GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY (GNU) AS A CONFLICT PREVENTION STRATEGY: CASE OF ZIMBABWE AND KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts have been on the increase on the African continent in recent years. These have varied in intensity with some assuming grave proportions, while others have manifested themselves on the wake of dictators who cling on to power through manipulation of electoral processes. Unity governments work best when countries are in a state of war or emergency, or when they are polarized by ethnic conflicts with no clear policy differences between contenders. The control of city councils by the opposition gives them a stake in governance and may force both parties to dialogue and tone down the unsavory aspects of their discourse. The international community should help Zimbabwe and Kenya resolve once and for all their resources allocation (such as land) as well as their partisan electoral institutions, which makes it difficult to organize free and fair elections. In such an arrangement, electoral results have been manipulated in such a way that there is no clear winner, resulting in the formation of a government of national unity (GNU) where former political opponents are forced into a marriage of convenience. This is usually after a lot of bloodshed, displacement, and human suffering. This is the case, which occurred in Kenya in 2007 and in Zimbabwe in 2008. In Zimbabwe, just like in Kenya, the prospects of a peaceful resolution to the flawed electoral process would not have been any better than through the GNU formation. This article deliberates on the GNU in Zimbabwe and Kenya and how the arrangement has come to pacify the potentially explosive situation in the countries.

Keywords: Conflict; Government of National Unity; Zimbabwe; Peace-Building

INTRODUCTION

With 93 wars in 70 countries, the period from 1990 to 1995 was twice as lethal as any decade since World War II. In fact, it is estimated that 22 million people have died in conflicts since 1945, with one-quarter of those deaths having occurred in the early 1990s. The late 1990s saw a decline in violence. The end of apartheid in South Africa, some progress towards peace in the Middle East, and a general worldwide trend toward democratic governance raised hopes, once again, that conflicts might be easier to manage in the new century. While tracking the intensity of violence, practitioners in conflict management have

also noted shifts in the types of conflict prevalent since the end of the Cold War. While interstate conflict continues, intrastate conflict has grown in prominence and has dominated since the dynamics of post-Cold-War discourse.

Political power and its excesses have been mooted as the main ingredient in most conflicts across the globe. Tribal, ethnic, or intestate wars have all bordered around the exercise of political power. International, ethnic of tribal wars have caused much suffering and political solutions have resulted settlements of disputes. At a national level, opposition political parties and ruling parties have ended up cobbling up arrangements, which would, at least, provide provisions for co-existence. One such arrangement has been the GNU, which has manifested itself in Kenya, Zimbabwe, and, at some stage, the ideas was mooted in Ghana. In most cases, it took mediation efforts by the diplomatic community and other impartial personalities to force the warring to be on the negotiation table.

Although electoral results in Kenya in 2007 and in Zimbabwe in 2008 indicated that the 'opposition' political parties were on the verge of taking over the control of the state, the longtime ruling political party (in Zimbabwe), which had based its credibility on its liberation war credentials, attributed its unpopularity to western exploits and endeavors. This resulted in conflict in both Kenya and Zimbabwe as the incumbents refused to relinquish power, resulting in the formation of the government of unity arrangements (GNUs). This article explains how the GNU in Zimbabwe was able to pacify the situation in different parties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent years has seen an unprecedented upsurge, not only in conflicts across the globe, but an equally abundance of literature on conflict management and conflict resolution. Whether in the diplomatic community, the military, international civilian police, or nongovernmental organizations, those who work in areas of conflict have had to ask themselves whether the intensity of conflict actually increased since the end of Cold War. Literary works by Lund (1996:5 have suggested a Conflict Curve, which presents peace as consisting of stages of intensity. He presents these as consisting of "durable peace," "stable peace", and "unstable peace" and uses these to describe the state of a relationship between nations or groups within nations (Lund, 1996). Consequently, on the face of potential conflict, these terms have been used to describe different phases in a changing relationship. Diplomacy is also a term which has been used to portray endeavors at attaining or creating a peaceful environment. Consequently terms like "preventive diplomacy", "crisis diplomacy", and other related terms have eventually found their way into the Peace and Conflict Resolution discourse. In a further complication, different terms are sometimes used to describe the same concept. For example, while "preventive diplomacy" is an expression that might be used in discussions at macro levels alike, the United Nations "conflict prevention" might be used as an equivalent expression in academic literature not only to refer to conflict of that magnitude, but even at national level.

In his insightful book, *Preventing Violent Conflicts* (1996), Michael Lund introduces the Curve of Conflict, a conceptual model that illustrates how conflicts can be both violent and nonviolent and how the use of force in violent conflict tends to rise and fall over time. The curve also helps to organize terms and concepts used by conflict management professionals, showing how different conflict's phases relate to one another and to various kinds of third-party interventions.

Fig. 1: The Curve of Conflict
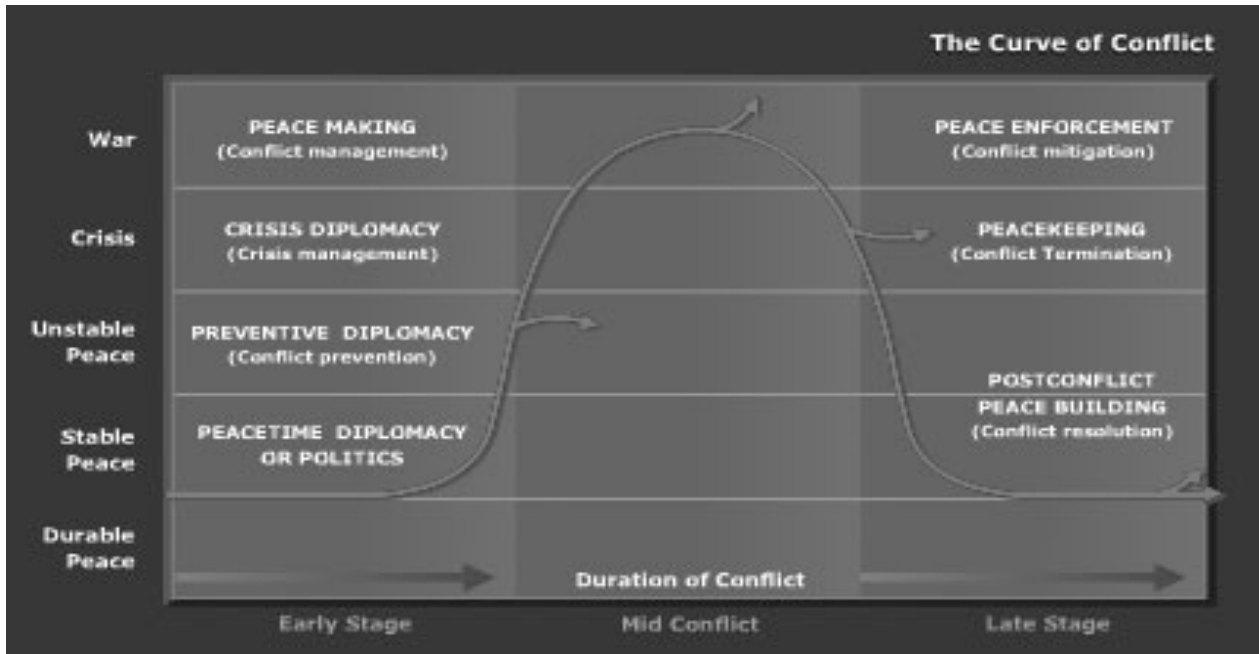
Adapted from Michael Lund's, *Preventing Violent Conflicts* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996), p37

Lund alludes to inter-state and intrastate conflict. For this article, the author explores the applicability of intrastate conflict resolution in Zimbabwe and Kenya. Conflict resolution endeavors have given birth to a new term, government of national unity (GNU), which denotes the concept of two political foes coming to a consensus to bury the hatchet and work together in a new coalition formation. While the concept of GNU has been implemented in many countries with varying degrees of success, but in Kenya and Zimbabwe the formation has been with varied consequences.

This article, therefore, attempts to establish the extent to which the GNUs in Zimbabwe and Kenya have provided a conflict prevention mechanism with the propensity to the much-needed democratic space for citizens and a leeway through which citizens can embark on the national healing processes. The article also points out that the notion of a GNU is a way of short changing the electorate, who will not have voted for more than one person to lead them.

THE CONCEPT OF GNU

It has been realized that rebuilding a country after civil strife is not only about re-building visible infrastructure, but re-building emotional healing and stress management. The exercise also involves a situation where one could envisage the myriad activities and challenges that need to be addressed to restrain the possibility of war-relapse. Peace-building cannot be viewed simply as a "quick-fix-strategy" applied to people will have witnessed unrest or in failed states that are experiencing dysfunction in their structures and strategies. Peace-building initiatives, practices and procedures require a multi-faceted approach working to achieve "positive peace" in every aspect of social life (Saed, 2010). After the cessation of hostilities,

people who arguably were fighting for the pursuit of justice and had high expectations of better experiences and life unfortunately meet with different realties on the ground, and Somaliland is not an exception (APD & INTERPEACE;2008). Consequently, modern political scientists have envisaged the formation of unity governments (GNUs) as a precautionary and transitional measure to ensure short-term reprieve from strife.

The term "government of national unity" is a term used to refer to a case in which all the major political parties in a country are part of the governing coalition. GNUs are a fragile, acrimonious, usually transitional arrangement with a high risk of disintegrating at the slightest opportunity and further degenerating into conflict. Due to the simmering and enduring nature of conflict within the arrangement, it would fit within under Lund's Conflict Curve conundrum. This type of government occurs in parliamentary systems. The politics of division alienates otherwise relevant constituencies and could create other consequences, including threat to security and political stability. The GNU is an attractive vehicle for reducing tension and managing differences within the polity. It has proven popular in many jurisdictions, including Canada, Israel, the United Kingdom, during World Wars I and II, and the United States, during the American civil war when President Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, chose Andrew Jackson, a Democrat, as his Vice President. Most recently, the GNU has been adopted in South Africa, Togo, Macedonia, Sudan, and Iraq. In Nigeria, overtures have long been made to establish a GNU given the diversity of the country. The Tafawa Balewa Government (Northern Peoples' Congress) in the First Republic had formed alliances with the opposition (NCNC/NNDP), even if this was self-serving on the long run, resulting in serious clashes among partners in 1963 (over the Census) and in 1964 (over the Federal elections). In the Second Republic, the Shehu Shagari government brought the Nigeria Peoples Party, led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, into power even if this arrangement later collapsed. In South Africa, Kenya, and, more recently, Zimbabwe, the concept of GNU was again reactivated and with varying outcomes and consequences. According to his book, *Long Walk to Freedom* (1995) Mandela had to make the decision to negotiate, utilizing his sense of inborn leadership, and only reporting his movement later the result of those negotiations. It is thanks to Mandela's courage as a prisoner to negotiate with those who imprisoned him that South Africa is where it is today, apartheid-free and under democratic rule. Recent developments, when we have stood witness to the formation of GNU in neighboring Kenya and Zimbabwe, are a result of the exercise of discretion of leadership mandate by various political groups in those two countries.

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

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

Right (1986), both of which state that "*"Every citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the government of his country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the provisions of the law*" (UDHPR,1948; ACHPR,1986). The politically-motivated violence, which followed these elections, if it is anything to go by, flies on the face of this freedom to people's right to choose political leaders of their choice.

Almost all previous power-sharing agreements in Africa have followed armed conflicts as was the case in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, and Sudan - and not the elections. Debates around post-electoral power-sharing arrangements have mainly focused on the importance of preserving peace for the greater good of the nation and the presumed contribution of this arrangement to the attainment of that objective, without due regard for the preferences of the electorate who, at the end of the day, are the decisive force on who should preside over their affairs. While there is no doubt that effective unity is desirable, especially in furtherance of democracy, it could be argued that the kind of unity that we are seeing being emerged in Kenya and Zimbabwe may actually herald the corrosion of democracy as we have come to know it, where the elite unites to further their own interests and not those of the nation (Maunganidze, 2009). However, Saed (2010) has come out strongly against GNU formations by arguing that the hasty nature, with which most NUs are established, makes them susceptible to collapse. He points out that "*strong government institutions that internalize the rule of law coupled with the promotion of socio-economic and cultural aspects that had been disrupted and altered by the wars are schemes that do not need quick-fix approaches and policies, but need to be planned for generations*" (Saed,2010). As a result, he recommends that there is need for actors to deliberate at length on the modalities and modus operandi of the GNU well in advance to prevent it from possibly collapsing.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, DEMOCRACY, AND GNU FORMATION

The prevailing practice has been that in many post-colonial African countries, there has been dominance by rulers inclined to share power only with a very small coterie of collaborators (Beetham, 1999). This is against the will of the electorate, who are destined to make appropriate choices as to who should preside over them. Consequently, forming a GNU would not befit the wishes of the electorate. A government of national unity, if properly instituted, is a form of democracy in that people of various political parties are able to bury their political, ethnical, and tribal differences and strive to build a democratic society where people enjoy freedoms and rights as enshrined in their constitution. It could further be argued that the institution of GNU formations should be regarded as an exception rather than a norm, especially in every case where the incumbent president loses to the opposition, just like the cases in Kenya in December 2007 and in Zimbabwe, during the March 2008 elections. If the practice is not discouraged, the continent of Africa (currently having many autocratic rulers unwilling to cede power to the opposition) will be inundated by states being run by governments consisting of GNU formations.

Budge and Keman (1999) concur with the notion of a power-sharing arrangement and assert that, generally, this arrangement is reached when the ruling party's confidence and legitimacy are severely weakened, even though it remains strong enough to exercise control over the most important institutions. In both cases of Kenya and Zimbabwe's GNU discussions, the ruling parties have realized that they cannot govern alone, due to the fact that the opposition is more popular with the electorate. Meredith (2008) is in support of the power-sharing arrangement and points out that "… creation of a power-sharing

arrangement has the advantage of conferring some sort of legitimacy to the ruling party without discrediting the opposition, while at the same time reducing the ruling party's fear of losing everything and fear of future reprisals and allaying the opposition's anxiety that the ruling party might have somehow rigged the elections"(Meredith,2008). Ake (2000) concurs by pointing out that in recent times; democracy has become a unifying discourse which is supposed to tame national and international politics. This has proved to be too costly to the electorate, whose decisions have been manipulated by politicians for self-interest.

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

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

> *(i) to participate in the government directly or through freely chosen representatives;*
>
> *(iii) to participate in a peaceful political activity intended to influence the composition and policies of [the] government; [and],*
>
> *(iv) to participate, through civic organizations, in peaceful activities to influence and challenge the policies of government.*

The implications behind these constitutional prescriptions are that the citizens have the right to be incorporated into the political activities that determine their destiny. However, recent developments in Kenya and lately in Zimbabwe have widened the rift between citizen participation and the concept of democracy. While there is no doubt that the right to vote is the first primordial act of participation, the question that needs to be asked is to what extent these rights have been translated into credible participation of citizens in the day-to-day activities of the state in the SADC (Electoral Institute of Southern Africa,2003) and, subsequently, into a democratically-elected political leadership.

Although democratic electoral processes should be associated with the conduct of free and fair elections, elections in Kenya, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere in Africa have, in recent times, been associated with accusations of violence, vote rigging and vote buying, such that, in the end, the results have not been credible. There were cases of boycotting elections by contesting political parties. In Kenya, violence erupted, leaving many hundreds dead and several thousand displaced. The same scenario occurred in Zimbabwe before and after the 2008 elections, which resulted in contesting MDC boycotting the elections citing violence on its supporters. Plattner (2005) justified boycotting of elections by saying that "…boycotting elections is a peaceful manner in which people may powerfully demonstrate their dissatisfaction". The UNDP Report (2004) envisages the extension of democracy from a democracy of voters to a democracy of citizens where the implication enshrined in the assertion is that electoral processes are not the ultimate democratic institutions in a country, but total involvement of citizens in all governing processes.

Most SADC countries (Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana, Malawi, and lately Zimbabwe) used the *first-past-the-post system*, which is limited in terms of representation, but is potentially able to offer a greater level of participation and accountability.

The concept of *first-past-the- post* has even created more problems where losing candidates (mostly the incumbent presidents) would call for the formation of a government of national unity (GNU) for them to be accommodated in the new dispensation and possibly to avoid retribution for any human rights violations committed during their tenure of office. An election is all about numbers. The *first-past-the-post* formula is used to determine the winner. The fact that a political candidate failed to garner sufficient votes to become the president of a country implies that the electorate is not satisfied with his/her performance. Incorporating such a candidate in a government of national unity would ultimately be an insult to the very electorate who will have showed disapproval of his/her leadership. Recent events in Kenya, where a GNU was formed with a losing candidate, seems to have set a good precedent on the African continent because although elections were held and a controversial result came out, the fact that the warring parties decided to come together to support the drafting of a new constitution for the multi-ethnic country is good news for all pro-democratic forces on the continent.

GNU, it would appear, has been reduced to an attempt by losing political candidates to get back into mainstream politics through the backdoor, and claiming to hold the mandate of the electorate. The precedent set by Kenya and the subsequent formation of a GNU and a likelihood of a similar political arrangement in Zimbabwe have been seen as a '*dent on democracy* (Bwanya 2008) and is likely to open the floodgates of similar scenarios elsewhere in Africa. The whole exercise of GNU formations contradicts the purpose of elections whose sole purpose is to give those who collect the highest number of votes, the opportunity to govern the country and those who will not have been successful to rally behind the winner. While GNUs are appropriate in countries like Kenya where there are many ethnic groups, in Zimbabwe, the concept is inappropriate due to the monolithic demographic pattern where any elected leader would be able to unite the nation. The result of a GNU formation in countries like Zimbabwe where sharp ideological differences prevail cannot take root, especially given that ZANU PF depends on its liberation war credentials based on Marxist/Leninists while the MDC formed on the premise of workers' interests, is more capitalist-oriented. With bread-and-butter issues being prominent among much of the populace, the electorate in the country have tended to identify with the MDC more than ZANU PF whose failed economic policies have brought the country to its knees. At the same time the party has distanced itself from the electorate. Finding the same political party at the helm despite having fared badly at the polls would not only disappoint the electorate but makes a mockery of the electorate's political choices.

DISENFRANCHISING CITIZENS THROUGH THE GNU

GNUs are a volatile formation with the propensity to cause a tumultuous situation if not carefully handled. Both in Kenya and Zimbabwe, while the GNU formations have remained fragile, the protagonists have tried to avoid direct confrontation with each other by resorting to issuing press statements, which can dispute and easily claim that they have been 'misquoted'. The most prevalent circumstance in which a nation may institute a government of a national unity is where there might be need to draw upon various parties after an election, where no one party can claim an overall majority, or where a winning party still feels it needs to draw upon expertise from beyond its own ranks. In recent times, GNU in Africa has been used to retain power through the *back door*. Despite the ruling parties having lost credibility in the elections, a power-sharing arrangement would be a compromise especially for the ruling party. Mesfin (2008) agrees with this statement by maintaining

that "…the creation of a power-sharing arrangement has the advantage of conferring some sort of legitimacy to the ruling party without discrediting the opposition".

James Hamill in (2008), has portrayed GNUs as a formation "… based upon a straightforward denial of the popular will", given that the portion of the people destined to govern are those who will have lost in the electoral process. While from the onset, the formation implies that unity is achieved, prevailing debates have indicated that is not the case. James Hamill (2008) has put forward three principal objections to the national unity argument as it is currently being advanced for Zimbabwe. First, Hamill asserts that a GNU impedes attempts to entrench democratic values on the continent - integral to which is the absolute necessity that parties (and governments) accept election defeat and orderly transfers of power. National unity is invariably couched in a noble rhetoric, but in reality it indulges those who are prepared to unleash terror and mayhem to impose themselves upon the people and secure in the knowledge, that, at the very least, they will have carved out a continuing role for themselves in the government by so doing. That is entirely incompatible with the democratic principles, which African states and African multilateral organizations have claimed to embrace since 2000. It has been pointed out that the paradox of the national unity governments is that they rarely produce national unity and certainly will not do so in Zimbabwe, against the backdrop of the huge citizen dissatisfaction. Instead, the likelihood is that it will produce a pantomime horse arrangement as two parties with profound differences are compelled to work together largely at the instigation of outsiders. Kenya's arrangement is routinely paraded as though it is an unqualified success, but at what costs? The Government of National Unity formation seems retrogressive to democracy and brings into question whether the usual *winner-takes-it-all* situation in Africa is the right way to go (Gyimah-Boadi, 2008). Kenya is unique in that its heterogeneous demographic pattern has made it susceptible to a power-sharing deal. With reference to Zimbabwe, the power sharing arrangement has been described as a *dead end* implying that it is an unattainable arrangement given the animosity of the two political parties involved. Nevertheless, in the absence of civil leadership/disobedience, the options are so limited such that a GNU might be one of the fastest ways to a political solution out of the current quagmire.

THE GNU IN ZIMBABWE AND KENYA: THE GENESIS

GNUs have been prevalent in many countries in recent years. What has been characteristics of these GNUs have been that they are a result of concessions after flawed electoral processes where no clear winner was recorded. This arrangement has also been conceived as a fraudulent way of 'rewarding the losers'. In some cases, failure to garner enough votes has also forced the winners to form a coalition with their political opponents. In some cases, the GNU formation has been necessary to avoid volatile situations, especially in those countries where ethnicity is more pronounced. In Kenya, more than 1,000 people lost their lives with many being displaced. This forced Mwai Kibaki and Odinga Oginga to cobble up a GNU to prevent the country from degenerating into further turmoil.

In Zimbabwe, after many years of conducting flawed elections, Zimbabwe came to head in 2008 when closely contested elections saw the former opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) winning the elections on the backdrop of unprecedented levels of politically-motivated violence perpetrated by youth militia, war vets, and other rogue elements sympathetic to ZANU-PF. Military elements and other state security agents were also siphoned into the furore, leading to

many causalities, mostly those perceived to be anti-ZANU-PF. What exacerbated the situation was the partisan nature of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, which withheld election results, increased anxiety among the increasingly restless population and the international community. The anxiety degenerated into lawlessness as marauding youths and the military went about intimidating, beating, and even murdering people, resulting in a near-civil war scenario.

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

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

While it may be too early to say that such arrangements are a negative trend in African politics, the developments that have taken place in the Kenyan and Zimbabwean cases are a cause for concern. They seem fraught with contradictions inherent in the political agendas of the leaders. While the rhetoric appears to be that unity will benefit everyone, the reality on the ground shows that the arrangements are only benefiting those in power and their self-interests. At best, it furthers disagrees and pushes the country on the verge of renewed tensions as leaders seek to out-maneuver or vilify each other. In the Zimbabwean case, despite the signing of the Global Political Agreement on 15 September 2008, which created for the formation, composition, and implementation of the inclusive government, there are hardliners of the old establishments who think that their social and political positions are being threatened. The possibility of bringing those who have violated human rights over the past three decades before the courts of law which again threatens to dismantle the GNU, as these people fight for their political survival. In Zimbabwe, following the disputed March and July 2008 run-off elections, a political impasse that gravely continued to affect the country's ailing economy left the protagonists in the country no choice but to embark on a process of establishing a unity government to revive the country. On 11 February 2009, the wheels of the new government were set in motion as the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, was inaugurated as the country's executive Prime Minister. However, two months down the line, the new arrangement is still faced with an avalanche of challenges, including the resistance from ZANU-PF hardliners, some of whom have accused President Mugabe of letting them down by agreeing to join the GNU. Also some resistance to the new executive Prime Minister continues to

undermine the good functioning of the new administration, while confidence among key political actors remains weak. This has also created further problems for arrangement.

Challenges in Kenya are different and have revolved around ethnicity. Politicians have manipulated the already volatile ethnicity environment, thereby forcing the country to be embroiled in unprecedented post-election violence after the disputed December 2007 presidential elections, in which ethnic differences were used as fuel. Reports put the casualty list at over 1,000 people who were killed and thousands more internally displaced. Faced with a humanitarian crisis and growing international condemnation, the two protagonists, the ruling Party of National Unity (PNU) and the opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), were forced to make a political compromise negotiated by mediators. They entered into a transitional power-sharing arrangement that saw the key opposition leader Raila Odinga of ODM being inaugurated as the country's Prime Minister, while Mwai Kibaki remained at the helm.

In both countries, the aim of these arrangements have been to ensure sound constitutional reforms that will provide for institutional mechanisms aimed at avoiding the repeat of electoral violence. In Kenya, the power-sharing agreement has even led to a paralysis of the country as most political actors are more interested in preparing for the 2012 elections than in introducing the much-needed reforms envisaged in point 4 of the Kofi Annan-led mediation. What, then, can be done when the solution becomes the problem? Is there an alternative to the alternative?

Historically, numerous unity arrangements have predominantly been pre-electoral or post-war. In the former, rivals come together to form a unified front that runs for elections. The latter is illustrated by countries, such as post-apartheid South Africa, Sudan, and Somalia, which have embarked on this form of power-sharing. In Zimbabwe in 1980, the guerrilla movements of Robert Mugabe's ZANU party, united with Joshua Nkomo PF-ZAPU, to form what is now known as ZANU-PF. Mugabe's ZANU had a larger following and, through compromises made by the merging of these two ethnically diverse groups, a united front was formed that would govern Zimbabwe. Having assimilated PF-ZAPU into ZANU's ranks, Mugabe set out to win the 1985 elections and he became the country's first post-colonial democratically elected president. Almost 30 years later, the signing of the September 2008 Global Unity Agreement is reminiscent of the coming together of ZANU and PF-ZAPU. The only difference is that the MDC is a relatively new political grouping with no liberation credentials, making it seem like the little brother of this somewhat patrimonial arrangement.

In both Kenya and Zimbabwe, while it is still too early to draw lessons from the GNU formations in the two countries, one should be given the benefit of the doubt, especially in Zimbabwe, to be alarmist and pessimistic, if the current trend by ZANU PF hardliners persist on their unpreparedness to embrace an inclusive government in which they were losers in the presidential, parliamentary, senatorial, and local government elections. It would also not be alarmist to express that the circumstances in which the Zimbabwean GNU was negotiated and the compromises that both parties have had to make is an indication that all is not settled. Indeed ideological differences between Mugabe (of Marxist orientation) and Tsvangirai (of the capitalist school) have seen them and other senior government officials often contradicting each other publicly. There have also been accusations that elements within ZANU-PF are trying to sabotage the GNU, with specific reference having

been made to the Joint Operational Command comprising service chiefs of the police, army, prisons, and the intelligence agency. In Kenya, the case is no different. In a country where ethnicity and cultural heritage has played a pivotal role in politics, it is not surprising that any unity government that attempts to bring ideologically dissimilar factions together is faced with tremendous challenges. The resignation, on 6 April 2009 of the Minister of Constitutional Affairs from the GNU may be a case in point. On 13 April, 2009, the Minister of Information and Communication in the Zimbabwean inclusive government, Hon. Nelson Chamisa, threatened to resign over the arbitrary action by the President Mugabe to usurp some of his ministerial powers and transferring them to a fellow ZANU PF hardliner, one Christopher Mushowe of the Ministry of Transport and Communication. Again, this is one of the myriad of events which have shaken the foundations of the inclusive government formation to date.

The constitutional debate, which has left out civil society, has been a disappointment, especially the National Constitutional Assembly, which initiated the constitutional reform debate in 1996. Civil society, especially in Zimbabwe, has accused the new GNU formation of sidelining them in the constitution-making process, a process which civil society initiated. Blame of sidelining the electorate and civil society has eventually been put on the new inclusive formation. It can thus be argued that post-electoral governments of national unity, as so far seen in Nairobi and Harare, are elite pacts that accord less consideration to the electorate. The aspirations of ordinary people who cast their ballot with the hope of establishing a new government or extending the term of the incumbent have largely remained unattended to. For these masses, democracy remains a pipe dream. Although some proponents of the GNU formation may maintain that this has been the best arrangement to pacify the warring factions in the two countries, but opponents of the system, there are also those who pursue the argument that one still needs to gather more empirical evidence to generalize it. But the short experience of Kenya and Zimbabwe, so far, indicates that free and transparent elections, after which the winner takes responsibility to rule democratically, remain the only sustainable condition for structural stability. However, in Zimbabwe, the constitution-making process is chaired by a government appointed commission. Civil society prefers the appointment of an independent individual (preferably a judge) to head the commission. In Kenya, the resignations are a bad omen on the future and viability of the GNU. Despite the various mud-slinging and name-calling, what is needed in both cases is commitment on the part of those in the inclusive government for it to work.

REFLECTIONS ON THE UNIQUENESS OF THE KENYAN AND ZIMBABWEAN CASES: ARE THEY REALLY A VOLATILE FORMATION?

While the two GNU formations in Kenya and Zimbabwe have remained balanced on a knife edge, they are a reflection that antagonists can co-exist as protagonists in a unity government. South Africa's national unity government came at the end of a long period in which the National Party and the ANC (itself comprising alliance partners from labor unions and opposition political parties) had worked together to draft a new constitution and bring the new democratic South Africa into being. In this case, the ANC clearly won and invited relevant players on board. This was because in the South African case, the various stakeholders formed a broad-based alliance comprising the strong labor movement, COSATU, and various alliance partners including opposition political parties. Nothing remotely similar to this situation currently pertains in Zimbabwe and Kenya, where irregularities in the electoral process culminated in violence and casualties. The case of Zimbabwe is a diabolically

different and uncompromising one because, unlike in Kenya where the President and Prime Minister have had a history of working together, here a situation is experienced where the Zimbabwean President and the (former) opposition leader are persons who have been displaying public enmity for a long period. Overdependence on liberation credentials by President Robert Mugabe and the army's pre-election statements that they "will not salute a leader who did not fight in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle" manifests the uncompromising position of both the military and President Mugabe and the latter's unpreparedness to hand over power to a winner. Therefore, it is justified that a government of national unity would be the lowest that President Mugabe and the military would sink to accommodate the (former) opposition MDC. Furthermore, it can be argued that in the Zimbabwean scenario, the ruling party is attempting to systematically liquidate the opposition. There is also a tendency by the proponents of GNUs to draw a comparison between Mandela and De Klerk and Mugabe and Tsvangirai, but unfortunately, the comparisons do not hold because De Klerk saw the need to share power and this is not the case in Zimbabwe, where each wants absolute and executive powers to hire and fire cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister (Ayittey, 2009). In Kenya, the concept of a government of national unity was facilitated by the existence of a multi-ethnic demographic pattern that dictates the necessity of ethnic representation in the government. This is supported by Rock (2009) who argued that in Africa, most states are undeniably plural societies marked by deep cleavages among a diversity of ethnic groups. Young (1995) supports this notion by indicating that elections seem to provide the opportunity to legitimize the political and economic pre-eminence of one group, to reward supporters of that group and compel them to adopt greater political conformity, and to re-impose a firm hand on challenging elements within or outside that group. The only comparative advantage that Kenya enjoys is its heterogeneous demographic nature that no one political party can form a government on its own and needs the presence of other political parties. In the Zimbabwean case, the GNU formation portrays a paradox of national unity governments that can hardly produce national unity and certainly will not do so, against the backdrop of the ruling party's orgy of violence. In the Zimbabwean case, the ruling party, ZANU-PF, and the MDC are arch rivals whose co-existence within the same institutional framework would almost be impossible given their contradictory perceptions about salient issues, such as the land question. The two also seem to hold different and divergent foreign policy aspirations, with the MDC being pro-West, while ZANU-PF is anti-West.

PROSPECTS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION THROUGH NATIONAL HEALING

The genesis of Zimbabwe's challenges to its GNU revolves around ZANU PF's exclusive claim to the liberation struggle. However it is common knowledge that everybody fought in the struggle one way or the other. Therefore coming into the GNU with liberation credentials held high is indicative of the fact that it is the only political party that is destined to preside over the affairs of the country in perpetuity. This was first seen during the allocation of ministerial portfolios, an issue which took several SADC meetings to be resolved and yet a novice would have thought is was a simple matter of putting all the ministerial portfolios in a hat and political parties make their pick. NO, the conception that certain portfolios belong to this political party and not the other point to the fact that political parties were looking down on each other and did not regard each other as equal.

A unity Government is not workable in Zimbabwe under these conditions. This is one of the few cases in African democratization in which policies, rather than ethnicity or sentiments, are driving the political contest. Let the policies

contend as they do in Western democracies where ethnicity is an insignificant predictor of political behavior. A unity Government will fudge, not resolve, the issues.

From the time the GNU was established, the inclusive government saw it imperative to establish mechanisms where the violence and polarization that had characterized politics in Zimbabwe would be pacified. This is how the concept of national healing was started where former political foes would once again co-exist and strive to forgive each other. This led to the establishment of a ministerial portfolio within the inclusive government where three ministers of national healing were appointed with the mandate to spread the gospel of forgiveness among former political opponents, especially at grassroots levels where most of the MDC supporters had lost property and livestock at the hands of ZANU-PF apologists. Some had even been beaten, raped, and even murdered. With such an appalling past, the leaders in the inclusive government saw it necessary to instill a spirit of forgiveness within the citizens. However, the challenge with implementing this program has been that those who lost property and livestock want their properties back and want to see the perpetrators should face the full wrath of the law, a move which those in ZANU PF do not want to accept. What further complicates the situation is the fact that those who lost properties during the campaign of terror have been asked to forgive those who expropriated and confiscated their property. The involvement of elders and chiefs has not yielded any positive results as each side has stuck their heels to the ground with one side demanding that perpetrators be brought before the courts of law while the perpetrators claim that it was a time for war and as such let bygones be bygones. The Ministers responsible for National Healing have eventually been found in a quandary with prospects of resolution becoming remote with each passing day. At a political party level, the MDC have put in place restorative and rehabilitative programs under the social welfare department to assist their supporters across the country, restoring those who lost their resources and those displaced from their homes, and rehabilitating those who are survivors. However financial resources to achieve these objectives have not been enough. NGOs have also not been forthcoming to indulge in such a program, which they view as having the possibility of creating acrimony with sections of the inclusive government. Consequently, the most likeable alternative to Zimbabwe and Kenya's GNUs hinges on the successful drafting of an inclusive people-driven constitutional document followed by internationally supervised elections. With President Mugabe being notorious for refusing international observers anywhere near the ballot box, it remains to be seen how the country, civil society, and the international community would react to such an eventuality. In the case of Kenya, ethnicity should be nipped in the bud by not allowing it to rear its head again after the chaos that occurred on the aftermath of the 2007 elections in December.

CURRENT STATUS OF GNUS IN KENYA AND ZIMBABWE

The two countries have made history in their different tackling of simmering within the coalitions. If current events in the two countries are anything to go by, then what are unfolding are two nodes of GNUs. Both countries have made attempts to accommodate each other's political opinions. Tolerance has also been tested in both GNUs and in some cases, concessions have been made for the good of peace-building and stability. In the Kenyan case where consensus has been struck between the political parties within the GNU on the way forward. A new constitution has been drafted and adopted at a national referendum which was characterized by peace and harmony. With people-driven constitutions, Kenyans are prepared to consolidate their peace and endurance by electing political leaders of their choice. They have built a firm foundation for what

appears to be one of Africa's participatory democracies in the new millennium, at a time when most African leaders are clinging to power.

On the other side, the GNU in Zimbabwe has been characterized by political bickering, fighting for political power, acrimony, threats and counter-threats. The legislative requirements of consulting each other among the principals have been thrown out of the window and what remains is the older version of political leadership in the country. Arbitrary decision on the party of ZANU PF is continued unabated in contravention of the provisions of the political agreement which calls for consultation among political leaders, especially in making senior public service appointments. Intolerance and failure to co-exist have also characterized much of the tenure of the GNU in the country with each political party claiming hegemony over the other. ZANU PF claims to have won the second round of the polls while the MDC asserts that it won the first round and refutes ZANU PF allegations of winning the second round. These disagreements have threatened to derail the GNU and already polls have been penciled in for early 2011 on the backdrop of politically-motivated violence on the innocent electorate. The military has been visible in all the threats to the electorate to desist from what they did during the 2008-voting for the MDC.

CONCLUSION

From events in various countries where GNUs have been established, the result has been dismal and, in some cases, courting bloodshed. In multi-ethnic countries, GNUs have manifested more ethnically-based violent eruptions. In Zimbabwe, the first GNU of the early 1980s resulted in a civil strife, which political analysts regarded as ethnic cleansing. Currently, the simmering political discord and mud-slinging revolve around wrestling for power, a feature common in most GNU formations. As a result, this author would recommend that such formations should not be allowed especially given that elections is all about numbers and any political party they wins at the polls should be handed power, irrespective of by how many votes. The use of liberation war credentials have been abused and manipulated by find themselves losing the confidence of the electorate due to poor performance t government level. If other countries see that a political party can lose an election and proceed to rule the country, such a trend is bound to recur in many African states where incumbent presidents disregard the will of the people and opt for a GNU, if chances of winning are slim, especially given that those who have lost, but made it back to State House through the formation of a GNU were successful.

While GNUs are an interim and transitional process, the precedence set in Zimbabwe is nothing more than disappointing. On the contrary, recent events in Kenya have shown the good side of a genuine GNU, where parties in the formation are honest enough to abide by the dictates and stipulations of the GNU prescriptions. Kenya should, consequently, be awarded an accolade for having put the interest of the generality of Kenyans above everything, including party politics and hunger for power. Similarly, recent events that took place in Zimbabwean during the constitution-making process have left pro-democratic civil society organizations and peace loving people of Zimbabwe shell shocked. War veterans, the very people who fought for the liberation of the country, could be seen mobilizing, marauding ZANU-PF youth to disrupt the constitution-making process. This is not only a travesty of justice and human rights, but an absolute lack of vision. Citizens of Zimbabwe should take a cue from events in Kenya where the post-GNU period will be marked by strong democratic

institutions emanating from a people-driven constitution that prevailed in Kenya. If it is fear of defeat at an election, then disrupting a people-driven process would not help things. Given Zimbabwe's high literacy rate coupled with the abundant natural resources that the country is endowed with, there are huge prospects that the country would need a very short time, for it to be on the path to recovery. It is even further blessed with the fact that it is not as multi-ethnic and multi-cultural as Kenya, where prospects of ethnic conflict are much higher than in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual places and where everything that the government does is viewed along ethnic lines, even political appointments. National healing and forgiveness are remedial measures that politicians, elders, and the general civilian populations have tried as a way to foster co-existence among political foes. But what has exacerbated the situation is the fact that many of the political opponents stay within the same environs and find it hard to both forgive and forget, especially in cases where those of one political party confiscated livestock from their neighbors as punishment for belonging to a different political party. A similar scenario that happened in Zimbabwe is one of the threats to national healing as neighbors cannot forgive each other for having confiscated others' livestock and seeing one's livestock everyday now belonging to somebody else freshens their wound and makes prospects of forgiveness remote.

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