

# OPPOSITION PARTY ALLIANCES AND ELECTIONS IN BOTSWANA, LESOTHO AND ZAMBIA

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## ABSTRACT

*The Southern African Development Community has made significant democratic progress since the 1990s following a wave of ferocious internal conflicts, as in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In order for the achievements to be sustained the region requires viable political parties, which are key role players in a democracy. The majority of the current ruling parties in the SADC region such as the African National Congress, the Botswana Democratic Party, Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo), the Lesotho Congress for Democracy, Zambia's Movement for Multiparty Democracy and the South West Africa People's Organisation are very powerful, while opposition parties are fragmented and generally weak. However, a trend has developed for opposition parties, having recognised their limitations, to form alliances in order to play a meaningful role. This route has been followed by opposition parties in Botswana, Lesotho and Zambia. On the eve of the recent general elections in Lesotho and Zambia, parties negotiated strategies to maximise their chances of winning. In Botswana the negotiation process is still under way, albeit threatened by the failure of parties to move from their fixed positions. These developments raise a critical question: does the formation of alliances constitute a viable option for opposition parties aspiring to power? Put differently: could alliances be the winning formula for the opposition parties in their attempts to circumvent the glaring paucity of their numbers and become a force to be reckoned with?*

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of party coalitions and /or alliances has been discussed widely by various authors (Karume 2003; Khembo 2004; Kadima 2006). In the SADC region, for instance, Mauritius leads the pack in terms of a tradition of party coalitions, which have been the practice since independence, with power alternating between two main parties. Unlike in other countries, where coalitions form after elections, those in Mauritius usually precede the elections (Ramakrishna 2003; Kadima & Kasenally 2005). A report published by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (2001), which covers a wide spectrum of alliance politics in Southern Africa makes it clear that party alliances are not a new phenomenon in the region.

In recent elections in Zambia (28 September 2006) and Lesotho (17 February 2007), the ruling parties were given a renewed mandate to lead their countries for the next five years. Following a successful election in 2004, Botswana is gearing up for the next round – in 2009.

Two of the three countries considered in this paper – Botswana and Zambia – use a first-past-the post (FPTP) electoral model, while Lesotho has a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system. It is interesting to note that despite these differences, opposition parties in the three countries face the same challenges in the existence of a growing dominant-party system. As a result there has been much activity within and between parties in these countries between elections.

For instance, prior to the 2006 elections in Zambia, the main opposition party in Parliament, the United Party for National Development (UPND) formed alliances with the other major opposition parties, the Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD) and the United National Independence Party (UNIP). In Lesotho three alliances were formed just before the 2007 election. The Lesotho People's Congress (LPC), the Basotholand African Congress (BAC) and part of the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), led by Ntsukunyane Mphanya,<sup>1</sup> formed an alliance – the Alliance of Congress Parties (ACP). The All Basotho Convention, the Lesotho Workers Party (LWP) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) also reached an election pact. The National Independent Party (NIP), on the other hand, formed an alliance with the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD). A similar development is expected in Botswana before the 2009 elections.

Karume (2003, p 9) views the formation of pre-election coalitions as unsustainable because they are not based on ideologies but on vote pooling. As a result, they collapse easily, even if they win elections. It is worth noting that, with only a few exceptions, most of the parties which form alliances are the offspring

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1 Mphanya joined the alliance after falling out with the party, which had refused to join the alliance, preferring the other parties to join it.

of one party. Ironically, the political leaders who decide to break away from their original parties only resort to negotiations and joint problem solving on the eve of elections, which is what they should have done initially instead of breaking away only to seek reconciliation for the sake of the election. While Khembo (2004, p 123) maintains that 'the formation of new parties is neither a new phenomenon nor a destructive process in a liberal democracy', he hastens to warn that the problem with the formation of new parties is the motive.

It will be shown below that alliances in Botswana, Lesotho and Zambia, have been formed when the parties realised that fragmentation and vote splitting limited their chances of winning elections. It is appropriate to look at the alliances and the processes that led to their formation in order to establish the success or otherwise of these efforts.

In considering opposition party alliances in Botswana, Lesotho and Zambia, this paper begins with a brief discussion of the reasons behind party coalescence and possible forms of political alliance in the three countries. Secondly, the paper highlights inter- and intra-party relations before the most recent elections in each country as well as the way each party performed in those elections. It also looks at the structures of the alliances and the considerations of the parties when forming the alliance, as enshrined in their memoranda of understanding (MoUs). The paper will show that the idea of political party alliances is not necessarily new to some of these parties. It is therefore important to see if any lessons informed their renewed attempts.

Most literature on political party coalitions points to the fact that parties, whether ruling or opposition, form coalitions in order to secure more votes (Khembo 2004; Kadima 2006; Kadima & Lembani 2006). The decision to form coalitions is, however, not only based on a quest for majority votes but, according to the Social Cleavages Theory, it is also based on historically rooted orientations of the individual parties which guide them on how to respond to issues (Marks and Wilson 2000, p 2). Whereas this theory is validated by the formation of parties along ethnic lines in Zambia (Kabemba 2004), the paper will show that this was not necessarily the motivation in Botswana and Lesotho. Available evidence suggests that the main reason for these alliances is vote pooling.

## POSSIBLE FORMS OF ALLIANCES FOR BOTSWANA, LESOTHO AND ZAMBIA

### *Front*

In this model all the parties affiliate to one party, using its logo for election purposes as well as forming a government. They use one manifesto and uniform political

and election materials such as civic education and voter education programmes, brochures and leaflets. They contest elections as an alliance and share seats according to a formula agreed between them. The parties subscribe to the alliance while retaining their own identities and maintaining their ideological philosophy and principles. They are still able to pursue interests which do not clash with the fundamentals of the alliance. The African National Congress (ANC) follows this model with its alliance partners, the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) even though Cosatu is not a political party. The three parties pursue their individual interests and, on occasion, express differing opinions about issues (Habib & Taylor 2001).

### *Electoral Pact*

In this model political parties join hands only for the purposes of winning elections. Where the FPTP electoral model is used, they may agree not to field candidates in the same constituency but rather to support one candidate in each constituency, or, as is the case in Lesotho where the MMP electoral model is used, they may agree to vote for a candidate from party A in the constituency vote and a candidate from party B in the party vote. Another example of an electoral pact coalition is that of Kenya's National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), which consists of the National Alliance of Kenya (NAK) and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) (Rainbow) (Selolwane & Shale 2006). NARC contested elections in Kenya under one manifesto and went on to win them against the Kenya African National Union (KANU). The coalition had adopted a formal set of nomination procedures which applied to all candidates and fielded one presidential candidate in the election (NARC MoU, October 2002).

### *Unity/Merger*

Under this model the parties dissolve and form one political party. This means that one or both parties lose their identity and become one party. If adopted, this model means that all structures of the concerned parties merge. The parties' logos, ideology and principles also merge. The merger of the New National Party, formerly the National Party, with the ANC in South Africa shortly before the 2004 general election is a good example of this scenario. Against this backdrop we turn to the individual countries to see what form of alliance is most favourable.

## BOTSWANA

There has always been a problem of internal party democracy in Botswana despite the country's much acclaimed political stability. At independence in 1965 the two

major parties were the Bechuanaland Democratic Party (BDP) and the Bechuanaland People's Party (BPP).<sup>2</sup> Prior to the 1965 elections, the latter consisted of two factions – the consequence of which was not only to diminish the strength of the party but also to give an edge to the BDP (Somolekae 2002).

Some members of the splinter groups within the BPP regrouped to form the Botswana National Front (BNF) in 1966 in the hope that this would unite them. The BNF was, however, not able to meet this expectation, largely because, from its inception, it was also plagued by factionalism. The BNF contributed further to the proliferation of parties by spawning parties such as the United Socialist Party (PUSO), the Social Democratic Party (SDP), the Botswana Workers Party (BWP), the Botswana Labour Party (BLP), the Botswana Congress Party (BCP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF) (Selolwane & Shale 2006, p 125). It is evident that even at the point when the BNF was formed its members had learned no lessons about the causes of intra-party conflicts and their remedy. It is also clear that the leaders at the time did not address themselves to creating the necessary mechanisms for circumventing the challenges of intra-party democracy. They were simply power seekers who wanted to win elections.

Four decades later, the status quo remains the same, with the BDP comfortably in charge of the government, while, judging by the number of votes it received in the 2004 election, the BPP has been reduced to one of the smaller parties in the country. On the other hand, the BNF has gained support, overtaking the BPP, as will be seen below. The 2004 general election was won by the BDP without much difficulty for the ninth time since independence. However, the BDP's hegemony has recently attracted criticism from political analysts within and outside the country (Good & Taylor 2005). Its dominance is attributable to the FPTP electoral model, which, as Somolekae (2005) states, does not consider the popular vote of a party in allocating seats but only recognises the party with the highest vote. Opposition parties see this as a distortion of the real picture. It is axiomatic that the FPTP electoral model often works to the advantage of incumbent parties (see Matlosa 2003), a fact that is affirmed by the election result illustrated in Table 1 (p 6).

### *The 2004 General Elections and the Pact Parties*

Although the 2004 elections went smoothly, without the incidents of violence and intimidation that had been anticipated, there are growing concerns about the fairness of the elections in the light of the FPTP electoral model and the

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2 The parties are now called Botswana Democratic Party and Botswana People's Party.

incumbency, which are seen by many as factors which perpetuate the BDP's dominance. As the ruling party, the BDP has been accused of using state resources while the opposition is left without funding. It is also accused of monopolising the electronic media and communications, which accord prominence to the president while restricting opposition leaders on the grounds that their messages are political in nature (Good & Taylor 2005; Osei-Hwedie & Sebudubudu 2005). That the BDP, like other incumbent parties globally, monopolises the media and donor funding is not unusual. What is unusual is the fact that after 40 years opposition parties in Botswana still do not seem to have a comprehensive plan to challenge the status quo. They still grapple with unstructured alliances which emerge on the eve of elections and, because of internal conflicts, cannot sustain themselves until the following elections. Of the seven parties which took part in the 2004 elections only the BDP, BCP, the Marx, Engel, Lenin, Stalin Movement (MELS) and the NDF stood on their own – the other three opposition parties had formed an election pact.

The pact parties – the BNF, the BPP and the Botswana Alliance Movement (BAM) – fought under one manifesto and agreed not to compete in the same constituency. Each of the parties, therefore, chose the constituencies in which they would stand. On the basis of the pact agreement, rank and file members of the parties were encouraged to vote for whichever of the three parties was standing in their particular constituency. Table 1 reflects the performance of these parties (highlighted in bold) compared to that of the non-pact members, including the ruling party.

**Table 1**  
**Botswana: 2004 Election Results**

Party	No of of votes	% of votes	No of seats	% of seats
Botswana Democratic Party (BDP)	213 308	50,63	44	<b>77,2</b>
<b>Botswana National Front (BNF)</b>	107 451	25,51	12	21,0
Botswana Congress Party (BCP)	68 556	16,27	1	1,8
<b>Botswana People's Party (BPP)</b>	7 886	1,87	Nil	0
<b>Botswana Alliance Movement (BAM)</b>	11 716	2,78	Nil	0
National Democratic Front (NDF)	3 237	0,77	Nil	0
Marx, Engel, Lenin, Stalin Movement (MELS)	121	0,03	Nil	0
Independents	104	0,02	2	0
Total	412 379		59	100

As Table 1 shows, the BNF was the only member of the pact to win any seats. While the formation of the pact was a good idea, it did not necessarily translate into the expected results. Although some pact members lost in constituencies in which they believed they had strong support the parties can still claim success because, according to their agreement, their members contributed to the BNF's victory in the 12 constituencies in which it won. The reality, though, as reflected in Table 2, which shows selected constituency results, is clearly that if the vote had not been split the opposition (the BNF, BCP, BAM and NDF) would have beaten the ruling party in some constituencies.

**Table 2**  
**2004 General Election Results in a Select Group of Constituencies**

Constituency	BDP	Opposition	Margin
1. Kgatleng West	3 943	6 319	2 376
2. South East South	3 769	5 363	1 594
3. Mogoditshane	2 375	3 649	1 274
4. Gaborone North	2 480	3 753	1 273
5. Selebi Pikwe West	3 100	4 291	1 191
6. Selebi Pikwe East	2 629	3 709	1 080
7. Ngami	5 291	6 283	992
8. Francistown South	2 843	3 432	589
9. Nkange	4 246	4 531	285
10. Kweneng South	4 658	4 804	146

Source: Somolekae 2005

Table 2 shows that the opposition could have won all 10 constituencies in addition to the 12 won by the BNF. This would have given the opposition at least 32 seats instead of 13, which would have reduced significantly the ruling party's dominance, thereby creating a generally balanced Parliament.

There are a number of possible explanations for the failure of the pact parties to win adequate support. Firstly, they did not all completely understand the desired goals of the pact (see Selolwane & Shale 2006). According to the Cooperative Theory, coalitions exist if all role players believe they can gain from them. It is important that there should be similar understanding of the desired

goals. As Karume (2003, p 7) notes, coalitions are only as good as the results they produce. They should therefore strive to achieve a desired common goal. Related to this, and even more important, is the question of inadequate consultation by the individual parties with their rank and file membership. This is important in two ways. On the one hand members need to be involved in the coalition-building process and own the finished product – in this case, the pact. On the other hand, it is the rank and file members who vote. It follows, therefore, that if they had been thoroughly consulted they would have had a similar understanding and would therefore have voted with the future of the coalition in mind.

Secondly, the failure of the pact can be attributed to the absence of robust outreach programmes. Studies have shown that one of the weaknesses of parties in Botswana is that they do not engage in comprehensive outreach programmes, particularly using tools such as civic and voter education. They leave it up to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and civil society organisations to handle these aspects (Kadima, Matlosa & Shale 2005). Adequate outreach would have assisted the electorate to understand the cooperation option, thereby making the election less confusing. The fact that the parties did not contest the elections under one logo or symbol but retained their own was confusing. Rank and file members were asked to vote for the candidate of the pact member party who stood in a particular constituency. This created problems because voters are usually more conversant with their own party symbols. Again, given the adversarial inter-party relations in Botswana, asking voters to vote for a party which might previously have been demonised without helping them to understand the benefit of such a course was bound to cause resentment.

### *The Memorandum of Understanding and its Aftermath*

The pact parties have, to their credit, continued to work together since the 2004 elections and have been joined by the BCP after consultations with its general membership for a mandate to go into inter-party negotiations (BCP Report 2005). The parties then signed a MoU by which they agreed to work together in by-elections. Initially, the BPP, which had reservations, did not sign the MoU but it continued to share an understanding with the original members of the 2001 election pact. So, although it was not a signatory to the MoU, in October 2005 the BPP supported the BNF candidate in the Gaborone West-North by-election.

According to the MoU the parties recognised the need to strengthen their commitment to inter-party relationships and to inculcate in voters an understanding of the social, economic and political problems facing Botswana. The parties pledged not to compete against one another but to support one another in all parliamentary and local government by-elections from 2005 until the next

general election, in 2009. All the contracting parties agreed to support the candidate of the party which won the highest number of votes in the 2004 election. The MoU also contains a provision allowing the party which is entitled to field a candidate to request one of the alliance members to field its candidate if the former believes the latter has a better chance of winning. The alliance partners also established a Joint Committee, which was charged with overseeing the implementation of the MoU, including the selection of candidates for all by-elections. Table 3 shows the by-election results in the Gaborone West-North constituency in October 2005, which the parties contested under the MoU, thus testing the strength of the alliance. These results are compared to the 2004 general election results for the same parties.

**Table 3**  
**Botswana October 2005 By-election Results, Gaborone West-North**

Party	No of votes in 2004	No of votes in 2005 by-election	No of seats
BDP	3 315	2 330	0
BNF	3 936	3 723	1
BCP	1 281	*	
BPP	0	*	
BAM	0	*	

Source: Botswana IEC 2005

Clearly the MoU paid dividends as the parties achieved some positive results in the by-election. As indicated above, the party which won the highest vote in 2004 contested the election with the BNF, which had initially won the constituency with 3 936 votes to the BDP's 3 315, retaining it with 3 723 votes against the BDP's 2 330. There was an even wider gap (1 393 votes) between the BNF and the BDP in the Gaborone West-North Constituency by-election than the 621 votes which differentiated the parties in the 2004 general election. The number of votes won by the BNF and its allies indicates the importance of a kind of party unity that the country has not had in the past four decades.

The by-election was significant in that the BNF leader, Otsweletse Moupo, who had contested the 2004 election in Selebi-Pikwe West and had lost by 1 393

votes (IEC Botswana Election Report 2004) won, thus ending the awkward situation where the leader of a party with 12 MPs was not, himself, in Parliament. The positive result was very important, demonstrating that party unity allowed the opposition to defeat the BNF and reflecting the voters' support of the opposition parties' improved political maturity. The following section examines the parties' structured negotiations in preparation for the next election.

### *Cooperation for the 2009 General Election: A Mirage?*

The success in the by-elections became one of the driving factors for the four major opposition parties to co-operate further. They embarked on a negotiation process to pave the way for the 2009 general election and beyond.

While the parties do not necessarily share an ideology, they have similar ambitions to become an alternative political power to the BDP. Prior to the negotiation process, the individual parties consulted their members, a change from the past when the decision to form an alliance was the business of the leadership only. They met with their members to discuss coalition models that might be adopted. This also entailed conducting a comprehensive education campaign, despite limited funds, to ensure that members recognised the value of party unity if Botswana was to have alternation of power. As Greene (2002, p 760) observes, funding is a crippling factor for any opposition hoping to challenge a one-party dominant system.

The respective parties presented a number of alliance models to their members during the consultations and, following the consultations, the parties further discussed these models in regular meetings between the negotiating teams nominated by each party and mandated to engage in the talks on the parties' behalf. A positive sign was that the parties to the negotiations agreed to involve as convenor of their meetings an independent and credible person who did not belong to any of the negotiating parties. The NDF, which had stayed out of the 2004 pact, had now entered into a group membership arrangement (affiliation) with the BCP. This brought to five the number of parties in the MoU, although the NDF had not signed

The delicate nature of the process as a result of the parties' past relationships and many failed attempts at party unity since 1989 (Somolekae 2005) meant the parties were more cautious in their talks and their reluctance to move away from their positions led to the talks collapsing for the first time in September 2006 – 13 months after the signing of the MoU. This followed a disagreement between the BNF and the other parties on the model to be adopted. The BNF favoured affiliation (a front) while the other parties preferred an election pact and what they called an umbrella body, under which a new party with a new name and

logo would be formed and contest elections without the individual parties changing their identities.<sup>3</sup>

The stalemate was the result of one negotiator, the BNF, insisting that as the largest party it had already established itself as an alternative to the BDP and therefore the other parties stood to benefit from being affiliated to it. The BNF made its position public without due regard to the provisions of the code of conduct which regulated the parties' behaviour in and out of the negotiation process so as to have a coordinated approach to information and publicity. The failure of the parties, particularly the BNF, to observe the code of conduct has once again dealt a heavy blow to the unity efforts, which, as indicated above, have suffered several sustainability setbacks in the past. Apart from the code of conduct the parties devised no other mechanisms to assist them in building mutual trust.

The situation in Botswana is regrettable because it flies in the face of a statement clearly made by the electorate in terms of what they expect from the parties judging by the results reflected in Table 3. The results show that the voters welcomed and blessed the parties' collaboration. So, the parties have a great deal to lose in the 2009 election if they do not resuscitate the negotiations.

The collapse of the negotiations negates theories of pre-election coalition formation such as the signalling device theory, which, according to Ederberg, Tjernström & Kennedy (2006), suggests that the formation of a coalition prior to an election signals to the electorate that the coalition parties would be able to form an effective government. If this were true, in this case, ending negotiations would not be an option. Although critics of Botswana's much-vaunted democracy suggest that the electoral system does not accord opposition parties a fair chance, one would argue that while this is so, the parties are also currently suffering from an urge to self-destruct.

## LESOTHO

The 2002 general election in Lesotho and its results were met with accolades from all over the world. Acclaimed by Elklit (2002) as Africa's first Mixed Member Proportional election, it brought political peace and stability. However, it was preceded by a leadership conflict within the country's ruling Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) coupled with subsequent political conflict across the country. After years of internal leadership battles the Prime Minister and BCP leader, Dr Ntsu Mokhehle, left the BCP and, in 1997, formed a new party in Parliament – the

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<sup>3</sup> Interviews with the concerned parties in February 2006 in Gaborone, Botswana.

Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD). Although the internal pressure from the 'Pressure Group' faction of his party forced him to jump ship, Mokhehle was able to cross the floor with the majority of the BCP MPs, giving him the necessary numbers to remain head of government.

The BCP was left with the anti-Mokhehle 'Pressure Group' faction, whose members had been thrown out of the Cabinet by the Prime Minister (Likoti 2005). The BCP, which, as Matlosa (1999) indicates, won power through popular vote, was therefore reduced to an official opposition party while their wittier 'Majelathoko faction' (translated as 'those who eat far from others') continued as the government.<sup>4</sup> The BCP split surprised many who had thought that the party had become stronger since the King had overthrown it in 1994 and it had later been reinstated through the intervention of a SADC troika consisting of Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe (Rake 2001). Mokhehle's strategy in forming the LCD did not go unnoticed by other politicians in the SADC region who would later face similar situations. For instance, the same strategy was replicated by the current President of Malawi, Bingu Wa Mutharika, although the latter, unlike Mokhehle, does not enjoy majority support in Parliament (EISA 2 March 2006).

After its formation, the LCD consolidated its support and went on to win the 1998 general election, which was followed by arguably the most destructive political protests in the country's history, events that would eventually lead to the replacement of the country's FPTP electoral system with MMP. The BCP experienced a further split in 2002, giving birth to the Basotholand African Congress (BAC) shortly before the 2002 general election. The party split again in late 2006 when one of its leaders, Ntsukunyane Mphanya, left to form Mahatammoho a Poelano.<sup>5</sup>

The LCD also experienced a split when its deputy leader formed the Lesotho People's Congress (LPC) in 2002. In late 2006 it split yet again when the Minister of Communications formed the All Basotho Convention (ABC). That such rifts on the eve of elections have become a trademark of the congress parties in Lesotho is no surprise, what is surprising is the political acrobatics that accompany them. It is also disturbing to note the absence of conflict-management skills and the leadership morass that has come to characterise these parties.

Table 4 shows a wide gap of 180 082 votes between the ruling LCD and the BNP. Although the BNP is not a subject of discussion in this paper, reference is made to it to indicate the size of the gap between the LCD and the main opposition

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4 The word 'Majelathoko' is usually used by members of a group or organisation to describe colleagues who are perceived to have clandestine agendas which may harm the group or organisation. Also see Matlosa 1999.

5 The BCP experienced splits even during the colonial era when some of its leaders, mainly chiefs, left it to form the BNP.

party. The LPC was the only opposition party to win a constituency seat. This alone demonstrates the overwhelming dominance of the LCD. The other seats occupied by opposition parties, including four of the LPC's five, are PR seats.

Elections in two constituencies (Hlotse and Mount Moorosi) were declared invalid in the initial poll and the LCD won the fresh elections in both constituencies, increasing its total number of seats from 77 to 79. In its simplest form, the PR allocation formula for the rest of the seats in Parliament was as follows:

- a) Total number of votes divided by number of seats = quota of votes
- b) Party total votes divided by quota = number of seats

UNEAS 2002

According to Elklit (2002) PR seats can be allocated in one or more rounds. In Lesotho two rounds were required to allocate the seats reflected in Table 4 because the LCD had won 12 more seats (77) than its proportional entitlement (65). In the second round the total number of seats was 41 not 118 as in the first round.

**Table 4**  
**Lesotho 2002 General Election Results**

Party	No of votes	% of votes	No of seats	% of seats
LCD	304 316	54,8	77	65,3
BNP	124 234	22,4	21	17,8
LPC	32 046	5,8	5	4,2
BCP	14 584	2,7	3	2,5
BAC	16 095	2,9	3	2,5
NIP	30 346	5,5	5	4,2
LWP	7 788	1,4	1	0,8
Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP)	6 890	1,2	1	0,8
Popular Front for Democracy (PFD)	6 330	1,1	1	0,8
National Progressive Party (NNP)	3 985	0,7	1	0,8
<b>Total</b>	<b>546614</b>	<b>98,5</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>99,7</b>

The 41 seats derived from the total of quota of votes of the nine parties which won fewer votes than their proportional share of seats.

The BCP progeny continued to perform poorly in the by-elections, failing to secure even a single constituency from the determined LCD. The continuing dominance of the LCD has been, to a large extent, the result of the fragmentation within the opposition parties (with the exception, so far, of the LPC), which kept them preoccupied with court cases rather than with working to unseat the LCD by selling their political programme to voters.<sup>6</sup>

Table 5 illustrates the performance of the parties, comparing the 2002 election results with the 2003 by-election results in selected constituencies. The rationale for selecting these constituencies is that both are LCD strongholds and in both by-elections were held very soon after the 2002 general election, when the voters' election mood had not yet completely dissipated.

**Table 5**  
**Lesotho By-election Results in Two Selected Constituencies**

Party	Votes in Khafung 2002	Khafung Votes in 2003 by-election	Votes in Qhoali 2002	Qhoali Votes in 2003 by-election
LCD	3 195	2 585	4 809	3 028
LPC	2 275	1 084	126	122
BCP	311	248	218	100
BAC	232	0	64	0

Source: Lesotho Independent Electoral Commission

Table 5 reflects the decline in the number of votes for all the parties which contested the by-elections compared to the votes they received in the general election. The results for the LPC and BCP in Qhoali Constituency suggest that neither party had attracted any new members in those constituencies by 2003. This is in sharp contrast to the ruling LCD, whose votes suggest that it still enjoys majority support in the selected constituencies. However, these by-election results may not be a sufficient tool with which to measure a party's strength because they were held

<sup>6</sup> Even the BNP, which has both the following and the leadership capable of dislodging the LCD, has not taken part in by-elections (except in the Mohobollo constituency), leaving the weaker parties to engage in a David and Goliath battle. See IEC National Assembly by-elections summary (August 2003; October 2004).

at a time when parties had just gone through the general election and did not have adequate resources to undertake a second vigorous campaign.

It can also be observed from the table that not all opposition parties participated in the by-elections, for many reasons, ranging from lack of funds to lack of support in the constituencies. While a lack of party funding is a stark reality in Lesotho, non-participation of opposition parties in by-elections further entrenches the ruling party in power. Naturally the LCD is not concerned about the feebleness of the opposition and will therefore not do anything to change the situation because that would be political suicide. It is no exaggeration, however, to say that the continued one-party dominance in Lesotho takes the country back to the Nationalist Party heyday, which is a setback to the democratic consolidation efforts. In fact Schrire (2001, p 27) reminds us that one of the threats to democracy is an imbalance which provides one party with long-term numerical dominance.

### *The February 2007 Election and the History-Making Alliances*

As in Botswana, opposition parties in Lesotho have opted for cooperation to give them a chance to perform well in the 2007 elections and make a meaningful contribution to the country's governance. The LPC, the BAC and Mahatammoho formed the Alliance of Congress Parties, while the newly-formed All Basotho Convention, the LWP and the SDP made an election pact. Interestingly, the ruling LCD, fearing stiff competition and desperate to circumvent the MMP's exclusion of parties with many constituency votes, as happened in 2002, also wooed the NIP to form an alliance.

### *The Alliance of Congress Parties (ACP)*

In July 2006 the leaders of the LPC, the BAP and Mahatammoho announced the formation of the Alliance of Congress Parties (ACP). The leaders indicated their concern that the emerging democracy was degenerating into a *de facto* one-party state. They also lamented the increasingly widespread poverty in the country brought about by both a lack of resources and the distribution of resources (ACP Press statement 2006). The alliance partners underscored the importance of achieving real freedom, peace and development through effective socio-economic policies, programmes and strategies geared towards eliminating poverty and improving the socio-economic wellbeing of Basotho.

The ACP has a well-defined structure and a memorandum of understanding under which it contested the February 2007 elections. The underlying factor which seems to have motivated their partnership is expressed in the MoU. They have indicated that they do not have ideological differences and this has made it easy

for them to form an alliance. For this reason they go further, stating in the MoU how they will allocate resources and Cabinet and other senior portfolios if they win. Judging by the commonalities expressed in the MoU, which include, among others, that they come from the congress culture and orientation, it is not far fetched to suggest that the parties could easily merge permanently to form one party. The alliance's performance in the 2007 election, as shown in Table 6, does not reflect its immediate impact but it does indicate an increase in its collective vote compared to the previous election, which the parties contested individually.<sup>7</sup> The results further show a better performance by the ACP than by the other smaller parties, like the MFP and PFD, against which it competed in the previous election.

The ACP needs to consult further with its members, who were not sufficiently consulted because of the pressures created by the calling of a snap election. The significance of this alliance is that it is unique in that it has reconciled the congress leaders in a structured manner for the first time. More importantly, although it has not yet been tested, it has clearly sent a message to opposition parties that electoral reform alone is not enough if they remain fragmented.

#### *The ABC/LWP/SDP Alliance*

Like the ACP, these three opposition parties put their collective strength to good use in the 2007 election. In almost all the constituencies and in the PR votes (Table 6) the alliance emerged second to the ruling LCD/NIP coalition. The parties to the alliance agreed not to compete against each other and fielded their candidates in the constituencies under the ABC flag. Candidates for party lists (PR) were nominated under the LWP and included the ABC leader and other senior members as well as the SDP candidates, although these were low on the list, giving them less chance of winning seats.

The pattern reflected in column 5 of Table 6 whereby the alliance partners of the stronger parties (the LWP in this case) got a higher percentage of total PR votes, almost tantamount to the stronger party's constituency votes, is the result of an agreement between the parties that their voters would vote for the ABC under the constituency vote and the LWP under the PR vote. The party list then became the basis for the allocation of the ABC/LWP seats in Parliament. The alliance has therefore benefited both parties, with the ABC using it to maximise its representation in Parliament and the LWP, while having significant support in its own right, using the ABC's strength to ensure that it is also represented in Parliament.

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<sup>7</sup> The author is aware that at the time of publication opposition parties in Lesotho are contesting the seat allocation reflected in Table 6. The IEC may be forced to change the results.

**Table 6**  
**Lesotho National Assembly Election Results and Seat Allocation Summary**  
**February 2007**

Party	FPTP seats	% of FPTP Seats	Total party (valid votes)	% of total party votes	Party's allocation of compensatory (PR) seats	Total no of seats	% of PR seats +FPTP seats
ABC	17	21,3	None	0,0	0	17	14,3
ACP	1	1,3	20,263	4,6	1	2	1,7
Basotho Batho Democratic Party	0	0,0	8,474	1,9	1	1	0,8
BCP	0	0,0	9,823	2,2	1	1	0,8
Basotho Democratic National Party	0	0,0	8,783	2,0	1	1	0,8
BNP	0	0,0	29,965	6,8	3	3	2,5
LCD	61	76,3	None	0,0	0	61	51,3
LWP	0	0,0	107,463	24,3	10	10	8,4
MFP	0	0,0	9,129	2,1	1	1	0,8
National Independent Party	0	0,0	229,602	51,8	21	21	17,6
New Lesotho Freedom Party	0	0,0	3,984	0,9	0	0	0,0
PFD	0	0,0	15,477	3,5	1	1	0,8
<b>Total</b>	<b>79*</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>442,963</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Independent Electoral Commission, Lesotho

\* Election postponed in Makhaleng Constituency due to death of one of the candidates. A fresh poll will be held in due course.

### *The LCD/NIP Alliance*

This alliance is modelled on the same lines as the ABC/LWP/SDP alliance. The agreement between the two parties is contained in the MoU entitled 'Memorandum of Understanding Between Lesotho Congress for Democracy and the National Independent Party On Strategic Partnership and Co-Operation for the 2007 elections'.

Article 3 of this MoU stipulates the manner of cooperation between the two. Basically, the LCD competes for the 80 constituencies while the NIP competes for the 40 PR-based seats. Article 3(c)(i) states that the NIP will place its own candidates in the first five places and the LCD's candidates will occupy the next 6+4 places. Interestingly, the MoU states that the 6+4 formula means 'the six LCD members who will also be contesting in the constituencies but are being secured should certain eventualities occur (eg, a failed election). Whereas the four names will form part of the entire Proportional Representation list.'

The issue of 'failed elections' is misleading because failed elections have nothing to do with the PR list, which is closed. If there is a failed election, as indeed has happened in the Makhaleng constituency, a fresh election is held and parties have to nominate candidate for the constituency. The truth is that having read the danger signs of a likely defeat by the new populist ABC in some constituencies, the LCD put its top leaders, starting with Prime Minister Mosisili and his deputy, in the top six places as per the formula. This strategy definitely served the LCD well in the elections because it rescued some senior LCD members, mostly ministers who lost constituency elections but got into Parliament through this formula and went on to become ministers again.

Generally, the alliance has yielded good results for the parties, as shown in Table 6, with the LCD retaining 61 constituencies of the 79 it won in 2002 while the NIP got the highest number of 21 compensatory seats, positioning it as the main opposition in Parliament unless the ABC and others form a coalition. This result places the two parties in a good position in Parliament if they collaborate beyond the elections as, together, they have 82 seats of 120. This seems to be the only logical option for the LCD to pursue. Failure to consider this option, with the alliance having been restricted to elections and the NIP not having been rewarded with any senior position in government for its trouble, means that the LCD government is unlikely to have a firm hold on power should the NIP reconsider its position. Their future collaboration is, however, uncertain, because the alliance has become the most controversial of all the alliances in the eyes of the public.

The bone of contention is that the LCD signed an agreement with members of the NIP, whose leader alleges had no mandate to enter into such an agreement. Again, the PR list, as explained above, deliberately excluded the NIP leader, yet included the LCD leader and prime minister. Furthermore, even though the NIP leader won a High Court battle over this alliance, he accuses the LCD of having used its incumbency to influence the Court of Appeal to hear what he deems a *res judicata* matter between himself and his party's executive committee. The Court of Appeal overruled the High Court order, thereby legitimising the alliance, which leaves the NIP leader without a seat.

Despite the controversy, this alliance is significant in that it has defied the time-honoured taboo of formal cooperation between the ruling party and opposition parties in Lesotho. Thus, it has provided a conduit for interested opposition parties to join ranks with the ruling party, although, as some would correctly observe, this might be to the detriment of the opposition parties because the ruling party might use its incumbency to attract smaller parties in order to get higher numbers, thus deliberately weakening the opposition.

## ZAMBIA

Following the re-introduction of multiparty democracy in Zambia in 1991, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) was elected to power by an overwhelming vote. The shift of power from the United National Independence Party (UNIP) to the MMD ended more than two decades of the former's political dominance and suppression of opposition politics. The 1991 multiparty elections were run according to a FPTP electoral model. It was, however, not long before the party began to experience internal leadership squabbles. Members of the party were not allowed to contest for the party's presidency. Many were consequently forced to break away and form their own parties. It was during this time that the United Party for National Development (UPND) was formed. One of the reasons why UPND leader Anderson Mazoka broke away was in order to stand for the presidency in 2001 (FODEP 2001) and he could only do so if he was no longer a member of the ruling MMD.

The other major cause of instability within the MMD was that its leader, the then President of Zambia, Frederick Chiluba, had expressed his interest in standing for a third term in violation of his party's and the country's constitutional provisions. There were subsequent attempts by those around him to amend the MMD's constitution to pave the way for his aspirations. A total of 21 MPs of the ruling party who opposed the third-term agenda broke away from the MMD in protest and formed a new party, the Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD).

Simutanyi (2005) points out that other parties, such as the Heritage Party (HP) and the Patriotic Front (PF), were formed as a result of the third-term debate. He states that apart from the third-term issue the PF was formed in reaction to the nomination of Levy Mwanawasa as the ruling party's presidential candidate. As the FPTP electoral model often favours the ruling party it was to be expected that the formation of the new parties which broke away from the MMD would not stop the MMD from winning the 2001 presidential and parliamentary elections. The 2001 election results, with the four main political parties, the MMD, UPND, UNIP and the FDD highlighted, are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7**  
**Election Results in Zambia, 2001**

Party	No of votes	% of votes	No of seats	% of seats
Agenda for Zambia (AZ)	2 832	0,0	0	0,0
Democratic Party (DP)	115	0,0	0	0,0
<b>Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD)</b>	<b>272 817</b>	<b>9,0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8,2</b>
Heritage Party (HP)	132 311	3,0	4	2,5
Liberal Progressive Front (LPF)	175	0,0	0	0,0
<b>Movement for Multi party Democracy (MMD)</b>	<b>490 680</b>	<b>43,7</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>40,0</b>
National Christian Coalition (NCC)	35 632	0,0	0	0,0
National Leadership for Development (NLD)	3 155	0,0	0	0,0
National Party (NP)	1 228	0,1	0	0,0
Patriotic Front (PF)	49 362	1,0	1	0,6
Social Democratic Party (SDP)	809	0,0	0	0,0
<b>United Party for National Development (UPND)</b>	<b>416 236</b>	<b>33,0</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>30,0</b>
<b>United National Independence Party (UNIP)</b>	<b>185 535</b>	<b>8,0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7,5</b>
Zambia Alliance for Progress (ZAP)	3 963	0,0	0	0,0
Zambia Progressive Party (ZPP)	19	0,0	0	0,0
Zambia Republican Party (ZRP)	97 010	1,0	2	1,3
Independents	59 335	1,0	1	0,6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 751 214</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Matlosa 2003

The fragmentation of the MMD as the 2001 elections approached resulted in a split vote that contributed to its marginal victory over the newly established UPND. The MMD leadership had failed to uphold the principles that brought its constituent parties together in the first place. This is well illustrated by Kadima & Kasenally (2005) in their discussion of coalitions, in which they state that the same political diversity that puts a coalition in power may also lead to its collapse.

The closeness of the results, as noted in Table 7, have led to serious competition in and out of Parliament. The opposition parties have experienced stiff, although unfair competition, with the ruling party poaching their MPs and appointing them to ministerial and assistant ministerial positions, the appointment of UNIP, HP, FDD and UPND MPs being cases in point (Simutanyi 2005). This move has weakened the opposition parties in Zambia's Parliament.

The MMD has not only succeeded in increasing its number of seats by poaching from other parties it has also won more seats in constituency by-elections held across the country. For instance, as illustrated in Table 8, the MMD won three constituency seats from UNIP with large majorities, despite the fact that all three were considered to be party strongholds (FODEP 2001). While the Roan and Chama seats were lost after the MPs in those two constituencies died, UNIP lost the Milanzi constituency after its MP defected to the MMD because UNIP did not approve of her appointment as Assistant Minister and wanted her to resign. When she refused to do so, the party expelled her. The seat was therefore declared vacant, thus warranting a by-election. The same MP contested the by-election under the MMD flag and won by 1 360 votes.

**Table 8**  
**Zambian By-elections in Selected Constituencies, January 2006**

Party	Copperbelt Province: Roan Constituency No of votes	Eastern Province: Milanzi Constituency No of votes	Eastern Province Cham South Constituency No of votes
MMD	3 995	2 249	3 142
UPND	186	*	*
UNIP	302	1 662	706
FDD	253	352	1 001
PF	1 136	*	*
Party for Unity, Democracy and Development (PUDD)	220	*	*
All Peoples Congress (APC)	*	151	162

Source: Electoral Commission of Zambia 2006

\* Party did not participate in the by-election

While it has now become a cliché to attribute the dominance of a ruling party such as the MMD to incumbency, it is equally true that ruling parties are not easy to unseat and they usually do whatever it takes to have the results go their way. It is not surprising that the MMD is accused of having handed out to voters in order to get their votes the food parcels donated to the country by international humanitarian agencies.<sup>8</sup>

However, opposition parties did not help themselves by bemoaning incumbency while failing to improve their internal democracy. It is clear from the figures in Tables 7 and 8 that the ruling party will continue to dominate the opposition unless the opposition devises some strategies to circumvent the challenge. At this point we look at opposition initiatives in the run-up to the 2006 elections.

### *The United Democratic Alliance (UDA) and the Battle for Supremacy in 2006*

In March 2006 the three main opposition parties in Zambia, namely, the UPND, the FDD and UNIP, announced their new political alliance, the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) with a view to strengthening their chances in the 2006 presidential and parliamentary elections. This was to be expected given that the leadership of these parties found the MMD to be a common opponent because it unseated UNIP from power in 1991 and forced the FDD and UPND leaders out of its ranks following disagreements, as set out above.

The leaders of the three parties, which were all represented in the Zambian Parliament, signed a memorandum of understanding in which they acknowledged that they shared similar principles, visions and programmes, while equally recognising the need for a strong opposition alliance in order to win elections and advance democracy and development. The ruling party welcomed the formation of the alliance, indicating that it would focus on a narrower range of adversaries than it had in the past. It claimed that it would win the 2006 elections regardless of the number of opposition alliances in place (EISA 2 March 2006).

The UDA is headed by a national executive committee consisting of the three party presidents plus six other senior officials from each participating party, with the secretary general of the alliance being an ex-officio member. The main organs of the alliance are the permanent committees, namely, the Mobilisation and Strategy Committee, the Finance and Resource Mobilisation Committee, the Administration and Publicity Committee and the Research Committee. The day-to-day activities of the alliance are spearheaded by the Secretariat under the

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<sup>8</sup> Telephonic interview with Mr Njekwa Anamela, UNIP Deputy President, May 2006.

leadership of the National Secretary of the FDD, who has also assumed the position of UDA Secretary General. The alliance developed a manifesto which indicated what it would do if elected in 2006. The three leaders were given a mandate by their parties to decide on one leader among them to be a presidential candidate. This shows the seriousness with which members of each party regard the UDA – their mandate meant that they trusted their leaders and did not require them to subject such an exercise to party conventions or elections.

The death of UPND president, Anderson Mazoka, in May 2006 dealt the alliance a heavy blow as he had been tipped to become the UDA's presidential candidate (EISA 2006) on the basis of his performance in the 2001 election. A dark cloud hung over the party as its leaders fought each other for the position of party president. This led to a split in the party and the formation of the United Liberal Party (ULP) by the estranged UPND deputy president, Sakwiba Sikota. Table 9 shows that the UDA performed far more poorly than expected, despite the fact that it consisted of three main opposition parties, coming after the Patriotic Front (PF) which, in the 2001 election, had been defeated by the UPND (Table 8). This suggests that the split within the UPND drained the confidence of some voters.

The UDA's decision to nominate an inexperienced leader also played in the hands of experience politicians like President Mwanawasa and Michael Sata, who exploited this weakness to bolster their votes. A lesson to be learned by opposition parties from the UDA experience is that it is risky to invest all the hopes of the alliance partners in one person (as with Mazoka). Clearly defined organisational structures and the roles of the respective leaders and their individual and collective potential must be the foundation on which the alliance is grounded.

**Table 9**  
**Zambian Election Results 2006**

Party	No of seats	% seats
MMD	73	48,67
PF	43	28,67
UDA	26	17,33
Independents	3	2,00
United Liberal Party (ULP)	2	1,33
National Democratic Focus	1	0,67
Unallocated	2	1,33
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

## CONCLUSION

The paper has shown that political parties enter into coalitions for two major reasons – to stay in power or to access power (Kadima & Kasenally 2005). Nothing describes the case of political party alliances in Botswana, Lesotho and Zambia better than this statement. The ruling parties in the three countries are increasingly dominating the political landscape, while the opposition is becoming enfeebled.

We have indicated that once-strong parties such as the BPP in Botswana, the BCP in Lesotho and Zambia's MMD have produced multitudes of fragmented groupings which have perpetuated the status quo by splitting votes instead of bringing about a shift in power. Based on the evidence presented in this paper there is no doubt that in all three cases the decision of the parties to form alliances has been prompted in the main by their recognition of a common fate in so far as elections are concerned. Thus, little, if any attention has been given to the life of a coalition beyond elections. It has been observed, too, that, in all the cases, the choice of partner is not based as much on ideological, ethnic or historical considerations but on the prospect of victory through cooperation in the zero-sum political game.

The alliance partners in Botswana were toying with the idea of affiliation or election-pact options which never materialised because of the parties' failure to transcend their selfish interests and compromise their strongly held positions. In Zambia the parties adopted a model whereby they came together without losing their original identities; forming the UDA, which, despite having an impressive organisational structure, failed to translate this into impressive votes because of internal conflict in the UPND which split the opposition vote yet again. The alliance in Lesotho, although less structured than those in Botswana and Zambia, lived up to Karume's assertion that alliances are only as good as the results they produce.

Both opposition party alliances and the ruling party alliance with the NIP seem to have benefited from their collaboration. This may explain why the alliance partners in the ACP are now contemplating a merger which would see all of them disbanding to form one party before the 2012 elections.

The paper has shown that in all three cases the challenge to parties in forming alliances was that they had no well-documented lessons in terms of what makes or breaks alliances either locally or regionally. This remains a challenge, which could seriously threaten their sustainability.

Because the alliances in all three countries have largely been formed to fight elections, the parties have not discussed in any detail their plans, not only as the opposition in Parliament but in the event that they win the elections. We have warned in this paper that, although they are a useful strategy, alliances alone are

not necessarily a panacea for the problems of opposition. Parties must work continuously on their internal democracy and inter-party relations if the alliances are to yield sustainable results.

They must consult thoroughly with the people and should ensure that they do not project themselves as merely adversarial but claim their space as a legitimate and constitutional opposition.

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