In the period after the re-emergence of multiparty politics in Africa in the 1990s, party coalitions were formed for the purpose of securing enough votes or combining a sufficient number of parliamentary seats to govern. Some coalitions have undoubtedly contributed to consolidating countries’ initial steps towards democracy and peace, through power-sharing arrangements. Others have been accused of being ‘unprincipled’ because their members were ideologically remote and were therefore perceived as political opportunists interested in short-term gains rather than long-term policy goals.

Yet political party coalitions have increasingly become a significant feature of contemporary African politics in both presidential and parliamentary systems. The need to deepen our understanding of the formation, survival and effectiveness of such coalitions in Africa cannot be overstated, as countries must learn from their own experience as well as from the relevant experience of other comparable countries. This comparative study seeks to record the politics of party coalitions in Africa.

To date there have been virtually no major comparative studies of the politics of political party coalitions in contemporary Africa, largely for historical reasons. In most African countries, multiparty politics was banned soon after independence in the 1960s and replaced by one-party systems. So, while early studies of government in Africa covered aspects of party coalitions in countries such as Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Mauritius and Uganda, which experienced coalition governments in
the pre-independence and/or immediate post-independence periods, studies of political parties in Africa from the 1960s to the end of 1980s centred, with some rare exceptions, on single-party systems and related subjects.

In most African countries, political pluralism was only re-introduced in the 1990s. This has made it possible to study coalition politics in Africa, but research has largely been confined to aspects of party coalitions in individual countries and even then, the scope has been narrow. There is now an opportunity to expand such research broadly and deeply and to study coalition politics from a comparative perspective in order to come to some general conclusions.

Another reason for the absence of such studies is that most African countries have opted for presidential regimes, which tend to encourage the emergence of a dominant party, especially when they take the extreme form of presidentialism, in which parliaments are weak. In most parliamentary and semi-parliamentary regimes, in order to form a stable government it is necessary for a party to secure at least 51 per cent of legislative seats. Where no single party enjoys an absolute majority in Parliament, party coalitions are formed. This is particularly true of proportional representation electoral systems where no party has won an absolute majority, as in most of the parliamentary regimes of continental Western Europe. However, in a presidential system the formation of a government does not necessarily depend on securing an absolute majority in parliament since the president is elected by universal suffrage. Scholars therefore do not regard the study of party coalition politics in presidential regimes as being as crucial as it is in parliamentary democracies. This partially explains why the study of political party coalitions has essentially focused on government formation and survival in parliamentary regimes rather than on coalition politics in presidential systems. It is also possible that the prevalence of presidential regimes in Africa may have resulted in a limited interest in the study of party coalitions on the continent. Yet even in presidential regimes, the control of the majority in Parliament is desirable for political stability and easy processes of law and policy-making and, more broadly, for making the state governable.

A study of political parties and party coalitions would not be deep enough if it were based solely on information gathered by means of secondary sources. Yet collecting reliable primary source data is not only costly and time consuming, party leaders are frequently reluctant to disclose ‘sensitive’ information about their internal functioning, challenges and strategies. All these factors have, to date, discouraged scholars from embarking on such demanding research.
THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to document, analyse and explain various aspects of this under-researched, yet important aspect of political processes in Africa. It covers five countries, namely, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique and South Africa. The concluding chapter compares and draws lessons from the experiences of all five countries.

The countries studied were chosen on the basis of four criteria, the first of which was pre-selected by virtue of the fact that the study was limited to Southern and East Africa, the geographical areas covered by the two donors who sponsored the project, thus excluding research in Central, West or North Africa.

Second, each country had to have had experience with party coalitions in at least two general elections or referenda so the longevity and effectiveness of the coalitions could be studied. There have been coalitions in Mauritius since the pre-independence period in the 1960s and South Africa and Malawi have experienced coalition politics since their first multiparty democratic elections in 1994. Kenya’s 2002 presidential, parliamentary and local government elections were fought by two main party coalitions, as was the 2005 constitutional referendum. Mozambique, too, provides an example of a strong opposition party alliance which contested national and local elections in 1999, 2003 and 2004, thus offering the opportunity to examine how coalitions are formed and managed between elections.

The third basis for choosing the subject countries was the type of political regimes involved. It was necessary to have a mix of parliamentary and presidential regimes in order to analyse how practice and theory apply in the two contexts and the five countries selected cover both systems. Mauritius has a parliamentary regime. Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique are presidential regimes. South Africa has a hybrid system with a strong leaning towards a parliamentary regime, as the president of the republic’s investiture is conducted indirectly by the chambers, as is the case in parliamentary regimes.

Fourth, there was a need to study party coalitions in both countries that use the first-past-the-post (FPTP) and proportional representation systems in order to draw some general conclusions about the way a particular electoral system can influence the formation, survival and collapse of coalitions. Kenya, Malawi and Mauritius essentially use the FPTP system for their national parliamentary elections while the system in Mozambique and South Africa is closed list proportional representation (PR). It is worth
noting that South Africa has a mixed electoral system (a combination of FPTP and PR) for its local government elections.

If the conclusions reached were to be relevant, a significant number of appropriate cases had to be studied. The five countries selected meet all the necessary criteria and offer useful and unique examples which contribute to an understanding of coalition politics in the rest of Africa and, perhaps, elsewhere.

In South Africa, for example, though the country’s politics are clearly characterised by the existence of one dominant party, the African National Congress (ANC), the formation of governing and opposition coalitions at the national, provincial and local levels has become common practice. These coalitions have involved, on the one hand, only opposition parties and, on the other, the ruling party and some opposition parties. Of great importance in South Africa is the fact that the election of the president, provincial premiers and mayors is not carried out directly by the electorate but indirectly by the national Parliament, provincial legislatures and local councils (Kadima 2003). To be elected, the leaders all need to secure a minimum of 51 per cent in the relevant representative chambers. This is where the interplay between various elements makes South Africa’s experience with party coalitions worth learning from. These elements include the electoral system, ethnicity, race, class, ideology and the weight of history.

Kenya has become Africa’s model of how opposition parties can succeed in replacing an entrenched ruling party and access power by building a vibrant and diverse electoral coalition. The experience of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) of 2002 will go a long way towards encouraging coalition politics in the country, as already demonstrated when the constitutional referendum of December 2005 was fought essentially by two coalitions, Banana (Yes) and Orange (No). NARC’s experience has inspired many parties in Africa, but remains unequalled to date.

Malawi’s politics is essentially characterised by short-lived party coalitions. The limited opportunities outside the state, the absence of a dominant party in an ethnically divided country and the rapid fragmentation of the party system have made it obligatory for parties to coalesce in order to access or maintain power.

The case of Mauritius, one of very few countries on the continent with a long tradition of multiparty government, is unique. Any party that is serious about winning an election must enter into a coalition. Since independence in 1968, Mauritius has never been governed by one single party. Characterised by its racial and religious diversity as well as well delineated social classes
and consciousness, Mauritius has held eight successful general elections, of which all but one were contested by two major pre-election alliances. Ethnic calculation has been central to these elections in which, essentially, an incumbent coalition has been challenged by an opposition one (Kadima and Kasenally 2005). Mauritius is exceptional not only because of the regularity of well-run elections but also because of the frequency of alternation in power of successive coalitions.

The formation of party coalitions in Mozambique has been largely an adventurous enterprise. All coalitions except one have failed to enjoy a continued presence in Parliament. The Resistência Nacional de Moçambique (RENAMO) União Eleitoral is an example of an opposition alliance which has had significant representation in Parliament since its inception in 1999 and has remained active during the periods between elections, in spite of losing two consecutive presidential and parliamentary elections.

THEORIES OF PARTY COALITION POLITICS

The theories of party coalitions are essentially based on the experiences of continental Western Europe and have focused on predicting and explaining models of government formation in parliamentary democracies. Two main approaches are used in studying the subject: the theories of size and ideology, and the new institutionalism.

Theories of coalition based on size and ideology emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. They centre on the effects of a potential coalition’s size and ideology on its chances of formation and may be subdivided into office-driven and policy-oriented theories.

Office-driven theories are based on the assumption that the main goal of political parties is to access power. This is why these theories are also known as ‘office-seeking’ or ‘office-oriented’. For the defenders of this viewpoint, government formation is a win-lose scenario in which Cabinet portfolios are the payoffs. Therefore, if the most important thing for political parties is to receive Cabinet portfolios, a majority coalition in Parliament would not accept the existence of a minority government and would take the spoils of office for itself.

These theories have gradually been refined. The ‘minimal winning hypothesis’ was introduced by L von Neumann and O Morgenstern (1953) in the area of economic games and was subsequently applied to government formation by William Gamson (1961) and later ameliorated by William Riker (1962). The theory is based on the assumption that government
coalitions should comprise as few political parties as possible – just enough to win the legislature’s vote of confidence. Minimal winning governments, therefore, carry no passengers, in order to maximise possible office benefits. In 1968 Michael Leiserson also supported the minimum winning theory, arguing that the prospective government should seek to minimise the number of political parties in the coalition because it is easier for a smaller group of parties to reach consensus. Bazazel Peleg (1981) and A M A van Deemen (1989) argue that the largest party in the legislature is central in coalition negotiations and cannot easily be excluded from office.

The assumption on which the policy-oriented theories are based is that party coalitions are justified by policy goals. The early theories argued that coalitions are motivated not only by policy goals but also by the quest for office. Robert Axelrod (1970) suggests that office-driven coalitions pursue the maximisation of their benefits while minimising the coalition’s bargaining costs by forming only those winning coalitions that contain ideologically adjacent parties; hence the hypothesis of minimal connected winning coalitions. Similarly, Abram De Swaan (1973) notes that political parties will form the minimal winning coalition with the smallest ideological range, which positions the hypothesis of ideologically compact winning coalitions. Concurring with Axelrod and De Swaan’s views, Paul Warwick (1994) argues that ideologically diverse governments tend not to survive because of the greater policy compromises that coalition members have to make.

Michael Laver and Norman Schofield (1990) introduce two ideas. First, they argue that if parties are not interested in office but only in the implementation of their preferred policies the party controlling the median legislator will become a kind of policy dictator and will definitely get into government. Second, they note that ideological differences within the parliamentary opposition may be as relevant to the viability of minority coalition governments as the ideological diversity of the minority government itself. Echoing Laver and Schofield, Kaare Strom (1990) argues that minority governments have often survived by exploiting effectively the divisions between opposition political parties in the legislature.

In the early 1980s the role of size and ideology in explaining coalition formation was matched by a new approach focusing on institutions. The new institutionalist theories emphasise the role of a variety of institutional procedures in structuring coalition formations and survival. In addition to these procedures, the rules and norms governing decision-making within the government itself are increasingly being taken into consideration.

Two institutional procedures shape pre-government formation
negotiations. The first relates to the power of the *formateur* (the prime ministerial candidate, usually from the largest party) to consult and suggest his options on possible coalitions before bargaining over other proposals can begin. Potential government partners are given the choice either to accept or reject the *formateur*’s proposals. Predictive models emphasising the role of the *formateur* party have suggested that it has the ability to structure government formation outcomes by securing its own place in government and influencing the ideological composition of the coalition in its favour (David Baron 1993). The second procedure is the ability of incumbent prime ministers and incumbent coalition partners to time government formation bargaining to their advantage (David Baron 1998; Daniel Diermeier and Randolph T Stevenson 1999).

Another important institutional hypothesis is the investiture rule, which is the requirement that a potential government be supported by a formal majority vote in Parliament. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that, in the presence of an investiture vote, only majority governments can be formed. This is common in Scandinavian politics (Kaare Strøm 1990).

Three additional theories have been developed based on behavioural norms rather than institutional procedures. The first is that party pre-electoral commitments or pacts on governmental coalitions are likely to be constituted. The second is that publicly made party pre-electoral commitments not to enter into coalition with certain other parties (or ‘anti-pacts’) make it unlikely for coalitions with certain parties to be formed. The third theory is that coalitions with anti-democratic or anti-system parties are unlikely to be constituted, regardless of the existence or absence of anti-pacts.

A recent version of the new institutionalism focuses on the institutions that shape post-formation government decision-making. It is based on decision-making within the coalition government rather than the rules and norms of the process of coalition formation itself. In their portfolio allocation theory, which is based on policy-driven models of size and ideology, Michael Laver and Kenneth A Shepsle (1996) argue that Cabinet ministers enjoy a dictatorial control over the policy-making of their ministries. They note that the presence of political parties that enjoy a strategic advantage in coalition formation because of their size and ideological position is a determinant of government decision-making. They distinguish ‘Very Strong Parties’ (VSPs), to which a majority coalition prefers to give all the Cabinet portfolios rather than support any other coalition options, and ‘Merely Strong Parties’ (MSPs), less strong than VSPs, but still able to get into government.
It is easy to understand why scholars have focused the study of party coalitions on Western European parliamentary regimes. The parliamentary democracies of continental Europe essentially use proportional representation electoral systems and voters usually do not give a single party a parliamentary majority. After the election, which constitutes one of the three stages of government formation in parliamentary multiparty democracies (Mikko Mattila and Tapio Raunio 2004), parties bargain over the allocation of ministerial portfolios, with the negotiations usually led by the formateur. The government may be subjected to a vote of investiture in Parliament. Clearly, at the heart of parliamentary government is the fact that Parliament must have confidence in the government.

The explicit condition in parliamentary democracies that Parliament must have confidence in the government does not often exist in presidential systems (Guy-Erik Isaksson 2001). Yet, while not subject to a potential vote of no confidence, presidential systems build a majority coalition for many of the same reasons that parliamentary regimes do, such as the need for the executive to get its programme through the legislature. Coalitions in a presidential democracy may also serve a different purpose from those in a parliamentary system. Tensions between government and Parliament in a presidential system may lead to one of the following undesirable scenarios: divided government or stalemate, constitutional crisis, attempts to circumvent the legislature, impeachment, and regime instability (David Altman 2000); hence the need to build coalitions in presidential systems as well.

In Africa these theories apply in some contexts, but in many others they are of little relevance. The office-seeking theory, for example, applies in many African countries where the securing of posts in government, Parliament, parastatals or the diplomatic corps is extremely competitive in the context of general impoverishment, and coalition building serves as an avenue to accessing such positions.

There are few cases of post-election coalitions in Africa given that most electoral systems on the continent call for pre-election alliances in order to avoid wasting votes. In the circumstances, coalition partners tend to join up with as may parties as possible in order to win elections, as is evident in the chapters that follow. As for post-election coalitions, the theory that the party with the most representatives in the legislature is central to coalition negotiations is contradicted in Mauritius and South Africa where, in the few cases of post-election coalition, parties that have won more seats than the others were kept out of government by a coalition of smaller parties. This was the case in Mauritius with the coalition formed by the Labour
The study of party coalitions in Africa

Party (LP) and the Parti Mauricien Socialiste Démocrate (PMSD) against the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) in 1976 and in South Africa with that between the Democratic Party (DP) and the New National Party (NNP) against the ANC in the Western Cape province in 1999.

The formateur procedure does not exist in the countries featured in this study. Negotiations among the parties are conducted informally, with no one enjoying a special legal status. However, the party of the incumbent prime minister, in the case of Mauritius, or the presidential party, in the case of South Africa, Kenya and Malawi, tends to be favoured as its leader has the prerogative of setting the election date. This allows the ruling party not only to organise itself ahead of the election but also to take the lead during the negotiations leading to the formation of a pre-election alliance.

Scholars in Western Europe have placed an inordinately high emphasis on predicting and explaining why some coalitions form and others do not. This is probably the result of the fact that coalitions in Western Europe are formed essentially after elections in the context of proportional representation electoral systems when no party has won an absolute parliamentary majority. In the five countries studied party coalitions are essentially formed prior to elections. As a result, the predictive dimension of the theories offered by Western European studies appear to be of limited relevance in the African context, especially when elections are clearly won, as often happens, by a single party or by a pre-election party coalition with an absolute majority.

Furthermore, the study of party coalitions has been dominated by a focus on executive or ruling coalitions. This study devotes equal attention to both governing and opposition coalitions. As part of opposition politics, parties often enter into coalitions in order to limit the electoral gains of a dominant governing party at national, provincial and local government levels. Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique and South Africa all offer interesting examples of such opposition coalitions.

Another important aspect of the study of coalition politics is the assumption by coalition theorists that political parties behave like unitary actors, a belief based on the assumption that party leaders are relatively shielded from pressure from below with regard to strategic decision-making. Many scholars who have studied the party organisational determinants of coalition politics argue that the more centralised a party the easier it becomes for the leadership to screen inter-party politics from intra-party conflicts. However, this view is opposed by some. Moshe Moar (1998) argues that organisational decentralisation is crucial in enabling party elites to manage intra-party conflicts in such a way that splits are avoided and dissent can be
The present study limits itself to testing how alliances cope with intra-party tensions and how parties deal with coalition-related tensions.

In general, the applicability of the above theories to the African context varies from country to country because of the particular socio-political and economic context of those countries, as the chapters in this book demonstrate. Some dominant features of African politics are not considered in these predictive models. These features include the pervasiveness of ethno-regionalist politics within political parties and coalitions combined with the dominance of identity-based voting behaviour over issue-based choices; the presidentialist deviation of presidential regimes, which tends to endow the presidency with excessive executive powers, to the detriment of Parliament; the prevailing unstable party systems; and the limited opportunities outside the state, which often lead to the prevalence of opportunistic coalitions.

Moreover, party coalitions in Africa are likely to be affected by factors such as the inadequate institutionalisation of democracy on the continent and the dominance of founding leaders over the party as well as the structural and organisational weaknesses of the parties themselves. Because these theories do not take into account these important features, a study of African party coalitions based essentially on such theories would result in superficial conclusions.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Data for this study were collected on the basis of a questionnaire consisting of 35 questions and were supplemented by face-to-face interviews with party and coalition leaders in each of the countries concerned. In one case, a round table in the form of a focus group meeting involving key leaders of a dozen parties allowed the author of the South African chapter to gather substantive first-hand information about party coalition politics in the country. Secondary sources and direct observation by the authors in the countries in which they live also provided valuable data and information.

In this study, a party coalition is defined as the coming together of a minimum of two political parties for a certain period, in pursuit of an agreed set of common goals to be reached by means of a common strategy, joint actions, the pooling of resources and the distribution of possible subsequent pay-offs. The words ‘alliance’ and ‘coalition’ are used interchangeably.

The study deals only with alliances made up of political parties. For this reason, pre-election alliances between political pressure groups, faith-based
organisations and non-governmental organisations, which worked towards the effective introduction or maintenance of a democratic multiparty system in countries such as Kenya, Malawi and South Africa, are not included systematically. This decision derives from the fact that, unlike civil society organisations, which do not seek political power, political parties are structured and organised around the ultimate objective of accessing or maintaining power and therefore have different organisational structures, procedures and priorities from those of social groupings. In addition, by joining a coalition a political party becomes subject to various internal and external political pressures which affect its viability and effectiveness. In order to achieve its objective a study of party coalitions must pay as much attention to the analysis of the coalition as to the examination of its affiliates, the political parties.

In the light of the above, the study excludes the United Democratic Front (UDF) in South Africa and the Forum for Restoration of Democracy (FORD) in Kenya. The various pre-electoral alliances in Malawi, which consisted of non-governmental organisations, religious groups and other stakeholders agitating for political pluralism and electoral reforms, are also not considered. The only exception is the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) because of its particular involvement in government as a key member of South Africa’s ANC-led Tripartite Alliance.

The research was conducted between 2003 and 2006 and faced a number of challenges. First, it was not easy to gather relevant information from secondary sources given that there has been virtually no major research on party coalitions in the five countries. Second, the research was conducted when most countries were in the process of elections and party leaders were not comfortable sharing their views and divulging what they termed strategic information. Ballots were held in 2003 (Mozambique local government elections), in 2004 (national elections in South Africa, Malawi and Mozambique) and in 2005 (legislative elections in Mauritius and the Kenyan constitutional referendum). Most party representatives were nonetheless willing to engage with the research team (see Appendix 1 for the list of respondents) in spite of their busy schedules.

The research was largely guided by the following questions asked about each of the countries studied: What brings particular political parties together in a coalition? How are negotiations conducted? Who is entitled to negotiate? What are the objectives of these coalitions? How are coalition partners selected? What is the legal basis of party alliances? How does the electoral system in use in the various countries impact on the nature of party coalitions
in those countries? What role do ethnicity, race, class and ideology play in the formation (and collapse and revival) of party alliances? Who are the driving forces behind the alliances? How are alliance relationships nurtured? How does the coalition affect intra-party dynamics and vice-versa? How does the process of selecting coalition candidates impact on women’s representation in Parliament? What explains the longevity and effectiveness of some alliances while others fall apart or into desuetude? What impact does coalition-related conflict have on intra-party dynamics? What have been the consequences of particular alliances on individual political parties? Having answered the above questions, the study offers explanations for the formation, survival and effectiveness of alliances in Africa.

ORGANISATION OF THE BOOK

Chapter 1 provides the overall introduction, which includes the importance of the study, the research methodology, the scope of the study and the literature review, and assesses the relevance to the African context of the existing theories on party coalitions.

Chapters 2 to 6 present the case studies in the following order: South Africa, Mauritius, Malawi, Mozambique and Kenya. Each chapter is structured more or less as follows:

- The first section gives the historical background to political parties and party coalitions in the country, their ideologies, organisation and challenges.
- The second section analyses the effects of ethnicity, race, ideology and class on party coalitions in the country.
- The constitutional, legal and administrative framework governing political party coalitions is covered in the third section.
- The impact of party coalitions on women’s representation at national level is covered in the fourth section.
- The fifth section describes the formation of party coalitions, including issues such as the choice of coalition partners, the driving forces behind the coalitions, the selection of candidates and the allocation of portfolios.
- The sixth section deals with the management and maintenance of coalitions.
• The seventh section presents a general view of the issues pertaining to the survival, effectiveness and collapse of political coalitions in the country.

Chapter 7 is an overall conclusion, covering the factors which influence the formation, effectiveness, survival, sustainability and collapse of party coalitions. The chapter also analyses the impact of coalitions on the political system and more specifically on variables like national reconciliation, ideological harmonisation, the party system and individual political parties and women’s representation. It also draws lessons for the countries concerned from the practice of party coalitions.

The collection and analysis of the data are intended to contribute to the reduction of the knowledge gap by documenting the individual experiences of the five countries. The study ultimately aims to ensure that party coalitions contribute to the vibrancy of democracy and party systems in Africa.