. Where presidential and legislative elections are not concurrent, a legislative coalition was coded as 'opposition' if none of the parties that belong to it won presidential office in the previous elections.[11] The rationale was that a party whose candidate wins executive office often has greater access to resources and popular momentum in subsequent legislative elections, thereby reflecting the role of presidential incumbency rather than the impact of coalition behavior. This is particularly true in Africa's presidential systems where executives demonstrate a high level of control (see van de Walle 2003). For instance, the SOPI coalition in Senegal's 2001 legislative elections was excluded since it was led by the

[7]According to Freedom House, it offers its 'electoral democracy' designation to countries that meet four criteria: 1) a competitive, multiparty system; 2) universal adult suffrage for all citizens; 3) regularly contested elections in conditions of ballot secrecy and in the absence of massive voter fraud; and 4) significant access to the electorate through the media and through open political campaigning (see http://www.freedomhouse.org/).

[8] This is not to deny the importance of opposition coalitions in non-electoral democracies, such as the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) in Ethiopia's 2005 parliamentary elections. However, given the constraints faced by these opposition parties, they cannot be fairly compared with those in more liberalized political environments.

[9]The remaining three countries are Namibia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa.

[10]The table also excludes opposition coalitions that disintegrated before competing in elections, such as the alignment of the Democratic Party with the New National Party and the Federal Alliance in South Africa during 2000.

[11] The exception is Mali in 2002 when AmadouToumaniTouré was elected president but did not belong to any political party. As such, the party that had previously held both the presidency and the parliamentary majority, which was the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA), was considered the incumbent party.

PartiDémocratiqueSénégalais(PDS), whose leader Abdoulaye Wade had won the presidency in the previous year's elections.

Where presidential winners left their party soon after their electoral victories and formed new parties, their erstwhile party was thereafter considered part of the opposition. This is relevant for Malawi, where President Mutharika left the United Democratic Front (UDF) after winning the 2004 elections to form the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and for São Tomé e Príncipe where President Fradique de Menezes left the *AcçãoDemocrática Independent*(ADI) following his 2001 victory to form the *Movimento Democrático das Forças da Mudança* (MDFM).

[Insert Table 2 here]

Importantly, Table 2 highlights not only that opposition coalitions are formed across a range of electoral institutions but also that the perceived theoretical benefits for defeating incumbents rarely materialize. This reinforces Randall and Svåsand's (2002) observation that even if leaders do agree to enter a coalition, it is very difficult to construct a winning coalition that will defeat the principal political party. In fact, the best known instances of coalitional success, which are the Alternative 2000 coalition in Senegal and the NARC coalition in Kenya, are notable precisely because they are so rare in the multi-party era.

Coalitions and Competitive Party Systems

Pre-electoral coalitions not only have proved relatively unsuccessful at facilitating incumbent turnover but also reduce the ability of political parties in Africa to address their second and even greater challenge: the lack of well-defined policy platforms and ideological orientations. Indeed, most coalitions in Africa are based on office-seeking, rather than policy-seeking, motives. In the office-seeking perspective, parties enter coalitions with the goal of

obtaining control over the benefits that accompany holding a particular political office (Riker 1962; Laver and Schofield 1990). These benefits may be either intrinsic, such as the influence and power that accompanies the office, or material if such offices come with certain perquisites (see Budge and Laver 1986; Strøm and Müller 1999). By contrast, policy-seeking coalitions consist of parties that possess broadly similar policy preferences, and therefore parties with the smallest ideological distance between them are more likely to join together (De Swaan 1973).

The frequency by which coalition members consist of old foes who suddenly become new allies illustrates that ideology rarely is central to coalition-building in Africa. For example, Oyugi (2006: 64) highlights this with respect to the case of NARC in Kenya: 'Thus the need to remove [President Daniel Arap] Moi from power became a major factor influencing alliance formation in 2002. It had very little, if anything, to do with the 14 parties coming together to trade off policies that they wanted to implement.' Although MwaiKibaki led NARC against the then-ruling Kenyan African National Union (KANU), he subsequently formed a coalition with KANU in the 2007 elections in an attempt to stave off one of his former NARC allies, RailaOdinga.

A similar dynamic has occurred in Southern Africa. In Malawi, where the opposition formed the Mgwirizano Coalition in the 2004 elections, Rakner et al. (2007: 1131) observe that there was a 'marked absence of ideological or political priorities as the driving factor behind coalition formation.'[12] In the country's 2009 elections, the opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) formed a pact with the exact same party, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), whose dictatorial leader it ousted in the country's first multi-party elections in 1994. In Zambia's 2006

[12]A similar trend also characterizes incumbent coalitions. For instance, Kapa (2008) notes that in Lesotho's 2007 elections, the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) formed a pact with the National Independent Party (NIP) solely because the two parties both used birds as their campaign symbols, and neither party wanted to risk losing votes to the other party if voters mixed up the symbols.

presidential elections, the United National Independence Party (UNIP) joined with the Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD) and the United Party for National Development (UPND) to form the United Democratic Alliance (UDA). Two years later, in the 2008 by-elections, both UNIP and FDD then decided to campaign against the UPND's presidential candidate and in favor of the ruling Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD), a party which roundly defeated UNIP during the country's transition to democracy in 1991.

The example of Senegal deserves special attention given that its 2000 presidential elections represented an important example of coalitional success (see Galvan 2001). In that election, the then-ruling *PartiSocialiste*(PS) was challenged by the Alternative 2000 coalition, which was led by Abdoulaye Wade and the PDS. In the run-up to the first round of elections, Wade formed a coalition with six other parties, including three self-proclaimed leftist parties: *And-Jëf/PartiAfricaine pour la Democratie et la Socialisme* (AJ-PADS), *LigueDémocratique-Mouvement pour le Parti du Travail* (LD-MPT), and PIT. Since the PDS was an avowedly neo-liberal party, the support of these three parties for Wade's candidacy revealed that they prioritized defeating the incumbent over pursuing common policy goals. When it became clear that Wade would be competing against the PS candidate, AbdouDiouf, in a second-round of elections, other major opposition parties, including the *Alliance des Forces de Progrès*(AFP), coalesced around the Alternative 2000 coalition and formed the broader *Front pour l'Alternance*(FAL).

Yet, soon after winning this election, a series of fallouts among Wade's coalition partners occurred. He dismissed cabinet members from the PIT and LD-MPT and fired his Prime Minister, MoustaphaNiasse, who leads the AFP. By May 2001, Niasse led 16 opposition parties to form another coalition, known as the *Cadre Permanent de Concertation de*

l'Opposition(CPC), to contest local and municipal elections. Ironically, the party that the AFP had challenged just one year earlier, the PS, was also a member of this opposition coalition. Not long after, the CPC joined with PIT and the LD-MPT to form a broader opposition coalition known as the *Coalition Populaire pour l'Alternance* (CPA). However, in the run-up to the February 2007 presidential elections, the CPA collapsed and led to a host of new coalitions each formed around the key opposition parties. Only a few months later, yet another new opposition coalition, *BennooSiggilSenegaal,* emerged and included the AFP, PS, and *Rewmi.* The latter party was formed only in 2006 by IdrissaSeck, who is a former PDS prime minister and protégé of President Wade. Collectively, this behavior lends support to Mbow's (2008:167) claims that in Senegal, 'political parties proliferate and disappear at will in dizzying bouts of fusion and floor-crossing that on the whole makes it hard to take the country's party scene seriously.'

Such sentiments are further reinforced by the vague policy objectives espoused by some of the major parties that have been involved in these opposition coalitions. For example, Aissata Tall Sall, who is the chargé of communication for the PS, admits that there is no true philosophical difference between her party and the rest of the opposition.[13] The PS spokesman, AbdoulayeWilane, notes that his party aims for 'law and order to prevail, for democracy to prevail, the separation of powers to prevail, justice to prevail, legality to prevail, solidarity to prevail, transparency to prevail, and good governance to prevail.'[14] Likewise, the AFP promotes a nebulous goal of 'faith, patriotism, and solidarity'[15]while *Rewmi's*spokesperson claims that

[13] Personal interview with Aissata Tall Sall, Dakar, Senegal, September 15, 2008.
[14] Personal interview with AbdoulayeVilane, Dakar, Senegal, September 11, 2008.
[15] Personal interview with Hélène Tine, spokesperson of AFP, Dakar, Senegal, September 16, 2008.

'*Rewmi*is not a leftist party, it's not a liberal party….*Remwi* has a panoramic ambition. We traverse issues that appeal to all.'[16]

Unless a voter is very well-informed, which can be difficult in a region where independent radio stations remain sparse and low literacy hinders large-scale newspaper readership, labyrinthine shifts in alliances and the profusion of new acronyms can be extremely difficult to follow. Consequently, voters may simply resort to supporting coalitions because of the personality of their leaders, thereby reinforcing the lack of programmatic content already plaguing the region's parties.

Failing to Create Loyal Party Constituents

As Dalton and Anderson (2011: 16) observe, 'Volatility in party offerings makes it difficult for voters to make meaningful choices, and to reward or punish political parties on programmatic grounds.' Since many of the pre-electoral coalitions witnessed in Africa are based on the sole goal of defeating the incumbent rather than shaping policy in a specific direction, and because they often are transient to reflect shifting alliances among party leaders, these coalitions prevent the development of a loyal constituency base. Crafting a loyal constituency base often requires creating roots in society, which is reflected by whether parties are regularly supported over time and in different types of elections (Mainwaring 1998: 72). This section therefore examines how much support voters offer opposition parties involved in coalitions and whether this support wavers between elections.

Specifically, electoral volatility between each country's most recent presidential and legislative elections offers a means for assessing the degree of voter attachment to a coalition's party members. The concept of electoral volatility refers to shifts in support for parties across

[16] Personal interview with Waly Fall, spokesperson of *Rewmi*, Dakar, Senegal, November 25, 2008.

subsequent elections and conveys the degree to which the party system is institutionalized. High levels of volatility suggest the inability of parties to establish a loyal constituency base and a party system in which 'citizens have trouble locating what the major parties represent even in the broadest terms' (Mainwaring and Scully 1995: 5). Powell and Tucker (2008) further note that in developing countries, higher volatility reflects both shifts in votes for established parties as well as the rapid emergence and disappearance of new parties. Although a lower level of volatility traditionally is interpreted as reflecting higher allegiance of citizens to parties, it may also indicate a lack of competitiveness (Kuenzi and Lambright 2001: 444). This is precisely the case where ruling parties have transformed into dominant parties and where opposition parties offer little appeal to voters.

The Pedersen Index (1983) is a common metric for capturing volatility. The index is calculated as

$$\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} |p_{it} - p_{i(t+1)}|}{2}$$

where*p* represents the share of votes or seat shares for party *i* in one election period, *t*, or the subsequent election, *t+1*. Yet, using the Pedersen index alone hinders understanding whether volatility levels are due to the degree of appeal of incumbents or the opposition.

As such, Tables 3a and 3b present both total electoral volatility during the two most recent consecutive elections in each country and the share attributable to opposition coalition formation and splits. This latter variable was calculated by isolating changes in either presidential vote shares or legislative seat shares between elections for those opposition parties that were involved in any coalition during period *t*, period *t+1*, or both.[17] For the purpose of

[17] In presidential elections with two-round systems, volatility is calculated based on vote shares obtained from the first round. Legislative seat shares were calculated based on the number of total seats elected rather total seats to

calculating changes in vote and seat shares, some coding rules are necessary for party splits and mergers. Following Powell and Tucker (2008), if a coalition in period *t* subsequently splits but one party is the clear successor, then this party and the coalition are considered one entity while the other splinter parties are considered new ones. For instance, the NARC in Kenya subsequently split into a host of new parties between the 2002 and 2007 presidential elections. Since MwaiKibaki had led NARC, his Party of National Unity (PNU) was considered the successor to NARC in the 2007 presidential elections. The Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya (ODM-K), whose leaders did not compete as presidential candidates in 2002, are considered new parties for the 2007 presidential elections. The change in the PNU's vote shares was calculated as the difference between what the NARC obtained in 2002 and what the PNU received in 2007 while that for the splinter parties was equivalent to what they obtained in subsequent elections, or $|(0-p_{i(t+1)}|$, because their parties technically did not compete in the previous presidential election. [18]

By contrast, if a coalition was formed in time *t+1* and at least two of its constituent members received at least five percent of the vote in time *t*, then the coalition was considered a new party. If only one received five percent of the vote in time *t*, then the coalition was considered a successor to that party. In Benin, both the RB and the *MouvementAfricain pour la Démocratie* (MADEP)received more than five percent of seat shares in the 2003 elections. When they joined to form the ADD coalition in 2007, the ADD was therefore considered a new

exclude those that are appointed. Using seat shares, rather than vote shares, for legislative elections is common for research on Africa due to low reliability of legislative voting data (see Bogaards 2008; Kuenzi and Lambright 2001).

[18] By contrast, in Kenya's 2002 legislative elections, members of the NARC coalition competed under their individual party banners. As such, there was no need to determine the successor to NARC in the 2007 legislative elections.

party with seat changes calculated as $|(0-p_{i(t+1)}|$ while the RB and MADEP's seat changes were equivalent to $|(p_{it}-0)|$.

[Insert Tables 3a and 3b here]

In addition to volatility, the age of political parties is often used as an indicator for determining how established parties are within their respective country (e.g. Kuenzi and Lambright 2001; Mainwaring 1998). Both tables therefore include the mean age of the parties included in the coalition at the time of the elections in which they competed.[19] The results reveal that volatility can be just as high in countries with more established opposition parties as in countries with relatively young parties. The reason for this is because volatility is linked to two factors: shifts in voting preferences for established parties, such as in Mauritius, and the entry and exit of relatively young parties, such as in Kenya or Mali.

More significantly, the two tables illustrate that in a number of countries, opposition coalition volatility constitutes a relatively high level of total volatility within a country.In most cases, this is because there have been multiple coalitions in consecutive elections and/or the country's main opposition party was involved in a coalition. This latter point suggests that while the participation of the main opposition party may be critical for shoring up a coalition's competitiveness, it may also contribute to higher levels of party system volatility.

The example of São Tomé e Principe is instructive in this regard. There, the larger and more established ADI was part of the UêKédadji (UK)for the 2002 elections, helping that party gain 8 seats, but then defected in the 2006 elections and gained 11 seats while its former UK

[19] This was calculated as the average age of each party participating in the coalition at the time of the elections in which they competed as a coalition.

partners earned no seats. As a result, opposition coalition volatility was quite high. By 2010, the ADI was the party of the incumbent president and earned 26 seats in parliament. The UK did not even compete while the previous incumbent party, the MDFM, lost many of its previous seats. This explains why overall volatility is quite high between the 2006 and 2010 elections but the share of opposition coalition volatility is low compared to that between the 2002 and 2006 elections.

The other few cases of low shares of volatility attributable to opposition coalitions are related to two trends. First, the opposition parties comprising a coalition in some countries have minimal appeal, thereby resulting in consistently low votes during elections. This is not only true with respect to the ABN in Benin but also in Ghana where the Grand Coalition's main constituent party, the People's National Convention (PNC), articulates an 'Nkrumahist' message that has garnered negligible votes across elections. Secondly, low volatility in Seychelles is a result of the high appeal of the Seychelles National Party, which has retained an equally high share of votes across elections, regardless of whether or not it joined a coalition with the Democratic Party.

In the majority of cases where opposition coalitions contribute a high level of volatility, this must be attributed to the failure of party members to generate a loyal following over time. Other explanations for this volatility are not convincing. For instance, the emergence of a new opposition party in the system can impact the degree of volatility created by a coalition. This was the case in Zambia where the emergence of the Patriotic Front (PF) upset the prospects of the UDA in the 2006 elections. However, if voters are distracted so easily by new opposition parties, then this serves to only heighten a coalition's lack of widespread appeal. Changes in electoral rules and institutions between elections represent another explanation for volatility

because this may create, or reduce, opportunities for coalitions to increase their vote or seat shares. Yet, within the countries and time period examined here, Mozambique was the only country to switch its electoral rules, removing the 5 percent electoral threshold for the legislative elections that took place in 2009.[20]This should have increased the coalitions' prospects.Nevertheless, none gained any seats in the 2009 elections while a former coalition leader in 2004, RENAMO, actually witnessed its seat shares decline. A final possibility is that voters turn away from an opposition coalition because its leader leaves. For example, Malawi's GwandaChakuamba, who led the Republican Party (RP) and the Mgiwirizano Coalition, received almost 26 percent of the vote in the 2004 elections. Shortly thereafter, he defected to the ruling DPP. When the RP then competed in the 2009 presidential elections with a new leader, it received less than one percent of the vote. Such trends, however, only reinforce that personality of candidates, rather than policy of the coalition, are motivating voters and that voter loyalty is therefore tied to party leaders rather than to the parties themselves.

Conclusion

Pre-electoral coalitions among opposition parties have been popular in Africa during the last decade, and opposition parties in countries such as Nigeria, Uganda, and South Africa recently discussed engaging in such arrangements to increase their competitiveness in 2011 elections. By offering economies-of-scale, such arrangements theoretically offer the promise of overcoming incumbent dominance and reducing party fragmentation.

However, this paper illustrated that coalitions do not necessarily promote consolidation within the region in either the narrow sense of incumbent turnovers or the broader notion of

[20] Senegal also changed the number of seats in the National Assembly from 120 to 150 but this had little impact on the main opposition coalition, Siggil Front, because it boycotted the legislative elections in 2007.

creating competitive and institutionalized party systems. By focusing on those pre-electoral coalitions forged by opposition parties since 2000 in a set of African countries classified as electoral democracies, two findings emerged. First, aside from a few notable cases, opposition coalitions rarely have defeated incumbent parties in either presidential or parliamentary elections. Secondly, as shown in Tables 3a and 3b, opposition coalitions in a majority of cases have contributed from one-third to two-thirds of total electoral volatility. This indicates that they, and their participating parties, often fail to generate a loyal constituency base over time. One of the main reasons that these opposition coalitions do not craft linkages with voters is that participating parties are focused more on office-seeking, rather than policy-seeking, coalitionsthat form and disintegrate between elections.This in turn is because their constituent member parties often lack policy substance and predominantly rely on the personality of their party leaders for differentiation.

The implications of this are troubling in these nascent democracies, especially given that Afrobarometer surveys indicate already low levels of trust and identification with opposition parties. Scholars focusing on industrialized democracies have argued that the clarity and differentiation of party choices offered to voters influences their decision to vote in the first place (see Aart and Wessels 2005; Dalton 2008). Indeed, the 'supply' of meaningful party alternatives in an election increases voters' motivation to invest time and energy in making electoral decisions (Klingemann and Wessels 2009). Otherwise, as Hagopian (2005) argues, the lack of credible party alternatives can lead to a diminished interest in politics and a decline in citizen participation.

In Africa's electoral democracies, the important challenge of increasing incumbent turnover should be complemented by the development of distinct party choices in order for

elections to provide a meaningful conduit for conveying citizen preferences. Such parties do not necessarily have to offer distinct platforms along the traditional left-right ideological spectrum and, as noted earlier, those few African parties which have done so rarely demonstrate widespread appeal. However, they do have to demonstrate relevance with the everyday concerns of African citizens, including job creation and improved service delivery, and offer realistic solutions for achieving such goals. This, more than office-seeking coalitions, would go a long way to ensuring that democracy provides African voters real choices when they go to the polls.

Tables

Table 1: Trust and Identification with African Political Parties

Survey Question	Round 3 (2005)		Round 4 (2008)	
	Not at all/ Just a little	*Somewhat/ A lot*	*Not at all/ Just a little*	*Somewhat/ A lot*
How much do you trust the ruling party?	36.9	57.5	42.1	52.9
How much do you trust opposition parties?	57.3	34.7	57.8	34.2
Are you close to a political party in your country?	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*
	61.1	35.2	59.8	34.6
If so, which party?[a]	*Incumbent*	*Opposition*	*Incumbent*	*Opposition*
	38.7	20.7	35.4	21.6

Source: Afrobarometer Rounds 3(questions 55E, 55F, 85 and 86) and 4 (questions 49e, 49f, 85 and 86).
N = 25, 397 in Round 3 and 24,106 in Round 4
Notes: The 'incumbent party' refers to that party in power at the time the survey was conducted. These percentages are the average of the weighted responses across the 17 countries included in both rounds of the survey.
[a]Percentages do not sum to 100 because of the exclusion of those who refused to answer or who claimed that they were not close to any party.

Table 2:
Opposition Coalitions in Presidential and Legislative Elections Since 2000

Country	**Electoral Institutions**[a]		**Year of Coalition (Presidential or Legislative)**	**Opposition Coalition/Pact**	**Did Coalition Defeat Incumbent Candidate/ Party?**
	Presidential	Legislative			
Benin	TRS	List PR	2003 (*Legislative*)	Alliance Etoile	No
			2006 (*Presidential*)	Alliance pour un Benin nouveau (ABN)	No
			2007 (*Legislative*)	Alliance pour une dynamique démocratie (ADD)	No
Botswana	----	FPTP	2009 (*Legislative*)	Botswana Congress Party/Botswana Alliance Movement	No
Cape Verde	TRS	List PR	2001 (*Legislative*)	AliançaDemocráticapara a Mudança (ADM)	No
Ghana	TRS	FPTP	2004 (*Presidential*)	Grand Coalition	No
Kenya	TRS	FPTP	2002 *(Presidential & Legislative)*	National Rainbow Coalition (NARC)	Yes

Country	Electoral Institutions[a]		Year of Coalition (Presidential or Legislative)	Opposition Coalition/Pact	Did Coalition Defeat Incumbent Candidate/ Party?
	Presidential	Legislative			
Lesotho	----	MMP	2007 (*Legislative*)	Alliance of Congress Parties	No
			2007 (*Legislative*)	All Basotho Convention & Lesotho Workers Party	No
			2007 (*Legislative*)	Basotho National Party/National Progressive Party	No
Malawi	FPTP	FPTP	2004 *(Presidential & Legislative)*	Mgwirizano Coalition	No
			2009 *(Presidential)*	Coalition of Malawi Congress Party & United Democratic Front	No
Mali	TRS	TRS	2002 (*Legislative*)	Convergence pour l'alternance et le changement (ACC)	No
				Espoir 2002	Yes
			2007 (*Legislative*)	Front pour la démocratie et le République (FDR)	No
Mauritius	---	BV	2005 (*Legislative*)	Alliance Sociale (AS)	Yes
			2010 (*Legislative*)	Alliance du Coeur	No
Mozambique	TRS	List PR	2004 (*Presidential & Legislative*)	RENAMO-União Electoral (UE)	No
				FrenteUnidaparaMudança e Boa Governação (MBG)	No
			2004 (*Legislative*)	FrenteAlargada da Oposição (FAO)	No
				União para aSalvação de Moçambique (USAMO)	No
				UniãoDemocrática (UD)	No
			2009 (*Legislative*)	AliançaDemocrática de AntigosCombatentespara o Desenvolvimento (ADACD)	No
				União Electoral UE)	No
São Tomé e Príncipe	TRS	Parallel	2002 (*Legislative*)	UêKédadji (UK)	No
			2006 (*Legislative*)	UêKédadji (UK)	No

Country	**Electoral Institutions**[a]		**Year of Coalition (Presidential or Legislative)**	**Opposition Coalition/Pact**	**Did Coalition Defeat Incumbent Candidate/ Party?**
	Presidential	Legislative			
Senegal	TRS	Parallel	2000 (*Presidential*)	Alternative 2000	Yes
			2007 (*Presidential & Legislative*)	TakkuDefaraat Senegal	No
				And Defar Senegal	No
			2007 (*Presidential*)	Alternance 2007	No
				And Liggey Senegal	No
				Jubbanti Senegal	No
				TekkiTaaru Senegal	No
				Sellal	No
			2007 (*Legislative*)	Coalition Waar Wi	No
				Siggil Front	Boycotted
Seychelles	TRS	Parallel	2007 (*Legislative*)	Seychelles National Party & Democratic Party	No
Zambia	FPTP	FPTP	2006 (*Presidential & Legislative*)	United Democratic Alliance (UDA)	No
			2006 (*Legislative*)	National Democratic Front (NDF)	No

Sources: Please see appendix for data sources on specific countries. Data on electoral institutions is from the Electoral Knowledge Network (aceproject.org), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (http://www.ifes.org), and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (http://www.ipu.org/parline).

Notes: [a]BV=block vote, FPTP = first-past the post, MMP= mixed member proportional system, PR = proportional representation, TRS= two-round system.

Table 3a: Volatility for Opposition Coalition Candidates in Presidential Elections

Country (Electoral period)	Total Presidential Volatility	Opposition Coalition Volatility as Share of Total Volatility (%)	Opposition Coalition (Year)	Mean Age of Coalition Parties	Coalition's Presidential Candidate
Benin (2001-2006)	67.8	6.1	ABN (2006)	15	Bruno Amoussou
Ghana (2004-2008)	4.4	11.7	Grand Coalition (2004)	11	Edward Mahama
Kenya (2002-2007)	53.6	69.7	NARC (2002)	6	Mwai Kibaki
Malawi (2004-2009)	72	45.1	Mgwirizano (2004)	4	Gwanda Chakuamba*
			MCP-UDF pact (2009)	34	J.Z. Tembo
Mozambique (2004-2009)	19	40.4	RENAMO-UE(2004)	12	Alfonso Dhlakama
			MBG (2004)	13	Carlos Reis*
Senegal (2000-2007)	49	58.7	Alternative (2000)	18	Abdoulaye Wade
			Alternance (2007)	8	Moustapha Niasse
			And Liggey(2007)	1	Idrissa Seck
			Jubbanti Senegal(2007)	26	Abdoulaye Bathily
			Tekki Tarru Senegal (2007)	1	Mamadou Lamine Diallo**
			Takku Defaraat Senegal (2007)	1	Robert Sagna
			And Defaar (2007)	15	Landing Savane
			Sellal (2007)	1	Mame Adama Guèye**
Zambia (2006-2008)	9.4	30	UDA (2006)	20	Hakainde Hichilema

Sources: Please see Appendix for sources for specific countries. Data for calculating the mean age of coalition parties is from *Africa South of the Sahara* (2000, 2009).
Notes: *Candidates did not compete in subsequent election; ** Candidates did not compete in prior election

Table 3b: Volatility for Opposition Coalitions in Legislative Elections

Country (Electoral period)	Total Legislative Volatility	Share of volatility due to opposition coalition(s) (%)	Opposition Coalition (Year)	Mean Age of Coalition Parties	Member parties
Benin (2003-2007)	60.8	46.5	Alliance Etoile (2003)*	11	Les Verts, BGLD, UDSN
			ADD (2007)	14	RB, PSD,MADEP
Botswana (2004-2009)	9.7	36.4	Pact (2009)	11	BCP/BAM
Cape Verde (2001-2006)	2.7	0	ADM (2001)	7	UCID, PCD*, PTS*
Kenya (2002-2007)	41.4	54.5	NARC (2002)	6	DP/PNU, LDP, FORD-K, NPK*
Lesotho (2002-2007)	38.7	60.4	Alliance of Congress Parties (2007)	4	BAC, LPC
			Pact (2007)	4	ABC**, LWP
			Pact (2007)	22	BNP, NPP**
Malawi (2004-2009)	60	40	Mgwirizano Coalition (2004)	4	RP, MAFUNDE, PETRA*, NUP*, MDP*, PPM *, MGODE*
			Pact (2009)	34	MCP, UDF
Mali (2002-2007)	26	65	Espoir 2002 (2002)	7	RPM, RDT*, MPR, CNID
			ACC (2002)	6	PARENA, US-RDA
			FDR (2007)	7	RPM, PARENA
Mauritius (2005-2010)	98.4	47.5	AS (2005)	20	MLP, PMSD, MMSM, MR, VERTS-OF
			Alliance du Coeur (2010)	15	MMM, UN,* MMSD
Mozambique (2004-2009)	15.6	50	RENAMO-UE (2004)	12	RENAMO, UE (PCN, MONAMO-PMSD, FAP, FUMO-PCD, PEMO, PPPM, PRD, PUN, FDU, ALIMO)
			MBG (2004)*	13	UNAMO, PARTONAMO
			USAMO (2004) *	6	PADRES, PSM, UM, PSDM
			FAO (2004)*	1	FL, PAC
			UD (2004)*	11	PANADE, PLDM
			UE(2009)	16	PCN, MONAMO-PSD, FAP, FUMO-PCD, PEMO, PPPM, PRD, PUN, UDF, ALIMO
			ADACD (2009)	11	PPPM **, PSM **, PACODE**, PUR **

Country (Electoral period)	Total Legislative Volatility	Share of volatility due to opposition coalition(s) (%)	Opposition Coalition (Year)	Mean Age of Coalition Parties	Member parties
São Tomé e Principe (2002-2006)	21.75	79.3	UK (2002)*	5	ADI, UNDP, PRD, PPP
São Tomée Principe (2006-2010)	34.6	0	UK (2006)*	7	PPP, PSR, UNDP, Codó
Senegal (2000-2007)	23.5	48.2	TakkuDefaraat Senegal[a]	7	Led by DS
			And DefarSenegal[a]	15	Led by AJ-PADS
			WaarWi[a]	1	Led by MoudouDiagneFada
			Siggil Front	22	PS, AFP, Rewmi, PIT, LD-MPT
Seychelles (2002-2007)	0	0	Pact (2007)	28	SNP, DP

Sources: Please see Appendix. Data for calculating the mean age of coalition parties is from *Africa South of the Sahara* (2000, 2009).

Notes: *Parties did not compete in subsequent election; ** Parties did not compete in prior election

[a]Existing data only indicates which party led these coalitions and that party is the basis for calculating mean age of coalition

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Appendix:
Data Sources and Party Acronyms Presented in Tables

The African Elections Database (http://africanelections.tripod.com/) was used in most cases for election data. Where additional resources were also used, they are indicated below:

Benin - Alliance pour une dynamique démocratique (ADD),Bâtisseurs et Gestionnaires de la Liberté et de la Démocratie (BGLD),Mouvement Africain pour la démocratie (MADEP), Renaissance du Bénin (RB), Parti social-démocrate (PSD), Union pour la Démocratie et la Solidarité Nationale (UDSN), Union Nationale pour la Solidarité et le Progrès (UNSP)
Sources:Seely (2007)

Botswana – Botswana Alliance Movement (BAM), Botswana Congress Party (BCP), Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), Botswana National Front (BNF)
Sources:Independent Electoral Commission (http://www.iec.gov.bw/);Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (http://www.eisa.org.za/)

Cape Verde –Partido da Convergência Democrática(PCD), Partido de Trabalho e Solidariedade (PTS), UniãoCristã, Independente e Democrática (UCID)

Ghana- National Democratic Congress (NDC), People's National Convention (PNC)
Sources: Electoral Commission of Ghana (http://www.ec.gov.gh/)

Kenya – Democratic Party (DP), Party of National Unity (PNU), Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya (ODM-K), Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Kenya (FORD-K), National Party of Kenya (NPK)
Sources:Kenyan Electoral Commission (http://www.eck.or.ke)

Lesotho- All Basotho Convention (ABC), Basotho National Party (BNP), Basutoland African Congress (BAC), Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD), Lesotho People's Congress(LPC), Lesotho Worker's Party (LWP), National Progressive Party (NPP)
Sources:Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (http://www.eisa.org.za/)

Malawi –Democratic People's Party (DPP), Malawi Congress Party (MCP), Malawi Forum for Unity and Development (MAFUNDE), Movement for Genuine Democratic Change (MGODE), National Unity Party (NUP), People's Progressive Movement (PPM), People's Transformation Party (PETRA), Republican Party (RP), United Democratic Front (UDF)
Sources: Malawi Electoral Commission (http://www.mec.org.mw/Elections/); Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (http://www.eisa.org.za/)

Mali –Congrès national d'initiative démocratique (CNID), Mouvement patriotique pour le renouveau (MPR), Parti pour la renaissance nationale (PARENA), Rassemblement pour la démocratie du travail (RDT), Rassemblement pour le Mali (RPM), Union soudanaise-Rassemblement démocratique africain (US-RDA)

Mauritius– Mouvement labour party (MLP), Mouvement militant mauricien (MMM), Mouvement Mauricien Social Démocrate (MMSD), Mouvement militant socialiste mauricien (MMSM), Mouvement rodriguais (MR), Parti mauricien social démocrate (PMSD), Union Nationale (UN)
Sources:Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (http://www.eisa.org.za/)

Mozambique - AliançaIndependente de Moçambique (ALIMO), Frente de AçãoPatriótica (FAP), FrenteDémocraticaUnido (FDU), Frente Liberal (FL), FrenteUnida de Moçambique-Partido de ConvergênciaDemocrática (Fumo-PCD), MovimentoNacionalistaMoçambicana-PartidoMoçambicano da Social Democracia (MONAMO-PMSD), PartidoAfricanoConservador (PAC), Partido Socialisa de Moçambique (PSM), Partido do CongressoDemocrático (PACODE), Partido da AliançaDemocrática e Renovação Social (PADRES), PartidoNacionalDemocrático (PANADE), Partido para TodosNacionalistas de Moçambicanos (PARTONAMO), Partido de ConvençãoNacional (PCN), Partido Livre Democrático de Moçambique (PLDM), PartidoEcologista de Moçambique, Partido do Progresso do Povo de Moçambique (PPPM), PartidoRenovadorDemocrático (PRD),Partido Social Democrático de Moçambique (PSDM), Socialisa de Moçambique (PSM), Partido de UnidadeNacional (PUN), PartidoPartido da União para a Reconciliação (PUR), ResistênciaNacionalMoçambique (RENAMO), União Electoral (UE), União para a Mudança (UM), UniãoNacional de Moçambicana (UNAMO)
Sources:Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (http://www.eisa.org.za/)

São Tomé e Principe – AccãoDemocráticaIndependente (ADI), Partido de ConvergênciaDemocrática (Códó) PartidoPopular do Progresso (PPP), Partido Social Renovado (PSR), Partido de RenovaçaoDemocrática (PRD), UêKédadji (UK),UniãoNacional para Democracia e Progresso (UNDP)

Senegal- Alliance des forces de progress (AFP), And Jëf-Parti africain pour la démocratie et le socialisme (AJ-PADS), Ligue démocratique-movement pour le parti du travail (LD-MPT), Parti démocratique sénégalais (PDS), Parti de l'indépendance et du travail (PIT), Parti socialiste du Sénégal (PS)
Sources: Galvan (2009)

Seychelles – New Democratic Party (DP), Seychelles National Party (SNP)

Zambia – Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), Patriotic Front (PF), Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD), United National Independence Party (UNIP), United Party for National Development (UPND)
Sources: Electoral Commission of Zambia (http://www.elections.org.zm)