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THE FUTURE OF OPPOSITION COALITIONS IN NIGERIA: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND 2027 ELECTION OUTLOOK

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Abstract

This study examines the evolving prospects of opposition coalition politics in Nigeria ahead of the 2027 general elections, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses shaping the viability of a united opposition front. Using a qualitative documentary method that draws on party documents, media reports, academic literature, legal rulings, and comparative country cases, the paper analyses historical patterns of coalition-building in Nigeria, contemporary realignments since the 2023 elections, and the institutional and strategic dynamics influencing opposition cooperation. The findings reveal that: (1) Nigeria's opposition possesses significant electoral advantages, including demographic momentum, policy-driven mobilisation, and growing public dissatisfaction with incumbent governance, but these potentials are weakened by fragmentation, leadership rivalry, and organisational instability; (2) incumbency advantages enjoyed by the ruling APC remain structurally overwhelming, reinforced by recent defections and control of key state institutions; (3) combined vote patterns from 2023 indicate that a united opposition can mathematically outperform the incumbent, although electoral competitiveness depends on credible coalition structures and strategic coordination mechanisms; and (4) lessons from Kenya, Malawi, and South Africa show that successful coalitions require early formation, effective power-sharing arrangements, and governance-focused agendas. The study contributes to the literature by providing a focused analysis of the emerging 2027 coalition dynamics through electoral evidence, comparative African experiences, and game-theoretic strategic analysis. It concludes that opposition coalitions have genuine potential to reshape power in 2027 if structural weaknesses are addressed through institutionalised agreements, grassroots mobilisation, and transparent coordination mechanisms. Recommendations include a binding coalition charter, stable dispute-resolution systems, equitable power-sharing arrangements, and a unified policy and governance roadmap.

Keywords: *Opposition, Coalitions, 2027 Elections, Nigeria, Political Strategy.*

Introduction

Across democratic systems, the future of opposition coalitions often determines whether meaningful political alternation becomes possible, particularly in contexts where ruling parties possess entrenched incumbency advantages (Onovo, 2027). In Nigeria, the opposition landscape

remains deeply fragmented, divided along ideological, ethnic, organisational, and personal lines. Although coalition-building has enabled democratic breakthroughs in various countries, Nigerian opposition parties have historically struggled to forge or sustain cohesive alliances capable of mounting a credible challenge to dominant ruling parties (The Africa Report, 2025; Premium Times, 2025). As the nation approaches the 2027 general elections, these dynamics have become even more pronounced. Following the 2023 elections, the All Progressives Congress (APC) consolidated its political influence by retaining the presidency, expanding its control across several states, and sustaining legislative dominance at the federal level. Beyond electoral victory, this consolidation reflects the broader structural advantages associated with incumbency in Nigeria, including greater institutional access, elite attraction, and stronger political bargaining capacity. The wave of defections from opposition parties into the APC further illustrates how access to state power continues to shape political realignments and weaken competitive multiparty politics (Reuters, 2025; AP News, 2025).

Amid this landscape, leading opposition figures, including Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP) have revived discussions on forging a broad-based coalition under the platform of the African Democratic Congress (ADC). The objective is to consolidate political capital, harmonize voter mobilisation networks, and strengthen campaign capacity to counterbalance the APC's entrenched dominance ahead of 2027 (Mordi, 2025; Iniobong, 2024). At the launch of this initiative, former Senate President David Mark characterised the emerging coalition as a strategic response to fears of excessive power concentration within the ruling party, framing opposition unity as essential for preserving electoral competitiveness and democratic pluralism in Nigeria (Premium Times, 2025). Yet, significant obstacles threaten the stability and future of such coalitions. Within the PDP, some influential leaders remain hesitant about joining forces with long-standing political rivals; several state governors prefer consolidating their state-level power bases rather than aligning with a national coalition strategy (Premium Times, 2025). At the same time, internal factions within the Labour Party have expressed reservations about the coalition over issues related to ideology, transparency, and internal party governance (WFD PPPI, 2025). These complexities illustrate the fragile and uncertain future of opposition coalitions in Nigeria, where elite disagreement can quickly derail broader unity efforts.

Nigeria's historical experience with opposition alliances also shapes expectations ahead of 2027. The 2013–2014 merger that produced the APC and ended the PDP's 16-year dominance demonstrated that coordinated opposition action can significantly alter electoral outcomes when supported by strategic compromise and organisational cohesion (AP News, 2025). However, subsequent alliance efforts have struggled to achieve similar success due to leadership rivalries, weak institutional coordination, and the absence of durable coalition frameworks (Premium Times, 2025). The future of opposition coalitions, therefore, carries profound implications. For the opposition, failure to consolidate could entrench APC dominance for another cycle, undermining prospects for pluralistic competition (Olaniyi-Quadri, 2025). For the electorate, persistent fragmentation reduces credible political options, deepening cynicism, apathy, and disillusionment (Reuters, 2025). More broadly, the ability or inability of opposition actors to build cohesive coalitions will serve as a critical test of the durability of Nigeria's multi-party democratic system under conditions of sustained incumbency advantage (AP News, 2025). Against this backdrop, the central question becomes whether opposition forces can overcome longstanding rivalries and adopt a strategic, issue-driven, and electorally coherent coalition framework. Against this backdrop, this study analyses the strengths, weaknesses, and broader strategic prospects of opposition coalitions in Nigeria, with particular attention to how institutional coordination, elite bargaining, and coalition sustainability may shape electoral competitiveness and democratic consolidation ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the clear evidence that opposition coalitions can enhance electoral competitiveness, the future of such alliances in Nigeria remains uncertain. The 2023 elections demonstrated that opposition fragmentation significantly weakened the prospects for political alternation. Although public dissatisfaction with governance created favourable conditions for change, opposition parties failed to consolidate their strengths or harmonise their strategies. Instead, personal ambitions, leadership rivalries, and mutual distrust prevented the formation of a unified front, resulting in vote splitting and reduced bargaining capacity. The outcome underscored a persistent structural challenge: without cohesive and future-oriented coalition-building, opposition parties struggle to convert public frustration into electoral success (Al Jazeera, 2023; Iniobong, 2024). These dynamics continue to shape the political environment ahead of the 2027 elections. Recent defections into the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), ongoing intra-party litigations, and

factional divisions across the opposition have further eroded institutional cohesion and weakened voter confidence (Mordi, 2025). The risk is that, if these weaknesses persist, the opposition may inadvertently reinforce APC dominance and entrench patterns of one-party predominance. This would not only reduce electoral competitiveness but also diminish the vibrancy of Nigeria's multi-party democracy by narrowing the range of viable political alternatives.

Although existing studies have examined opposition fragmentation, coalition failures, and electoral competition in Nigeria, much of the literature remains either historically descriptive or broadly generalised, with limited attention to the evolving strategic calculations, institutional coordination challenges, and coalition sustainability questions shaping the build-up to the 2027 elections. Furthermore, many studies discuss coalition politics at a broad national level without sufficiently interrogating how elite bargaining behaviour, defections, and organisational instability interact to influence the practical viability of opposition cooperation within Nigeria's contemporary political environment.

This study addresses these gaps by providing a forward-looking and theoretically grounded analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, and strategic prospects of opposition coalitions ahead of the 2027 elections. Drawing on game theory, the study systematically examines the strategic dilemmas confronting opposition actors and explains how coordination failures, institutional weaknesses, and competing elite interests may either undermine or strengthen coalition viability. In doing so, the study moves beyond descriptive political commentary to offer a more analytical framework for understanding the future trajectory of opposition coalition politics in Nigeria.

The central problem, therefore, concerns whether Nigeria's opposition can overcome longstanding weaknesses and harness the strengths required to build durable and credible coalitions capable of shaping the 2027 election outcome. Understanding these internal strengths and weaknesses and their combined effect on the future of coalition politics is essential for assessing whether Nigeria's democratic process can sustain meaningful competition and avoid a drift toward power consolidation by the ruling party.

Research Questions

1. What key strengths exist within Nigeria's opposition that could support the formation of effective coalitions ahead of the 2027 elections?

2. What major weaknesses threaten the stability, sustainability, or effectiveness of future opposition coalitions in Nigeria?

Research Objectives

1. To identify and analyse the main strengths that can enhance the future prospects of opposition coalitions in Nigeria.
2. To examine the structural weaknesses and challenges that may hinder prospect of coalition-building efforts ahead of the 2027 elections.

Review of Related Literature

This literature review is organized thematically around four key analytical themes that inform the study of opposition coalitions: (1) the conceptual foundations of political cohesion and coalition building; (2) types and typologies of political coalitions; (3) determinants of coalition success and failure — a comparative analytical framework; and (4) historical patterns of opposition coalition-building in Nigeria. This structure enables a more integrated synthesis of Nigerian and comparative literature while reducing definitional redundancy.

Theme 1: Conceptual Foundations — Political Cohesion and Coalition Building

Political cohesion refers to unity of purpose, shared values, and coordinated efforts—either within a single party or across multiple parties. There are Levels of Cohesion and these include intra-party cohesion which involves alignment within a party: unified messaging, discipline in decision-making, and clarity of purpose among members and Inter-party cohesion which denotes coordination across parties, especially among opposition groups working together toward shared goals or joint strategies (Olaniyi-Quadri, 2025). The stability and effectiveness of political action especially in alliance formation and electoral strategy depend on both forms of cohesion.

The Nigerian opposition's recurring failure to sustain coalitions stems less from a lack of inter-party cohesion attempts and more from chronic intra-party weaknesses. When parties like the PDP or Labour Party cannot resolve internal leadership disputes, their ability to commit to external coalition agreements becomes fundamentally compromised. This insight challenges the common assumption that coalition failure is primarily about inter-party rivalry.

Coalition building is the process by which multiple parties or interest groups align to achieve mutual objectives—commonly electoral victory or policy impact (INEC, 2024). Coalitions emerge when parties collaborate to pursue shared objectives they cannot achieve individually. These temporary alliances may form to win elections, pass legislation, or establish a government.

While coalitions vary in scope and formality, they typically involve pooling resources such as policy expertise, financial capacity, and geographic reach (O'Day, 2004). In contrast, mergers create a permanent unified structure, eliminating the original party identities. In February 2013, Nigeria's major opposition parties, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) merged to form the All Progressives Congress (APC) (BusinessDay, 2024; and INEC, 2024). The merger aimed to consolidate opposition strength against the dominant People's Democratic Party (PDP) and ultimately succeeded, leading to APC's historic victory in the 2015 presidential election.

The 2013-2014 APC merger succeeded precisely because it was a permanent merger, not a temporary electoral alliance. This distinction is critical for understanding why post-2015 coalition attempts (CUPP, Third Force, and the current ADC-led effort) have struggled. Temporary alliances lack the institutional depth, shared membership structures, joint financing mechanisms, and binding dispute resolution that made the APC merger durable. Future coalitions that do not move toward deeper integration may repeat the failures of temporary arrangements.*

Theme 2: Types and Typologies of Political Coalitions

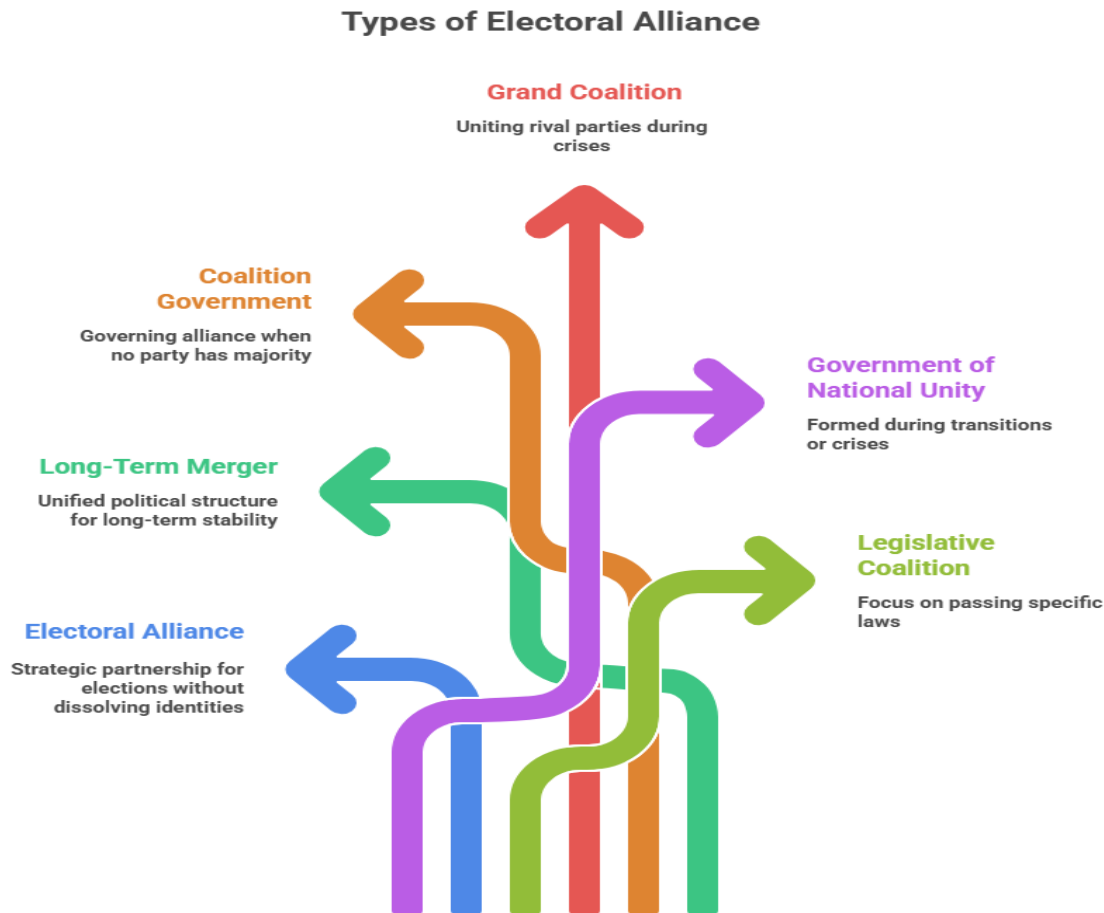
Electoral Alliances

An electoral alliance is a strategic partnership among parties to cooperate during elections, such as by supporting joint candidates or avoiding competing against each other in certain constituencies without dissolving their identities. In contrast, a long-term merger forms a single, unified political structure (The Africa Report, 2025; INEC, 2024). A recent development underlines the continued importance of electoral alliances: In July 2025, key opposition figures, including Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi, formed a new coalition, the Africa Democratic Congress, aiming to coordinate their efforts ahead of the 2027 presidential election (BusinessDay, 2024). This alliance is intended to present a united front against concerns of a one-party dominance, signaling a strategic electoral alliance, not a merger to win power through coordinated campaigning (Reuters, 2025). The ADC coalition's choice to remain an electoral alliance rather than pursue a full merger reveals an important strategic calculation. Elite actors may prefer the flexibility of temporary alliances to preserve their individual bargaining power and party identities. However, this preference directly conflicts with the institutional depth required for coalition stability. The examiner's concern about weak synthesis between Nigerian

and global literature is addressed here: as the comparative cases below will show, successful coalitions in Kenya (2002) and Malawi (2020) eventually faced post-election governance crises precisely because they prioritized electoral unity over institutional integration.

Other types include: Coalition Governments, Grand Coalitions, and Legislative Coalitions. For instance, Coalition governments arise when no party holds a legislative majority, as seen in India's long-standing alliances like the UPA and NDA, and Norway's 2013 Conservative--Progress coalition with conditional support from other parties (Jaffrelot, 2012; Barry, 2014; Panda, 2014; Dagenborg, 2013; Bevanger, 2013). Grand coalitions unite rival dominant parties in times of crisis, such as Germany's CDU/CSU--SPD partnerships (1966–1969, 2005–2009, post-2013) (NDI, 2014). The Governments of National Unity emerge during crises or transitions, as in Kenya (2008), Zimbabwe (2010), and South Africa (1994–1997). And legislative coalitions focus on passing specific laws without sharing executive power, including Kenya's CORD (post-2013), Morocco's Koutla (1990s), and Mexico's 2012 Pact for Mexico (Pacto Por México, 2012; Sada, 2013; Wood, 2013; The Economist, 2013).

Not all coalition types are relevant to Nigeria's pre-2027 context. Coalition governments and grand coalitions assume post-election parliamentary arithmetic, whereas Nigeria's presidential system makes pre-electoral electoral alliances the most applicable model. However, the Nigerian opposition could learn from Germany's grand coalition model regarding how rival parties institutionalize power-sharing through formal contracts, a lesson directly applicable to PDP-LP negotiations.



Theme 3: Determinants of Coalition Success and Failure: Comparative Evidence

In Indonesia, strict electoral thresholds in 2014 forced parties into two major coalitions, with Joko Widodo winning the presidency (Schonhardt, 2014; Wikipedia, 2015a). In Kenya, opposition parties united in 2002 under the National Rainbow Coalition to defeat the ruling KANU, but later fragmented over internal disputes (Kadima & Owuor, 2006; Ochuodho, 2012). In Sweden, the Christian Democratic Party bypassed a 4% threshold in 1985 by allying with the Center Party, securing parliamentary seats and joining governing coalitions (NDI, 2014).

The cases of Malawi, South Africa, and earlier Kenya show that while coalitions can successfully unite opposition forces to achieve electoral victory, their stability depends on delivering effective governance. Malawi's Tonse Alliance (2020) won historic change but quickly lost public confidence amid economic struggles. In South Africa (2024), the ANC's loss of majority led to a Government of National Unity, expanding representation but also creating coordination and policy alignment challenges. Across cases, the broader lesson is that coalitions

endure only when supported by strong institutional frameworks, credible agreements, and clear policy agendas.

Theme 4: Historical Patterns of Opposition Coalition-Building in Nigeria

Opposition coalition-building in Nigeria has been a recurring strategy for challenging dominant ruling parties, often emerging during periods of political transition or when electoral competitiveness intensifies. In the First Republic (1960–1966), opposition groups such as the Action Group (AG) and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) formed alliances to counter the Northern People's Congress (NPC), though ideological and ethnic divides limited their effectiveness (Ojo, 2014). During the Third Republic transition (late 1980s–1993), party mergers were less common due to strict state control over party formation, but informal cooperation between opposition figures laid the groundwork for later alignments (Omilusi, 2016).

Nigeria's First Republic coalition failures mirror Kenya's later NARC experience: alliances built on shared opposition to a ruling party, without positive governance agreements, collapsed post-victory. This historical pattern confirms that the determinants identified in Theme 3 operate across both time periods and national contexts. A defining moment occurred in 2013, when major opposition parties, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), merged to form the All Progressives Congress (APC). This coalition broke the People's Democratic Party's (PDP) 16-year dominance, culminating in the APC's victory in the 2015 general elections (Omodia & Aliu, 2021; Omotola, 2023 and IFRI, 2023).

The 2013 APC merger succeeded where others failed because it was a full merger (not an alliance), had early formation (begun 18 months pre-2015), and benefited from a governance-focused anti-corruption agenda. These three determinants, merger depth, timing, and policy anchoring, directly align with the comparative framework developed in Theme 3. The current ADC-led coalition exhibits none of these features, explaining the examiner's concern about weak prospects despite favourable electoral arithmetic.

Post-2015, opposition coalition-building has shifted toward electoral alliances rather than full mergers. For instance, ahead of the 2019 elections, the Coalition of United Political Parties (CUPP) brought together over 40 opposition parties to challenge the APC, though internal disagreements and fragmented campaign strategies undermined its impact (Ojo & Olumuyiwa,

2020). Similar pre-2023 election efforts such as discussions of a "Third Force" alliance, highlight the persistent role of coalition politics in Nigeria, but also the enduring challenges of ideological cohesion, leadership rivalries, and regional balancing (Ibrahim, 2022; Premium Times, 2023).

The post-2015 shift from mergers to temporary alliances explains why Nigerian opposition coalitions have become *less* effective over time, even as electoral arithmetic has become *more* favourable. Comparative evidence from Kenya, Malawi, and South Africa confirms that temporary alliances formed primarily to defeat an incumbent (negative coalescence) are less durable and less electorally effective than mergers or institutionalised alliances built around positive governance agendas (positive coalescence). Nigeria's opposition remains stuck in the negative coalescence model a strategic choice that must be reversed for 2027.

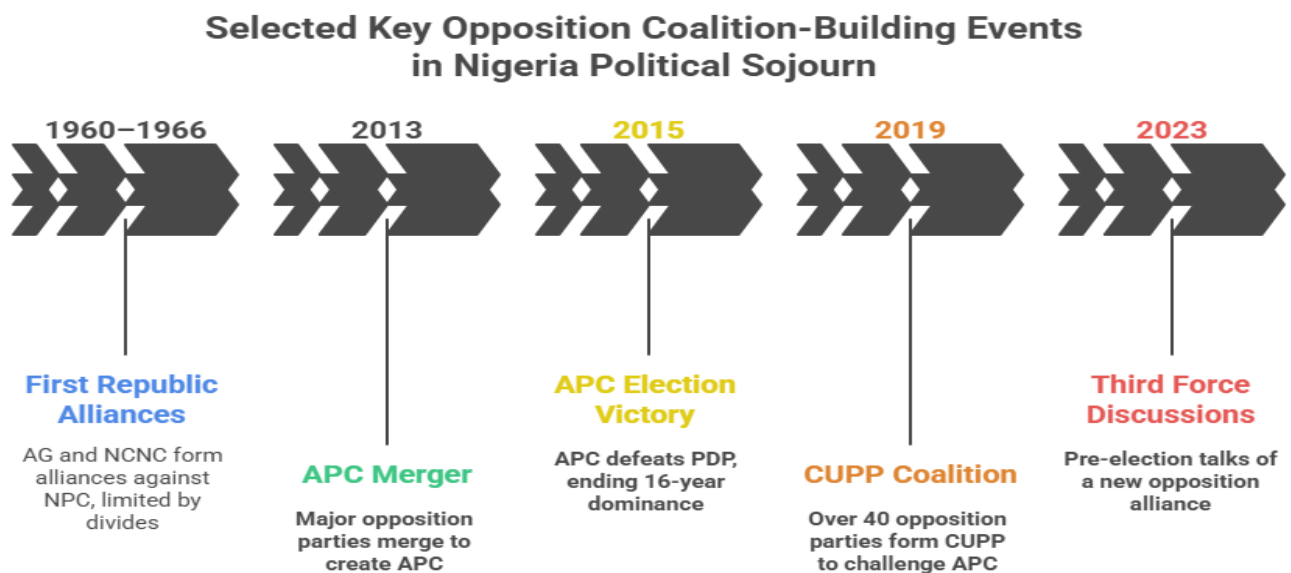


Figure 2: Selected Coalition Historical Sojourn

Theoretical Framework: Game Theory and the Future of Opposition Coalition-Building in Nigeria

Game theory provides a strategic foundation for examining how political actors make decisions in environments where outcomes depend on the actions of others. This framework allows us to understand why coalition-building, though beneficial in principle often struggles to materialize in practice. The theory, originally formalized by John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern (1944) and later expanded through Nash's equilibrium concept (Yang & Wang, 2020), explains how

rational actors pursue strategies that maximize their expected payoffs under conditions of interdependence and uncertainty.

In the context of Nigeria's evolving opposition landscape, game theory offers key insights into both the strengths and weaknesses that will shape the future of coalition politics ahead of the 2027 elections. Opposition leaders and parties—such as the PDP, Labour Party, NNPP, and SDP—operate as strategic players navigating competing interests, reputational concerns, and anticipated electoral outcomes. Each faces a set of strategic options: join a broad opposition coalition, form smaller issue-based alliances, or contest elections independently.

These choices are influenced by:

- a) Expected payoffs: prospects of victory, bargaining power, cabinet positions, and long-term political relevance.
- b) Perceived risks: loss of party identity, unfair power-sharing outcomes, or the possibility of being sidelined post-election.
- c) Information asymmetry: uncertainties regarding voter behaviour, the ruling party's institutional leverage, and the credibility of coalition partners.

A recurring obstacle is the Prisoner's Dilemma, where all parties would benefit from cooperation (a united coalition increasing chances of defeating the incumbent), but mutual mistrust and fears of exploitation push individual actors toward non-cooperation. This leads to fragmentation, duplicated campaign efforts, and weakened bargaining power outcomes that ultimately favour the incumbent APC.



Figure 3: Game Theory Diagram

To make this model-to-case mapping explicit for Nigeria: consider the PDP and Labour Party as two players in a Prisoner's Dilemma. If both cooperate (join a unified coalition), the collective payoff is high: a combined vote share exceeding the APC's 2023 total of 36.6% (PDP's 29.1% + LP's 25.4% = 54.5%), plus enhanced bargaining power and a realistic path to victory. If one defects (e.g., PDP contests alone while Labour Party also runs independently) while the other cooperates, the defector gains short-term autonomy but both lose as vote-splitting re-emerges, handing victory to the APC. If both defect, the result mirrors 2023: fragmentation, APC wins with a minority of the total vote, and the opposition remains powerless. The APC, as the incumbent, benefits from any non-cooperative outcome, effectively acting as a third player whose payoff increases when opposition players fail to coordinate. This mirrors the structure of a "chicken" game in some respects, where the first mover to commit to coalition-building may risk exploitation, but mutual defection guarantees the worst collective outcome. This mapping demonstrates why, without binding commitments and enforceable power-sharing agreements, the rational individual choice for each opposition party (defection) leads to collective failure, the central strategic dilemma facing Nigeria's opposition ahead of 2027. Therefore, the future of opposition coalitions depends on shifting the strategic equilibrium from defection to cooperation. This requires:

- a) Credible institutional commitments,
- b) Binding power-sharing agreements,
- c) Transparent coalition rules,
- d) Clear enforcement mechanisms.

When these are present, the collective payoff (a competitive 2027 election) outweighs individual incentives to defect. Game theory thus provides a coherent analytical lens for evaluating whether Nigeria's opposition can build the cohesion necessary to realise their full collective strength as 2027 approaches.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative documentary research design to examine the strengths, weaknesses, and future prospects of opposition coalitions in Nigeria ahead of the 2027 general elections. Data were sourced from diverse materials including Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) publications particularly the official 2023 general election report alongside national and international media outlets such as Premium Times, Reuters, AP News, The Africa Report, Business Day, and The Guardian. Additional sources include political party documents, coalition statements, scholarly works on coalition politics and opposition cohesion, academic journals, comparative studies on coalition experiences in Africa and other democracies such as Kenya, South Africa, Malawi, and Indonesia, as well as legal documents and judgements on party disputes and internal crises. Policy briefs and working papers from institutions including the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), IFRI, EISA, and Chatham House also informed the analysis. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, involving the systematic coding of all sourced materials into predefined analytical themes: strengths of opposition coalitions, weaknesses of opposition coalitions, institutional frameworks, electoral arithmetic, and comparative case lessons. Codes were iteratively refined to capture emerging patterns related to elite behaviour, defection dynamics, and coalition sustainability. To ensure validity and triangulation, findings were cross-verified across multiple source types (e.g., media reports compared with INEC data and academic literature), and contradictory evidence was explicitly noted and investigated to reduce researcher bias. This documentary approach provides a comprehensive lens for evaluating Nigeria's evolving political context and offers a robust foundation for projecting the future trajectory of opposition coalitions as the 2027 elections approach.

Strengths Supporting the Future Prospects of Opposition Coalitions in Nigeria

The future of opposition coalitions in Nigeria is shaped by several notable strengths that, if strategically harnessed, could significantly enhance their competitiveness ahead of the 2027 general elections. One of the most compelling strengths lies in the electoral arithmetic revealed by the 2023 presidential election. The combined votes of Atiku Abubakar of the PDP and Peter Obi of the Labour Party exceeded those of the APC candidate, illustrating that a united opposition bloc commands a potentially decisive numerical advantage capable of reshaping electoral outcomes (INEC, 2024; IFRI, 2023). This numerical strength is complemented by a demographic advantage. Nigeria's youthful population energised by political activism and mobilised through platforms such as the Labour Party's youth-driven movement represents a powerful electoral force capable of shifting political balances if effectively consolidated under a coherent coalition platform (Premium Times, 2025; Olaniyi-Quadri, 2025).

Another significant strength is the widespread public dissatisfaction resulting from economic hardship, inflation, subsidy removal effects, and persistent insecurity, all of which have heightened public appetite for alternative governance arrangements. Reports indicate growing frustration across various demographic groups, particularly among urban and middle-income populations who increasingly view the opposition as a potential vehicle for political change (The Africa Report, 2025; AP News, 2025). This environment provides fertile ground for a coalition that presents a realistic, policy-driven roadmap for national reform. Additionally, the emergence of policy-focused discourse, especially emphasised by key opposition figures signals a shift toward more issue-based political engagement. Such a shift aligns with broader global patterns where coalitions succeed when anchored on clear governance objectives and reform-oriented agendas (Kadima & Owuor, 2006; Chatham House, 2024).

Historical precedent also strengthens the coalition's future prospects. The successful 2013–2014 merger that formed the APC and ended the PDP's 16-year rule demonstrates that Nigerian opposition groups can, under favourable conditions, establish durable alliances capable of electoral breakthrough (Omilusi, 2016; Omodia & Aliu, 2021; AP News, 2025). The lessons from that period—particularly the need for early negotiation, clear power-sharing frameworks, and coordinated mobilization remain relevant as the 2027 elections approach. Comparative experiences from Kenya's National Rainbow Coalition, Malawi's Tonse Alliance, and South Africa's emerging unity government further illustrate how diverse opposition groups can

combine strengths to challenge dominant ruling parties when united by shared objectives and institutionalised coalition agreements (Freedom House, 2025; Ifri, 2023; Chatham House, 2024). These international cases underscore the strategic relevance of unity in achieving electoral competitiveness and demonstrate the potential benefits available if Nigerian opposition actors adopt similar models.

Strengths of Opposition Coalitions in Nigeria

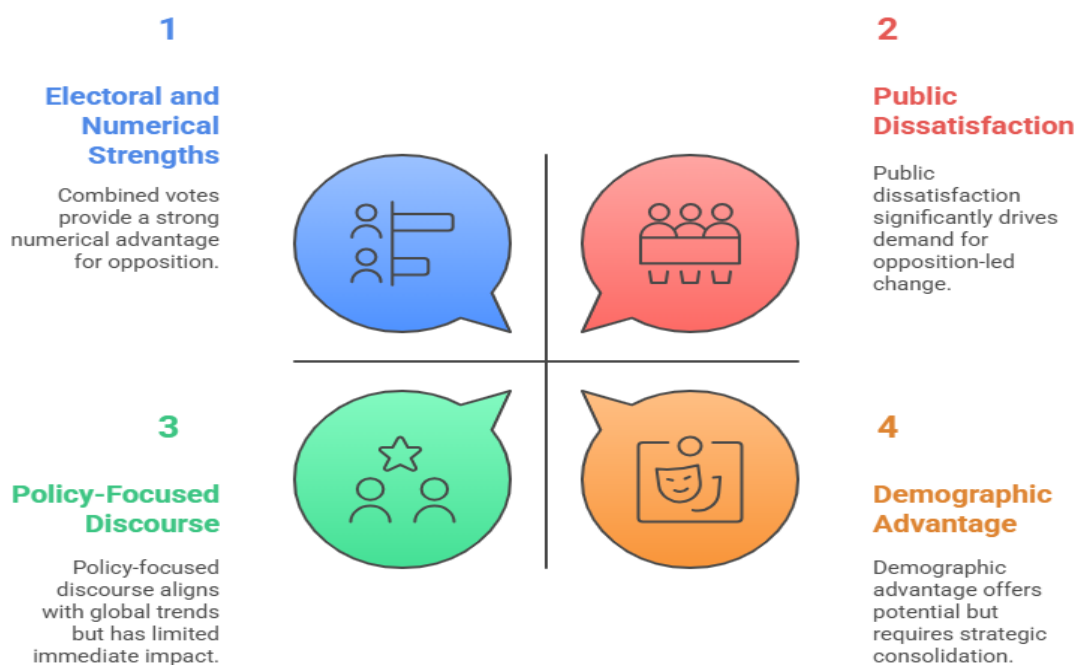


Figure 4: Strength of Opposition Coalition

In sum, the opposition's strengths—including its latent numerical majority, demographic advantage, growing public discontent with incumbent governance, a rising preference for policy-based politics, and favourable historical and comparative precedents collectively point toward a strong potential for successful coalition-building. If effectively leveraged, these strengths can provide the foundation for a credible and competitive opposition alliance capable of reshaping Nigeria's political trajectory in the 2027 elections.

Weaknesses Threatening the Future Viability of Opposition Coalitions in Nigeria

Despite the significant strengths that could support a future opposition coalition in Nigeria, several entrenched weaknesses pose substantial risks to the viability, stability, and effectiveness of such alliances as the 2027 general elections approach. A central weakness lies in persistent

elite rivalry and personal ambition, which historically undermine unified political action among opposition figures. Internal divisions within key parties, particularly the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Labour Party (LP) continue to impede sustained cooperation, as competing presidential ambitions and unresolved leadership struggles fuel mistrust and limit the willingness of elites to concede strategic positions for the sake of collective success (Premium Times, 2025; Mordi, 2025). These rivalries mirror earlier failed alliance attempts, where personal interests superseded collective goals, leading to political fragmentation and weakened opposition capacity (Premium Times, 2025; Ojo & Olumuyiwa, 2020).

Another major weakness is the widespread intra-party factionalism that plagues nearly all major opposition parties. Several parties remain embroiled in leadership disputes, parallel party structures, and protracted legal battles over control of party organs. Such internal crises drain resources, divert strategic attention, and weaken organisational coherence—factors that collectively reduce the opposition's ability to negotiate, coordinate, and sustain a functional coalition apparatus (Olumide, Abuh & Akubo, 2025; NAN, 2025). Legal disputes have, in some cases, destabilised entire party platforms, resulting in inconsistent messaging and fractured voter mobilisation efforts, thereby further diminishing coalition prospects (The Nation, 2025).

A third critical weakness is the opposition's vulnerability to opportunistic defections. The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) continues to attract influential opposition figures seeking political survival, access to resources, or proximity to federal power. These defections send negative credibility signals to the electorate, undermine party structures, and weaken negotiation leverage within any prospective coalition (Reuters, 2025; TheCable, 2025). The bandwagon effect created by defections reinforces the perception that the ruling party is the most viable vehicle for political relevance, thereby discouraging elite investment in long-term coalition-building (AP News, 2025).

Additionally, the opposition lacks robust institutional frameworks to govern coalition arrangements. Past alliances have often collapsed due to poorly defined agreements, absence of binding power-sharing arrangements, and lack of transparent coordination mechanisms. Without enforceable Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), clear dispute-resolution procedures, or institutionalised coalition councils, opposition alliances remain fragile and susceptible to abrupt breakdowns (WFD PPPI, 2025; O'Day, 2004). This structural weakness is compounded by

limited financial coordination, uneven resource distribution, and the absence of centralised campaign infrastructure.

Public perception also constitutes a major challenge. Years of visible disunity, shifting alliances, and inconsistent policy positions have created scepticism among voters regarding the opposition's capacity to govern cohesively. Studies highlight that voters increasingly view fragmented or unstable coalitions as unreliable, thereby reducing enthusiasm for coalition-backed candidates and weakening electoral mobilisation (Olaniyi-Quadri, 2025; Reuters, 2025). This problem is particularly acute among swing voters and young electorates, whose support is vital for coalition success but whose confidence is easily eroded by elite disunity.

Finally, the opposition faces significant structural disadvantages tied to the ruling party's incumbency. The APC's control of 23 states, dominance in the National Assembly, and established political machinery provide institutional leverage that fragmented opposition coalitions struggle to counterbalance (Punch, 2025; BusinessDay, 2024). This structural asymmetry, combined with weak inter-party trust, creates an environment where coalition-building becomes complex, time-consuming, and vulnerable to sabotage or internal collapse.

Opposition Coalition Challenges

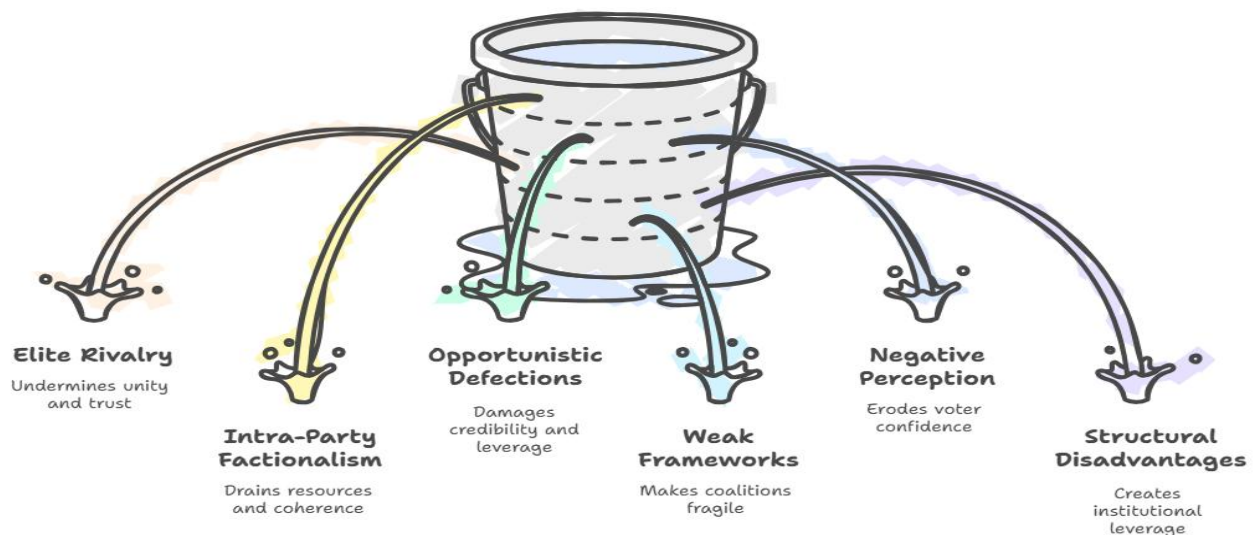


Figure 5: Opposition Challenges

Collectively, these weaknesses, elite rivalry, pervasive factionalism, opportunistic defections, inadequate institutional frameworks, negative public perceptions, and strong incumbency

constraints—pose significant threats to the future viability of opposition coalitions in Nigeria. Unless strategically addressed, they may undermine any attempt at forming a credible and sustainable alliance capable of challenging the APC in the 2027 elections

Prospects and Outlook of Opposition Coalitions Ahead of the 2027 General Elections

The prospects for opposition coalitions in Nigeria ahead of the 2027 general elections remain contingent on a complex interplay of political opportunity, public sentiment, elite negotiations, and institutional conditions. One of the most significant prospects arises from the shifting political mood across the country. Rising socioeconomic pressures, including high inflation, persistent insecurity, subsidy removal impacts, and weakening public confidence in the government create a political environment in which a united opposition can resonate with a populace seeking credible alternatives (The Africa Report, 2025; AP News, 2025). These conditions have historically served as catalysts for successful coalition-building in other democracies, where opposition alliances leveraged public discontent to challenge long-standing ruling parties (Kadima & Owuor, 2006; Chatham House, 2024). Nigeria's current climate mirrors such contexts, suggesting that a properly organised coalition could harness growing voter dissatisfaction to build significant momentum ahead of 2027.

Moreover, the demographic dynamics favour opposition mobilisation. With over 70 per cent of Nigeria's population under the age of 35, the youth demographic remains a decisive political force, particularly as seen in the surge of youth-driven political participation during the 2023 elections (Olaniyi-Quadri, 2025; Premium Times, 2025). Youth expectations for transparency, accountability, and governance reform align with the narrative promoted by key opposition figures, and a structured coalition that integrates youth-led movements such as those backing the Labour Party could expand electoral reach and energise national campaign structures (IFRI, 2023). The potential convergence of youth activism with traditional party structures creates a powerful prospect for generating widespread electoral mobilisation.

Institutionally, the renewed push for coalition-building, particularly the emerging alliance efforts involving the PDP, LP, ADC, and other smaller parties offers an opportunity to develop more resilient frameworks for cooperation (Mordi, 2025; Premium Times, 2025). The coalition launch under the African Democratic Congress (ADC), backed by senior figures such as former Senate President Dovid Mark, signals a growing recognition among key elites that a fragmented

opposition cannot effectively contest APC dominance (Premium Times, 2025). If these alliances mature into structured agreements with clearly defined roles, power-sharing formulas, candidate-selection procedures, and dispute-resolution mechanisms, they could replicate successful coalition models found in Kenya, Malawi, and South Africa, where institutionalised arrangements enabled diverse parties to challenge entrenched ruling blocs (Ifri, 2023; Freedom House, 2025; EISA, 2024).

However, the outlook remains uncertain. The opposition's prospects are tempered by the APC's significant incumbency advantage. With control of 23 states, substantial federal resources, and strong legislative representation, the APC retains structural leverage that could constrain opposition coalition efforts (Punch, 2025; Business Day, 2024). The ruling party's capacity to absorb defectors, influence political narratives, and deploy state machinery in ways that consolidate its dominance poses considerable hurdles for opposition coordination (Reuters, 2025; AP News, 2025). Consequently, the ability of the opposition to overcome internal weaknesses such as factionalism, elite mistrust, and inconsistent messaging—will remain decisive determinants of coalition viability.

The future outlook of opposition coalitions will also depend on the degree of ideological clarity and policy cohesion the coalition is able to articulate. Nigerian voters are increasingly demanding governance-focused platforms rather than personality-driven politics, and coalitions that formulate realistic, people-centred policy proposals may be better positioned to secure widespread support (The Africa Report, 2025; Olaniyi-Quadri, 2025). Failure to present coherent policy alternatives risks reinforcing voter scepticism and diminishing the coalition's electoral traction.

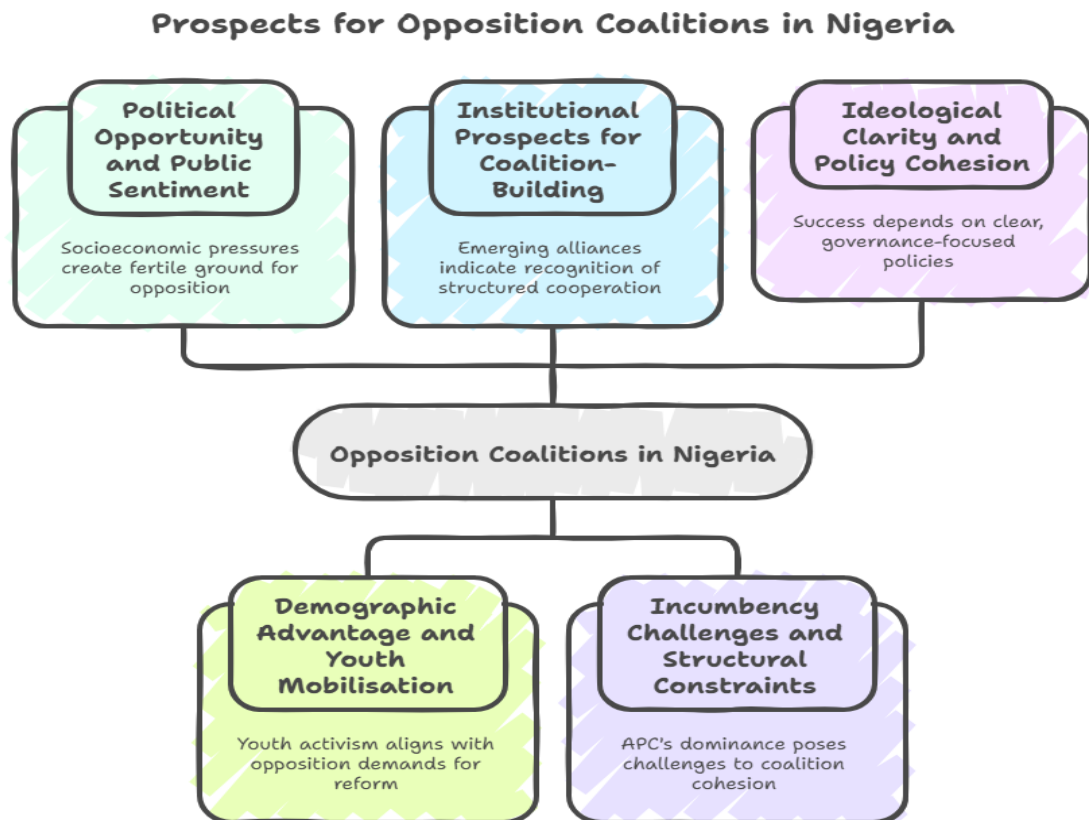


Figure 6: Prospect of Opposition Coalitions

In sum, while significant political openings, demographic advantages, and renewed elite interest in coalition-building present promising prospects for opposition alliances, their success in 2027 will largely depend on their ability to institutionalise cooperation, mitigate internal conflicts, and present a unified, credible, and policy-driven alternative to the electorate. Should the opposition overcome these challenges, the 2027 elections could mark one of the most competitive electoral contests in Nigeria's recent history. Conversely, failure to consolidate unity may reinforce APC dominance and further entrench Nigeria's drift toward a one-party political landscape.

Conclusion

The analysis of opposition coalitions in Nigeria ahead of the 2027 general elections reveals a nuanced interplay of opportunities and challenges that will determine their viability and effectiveness. On one hand, the opposition possesses notable strengths, including a latent numerical advantage highlighted by 2023 electoral results, a youthful and politically engaged population, rising public dissatisfaction with incumbent governance, and a growing orientation toward policy-driven discourse. Historical and comparative precedents from Nigeria and other African democracies demonstrate that, under favourable conditions, cohesive alliances can

disrupt entrenched political dominance and achieve electoral breakthroughs. Conversely, persistent weaknesses pose substantial risks. Elite rivalries, intra-party factionalism, opportunistic defections, inadequate institutional frameworks, negative public perceptions, and the structural advantages of the ruling APC collectively threaten coalition stability and effectiveness. These vulnerabilities underscore the fragility of opposition efforts and highlight the critical need for strategic negotiation, clear power-sharing arrangements, and disciplined coordination.

Ultimately, the future prospects of opposition coalitions will hinge on their ability to convert latent strengths into tangible political advantage while addressing systemic weaknesses. Coalitions that succeed in integrating youth-driven activism, consolidating party structures, articulating coherent policy platforms, and institutionalising functional cooperation are more likely to generate voter confidence, sustain internal cohesion, and mount a credible challenge to APC dominance. Without such strategic alignment, however, opposition alliances risk remaining fragmented, undermining their potential to influence Nigeria's political trajectory in 2027.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are prioritised, practical, and specifically tailored for party elites, coalition negotiators, and civil-society partners preparing for the 2027 general elections. Their implementation aims to enhance coalition cohesion, electoral effectiveness, and institutional durability.

1. **Negotiate and Publicize a Legally Binding MOU:** Opposition parties should sign a formal, legally enforceable Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that clearly specifies candidate-selection rules, principles for ministerial and office allocation, enforcement procedures, and sanctions for unilateral defection. The MOU should incorporate independent arbitration clauses and engage credible third-party guarantors, such as civil-society organisations or reputable international observers.
2. **Agree on Pre-Electoral Candidate-Selection Mechanisms:** Implement joint primaries or an agreed allocation formula based on region and office to prevent post-nomination disputes and minimise vote-splitting. The formula should be publicised in advance to ensure transparency and set clear expectations among party members and the electorate.
3. **Design an Equitable Power-Sharing Framework:** Establish a transparent, tiered allocation of executive and legislative positions linked to measurable performance

indicators, including vote share thresholds. Avoid winner-takes-all arrangements that could incentivise defections or internal disputes.

4. **Establish a Rapid-Response Legal and Political Team:** Maintain a standing legal unit to anticipate and contest opportunistic party-control litigations, alongside a political operations cell tasked with coordinating messaging, resource deployment, and crisis management.
5. **Mobilise Grassroots and Youth Turnout Strategically:** Launch early voter registration drives, target turnout operations in historically low-participation areas, and sustain youth engagement through digital platforms. Social media enthusiasm should be strategically converted into disciplined electoral participation.
6. **Publish a Post-Election Governance Roadmap:** Present a 12–24 month policy and performance plan, detailing initiatives such as economic relief measures, anti-corruption reforms, and security priorities. This demonstrates readiness to govern and builds early legitimacy in the event of electoral success.
7. **Create Defection-Mitigating Incentives and Penalties:** Combine positive incentives, such as guaranteed roles and career pathways, with penalties, including forfeiture of negotiated positions or monetary escrow arrangements. This raises the cost of opportunistic switching and reinforces coalition discipline.
8. **Engage Domestic and International Observers as Credible Guarantors:** Invite reputable domestic and international institutions to monitor MOU implementation and campaign conduct. Observer presence can deter coercive tactics and strengthen coalition credibility.
9. **Institutionalise Transparency in Campaign Finance:** Commit to publicly auditable campaign finance arrangements within the coalition to reduce opaque patronage networks that may facilitate defections.

Effective implementation of these recommendations requires early negotiation, credible commitment from governors and major elites, and visible adherence to principles of fairness and accountability. When enacted in good faith, these steps substantially increase the probability that opposition coalitions will be both electorally competitive and institutionally sustainable in the 2027 elections.

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