

Untenable Marriages: Situating Governments of National Unity in Africa's Political Landscape Since 2000

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This study examines Africa's newest political phenomenon of forced political marriages called Governments of National Unity (GNUs) or Inclusive Governments. It endeavours to situate these governments in the continent's political landscape with the view of assessing the phenomenon's contribution to the democratic discourse in Africa. It analyses the foundations of such governments with the view of examining the extent to which they have been conflict resolvers in countries where they have been established. While this study acknowledges the positive contribution of GNUs in conflict management and resolution, the study posits that by and large GNUs have had the effect of subverting the voices of the electorate in Africa. The study argues that where they have been established, such governments have made the administrative systems of the countries fail to deliver desired services to the people as the political parties in the 'marriage' haggle for political supremacy. The study further avers that the foundation of these governments is lack of democratic traditions of accepting electoral defeat and failure by African electoral supervisory machineries to operate impartially. Consequently, the implication of the findings is that GNUs do not eliminate conflict but simply transform it thus only partially solving the problem.

Keywords: GNU, contest, democracy, marriages, stability, transitional, untenable

Introduction

A Government of National Unity (GNU) is an institutional model government that is formed by two or more political foes in order to resolve a political impasse by sharing power. It is born out of circumstances in which the legitimacy of a party in office is severely weakened and the party is incapacitated to govern the country alone. This then makes it imperative for such a party to seek legitimacy by forming a governance alliance with partners in opposition. GNUs have therefore been embraced in some African countries for smooth conflict resolution. Such governments are meant to be transitional arrangements instituted to "ensure short-term reprieve from strife" (Mauve cited in Mapuva, 2010). They are roads to the establishment of political normalcy in situations where political contention has created a stalemate. Characteristically, GNUs are fragile arrangements beset with acrimony, mistrust and are susceptible to disintegration at the slightest political disturbance. Indeed GNUs have become tenable in circumstances where antagonistic political gladiators have run out of viable options in resolving political contest.

GNUs have particularly been established to resolve political disputes emanating from political stalemates. They have been established in post-independent Africa as transitional arrangements meant to ensure smooth transfer of power to majority rule or to resolve political quagmire.

In Zimbabwe for instance, the Internal Settlement (1978) resulted in the formation of a coalition government between Smith and moderate African nationalists at the time (Martin & Johnson, 1981).

This was as a result of a vain attempt by Ian Smith to retain white minority hegemony camouflaged by moderate African political parties.

GNUs have also emanated from the need to fulfil a constitutional requirement. For example at independence in Zimbabwe in 1980, a coalition government was formed by ZANU (PF), PF ZAPU and the Rhodesian Front after the general elections which resulted in majority rule in the country. This was in order to meet the dictates of the 1979 Lancaster House Agreement (Tshuma, 1997). The political compromise had been strongly supported by Front Line States (FLS) that wanted Zimbabwe to avoid the destruction which had ensued in Mozambique and Angola subsequent to the departure of Portuguese colonialists (Chung, 2006). There was also another GNU like government in Zimbabwe following the signing of the Unity Accord (1987) between ZANU PF and PF ZAPU. The establishment of that government ended the post-independence dissident war in Zimbabwe that had resulted in the loss of over 20 000 lives (Smith, 1997). Hence, the formation of the Unity Accord broke the political dead heat ensuing unity, peace and solidarity between the dominant ethnic groups in post independent Zimbabwe, the Ndebele and Shona.

A GNU was also established in South Africa in 1994 in accordance with the transitional

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constitutional arrangements which stipulated that any political party with 20 or more seats was entitled to cabinet positions (Mandela, 1995). Further, Nelson Mandela the first post-independent black legendary South African president foresaw the problem of sabotage and continued violence if there was a drastic paradigm shift in power relations. This was because of the looming dangers of political retribution against the whites if the delicate political matrix was not handled tactfully. Mandela therefore realised the need to foster good race relations and formed a Transitional Government which brought together the main political rivals, the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party (NP) (Davenport, 1998). In that new arrangement, Mandela appointed two Vice Presidents, Thabo Mbeki (ANC) and Fredrick De Klerk (NP). Such an arrangement ensured smooth transfer of power to the black majority.

In post 2000 independent Africa, GNUs have mushroomed and assumed different dimensions in Sudan (2005), Kenya (2008) and Zimbabwe (2009). These three countries are going to be the focal points of study for this paper. In Sudan the GNU was established to resolve the 20 year old civil war between the North and South. In Kenya and Zimbabwe GNUs were established to address standoffs arising from contested election results. In the above cases, the governments formed were marriages of convenience which have turned out to be largely untenable.

Africa's Political Landscape

GNUs can best be understood when discussed within the political landscape that obtained in Africa following its independence. The period following independence was characterised by the establishment of especially strong governments with a 'one party state' orientation (Boahen & Ade-Ajayi, 1986). This was clearly represented by the politics of independence leaders (Nyerere of Tanzania, Kaunda of Zambia, Banda of Malawi, Nkrumah of Ghana, Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo, Denis Sassou-Nguesso of Congo, Ahmed Sekou Toure of Guinea, Felix Houphouet-Boigny of Ivory Coast and Omar Bongo of Gabon) who argued that multi-party democracy was divisive and alien to Africa (Uwechue, 1981). They posited that the best way of defending and solidifying national unity in independent Africa was through containing political pluralism, which they argued fanned ethnicity and regionalism. They propounded what they called democracy by consensus, a form of democracy reminiscent of the pre-colonial period where the elders 'sat under a big tree and talked until they agreed' on any contentious issue. In this kind of democracy, political contest was confined to a 'single party', where it could be easily managed.

Indeed pre-colonial democratic practices were manipulated to justify their political programmes.

During the 1970s, most African governments moved towards total authoritarianism which was soon replaced by multi-party democracy in the 1990s. The wave of multi-party democracy that engulfed the entire continent was largely propelled by the international western capital that came with Structural adjustment Programmes. Cefkin quoted in McColm (1992) singles out the year 1991 as a historic year for change to multi-party pluralism as it heralded the collapse of one party authoritarian regimes in Africa and ushered in an 'era of democracy' in Africa represented by the conduct of periodic elections in most of Sub Saharan Africa. This newly won democracy was however often threatened by persistent conflict. It can also be argued that since this democracy was forced down the 'throats' of most Africa leaders, they embraced it rather half-heartedly. It can be further argued that the leaders who survived the ouster only introduced cosmetic reforms that were largely directed at pleasing their international sponsors. Their lack of commitment to sharing power was clearly shown by their quick embrace of this new political 'animal' called GNUs.

When multi-party democracy was introduced in Africa, as in other parts of the world, it was grounded on the principle that the majority should rule (Janda, Berry, Goldman & Hula, 2001). Janda *et al* further postulates that one of the fundamental principles of democracy was 'voting in elections'. This entailed choosing among various alternatives and giving power to the winner. The results of the 'voting' process and the collective group decision had to be respected in principle by all involved. From the foregoing it can then be argued that elections are indeed the heart of a democratic system.

Concomitant to the principle of establishing democratically elected governments in Africa after 1991, Africa declared its conformity to several international conventions that promoted the respect for democratic management of elections. One such convention was the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, General Assembly Resolution 217 A (iii) of 10 December 1948. Article 21(1) in particular states that: "Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives" and 21(3) reinforces the above by further stating that: "the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures". Halstead (2005) emphasises the point that Article 21 vividly expresses the right of every adult to fully participate in one's government, have equal access to public office and that all governments have an obligation to conduct transparent periodic universal elections.

Article 13 of the African Charter on Human and People's Right (1982) also state: "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." This position is supported by one of the African Union (2002) aim of promoting democratic principles, institutions, popular participation and good governance (Hanson, 2012). Further, SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2004) outline specific benchmarks for guaranteeing credible elections in the SADC region. These, among others are transparency, impartiality, integrity and professionalism. The principles also allow for international observers to act as referees in the whole electoral process.

In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), which is the supervisory commission of elections in the country enacted by Zimbabwe Constitution Amendment No. 17 of 2005 clearly states its mandate as one of preparing for, conducting and supervising elections "efficiently, freely, fairly, transparently and in accordance with the law" (The Constitution of Zimbabwe (1980). It is worth noting that in spite of Africa's commitment to the above conventions, several states have taken the route of GNUs as a way of resolving political deadlocks.

GNUs in Africa

Sudan

As noted earlier, a GNU was established in Sudan between the largely Muslim North and the Christian/Animist South following 20 years of a deadly civil war. The GNU was meant to bring about peace in the country. Negotiations between the North and South culminated in the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on 9 January 2005 (Marsden, 2008) between the National Congress Party (NCP) led by Omar Hassan al-Bashir and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) then led by John Garang. The agreement granted Southern Sudan some semi-autonomy for the next six (6) years to be capped by a referendum in 2011 to decide on whether Southern Sudan wanted to gain full independence or remain part of the larger Sudan.

Sudan had been divided into five provinces in the North and three in the South all governed by military governors on ethnic and partisan lines. This had created serious political turmoil and instability with the South complaining of political and economic marginalisation. During the lifespan of the GNU, the Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir had two Vice Presidents, one from the North and the other from the South. The GNU was disbanded in January 2011 following a referendum

in which the Southerners voted overwhelmingly for a separate state which was eventually born on the 9th July 2011 (Dagne, 2011).

Kenya

A GNU was also formed in Kenya in 2008 following disputed elections. Mwai Kibaki of the Party of National Unity (PNU) was purported to have been defeated by Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) in the December 2007 elections that had been marred by violence and intimidation (Simpkins, 2009). Because both leaders were claiming victory, the political logjam which ensued culminated in bloody ethnic violence between their supporters across the country.

The consequences of this conflict were devastating. Many innocent people were killed, internally displaced and property worth millions of dollars was destroyed. Over 1000 innocent souls lost their lives (Mapuva, 2010). A large number of Kenyans fled to neighbouring countries to seek refuge. The education sector which many Kenyans of all races and ethnicities took a lot of pride in was severely disrupted. Regional economies were also negatively affected. The United Kingdom and United States were quick to intervene in the Kenyan crisis and their intervention resulted in the formation of a GNU between the feuding parties. It also took the diplomatic skills of the former United Nations Secretary General Koffi Annan to force the feuding parties in a marriage.

Perhaps it is worthwhile to remark on the speed with which the United Kingdom and United States were eager to find a swift solution to the dispute while they procrastinated over the Darfur crisis in Western Sudan in which even more people were dying. This persuaded the authors to conclude that perhaps their economic and strategic interests were threatened hence their disregard of the voters' voices for a GNU.

A Kenyan observer remarked that: *the two powers would have you believe that the violence that has taken the lives of many innocent voters was the result of the rivalry between the Kikuyus and Luos. It was not. However, the rigging of the election results and the violence that followed have given them the ammunition to claim Africans are incapable of governing themselves. The two power brokers do not respect a government elected by the people of Kenya. In fact they prefer and encourage tribal rivalry which allows them to pick a superior tribe through which they govern other tribes. The superior tribe in turn rule other tribes through selected tribal flunkies...*" (Marsden, 2008).

The involvement of the West and the UN raises the question of how home grown GNUs are. Indeed we are persuaded to conclude that they are a 'foreign creations' designed to perpetuate continued western interference in African affairs.

In the new political dispensation that followed the establishment of the GNU in Kenya in 2008, Kibaki retained his executive Presidency while Odinga became a non executive Prime Minister, an office that had no long standing constitutional authority (Simpkins, 2009). The new political arrangement was known as the Grand Coalition Government.

Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe a GNU was also established following the contested Presidential runoff in June 2008 in which Robert Mugabe, the ZANU PF candidate had 'won' uncontested after the dramatic withdrawal of the MDC-T candidate Morgan Tsvangirai from the race, accusing his rival of intimidating his supporters (Mapuva, 2010). Mugabe had been defeated by Tsvangirai in the earlier disputed March election of the same year in which the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) had maintained that no one had garnered the required 51% votes to form the next government. The June re-run was marred by intimidation, abductions, violence and death which forced Tsvangirai to pull out of the race. After the humdrum runoff, the political impasse remained unsolved, micro- economic instability persisted and violence and political retribution continued unabated (Mapuva, 2010). Zimbabwe became a near failed state. There were counter accusations on perpetrators of violence from the two rival parties as political tension heated up.

In spite of the fact that the warring parties were divided on fundamental issues, the crisis compelled them to reach a negotiated political compromise to ease tensions. Both parties strongly feared that continued political impasse would alienate them from the voters as they would be perceived as non-caring. There was also pressure from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union (AU) and the international community at large that eventually forced Mugabe and Tsvangirai to sign the Global Political Agreement (GPA) on 15 September 2008 resulting in the formation of a GNU that was installed on 11 of February 2009 (Chitiyo, 2009). In the new arrangement, Mugabe retained the Executive Presidency and Tsvangirai became a non-Executive Prime Minister in typical Kenyan style. The Kenyan script was being played once again in Zimbabwe.

Through participation in the GNU, ZANU PF anticipated to gain political legitimacy, time to retreat and reorganise whilst subjecting the MDC to deal with harder issues of reviving the economy and getting the government to work again. Furthermore, it wanted to use its newly acquired political legitimacy to press for the removal of sanctions which had been imposed on it by the

West following the controversial Land Reform Programme of 2000. However Tsvangirai argued that his party only compromised for the sake of the innocent people who were suffering from a collapsed economy. Further, the two MDC formations wanted to gain access to the levers of power so as to influence the economic and political direction of the country.

Other African countries

A GNU was also established in Madagascar in September 2009 in an attempt to bring peace and stop violence on innocent people following Rajoelina's military takeover earlier in the year. The deal was brokered by the former Mozambique leader Joaquim Alberto Chissano who had been tasked by African leaders to revive deadlocked negotiations among Madagascar's political rivals, namely Andry Rajoelina, Mac Ravalomanana, Didier Ratsiraka and Albert Zagy (Lough, 2009). The protagonists were impelled to make political concessions among themselves. The country has remained in political limbo ever since as the international community refused to recognise Rajoelina's presidency. The general perception among African leaders was that if his government was recognised, it would set a bad precedence for Africa. Chissano's efforts however culminated in the signing of the Maputo Agreement in which the rival leaders pledged to work together through a GNU. The feuding leaders agreed that an interim government be formed that was to be led by a Prime Minister and three deputy ministers and Presidential and legislative elections be within 15 months under a new constitution (Barry, 2009).

In the Ivory Coast, Gbagbo also embarked on futile attempts to form a GNU in 2011 when he refused to step down after a presidential election defeat by opposition leader Quattara. Many lives were lost in the civil war that ensued between Gbagbo loyalists and Quattara's rebels. The fighting only came to an end with the capture of Gbagbo in his presidential palace by Quattara's forces which were heavily backed by French soldiers (Mudzungairi, 2011).

In Tunisia during the same year, Ben Ali also proposed for a GNU following widespread disorders and protests by his people against his government.

The former Libyan strongman and flamboyant leader, Mummer Gaddafi also hinted on the need for a coalition (GNU) arrangement with the rival National Transitional Council (NTC), a rebel group fighting against his government. Gaddafi was ultimately ousted from power and shot dead by the NTC forces in 2011, which again got a lot of logistical and military support from the West (Mananavire, 2011).

Achievements by GNUs

The impact of GNUs in conflict transformation and resolution can be viewed in several dimensions. One of them acknowledges that these were governments born out of political stalemates. That their roles diminished over time should not eclipse their contribution to conflict resolution at their inception. This therefore implies that GNU's do serve as viable options in resolving conflict situations. In the above case studies, GNUs have facilitated peace, reconciliation, economic recovery and re-functioning of governments concerned. These governments have provided political and economic stability and brought some semblance of unity as warring parties compromise on national issues.

Thomas (2011) posits that the immediate impact of the signing of the CPA in Sudan was that it: *brought historically under-represented Southerners into central government; established an autonomous Southern government with its own army and a share of Southern oil revenues in Juba; and invested in Sudan's vast and impoverished southern zone. These outlying regions were left out of the colonial and post colonial development, and their diversity was mismanaged to create social divisions that are among the starkest in the world. Over the six year interim period, the CPA aimed to make Sudan's unity "attractive" to Southern Sudanese people, who inhabit the poorest of Sudan's peripheries.*"

The NCP-SPLM political duopoly sanctioned spectacular oil-driven growth. However it at the same time failed to totally resolve the uneasy Afro-Arab mix matrix as tension and suspicion continued between the North and South throughout the lifespan of the GNU.

According to Dagne (2011), the establishment of the GNU in Sudan enabled the Sudanese people to test their democratic right through the ballot box for the first time in their lives. The birth of South Sudan, through a 2011 the full implementation of the CPA deal of 2005, which ended Africa's longest civil war. The deal saw almost 98% of Southern Sudanese voting overwhelmingly to secede and on 9 July 2011, becoming Africa's newest state, the 54th (Huni, 2011). That the referendum took place on time and in a calm, peaceful and orderly environment was a remarkable operational and political achievement. It can indeed be attributed to the political maturity displayed by politicians from both sides who wanted the GNU to work and peace to prevail.

Nevertheless, the final secession of Southern Sudan did not seem to signal the final resolution of the Sudanese crisis. Sudan's successor states and their citizens require everlasting agreements on complex issues including how to handle oil revenues (the lifeblood of both economies), future

citizenship, the Abyei borderline (Martin, 2012), currency changes and dividing up the national debt (Thomas, 2011).

The GNU brought some semblance of unity and political stability in Kenya as it produced a 'pantomime horse arrangement' where parties with diverse ideologies were forced into a marriage (Mapuva, 2010). The new cabinet of the GNU included a fifty- fifty percent distribution of posts between the PNU and ODM. Indeed, it was in reality a carefully balanced ethnic coalition. Though intermittent violence against political foes continues, there exit relative peace and stability which is conducive to development. The Kenyans successfully concluded the drafting of a new constitution which might eventually lead to a free, fair and peaceful election. The constitution declares that all sovereign power and authority belong to the people of Kenya and shall be exercised only in accordance with the constitution. Thus the drafters of the new constitution ensured that it became a firm foundation for democracy and good governance in Kenya.

In Zimbabwe, the GNU has also brought about relative peace and some micro-economic stability. The GNU brought about some form of unity as political violence has subsided. Indeed, the formation of the GNU brought about the scaling down of political hostilities, a welcome development since the economy that had been reduced to a shell is now on the path to recovery. The rival parties (ZANU-PF and MDCs) have, to some extent been working together harmoniously in crafting national policies through stretching out and accommodating divergent political opinions in a bid to build national cohesion. This was acknowledged by Tendai Biti of the MDC (Nkala, 2012) and Patrick Chinamasa of ZANU-PF (Huni, 2012). Together, they have crafted a national draft constitution which will soon go to the electorate through a referendum.

With the inception of the GNU, a stable currency in the form of the US dollar was introduced, shops have since re-stocked, inflation is under control and the economy is on its way to recovery. Zimbabweans can now plan for the future. Indeed, the GNU has managed to bring sanity to the economy through the Short Term Emergency Recovery Programmes, Step One and Step Two which have managed to address issues pertaining to runaway inflation and economic stability. Basic commodities such as bread, milk and mealie mealie are now readily available at affordable prices. At the height of the Zimbabwean economic crisis, the situation was so bad that it was not only difficult to get relish for *sadza* (staple food) but even to get *sadza* for relish. Even ZANU PF strongman Emmerson Mnangagwa acknowledged that since the inception of the GNU, there has been relative peace in the country and that the economy

which had plummeted has significantly recovered. Industry, agriculture and mining are also showing positive signs of recovering (Freeman, 2011).

GNUs have also led to prosperity since they have also provided checks and balances to the established governments. All parties in the GNU would want to do better than the other and vices like corruption and extravagance have been exposed through accountability. However, in Zimbabwe, the end of 2010 saw a polarisation of the cabinet on a wide range of issues. This created a sense of tension both within and outside cabinet. The tension as will be articulated later, seems to arise from a general non implementation of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and lack of clarity over the roadmap leading to a free, fair and uncontested elections (Magaisa, 2012).

GNUs have also managed to tap the best talent available instead of re-cycling politicians who have since passed their best before dates. People who are appointed on merit tend to deliver to the best of their ability. An example is the Zimbabwean Minister of Finance Biti who has reigned in inflation which had gone out of control. GNUs have also been able to bring about peace, cosmetic political and economic stability in the above mentioned countries which is good for the improvement of social services like health, education and economic and political revival. GNUs have also served as rational temporary transitional arrangements as they have been used to provide a panacea for a smooth transfer of power.

The accommodation of small parties is also critical in promoting political stability. In spite of their limited number of seats in parliament, at times they play the role of kingmakers as their vote may prove to be decisive. In the Zimbabwean scenario, for instance the mainstream MDC-T and ZANU PF make up a hung parliament. Acceptance or rejection of any policy decision by parliament is therefore the prerogative of the smaller MDC-N. Its vote influences the outcome of any parliamentary vote in the inclusive government. For example when the MDC-T and ZANU-PF contested for the post of Speaker of Parliament, the MDC-N threw its weight behind the MDC-T candidate resulting in the MDC-T candidate emerging victorious. The MDC-N Members of Parliament in that respect are kingmakers.

Weaknesses of GNUs

However, to a large extent, GNUs have been conflict rocked 'marriages'. They have been manipulated by incumbent leaders to sneak into office through the back door. Viewed from this perspective, GNUs have not been the best solution for Africa as they impede on democracy. They entrench *de facto* rewarding losers who continue to remain in power. This partly explains why

leaders such as Gbagbo and Gaddafi were calling for GNUs upon realising that they were losing political space to their opponents. For example, J. Bimha, a Zimbabwe's Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs argued that Zimbabwe would not recognise the new NTC Libyan regime unless a coalition government accommodating Gaddafi loyalists was put in place. He stated that there must be an inclusive government in Libya in order for the Zimbabwean government to recognise the new government (Karimakwenda, 2012). Instead of pointing out that Libya needed a people driven constitution which would provide a roadmap to democratic elections, Bimha was calling for a GNU in Libya that would accommodate Gaddafi loyalists. What is clear from the foregoing is that African politicians are indifferent to change and will time and again scatter 'banana skins' on the road to the state house to ensure that opposition victory is frustrated.

In the case of Zimbabwe the two MDC formations have not totally achieved the stated objectives as power has largely remained in the hands of Mugabe and his party as evidenced by his unilateral appointments of ambassadors and governors. Throughout its lifespan, the GNU has been bedevilled by bitter rivalry, mistrust and extreme suspicions. Simple matters that require simple consensus often become subjects of long debates and take away a lot of productive time from the government. Another notable disturbing feature of the GPA was its exclusion of broad - based socio-economic and political actors as there was no inclusion of broader civil society in the pre and post negotiation processes. As such it became a process owned and dominated by the three political parties when in reality it is expected to function as a national outlook and authority (Maisiri, 2010). It has also been noted that the civil society and smaller political parties such as the National Constitutional Assembly, Coalition Crisis in Zimbabwe, Mavambo/Kusile of Simba Makoni and ZAPU led by Dumiso Davengwa have largely been ignored in the constitution making process thus making it a ZANU-PF/MDC project.

In most circumstances, power sharing in a GNU arrangement has not been equal and this has not worked for the benefit of the nation since incumbents seem not really interested in sharing power. They have tended to pursue power over politics. For example President Mugabe who arguably lost to Tsvangirai retained executive powers in the new Zimbabwean political dispensation. Furthermore ZANU PF which is currently in opposition is in control of powerful and strategic ministries such as Defence, Foreign Affairs, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Land Resettlement, Indigenisation and Empowerment and many others. On the other hand, the MDC formations which enjoy an upper hand over ZANU

PF in Parliament control peripheral ministries with the exception of the Ministry of Finance. On reflection, it can be argued that the Ministry of Finance was relinquished to the MDC to make it easy for the country to get financial assistance from the international community. A ZANU PF man at the helm of that Ministry would have made potential investors and donors shun the country as the previous economic meltdown was associated with ZANU PF. The gamble seems to have paid dividends as the international community appears to be appreciative of the role of the Ministry of Finance in the transformation and improvement of the country's economic fortunes.

In the case of Sudan, key ministries such as Energy, Defence, Interior and Finance were parcelled to the NCP while the SPLM only received marginal portfolios in a 30 member strong cabinet (Reeves, 2005). In terms of the distribution of cabinet posts, the NCP got 52%, the SPLM 28% and other smaller political parties 20%. Al Bashir retained the presidency and was deputised by two vice presidents, Ali Osman Taha (NCP) and John Garang, and after his accidental death, Salva Kiriir (SPLM). According to Reeves (2005), Garang and his successor had no real power over the control of the national army (excluding their own SPLM forces). Within the NCP ruling party, there remained a powerful clique of Arab extremists who remained opposed to the idea of a unity government with 'infidels' from the south. Political and military power remained tilted in favour of the NCP and the SPLM was treated as a junior partner in the whole political arrangement. Indeed they were also sidelined in many other national decisions thus making them disgruntled partners.

The bottom line was that GNU arrangements encouraged losers to refuse to relinquish power so that they could be accommodated in GNUs. Viewed in the light of the above, GNUs are indeed devilish as they deprive the electorate their democratic right to choose their leaders. Indeed, GNU's are a travesty of democracy. What Africa needs most is open contest and not GNU's. There is now a trend that the incumbents manipulate elections so as to force a GNU. This was witnessed in Kenya, Zimbabwe and most recently in Ivory Coast where Gbagbo was also refusing to relinquish power. GNUs are not good as they tend to reward the loser at the expense of the winner. In most cases it is the loser that retains real power. This has persuaded Mapuva (2010) to conclude that GNUs have "been reduced to an attempt by losing political candidates to get back into mainstream politics through the back door."

In Kenya for instance, Kibaki remains in power as President while Odinga is more of a ceremonial Prime Minister. In Zimbabwe President Mugabe is still at the helm while Tsvangirai continues to play second fiddle to the veteran

ZANU PF leader. Mugabe remains in charge of the army, police and Central Intelligence Organisation. He makes arbitrary appointments, disregarding the provisions of the GPA which stipulate that he should consult the Prime Minister on all major national appointments such as Governors, the Attorney General and the Reserve Bank Governor (GPA, 2008). President Mugabe points to an early election to be held under the current defective constitution. His standpoint is in sharp contrast with the letter and spirit of the GPA which demand *inter alia* a clear road map prior to the conduct of the next elections. For example, Mugabe argues that "I will definitely announce the date. Once I announce the date, everyone will follow. I have the constitutional right to name an early election date with or without GPA" (Ngwenya, 2011). Not only do GPA partners differ on matters of principal but their antagonistic relations have undermined the smooth implementation of government policies and programmes. On numerous occasions ZANU ministers have failed to attend meetings that are chaired by the Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai as head of the Council of Ministers. On one occasion, MDC Ministers also boycotted cabinet meetings chaired by President Mugabe in protest against the persecution of their leadership and supporters. This seems to suggest that there are parallel government structures operating in Zimbabwe.

Another challenge pertaining to the Zimbabwean scenario is the selective application of the law. This has seen members of the MDC being arrested on trivial charges while ZANU PF supporters are free to commit all sorts of atrocities (Dube & Tembo, 2012). GNUs have not been good for Africa as they render elections useless as the incumbents remain in power by fraud. Furthermore, GNUs sometimes become dysfunctional because of in-fighting or simply sabotage by another partner. This is evident in both Kenya and Zimbabwe. Each party in the GNU serve its own interests and in the end it's the people who suffer. In the unity government there is supposed to be sharing of power but this has not been the situation on the ground. The result has been that ministers only take instructions from their party leaders and national issues are thrown in the dustbin. This is why some Zimbabweans jokingly refer to the GNU as the Government of National Discord.

In Zimbabwe, outstanding issues in the GPA that include the roadmap to elections have not yet been resolved. Within government there has been increasing polarisation as the shaky conflicting visions of the main political parties lead to delay, deadlock or dispute over even the simplest of policies or reforms. The nature of the government is such that there is both collaboration and competitive. The parties in the GPA however concentrate more on competition than collaboration, oblivious of the coalition government's important

role to drive a common vision, to build the economy of the country and to improve the people's lives.

However it is interesting to note that while the coalition partners drift apart when dealing with issues of national interest, they narrow their differences when dealing with issues pertaining to their personal welfare. For instance Zimbabwe and Kenya witnessed a high level of comradeship among the partners when it comes to dealing with issues that affect their conditions of services such as salaries, sitting allowances, pensions and other material benefits (Share, 2012). While they earn high salaries and live well supported spending lifestyles, the ordinary workers receive ridiculously low wages (Staff Reporter, 2012).

Further, the GNU in Zimbabwe has also recorded various failures. The constitutional making process as articulated in Article 6 of the GPA missed all its deadlines and has been characterised by discord, disorganisation, intimidation, chaos, boycotts and constant bickering. The government has failed to promote national healing, cohesion and unity. It only managed to set up a structure and a Secretariat of the Organ. A healing process in the form of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission is yet to be instituted. When it comes to the rule of the law, respect for the constitution and other laws, the police have applied the law selectively and have mainly stood by ZANU (PF). The MDC formations have largely been closed out of the media, an indication that they are playing second fiddle to ZANU (PF). Article 5 of the GPA states that an independent land audit was supposed to be conducted but this has not happened. Article 29 of the GPA deals with freedom of expression and communication but airwaves have not been freed and licences have not been given to independent broadcasters.

GNUs have been used by the losers to buy time and reorganise and as a result, in most cases they become dysfunctional. The constant friction and antagonism between GNU partners is due to the constant struggle for supremacy in the coalition. It's like yoking an ox and a donkey and this makes the marriage unsustainable in the long term. There is perpetual belligerence in GNUs as there is always a constant struggle for supremacy between the competing parties. In all the countries where GNUs have been established the relations between the major protagonists, that is, leaders and their parties have always been overwrought. This is because there is always deep mistrust and suspicion between the governing parties.

In Sudan throughout the life of the GNU, the relations between Bashir and Kirr and their two ruling parties have been marked by obstruction and wary confrontation though in the end both presidents accepted the credibility of the vote which resulted in the secession of Southern Sudan

in 2011. The same scenarios are being played in Kenya, Madagascar and Zimbabwe. As noted earlier at times, the struggle emanates from the need to control the larger national political cake.

GNUs have also been bedevilled by corruption. Because of the fragility of these governments, the leaders tend to sweep committed crimes under the carpet, afraid of unsettling the government. In Kenya the GNU has been unwilling to thoroughly investigate post election violence and prosecute the perpetrators because leaders from both sides were involved (Simpkins, 2009). This has led the general Kenyan public to refer to the GNU as a 'Government of National Impunity' (Simpkins, 2009). In Zimbabwe, the GNU has been accused of enriching its leadership by awarding every Member of Parliament US \$15 000 and purchasing new top of the range vehicles for them at the expense of the generality of the people. This has persuaded some people to refer to it as a 'Government of National Looting' (Share, 2012).

GNUs are illegitimate because that is not what the people wanted when they went to vote. They result in precious time being lost. In Zimbabwe many summits have been held to resolve Zimbabwe's unending squabbles at the expense of development. GNUs are not voted by the people but by the parties which represent their own interests. People go to vote because they expect their verdict to prevail but in unity governments the same people rejected by the electorate continue in power. GNUs are indeed a mockery of elections. Excesses which people wanted to get rid of like corruption, nepotism, inefficiency and lawlessness sometimes continue unabated. Some individuals and institutions are immune to prosecution as GNUs are characterised by selected application of the law. Thus GNUs perpetuate problems instead of solving them. While GNUs have essentially provided transitional arrangements between conflict and peace in Sudan and South Africa, they have not eliminated tensions that preceded their formations in some trouble spots in Africa such as Zimbabwe and Kenya. This has persuaded Miles Tendi (Gonda, 2010) to argue that GNUs are a way of 'shelving' and not 'solving' them. They also result in the continuation of bad policies. The wishes of the people are not respected. Otherwise there is no point in holding elections whose results are not acceptable and respectable.

Conclusion

What Africa needs most is to re-galvanise regional organisations like SADC, ECOWAS, AEC and the AU to enforce democratic principles and values. The organisations seem to be there on paper as they have failed to flex their muscles when called upon to do so. Africa needs a standing army to perform that task so as to make democracy and good

governance a reality. This will go a long way in bringing about social, economic and political stability which is critical for Africa's development. It is true that ECOWAS has been fairly visible in dealing with crises in West Africa. It recently refused to recognise Gbagbo's leadership in Ivory Coast in favour of Quattara who was deemed to have won a democratic election but when it came to intervention, member states like Ghana became lukewarm. The AU also supported the stance taken by ECOWAS and this resulted in Gbagbo's isolation and eventual overthrow.

In March 2012, after a Malian military coup by middle level junta led by captain Sanogo ECOWAS took a firm standpoint by insisting on the return to a democratically elected government based on the 1992 Malian constitution. It further swiftly imposed sanctions and other military embargoes on the military junta in order to elbow the junta out of power. SADC seems to have taken a cue from the ECOWAS approach as it now seems to be maintaining a principled stance in dealing with the Madagascar and Zimbabwean crises. SADC is insisting on the GNU partners to honour their respective undertakings in creating conducive environments for the holding of free, fair and credible elections. And it appears like the leaders in these countries are beginning to take it seriously. Furthermore, the international community should also assist the continental organisations in resolving conflicts in the continent. Nevertheless, the intervention should be driven by the need to find genuine solutions to conflicts and not cupidity.

In conclusion therefore, it can be observed that in certain circumstances, GNUs have proved to be the best way forward for Africa's conflict ridden states because they facilitate reconciliation, peace, development, progress, interaction between or among rival parties, economic recovery and a road map for peaceful, free and fair elections. They ensure that the best talents are utilised for the betterment of the country. They have been able to bring together warring parties to the negotiating table and enabled them to work together in resolving their differences for the benefit of their respective people. However, whilst GNUs have been effective in conflict transformation, they are frequently bedevilled by constant friction which often causes their dis-functionality or paralysis in extreme cases. Above all, in certain instances, the incumbent leaders and their supporters are not prepared to accept the new political dispensation and continue to behave in their old ways. Political opponents continue to be victimised and the opposition parties continue to be marginalised, persecuted and treated like junior partners which is not good for democracy. Sometimes the GNUs are used by the incumbent leaders as a political gimmick to gain time to revitalise their political parties. This has been discernible in Kenya and

Zimbabwe respectively. In the Sudan, the long standing civil war between the North and South was successfully resolved by the institution of the GNU though there are still contestable issues which still need further attention by the Sudanese governments as highlighted above. Nevertheless, what Africa needs most are free and fair elections, effective election supervisory instruments and strong regional and continental bodies in order to find everlasting solutions to the continent's challenges. Africa does not need GNUs because they are an onslaught on democracy. Their continued implementation will herald the demise of democracy in Africa.

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