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FROM ONE-PARTY PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY TO MULTIPARTY LIBERAL DEMOCRACY IN ZAMBIA SINCE 1990: REALITY OR ILLUSION?

ABSTRACT

From the late 1980s, culminating in 1990, Zambia experienced a sustained call to end the one-party political system. This wave of a fresh wind of change resulted from the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which aroused the Democratic Wind of change, first in Eastern Europe and later in Africa in the early 1990s. It is also important to note that this was more powerful and contagious than perhaps the wind of change in the 1960s, which saw the end of colonial rule in Africa. Almost all in Zambia embraced it. In 1990, President Kenneth David Kaunda, whose United National Independence Party (UNIP) ruled Zambia for over 27 years, amended the constitution to facilitate the registration of opposition political parties.

The re-introduction of multiparty democracy in 1990 after 18 years of one-party rule was heralded as a milestone in the political history of Zambia. Thus, several political parties participated when the first multiparty elections were held in October 1991. The newly created Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) won the elections. The founders were men and women from different backgrounds whose only shared vision was to remove the UNIP regime from power and introduce liberal democracy in the country. Consequently, the MMD began to crack and splinter political parties emerged from it.

This paper examines the failure of democratic consolidation and why the democratisation process was still weak 30 years since the reintroduction of liberal democracy. The paper attempts to answer the following question: What lessons were missed in the historical

institutionalisation that underpinned other democratising nations that succeeded. The seventh tripartite elections were held on 12th August 2021, marking 30 years of liberal democracy. Yet, liberal democracy appears weaker than ever before: What is the root cause of this situation?

Keywords: *Autocracy, Democracy, Ethnicity, Multi-partyism, Regionalism, Tripartite Elections, Zambia*

1. INTRODUCTION

The change of government in our country that took place following the general elections of 31 October 1991 was not just a change of government like in the United States of Africa or the United Kingdom, where a new administration comes in after parliament and Presidential elections. No, ours was a transformation of the political system, from one based on the supremacy of a political party which was espoused by the ruling UNIP, in its constitution and practice, to a totally new system where the will and consent of the people is the basis of power and legitimacy of government.¹

The above quotation clearly demonstrates the excitement that the democratic revolution experienced in 1991 brought to Zambians. Undoubtedly, the October 1991 parliamentary and presidential general elections were as significant as the October 1962 elections held under the unpopular and complex constitution conceived by the British Colonial Secretary, Ian MacLeod.² John Mupanga Mwanakatwe observed that “the process of reintroducing multiparty politics in Zambia was not easy after 18 years of single-party rule”.³ Although it was clear by the late 1980s that the political system needed to be reformed, advocates of multiparty politics met many obstacles.

President Kenneth David Kaunda amended the constitution, and in October 1991, Presidential and Parliamentary elections were held under the amended constitution. The UNIP lost the elections to the MMD, whose mandate was to ensure that democracy would not be denied to Zambians again. Yet, within months of the MMD’s ascendancy to power, it faced challenges over alleged failure to implement political reforms promised during the run-up to the October elections. Although the government had changed and rhetoric had changed, the basic pattern of Zambian politics remained the same. It is arguable to suggest that the single party

1 D Chanda, *Democracy in Zambia: Key speeches of President Chiluba 1991-92* (Lusaka: Africa Press Trust, 1993), p. 1.

2 JM Mwanakatwe, *End of Kaunda era* (Lusaka: Multimedia Publications, 1994), p.36.

3 Mwanakatwe, *End of Kaunda era*, p. 36.

syndrome, characteristic of the one-party era, slowly replaced the much talked about multiparty liberal democracy. This was evidently strong during President Frederick Chiluba's second term and indeed in the period after the Levy Patrick Mwanawasa administration.

When Zambia reintroduced multiparty politics in 1991, the country witnessed "a host of strange splinter groups [which] presented their papers so that they [could] campaign in Zambia's forthcoming multiparty elections".⁴ By March 1991, at least seven new political parties had lodged their papers with the Registrar of Societies for certification. These included the MMD, the National Democratic Alliance (NADA), the Multi-racial Party (MP), the Theoretical Spiritual Political Party (TSPP), the People's Liberation Party (PLP), the Democratic Party (DP) and the Movement for Democratic Process (MDP).⁵ These parties joined UNIP in the race to Manda Hill as Zambia's Parliament is popularly known. The significance of the multiplicity of political parties was that, for the first time in many years in the political history of Zambia, Zambians enthusiastically responded to the challenge and spirit of liberal democracy or multipartyism. For all practical purposes, Zambia was truly a multiparty democracy. Yet, in reality, at least then, only UNIP and the MMD, which spearheaded the campaign for multipartyism, were real contenders for the formation of a new government in a multiparty political system. The other parties lacked clear leadership or platform and appeared to represent eccentric elements. They existed only on paper because they did not have elected Members in Parliament.⁶

While this multiplicity of political parties before the October 1991 general elections was lauded as a symbol of the freedom of association, it was nonetheless an indicator for problems of liberal democracy in a developing country. The MMD began to experience similar problems UNIP had experienced as a dominant political party in the First Republic. The MMD was born out of a coalition of many interests that generally agreed that there was a need to remove the Kaunda regime from power. Once the Kaunda regime was removed from power, the various interest groups began to look more towards their own interests as opposed to those of the MMD. Accusations and counter-accusations led to resignations which in turn led to the birth of new political parties. It was not long before President Chiluba began to face mounting criticism of authoritarianism and corruption. Some MMD members re-joined UNIP while others founded new political groupings. The coalescing of politicians around self-interests at the expense of national or group interests

4 *New African*, March 1991, p.18.

5 *New African*, March 1991, p.18.

6 AW Chanda, "Zambia's fledgling democracy: Prospect for the future", *Zambia Law Journal* 25 (28), 1993, p.142.

worked against national interests and the spirit of liberal democracy. This process also threatened the growth of a political society in which politicians of various interests and backgrounds were expected to work together for the nation's common good and to champion the liberal democratic ideals.

Thus, it was the birth of the National Party (NP) in 1993, the Zambia Democratic Congress (ZDC) in 1995, the Liberal Progressive Front (LPF) in 1994, the National Lima Party (NLP), now the Lima Party (LP) in 1996 and the Agenda for Zambia (AZ) in 1996, and later the United Party for National Development (UPND) and the Patriotic Front (PF), which have had the greatest impact on the politics of Zambia, as will be discussed in the article. The formation of these political parties, all of which broke away from the MMD, signified the mixed fortunes of multipartyism in the Third Republic.⁷ Furthermore, by 1996 there were over 37 registered political parties in Zambia. Of these, only UNIP, the NP and the ruling MMD were represented in the 1991-96 Parliament.

The Third Republic in Zambian politics has generated the most heated debate as to the theory and practice of multiparty liberal democracy in the political history of Zambia.⁸ The political process and practice have been the most criticised in the history of Zambia by political activists and some scholars. Unlike the Second Republic, the Third Republic was relatively open and therefore accommodated divergent views and interests. Consequently, the political leadership in the MMD was openly attacked and criticised in the crudest ways at times.⁹ Various issues generated this criticism or support. First, there was the constitution, especially as amended in 1996, as well as the constitution making process under the National Constitution Conference (NCC), which began in 2007 and completed its work in 2010. The presidential clause and the qualifications for candidature were the most criticised. In addition to this was the registration of voters under Nikuv Computers Israel Limited, which the government contracted to update and register voters in preparation for the 1996 Presidential and Parliamentary elections. For some reason, Nikuv Computers Israel Limited was widely believed to specialise in

7 See, BJ Phiri, "The mixed fortunes of multipartyism in Zambia's third republic: democracy or mobocracy?", *Journal of Humanities* 3, 2001, pp. 84-109. Between 1964 and 1972 Zambia was a multiparty democracy and this period was referred to as the First Republic. From 1973 to 1990 Zambia was a one-party state with only one political party, UNIP. This era was referred to Second Republic. From 1991 to the present Zambia returned to a multiparty political system and is in the Third Republic.

8 The First Republic was from 1964 to 1973, the Second Republic was from 1973 to 1991 and the Third Republic was from 1991 to the present.

9 *The Post*, 12 October 2001. He referred to President Chiluba as a fool and that all who voted for him are fools. That he got away with it shows the level of tolerance under MMD. In the UNIP era Mwanza would have been detained for similar remarks on the president.

rigging election results in favour of the ruling political party.¹⁰ Consequently, opposition political parties, led by UNIP, championed a campaign to discredit the government's use of the Nikuv Computers Israel Limited. This, among other reasons, led to UNIP's decision to boycott the 1996 general elections.

Then there was the issue of the economy and its performance. There was a cry, especially between opposition politicians and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and civil society, that poverty levels worsened since the MMD came to power in 1991.¹¹ However, Alfred Winstone Chanda observed that the MMD had been most successful in the economic field and that the "economic reforms [had] not been matched with political reform".¹² Nonetheless, the structural reforms of the economy through the privatisation of parastatals resulted in mass redundancies and retrenchments. This, in turn, caused mass poverty, particularly among the urban population. This increasingly became a source of concern by opposition political parties and civil society. As the MMD was halfway through its second term, it appeared incapable of dealing with the problem. Instead, the MMD paid more attention to remaining in power and seeking an amendment of the constitution to facilitate President Chiluba's third term bid. This resulted in several ministers and Members of Parliament resigning from the MMD.

This move forced by-elections in the affected constituencies. The MMD won contested seats, while the NP won the remaining five. While the by-election results served to strengthen the opposition in parliament, the MMD, nonetheless, remained firmly in control of the political situation in the country. The MMD further demonstrated that unlike UNIP in the First Republic, it could deal with the intra-party problems differently by allowing those dissatisfied to leave. While UNIP celebrated the departure of these members, it did not directly benefit from the resignations. However, the by-election results that followed demonstrated the fragility of multiparty democracy in Zambia because the opposition parties in parliament were not very strong. Thus, between 1991 and 1996, three political parties were represented in Parliament. Multipartyism was in place, though the ruling MMD was clearly overrepresented in parliament in much the same way that UNIP was in the First Republic. The Speaker of the National Assembly, Dr Robinson Nabulyato, decided that in the spirit of multiparty democracy UNIP would be

10 See, JK van Ndonge, "Reflections on donors, opposition and popular will in the 1996 Zambian general elections", *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 1 (6), 1998, pp. 77-99.

11 van Ndonge, "Reflections on donors, opposition and popular will in the 1996 Zambian general elections", pp. 77-99.

12 Chanda, "Zambia's fledgling democracy", p. 135.

recognised as the official opposition party in parliament, although it did not meet the criteria for that recognition. This recognition was the opposite of his decision on ANC in the First Republic. This situation lasted until 1996, after which there was no official opposition in parliament. It was only after the 2001 elections that the UPND and later after the 2006 elections that the PF were respectively recognised as official opposition parties in parliament because they had sufficient numbers in the house.

The MMD faced mass resignations by some of its founder members as the first MMD mandate was finishing. The major player was Dean Mung'omba, then Deputy Minister at the National Commission for Development Planning (NCDP). Mung'omba and others founded the Zambia Democratic Congress (ZDC), which soon emerged as a formidable political party and soon surpassed the NP in popularity. Undoubtedly, Dean Mung'omba projected himself as the next president of Zambia. He rated himself so highly that he believed that he would win the 1996 presidential elections. His television campaign advertisements were electrifying and persuasive. At the individual level, he was perhaps only matched to President Chiluba. Despite this projection, Mung'omba performed poorly during the elections. He hailed Zambians for turning up in their thousands to cast their votes.¹³ He further implored the winners and losers to ensure peace and stability continued so that the democratic process was not derailed. Yet once the results were announced and Mung'omba realised that he had lost to President Chiluba, he refused to recognise the results claiming that the MMD rigged the elections.

Nonetheless, the 1996 Presidential and Parliamentary elections were heavily contested. This was yet another demonstration by Zambians that they had taken multiparty liberal democracy seriously. In the end, however, the opposition's performance was a dismal failure leading to the MMD returning to power easily. Several reasons can be cited to explain this poor performance by the opposition. Most opposition parties entered the race ill-prepared. As the NP executive secretary in Ndola observed, "the question of finance or lack of it, played a significant role in influencing the last [1996] elections".¹⁴ The NP candidate further observed that, "mediocre performance by the opposition parties cannot be attributed solely to malpractice by the MMD as most opposition parties may want us to believe".¹⁵ These views were also expressed by a ZDC losing candidate who pointed out that while his party spent large sums of money on the presidential campaign, ZDC parliamentary candidates entered the race with no resources at all. The opposition parties were obviously disadvantaged compared to MMD candidates.

13 *Times of Zambia*, 19 November 1996.

14 *Times of Zambia*, 29 July 1997.

15 *Times of Zambia*, 29 July 1997.

Opposition parties also suffered from a lack of grassroots support and party structures to spearhead their campaigns. Some opposition parties fielded ill-prepared and inexperienced candidates. The NLP, for example, made an open invitation to anyone willing to be nominated on their party ticket. Party membership, therefore, appeared not to have been a requirement. Evidently, the NLP could not have been considered a serious contender in the competition for power. With UNIP boycotting the elections, the MMD had an easy task of retaining its grip on power. MMD's position was further made easy by the fact that only a minor proportion of the Zambian population was involved in political life. This resulted from apathy, which developed during the 27 years when UNIP monopolised power and exercised excessive control over all aspects of social life.

The plurality of opposition parties, while demonstrating the vibrancy of multipartyism in Zambia, also helped the MMD to easily win the 1996, 2001, and 2006 elections. Although voices of dissent against the MMD government were legion, because of their divided approach to dealing with the perceived shortcomings of the MMD government, the ruling party easily ran over the opposition. Instead of acknowledging this problem, the opposition parties in Zambia were engaged in some unproductive politicking, like participating in the burning of voters' cards. UNIP, which boycotted the 1996 elections, championed these unproductive and less than democratic methods of seeking redress in a democratic nation. UNIP was the largest and the most experienced political party. Its decision to boycott the 1996 presidential and parliamentary elections affected the outcome of those elections. Thus, contrary to President Chiluba's claim that his election to office and a majority of MMD candidates to parliament signified Zambia's achievement of the democratic ideal, the country remained a *de facto* one-party state because of the poor organisation of the opposition. The 1996-2001 parliament did not have an official opposition party because none of the opposition parties in parliament was large enough to qualify for recognition as the official opposition party in parliament. Not even the combined opposition members of parliament with Independent members of parliament met the requirement to be officially recognised as such. Thus, while Zambia was politically stable in the first ten years of the Third Republic, its democracy remained fragile because the country lacked a credible opposition.

2. ETHNICITY AND REGIONALISM: CHALLENGES FOR THE THIRD REPUBLIC

Ethnicity and regionalism have been considered as the only lasting forms of political association in most sub-Saharan Africa because the societies are culturally heterogeneous. Bertha Osei-Hwedie suggested that multiparty elections did not lead to social or ideological divisions. Instead, they emphasised the ethnic composition of the population and mutual hostility between ethnic groups.¹⁶ Ethnicity and regionalism, with the behaviour of the political elites, are said to account for the major difficulties in the process of consolidating democracy in Zambia. This observation is not new. As far back as the First Republic in 1967, Robert Rotberg discussed the question of tribalism and politics in Zambia. In the discussion, ethnicity was identified as the source of problems for multiparty politics in the country.¹⁷

Many years later, Richard Sandbrook argued that communal cleavages complicated and undermined the give-and-take principle of democratic competition. He further argued that in societies where political parties are divided along ethnic or regional lines, people interpret the victory of one party as a victory of one ethnic or regional group.¹⁸ While it is true that this undermines the future of democracy, there is a need to reassess the question of ethnicity and regionalism in Zambian politics. Clinging to ethnicity or regionalism as concepts for understanding the political history of Zambia may not be justifiable in the Third Republic.

From a theoretical perspective, an ethnic group can be defined as a community of people with shared perceptions, common origins, historical memories, values and expectations. These people make a deliberate effort to collectively press for their political and socio-economic interests. More often than not, ethnicity coincides with regionalism since ethnic groups are found in particular regions where the language of the dominant group is the lingua franca of the region. Consequently, therefore, ethnicity is politically significant in cases where a common culture is used to foster a common political agenda by an ethnic group. Osei-Hwedie suggests that in Zambia, political ethnicity is forged by a common language and a common experience.¹⁹ According to Herbert Herzog, political ethnicity is a, "natural expression of group affiliation,

16 B Osei-Hwedie, "The role of ethnicity in multi-party politics in Malawi and Zambia", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 16 (2), 1998, p.228.

17 RI Rotberg, *The rise of nationalism in Central Africa: The making of Malawi and Zambia, 1873-1964* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

18 R Sandbrook, *Politics of Africa's economic recovery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 96.

19 Osei-Hwedie, "The role of ethnicity in multi-party politics", p. 229.

a heritage of the past and the future tradition".²⁰ Furthermore, political ethnicity requires an elite or leadership to articulate its common ethnic, political and socio-economic interests to the central government. Thus, where political ethnicity was in place, a patronage culture based on ethnicity determined political behaviour and support.

Those who subscribe to the primacy of political ethnicity in Zambian politics suggest that there is a rivalry between four groups based on language: the Bembaspeaking group, the Tongaspeaking group, the Nyanjaspeaking group, and the Lozispeaking group.²¹ However, this analysis masks a deep-seated historical trend that has evolved, and one which Osei-Hwedie either deliberately ignores or they are not aware of Zambia's "One Zambia One Nation" motto is not without its history. Since the founding of the colonial state at the beginning of the last century, people from various ethnic groups within the country and from neighbouring countries migrated to the Copperbelt region and other towns in search of employment.

Inadvertently, the cross-cultural contact that followed, and that continues today, helped to build a culture of mutual acceptance. Lusaka's population has grown to two million, and that of Copperbelt towns has also grown to similar levels.²² The influence of these urban societies on the rest of the country is immense. Because of the high levels of urbanisation, Zambia has experienced high levels of inter-tribal marriages whose offspring are considered "proper" Zambians. Children of inter-tribal marriages do not usually align themselves to one ethnic group. They usually consider themselves as belonging to two ethnic groups and have loyalties to both. This is important because urbanisation has rendered the traditional matrilineal or patrilineal influences less important in determining family heritage. Furthermore, language is no longer such an important criterion for the political divide. Many Bemba speakers on the Copperbelt do not come from any of the Bembaspeaking groups identified by Osei-Hwedie, just as many Nyanja speakers also do not come from the groups she has identified. It is, therefore, plausible to suggest that political ethnicity in Zambia does not function in the manner that Osei-Hwedie describes.

It is also important that the analysis should examine the political profiles of leaders who are in inter-tribal marriages. Vera Tembo Chiluba, the late President Chiluba's wife, was from Eastern Province, while the wife of former Vice President Lieutenant General Christon Sifapi Tembo, Nangamba

20 H Herzog, "Social construction of reality in ethnic terms: The case of political ethnicity in Israel", *International Review of Modern Sociology* 15 (1-2), 1985, p. 46.

21 Osei-Hwedie, "The role of ethnicity in multi-party politics", p. 231.

22 Zambia, 2010 Census of population and housing, Volume 11, National descriptive tables, Central statistical office, Lusaka, November 2012.

Nellie Nachombe, was from Southern Province. There are several politicians, including Members of Parliament, who are in inter-tribal marriages. There is no doubt that such politicians and parliamentarians are influenced by such unions in their political conduct. In fact, several politicians have never resided in their so-called home areas. The only home they have known are the areas where their fathers or grandfathers went to work.

While it is true that the political rhetoric in Zambia describes certain political parties as tribal parties or regional political parties, the major political parties like the MMD, UNIP, PF and UPND cannot be considered as tribal parties. They are national in character. An important development that defies the ethnic analysis of Zambian politics since 1996 is over the suspensions and expulsions that rocked the MMD. The most important of these expulsions was that of the MMD National Treasurer and Minister of Environment, Benjamin Mwila, for having declared his intention to stand for MMD presidency and the Zambian president in 2001.²³ When Mwila made the announcement in early 2000, he conformed speculations that had been going on for months. Mwila was believed to be President Chiluba's uncle. Yet on the political scene, there was more conflict between them than proponents of political ethnicity care to understand. On 6 August 2000, heavily armed police sealed off Mwila's home in Lusaka's Chudleigh residential area, apparently to search for seditious material. The search yielded nothing and was believed to have been conducted to intimidate him.²⁴ Mwila had announced the formation of his own political party to challenge the MMD presidential candidate in 2001. He became president of the Zambia Republican Party (ZRP). The ZRP was born out of the merging of Mwila's Republican Party (RP), the Zambia Alliance for Progress (ZAP) and the New Republican Party (NRP).

The government's excessive use of violence and force against Mwila suggests that after 1996 political cleavages do not just happen between ethnic groups but within ethnic groups as well. Although it is too early to form a solid view about this new trend, there is some evidence that suggests a rethinking of political ethnicity as a major factor in Zambian politics. Nonetheless, the political elites, from time to time, appealed to ethnic affiliations to maximise political support. But those who did this, risked being shunned by the electorates because Zambians (especially in urban areas) were generally not comfortable with politicians who subscribed to ethnic politics. Nonetheless, while there were clear signs that inter-tribal marriages were neutralising ethnic

23 The New Humanitarian, <https://shop.un.org/rights-permissions>, accessed on 28 January 2022)

24 "Zambia: Police search for arms in former minister's house", *Panafrican News Agency* (Dakar) 6 August 2000, <https://shop.un.org/rights-permissions>, accessed on 28 January 2022.

feelings, especially in urban areas, it would be wrong to expect ethnicity to disappear from the political arena. The third term debate, which among other things, revitalised both racism and ethnic politics, created a political crisis in the nation that threatened peace and stability that existed since the country attained independence in 1964.

The above notwithstanding, the UPND has been struggling and failing to address the tribal tag that has continued to haunt it since its founding. Sadly, as the country was geared for the 2001 tripartite elections and all political parties were dressing themselves in national dress to gain support from all parts of the country, the UPND was sinking deeper in tribal campaigns. This was championed by the Tonga Traditional Association (TTA), which openly called upon all Lozis, Tongas and Nkoyas to back the UPND leader Anderson Mazoka for election as president of Zambia.²⁵ While it is incontestable that regional and ethnic interests do still play a role in the politics of Zambia, an open and blatant campaign on tribal lines, as the UPND did, was a sure way of losing the contest. Generally, Zambians do not take kindly political parties and indeed political leaders who subscribe and condone tribal and regional politics. During the run-up to the 2001 tripartite elections, only two political parties, The Agenda for Zambia (AZ) and the UPND, entered the race with the tribal tag firmly stuck on them.

As a result of that, the AZ failed throughout its campaign period to attract membership and support outside the Western Province. On the other hand, the UPND experienced a decline in support when the TTA openly stated, "we are not ashamed of that [...] Lozis, Nkoyas should support our choice. [...] All Southerners will support Mazoka".²⁶ Evidently, the experience of both the AZ and the UPND support our view that both at the theoretical and practical levels, it is futile to continue emphasising political ethnicity as a major factor in the political process in Zambia. Yet, it is important to note that because of the lack of clear class distinction between the rich and the poor in the Zambian society as a result of the declining economic conditions of the people, there is a general tendency to resort to ethnic affiliations for political support instead of class affiliation. It is in this respect that scholars still find ethnic analysis to provide an explanation of the political behaviour of most Zambian politicians in the political arena. Our view is that such an approach should be taken with some caution considering the changing character of the Zambian society arising from a very high rate of urbanisation.

The election results of the 27 December 2001 tripartite elections confirm the view that any political party that seeks to form a national government

25 *The Post*, 12 October 2001.

26 *The Post*, 12 October 2001.

on the basis of ethnic strength can not make it. This is why the UPND lost ground to the ruling MMD because it laid emphasis on ethnic support and won all seats in the Southern Province but performed poorly in other provinces, except in North Western Province. In a unitary state like Zambia, with its current constitution, a political party needs national support to win enough votes to form a government. Arguably therefore, ethnic and regional politics in Zambia cannot be used as a basis to seek national political office. The way MMD and Levy Patrick Mwanawasa emerged winners from tripartite elections confirms this observation. In fact, UPND's overwhelming defeat of the PF in the 12th August 2021 tripartite elections was yet another clear demonstration that ethnicity and regionalism were not acceptable in the political arena. In the 2021 tripartite elections, the UPND took a national approach in its campaigns, and its campaign messages were focused on the "One Zambia One Nation" Motto. The UPND got 61.6 per cent of the votes while the PF got 36.0 per cent of the votes.²⁷

3. THE THIRD TERM DEBATE: RETREAT FROM DEMOCRACY TO AUTOCRACY?

This article opened with a quotation in which President Chiluba suggested that, "the will and consent of the people is the basis of power and legitimacy of government". The third term debate in Zambia, which started soon after the appointment of District Administrators (DAs) towards the end of 1999, however, raises serious questions about the nature of the concept of the will of the people. The third term debate was supposedly initiated by MMD party cadres who began to petition President Chiluba to consider standing for a third term during the 2001 presidential elections despite constitutional restrictions. *The Monitor* suggested that the campaign was funded by the State House.²⁸

The DAs mobilised scores of cadres to champion the cause and even brought some cadres who camped at Parliament Motel and vowed not to go back to their home provinces until President Chiluba had given in to their demand. These cadres were later moved from Parliament to the State Lodge following Members of Parliament protests to the Speaker of the National Assembly. The manner in which the MMD handled the third term debate demonstrated the development of autocratic tendencies within the MMD and the political arena in Zambia. The 2001 MMD provincial conferences were characterised by undemocratic behaviour in which the concept of "the

27 The Zambian election results: All here with analysis, democracy in Africa, <https://democracyinAfrica.org>, accessed on 4 January 2022.

28 *The Post*, 29 April 2002.

will of the people” was manipulated. There was no doubt that the attempted perversion of the Constitution and encroachment on the liberal democracy that the Zambian people fought for in 1991 was on the brink of chaos and mob rule. Arguably, a political system where the president, backed by a small group of people, sought to control the power of the state and used that power in a self-serving manner was far from democratic dispensation. The MMD demonstrated that it was willing to do whatever it took to carry out its agenda of converting the republic, a government under the authority of the people it governed, into an autocracy.

However, the attempt received a sharp reaction from a cross-section of the Zambia society, including the Church and NGOs. The anti-third term campaign received support when the MMD Vice President Brigadier Godfrey Miyanda spoke out and called upon President Chiluba to open the campaign for the presidency.²⁹ It became apparent that autocracy would be kept in check because the vast majority of Zambians decided not to tolerate the attempted perversion of the Constitution.³⁰ The Republican Vice President Lieutenant-General Christon Tembo added his voice to the anti-third term debate when he spoke at the Law Association of Zambia (LAZ) organised rally on 21 April 2001. Several ministers, including the Minister of Legal Affairs Vincent Malambo, added their voice to the anti-third term debate. The two senior ministers regretted the fact that the President initiated a political crisis that pitted him against his ministers, which was yet another misfortune of multi-partyism in the Third Republic.

The political crisis in the MMD came to a head during the party’s fourth convention held at the Mulungushi Rock of Authority near Kabwe when the Republican Vice President Lieutenant General Christon Tembo, the MMD Vice President Brigadier General Godfrey Miyanda and several Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament were barred by party cadres from attending the convention. The convention was called to amend the MMD Constitution to facilitate President Chiluba’s bid for a third term. All members of the MMD National Executive Committee (NEC) opposed to the third term were barred from attending the convention which took place from Saturday 28 April to 2 May 2001. The only member opposed to the third term who attended the convention was the party Chairman Sikota Wina.³¹

29 *Times of Zambia*, 2 March 2001; *Zambia Daily Mail*, 2 March 2001.

30 G Thole, “Zambians gang up against Chiluba’s third term”, Information dispatch online, 22 February 2001, <http://www.dispatch.co.zm/news>, accessed on 18 June 2020. See also, “We pray that Chiluba comes to his senses, says Mwanakatwe”, Information Dispatch Online, 22 February 2001, <http://www.dispatch.co.zm/news>, accessed on 18 June 2020.

31 “Ruling party convention goes ahead”, *The New Humanitarian*, 26 August 2001 <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2001/04/30-1>, accessed on 29 January 2022.

His presence at the convention was strategic because the pro-third term members needed him to chair the proceedings of the meeting. It was evident during the convention that Wina went to the convention without the blessing of some of his closest allies, who included his wife, Princess Nakatindi Wina, who was conspicuously absent. Under normal circumstances, she would have been by his side. Later there was speculation that Sikota Wina was forced to go to the convention and perform the role of chairman. After the convention, both Sikota Wina and Princess Nakatindi Wina maintained an unusually long period of silence. They did not comment on the proceedings of the convention, nor did they associate themselves with the expelled members of the MMD.

Meanwhile, the MMD Electoral Commission Chairman Chifumu Banda and two other members of the commission stepped down as preparations for MMD NEC elections were underway, citing serious irregularities over election procedures. The Commission was denied lists of delegates who were qualified to vote at the convention. Chifumu Banda argued that he was too senior and a respected lawyer to be associated with the serious irregularities at the MMD convention. He stated that he did not want to be associated with the manipulation of the country's democratic principles. Despite these revelations, the MMD convention continued, and the elections were conducted, resulting in 18 NEC members being returned unopposed.³² The only post that was seriously contested was that of vice president because Paul Tembo allegedly refused to give way to Enock Kavindele. Initial reports indicated that Paul Tembo beat President Chiluba's favourite candidate, but after more than four recounts, Kavindere was declared the winner by 516 votes against Tembo's 515 votes. Tembo and his supporters immediately left the convention. Tembo later joined the Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD) before he was brutally murdered in July 2001.

At the close of the convention on 2 May 2001, 22 senior members of the party, including the Republican Vice President and Party Vice President, were expelled from the MMD.³³ This was despite the court injunction earlier obtained by those opposed to the third term restraining the MMD from expelling them from the party. Thus far, the spirit of autocratic rule seemed to have succeeded and further demonstrated the intransigency of the MMD. The court injunction was extended on three occasions and remained in force for over a month. This meant that the expelled members of the MMD were legally members of the party.

Although President Chiluba suggested that the convention, by amending the MMD constitution, had made a great achievement, the convention

32 "Ruling party convention goes ahead", *The New Humanitarian*.

33 *The Post (Lusaka)*, 12 October 2001.

actually left the MMD seriously divided and without a clear direction. This was especially after his address to the nation that he would not seek re-election for a third term but that the NEC would have to identify a Republican presidential candidate. By the end of May 2001, it was not clear who the MMD presidential candidate would be. The newly appointed Minister of Information, Vernon Johnson Mwaanga, told a press briefing on 28 May that the MMD had begun a serious search for a presidential candidate.³⁴ It was only in early August that the first Vice President in the Third Republic, Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, was elected by NEC as the MMD presidential candidate.

That the MMD amended its party constitution to enable President Chiluba to stand for a third term as MMD President clearly demonstrated the lack of political maturity in the MMD. The failure by senior politicians to acknowledge that the republican constitution was supreme and that party constitutions are subordinate to the Zambian constitution only served to complicate the constitutional crisis in the Third Republic.

Although the injunction obtained by Lieutenant General Christon Tembo and Brigadier General Godfrey Miyanda restraining the MMD from expelling them from the party remained in place, some of the 22 expelled members formed a new party called the Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD) under the chairmanship of Simon Zukas. Lieutenant General Christon Tembo formally resigned from the MMD and took up the position of interim vice president of the FDD. The other expelled members initially remained outside the FDD, pending the High Court decision regarding the court injunction.

Simon Zukas pointed out that one of the fundamental pitfalls of party politics in Zambia was that the party president was all too powerful from the time of independence. He observed on a radio talk-show programme on Radio Phoenix on Thursday 31 May 2001 that the MMD drifted along this line when President Chiluba and not party President Elias Chipimo began to chair NEC meetings.³⁵ This rendered the party chairman irrelevant. In the process, the party chairman became a passenger in the affairs of the MMD. Zukas suggested that the FDD would not allow a similar situation to develop in the new party, which would be more open and, "embrace a broad section of Zambians going way beyond the expelled 22 MPs".³⁶ There is no doubt that because all power rested with the president, party structures in the sections, wards and constituencies paid attention to what the party president wanted. This created a situation where the party president literally owned the party. Under this arrangement, it was easy for the party president to manipulate the various organs of the party and begin to use mobs to affect his intentions and

34 *The Post (Lusaka)*, 12 October 2001.

35 *Radio Phoenix*, "Live interview programme", 31 May 2001.

36 *The Post*, 28 May 2001.

designs. Autocratic behaviour on the part of the MMD government became an attractive option in the name of democracy.

It is important to point out, however, that autocratic behaviour did not only become a common feature within the MMD but that it was becoming a national political phenomenon. The leadership wrangles in UNIP and the subsequent suspension of Francis Nkhoma from the presidency and his subsequent replacement by Tilyenji Kaunda reflected more the work of autocracy and mob psychology than democracy. In December 2000, Rabbison Chongo, who was the acting UNIP president following the suspension of Francis Nkhoma, was roughed up and thrown out of his office by Lusaka UNIP youths.³⁷ Arguably, therefore, autocracy became a common political alternative to democracy, and there was a way in which politicians were subscribing more to autocratic tendencies in the name of democracy and the will of the people.

However, the news that the MMD had amended the constitution to facilitate President Chiluba's bid for the third term resulted in mass demonstrations by students in higher learning institutions. The demonstrations grew when he was re-elected party president unopposed. For the first time in many years, University of Zambia students peacefully demonstrated together with Evelyn Hone College students and those from Chainama College of Health Sciences. Although the demonstrations went on for several days, there were no reports of stone-throwing or harassment of motorists. Undoubtedly, students understood exactly what they were demonstrating against. There were also very clear indications that the anti-third term demonstrations were supported by nearly all students.

Meanwhile, the third term debate was clouded by the birth of seemingly state-sponsored NGOs, which began to champion the call for a referendum on the question of the constitution. Mike Zulu's National Organisation for Civic Education (NOCE) conducted a controversial opinion poll over the issue and suggested that the Zambian population was split over the matter. NOCE, nonetheless, continued to call for a referendum as the only way forward. However, the outcome of the MMD convention, particularly the amendment of its constitution and the election of President Chiluba for a third term, galvanised the nation against the third term and President Chiluba's intention to amend the Republican constitution.³⁸ Labour Day celebrations were characterised by anti-third term speeches by labour leaders, as well as by Labour Minister Edith Nawakwi.

37 *The Post*, 28 December 2000.

38 *The Times of Zambia*, 2 February 2001.

Because of mounting pressure from civil society and other interest groups, President Chiluba closed the fourth MMD convention without stating his position regarding his candidature for a third term as Zambian President. He stated that he would do so in a few days after taking into account national interests. The nation did not wait very long. In a late-night address on radio and television, he told the nation that,

Ten years ago, when you, the people of Zambia, opted for popular government, I promised that I would serve faithfully and that when I had served my two terms, I would leave office. That has always been my position, and that is the only statement that I have made. I have said nothing to repudiate that or contradicted my earlier pronouncements. I still stand by my word. I will leave office at the end of my term.³⁹

President Chiluba made these revelations while blaming interests groups for derailing the third term debate, which he claimed started with public petitions for him to stand for another term of office. He bitterly lamented that the effort ended with a malicious campaign, and accused the anti-third term MMD members of ganging with opposition parties and mobilising students to demonstrate against the amendment of the Republican Constitution.

Clearly, President Chiluba's pronouncement that he had no intention of seeking a third term as president of Zambia was in response to the mounting pressure and the constitutional crisis which was unfolding in the nation. There is no doubt that he was trying to undertake a damage repair manoeuvre after presiding over an unpopular political situation that he initiated. However, because of mounting pressure, he sought to show that he was more concerned with national interests than party interests. He dissolved the Cabinet and dropped all deputy ministers and provincial ministers. He argued that he took the decision to facilitate the constitution of a new government and a cabinet that would function in harmony.⁴⁰

Evidently, the campaign by members of the civil society opposed to the third term, demonstrations by students and their demand that President Chiluba be removed, coupled with the stand taken by opposition parties and expelled MMD leaders to petition the Speaker to impeach President Chiluba⁴¹, forced President Chiluba to reaffirm his earlier pronouncements that he would not seek a third term as president of Zambia. Instead, he pointed out that the amending of the MMD constitution was to usher in a new era where the party president would not necessarily be the MMD Republican Presidential candidate. The MMD National Executive Committee would identify a

39 *Zambia Daily Mail*, 5 May 2001.

40 *Zambia Daily Mail*, 5 May 2001.

41 *The Post*, 4 May 2001.

candidate who would be sponsored to contest and win the presidency of Zambia on behalf of the MMD. He likened the development to Tanzania's in 1984 when the late President Julius Nyerere retired but remained chairman of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi Party.

However, it should be noted that President Chiluba's decision to remain party president resulted from the massive pressure against his intention to go for a third term. President Chiluba's scheme to run for a third term and secure an amendment of both the MMD and republican constitutions began in 1999 when he banned all MMD members from campaigning to take over the presidency of the party. The MMD began to split over the matter, especially when Benjamin Mwila, in apparent defiance of the ban, announced his intention to contest the MMD presidency. He was subsequently expelled from the MMD. He founded the Republican Party (RP), which later merged with the Zambia Alliance for Progress (ZAP) to form the Zambia Republican Party (ZRP), of which he was president until his death in 2013. In retrospect, it can be argued that Benjamin Mwila read President Chiluba's banning of MMD members from campaigning over the presidency correctly.

President Chiluba's intentions only became clear when he promoted the debate over the third term issue. The debate further split the MMD, especially when ministers and Members of Parliament opposed to the third term were barred from attending the fourth MMD convention and subsequently expelled from the party. Although the MMD managed to amend its constitution and re-elected President Chiluba unopposed, the massive pressure made him declare that he had no intention to seek a third term as president of Zambia and also informed the nation that there would be no referendum over the issue. The debate was closed, but the MMD remained in a serious mess as it did not have a presidential candidate. Cadres who had campaigned for President Chiluba to seek a third term were frustrated and felt cheated. By June 2001, almost five months before the 2001 parliamentary and presidential elections, the MMD did not have a presidential candidate.

Resulting from the above, there were speculations that since the inception of the MMD, the presidential candidate was elected at the party's national convention, the decision to allow the NEC to choose a presidential candidate was likely to lead to a further split of the party. A considerable number of MMD members argued that, "if Chiluba knew that he was not going to stand for a third term, he should have let them choose a leader of their choice at the convention in Kabwe than leaving the matter to NEC".⁴² However, what these MMD cadres failed to comprehend or deliberately ignored was the fact that President Chiluba had no intention in the first place

42 *Elections Digest*, 1-6 June 2001.

to leave State House after only two terms. He was working towards facilitating an amendment of the constitution to enable him go for a third term. His plan was undermined by the massive anti-third term pressure.

That President Chiluba encouraged the third term debate and allowed the MMD to change its constitution to facilitate his election for a third term as MMD president, in conflict with the Republican Constitution, was a show of political immaturity. They deliberately ignored the fact that the Republican Constitution was supreme and that a political party in Zambia should be guided by clauses in it. Political parties are registered under the Societies Act, and as such, their constitutions should never be deliberately allowed to be at variance with the Republican Constitution to which they are subordinate. The MMD as the ruling political party should have learnt some good lessons from Tanzania, where politicians in Zanzibar attempted to change the constitution to allow the president of Zanzibar to stand for a third term. However, Chama Cha Mapinduzi in Tanzania maintained that the Zanzibar constitution should not be at variance with that of the Union. That was a clear demonstration of political maturity by Tanzanian politicians over a similar issue. To be sure, the MMD unleashed a constitutional crisis both in the party itself and in the country. It is small wonder then that the search for a presidential candidate for the MMD became a source of conflict and instability in the party.

Yet, it was not only the MMD that faced a leadership crisis. UNIP did not have an elected presidential candidate following the removal of Francis Nkhoma. This situation was reflected in several other parties on the Zambian political landscape. Almost all the political parties were led by the founders and hence gave the impression that they were personal parties. Worse still, most parties did not have a party structure on the ground. It was, therefore, difficult to expect that these parties would form the next government. Evidently, the founding of the FDD was reminiscent of the founding of the Zambia Democratic Congress (ZDC) by Dean Mung'omba on the eve of the 1996 parliamentary and presidential elections. That the ZDC performed poorly in that year's election reflected a lack of preparedness on the ground throughout the country.

As a result of the third term debate, three political parties were born out of the MMD after its May 2001 convention. These were the Forum for Development and Development (FDD), the Heritage Party (HP) and the Patriotic Front (PF). The birth of these political parties, especially that of the FDD, led to a temporary political decline of the MMD in the political arena. In fact, other political parties suffered in popularity as a result. One such political party that was directly affected by the birth of the FDD was the United Party for National Development (UPND) which lost some senior members to the FDD.

4. LACK OF INSTITUTIONALISATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

It is evident from the above that Zambian political parties lack a serious sense of institutionalisation. This means defining, creating, developing and maintaining social institutions and the extent or degree of institutional characteristics at any given time. It is not, therefore, surprising that because of little institutionalisation, political parties are easily manipulated by the government. Moreover, the ruling party circumscribed the activities of opposition political parties, if not completely outlawing them. What is behind this?

The answer seems to come from the fact that although political parties first appeared on the Zambian political scene as far back as 1948 when ANC followed by UNIP, they are still in a state of flux arising from challenges of ethnicity and regionalism. While UNIP emerged as a dominant political party and formed the first post-colonial government in 1964, its rival, the African National Congress (ANC), remained a very small opposition party, clearly unable to challenge UNIP in the political arena. During the First Republic, a number of small opposition parties came on the scene, but they were too weak to challenge UNIP meaningfully. When UNIP's dominance appeared threatened, it proscribed the opposition, and a one-party state came into being in 1973. It lasted until 1991, when multiparty democracy was re-established. The MMD and a host of other opposition political parties emerged on the political scene. As was the case in the First Republic, so too was the case in the Third Republic, where a dominant party emerged. The opposition remained seriously fragmented. The situation has continued because, unlike in the American political system where two strong political parties emerged,⁴³ in Zambia, there is yet to develop two strong political parties that can meaningfully determine the country's political future. Thus, when the MMD lost to the PF in 2011, the latter assumed the same approach as its predecessor in its dealings with opposition political parties.

Both during the First Republic and the Third Republic, the regimes employed a wide range of tactics to hinder opposition activities, including imposing tight restrictions on legal sources of funding. Meanwhile, the ruling party was largely unhindered in its use of public funding. The private sector, the only potential source of funding, thus resorted to covert funding of opposition political parties to avoid punitive actions by the government such as loss of government contracts and harassment by the tax authorities. As a result, opposition political parties became antagonists to the ruling party

43 For details see, JF Bibby, "Political parties in the United States". In: G Clark (ed.), *United States elections 2000* (Washington, DC: US Department of State, 2000), pp. 2-7.

and opposed everything it did. They saw their role in governance as ensuring that the ruling party fell from power by whatever means. Yet, from time to time, political leaders and those in the middle ranks constantly defected to either the ruling party or the party that appeared most promising to offer individual leaders rewards. This constant shift of political leaders and their quest for personal achievement maintained and contributed to the lack of institutionalisation of political parties. This was evident during the run-up to 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021 tripartite elections.

Arguably, therefore, this lack of institutionalisation of political parties became even more evident in other important respects. Modern party systems are invariably involved in interlocking relationships with other political institutions as controllers of the military and other national bureaucracies, as recruiters of judicial personnel, as coalition builders among organised interest groups, as civic educators and as managers of election systems. Because power is distributed among the institutions of a political system, it is usually the party system that must draw together the dispersed units of power to enable the country to achieve working consensus on public policies and legitimacy for its leaders and institutional operations. This, however, has not been the case in Zambia, where transparent adherence to the “rules of the game” has not been the norm. As a result, opposition political parties have generally assumed an antagonistic relationship with the ruling party. Worse still, opposition political parties have been characterised by frequent movement of party leaders and ordinary party members from one political party to another. This is because most political leaders and supporters alike lack commitment and are merely opportunists seeking government positions in a party that is promising to form the next government.

5. CONCLUSION

The manifestations of various views over the issues discussed in this paper clearly show the mixed fortunes of multipartyism in the political history of Zambia. Consensus is the last thing to expect. Issues which those in Western democracies take for granted are a cause of much debate and controversy in a developing country like Zambia. That Zambia was democratising and reforming its political institutions is unquestionable. Yet, the participants in this process did not agree entirely. Part of the reason was that a developing world democratising country like Zambia was usually judged too harshly by both those in the West and even by its own citizens in the opposition. In Zambia, while enjoying the freedom of a democratic nation, the private media was the most critical of the political reform process in the country. *The Post Newspapers* was a good example in this case. The paper's editorials

were critical and were perceived to be anti-MMD government. This should be understood in the light of high expectations from most stakeholders in the country. Because the Third Republic was born out of a highly restrictive, paternalistic and autocratic state, the citizens had very high expectations.

Consequently, the democratic process was constantly under attack. Opposition political parties operated and functioned in this environment, although they constantly suggested that multiparty democracy did not exist. Opposition political party leaders felt that the party in power was undemocratic and went to extremes to test the party in power. UNIP, for example, was involved in some most undemocratic practices hoping to provoke the government to take action, which it could then use to claim that the MMD government was repressive. The UNIP leadership would never have left the MMD leaders free if they were involved in burning voters' cards. Yet, because the MMD government adhered to the rule of law, it allowed UNIP the freedom to practice its civil disobedience campaign.

Yet, the greatest threat to Zambia's liberal democracy remains the lack of a credible opposition. Opposition parties are generally weak, and most serious candidates gravitate towards the ruling party. This is because political parties in Zambia do not have strong ideologies upon which they are grounded. The duration of the one-party political state in Zambia seriously affected the evolution of political parties in Zambia. This resulted in weak organisational structures, lack of organisational guidelines, irregularity of public meetings and rallies and weak leadership.⁴⁴ Consequently, this produce the usual maladies of *de facto* one-party state government in Zambia. The UPND and the PF, which were generally expected to produce a credible opposition, were both undergoing a major leadership crisis. This was particularly following the formation of a pact between them. UNIP was suffering from a leadership crisis because no one in the party was bold enough to challenge former president Kaunda for the party's leadership. This was because defying former president Kaunda was suicidal for most UNIP members, some of whom could lead the party. This crisis was further compounded by the view that UNIP was "owned" by the Kaunda family. The election of Kaunda's son as UNIP president did not help matters. This situation was replicated in the case of both the PF and UPND. The PF was in exactly the same state. There was no democracy within the party. Members of the Central Committee and other positions, including that of the Secretary-General of the party, are appointed by the party president.

44 N Simutanyi *et al.*, "The state of political parties in Zambia, 2003 Report", Assessment conducted by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the Foundation for Democratic Process (FODEP), Lusaka, July 2003, pp. 12-21.

Thus far, it can be safely concluded that Zambia's fledgling democracy during the 30 years of the Third Republic is largely a result of the weak opposition as well as the Movement for Multiparty Democracy's and the Patriotic Party's intransigence towards other political parties in the country once in power. While there was much debate on the ruling party's role to create an enabling environment for other stakeholders in the political arena, it was evident that the opposition was too weak to make a positive impact and strengthen liberal democracy in Zambia. The MMD and the PF, like UNIP before them, became intransigent. President Chiluba faced mounting criticism of authoritarianism and corruption. As President Chiluba was approaching the end of his second term, there were clear signs that the MMD was facing serious challenges and its future as a ruling party was in doubt. Consequently, the MMD and President Chiluba, in particular, resorted to using District Administrators to campaign for a change of constitution to facilitate his bid for a third term. Undoubtedly, the use of DAs and mobs to force a change of the constitution was a clear demonstration of Zambia's attempt to retreat from liberal democracy to autocracy. Yet, as noted above, autocratic behaviour had become an attractive political phenomenon that political parties used to deal with political opponents. The PF, was using the same tactics when it was in power and was even more authoritarian in its dealings with the opposition political parties.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that political parties in Zambia need to rethink the process of adopting parliamentary candidates. That several adopted candidates from the MMD and other political parties were rejected by various constituencies where they were to stand was a clear indication that the processes used were not in line with democratic principles. Democracy is an expensive venture. It is therefore expected that political parties opt for cheaper processes of adopting candidates. Yet, the more expensive process of holding primary elections to determine who gets adopted to stand against opponents from other political parties would undoubtedly contribute significantly to the consolidation of the democratic process in the country. This would also ensure that the adoption of candidates reflects the wishes of the people on the ground, unlike the current situation where the final decision rest with the highest organ of the party. As it happened with the MMD, some adopted candidates were not even interviewed, resulting in their being rejected by constituency officials.

Primary elections would surely enhance transparency which has been a major concern and, indeed, an essential ingredient for the consolidation of the democratic process in the country. The interview method has undoubtedly proved highly contentious and unsatisfactory as a means of democratically deciding who stands in parliamentary and ward elections. The experience

of the 2001 tripartite elections and past general elections has shown that the interview method tends to strengthen instead of weakening patronage. Elected officials tend to look to higher organs of the party for support instead of the lower organs, which give them the voter. Thus our democracy in the past has been top-down instead of been down-up. As a result, once elected, officials almost forget the electorate until the next round of elections and count on the higher organ of the party to adopt them. All they need to do is show up for the interview. This is why in some cases, the MMD adopted candidates who did not even feature in the interviews during the 2001 tripartite elections resulting in open rejection by members in the lower organs of the party.

On reflection, the lack of clear guidelines regarding campaign financing is yet another problem that affected the democratic process, especially the electoral process. The ruling MMD committed unlimited amounts of money towards the tripartite elections to the disadvantage of opposition political parties. A more disturbing development as a result of this lack of guidelines was the misuse of public funds by the ruling MMD. The diversion of two billion Kwacha from Parliament to finance the 2001 MMD convention is a case in point. Perhaps less known are cases where the MMD made requests for funds from institutions such as the Ministry of Finance and the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) to finance the campaign without the authority of Parliament. This prompted Emmanuel Kasonde, then Chairman of the ZRA Board to resign from his position when the MMD government requested K500 million without following the normal procedures and without explaining what the money was for.

This misappropriation of public resources by the party in power did not just occur during the MMD government. When the PF took over from the MMD in 2011 similar incidents of misappropriation of public resources before and during tripartite elections persisted as was the case in the 2016 and 2021 elections. From the number of political parties that have been participating in tripartite elections and the results that emerged at the end of the exercise, it can be safely concluded that Zambia's liberal democracy is weak and fragile. Indeed, as Larry Diamond noted, democracy, especially mature democracy, take a long time to develop, and the path towards it is not a smooth one.⁴⁵ With each election that takes place, democracy is expected to move a step further towards maturity. This remains a major challenge for Zambia because of the intransigence that take place before, during and after elections.

45 See, L Diamond, "Developing democracy in Africa: African and international imperatives", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 4 (1), 2000, pp. 191-213.