

## Case Study: Politics in Zambia

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### Overview

The case of Zambia illustrates many of the themes covered in *Politics in the Developing World* relating to how the politics of development interacts with developmental issues. Zambia, independent since 1964 when Britain relinquished power in Northern Rhodesia, is situated at the confluence of central and southern Africa. Zambia's development trajectory represents a paradox. At independence in 1964, Zambia was a middle-income country with a per capita income of US\$752 (in current US\$ figures). Four decades later, Zambia ranks among the poorest countries in the world. In terms of human development, measured by the Human Development Index, Zambia is ranked as 150 of 169 countries, mainly due to low life expectancy at birth. Zambia's development record is particularly alarming considering that it occurred in a context of political stability.

But, in the period after 2000, Zambia turned a corner. Economic growth has been recorded at 6-7 per cent annually for most of the decade following 2000 due to a combination of high copper prices and increased foreign direct investment (FDI). Partly as a result of improved governance performance, Zambia's multilateral debt was cancelled in 2006. With a Human Development Index at 0.586 according to the 2016 Human Development Report, Zambia is now ranked as a Lower Middle Income country (UNDP 2016). However, almost 70 per cent of the population still lives below the poverty line. The distribution of income remains skewed, as witnessed by a Gini coefficient of 57.5. The uneven distribution of wealth is also marked by regional differences (see Table 2.1).

Zambia's democratic trajectory presents an equally ambiguous picture. Experiencing a peaceful transfer of power from the one-party government of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) in the 1991 multi-party election, Zambia was depicted as a

model of African democratization. The Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) staged an electoral turnover without violence, in which the incumbent party was replaced by a cross-ethnic pro-democracy movement. Since then, Zambia has held five multi-party parliamentary and seven presidential elections. In the September 2011 elections, the main opposition candidate, Michael Sata, and the party Patriotic Front (PF), ousted the MMD. Zambia now belongs to a select group of African multi-party systems along with Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius and Senegal that have experienced two peaceful electoral turnovers. Referring back to the discussion about democracy (in chapter 14), Zambia may therefore be considered a democracy under both Przeworski's (1991) definition of democracy as 'uncertainty of outcome' and Huntington's (1991: 267) view that consolidation occurs when an incumbent has lost power twice through competitive elections. However, such definitions do not always reflect reality in the sub-Saharan African (SSA) context. Mali and Madagascar have experienced coups and can no longer be considered democracies. Common in most of Africa's new democracies that hold regular elections, the routinization of democracy has not resulted in institutional reforms that have been able to curb state malpractice and corruption. Over time, Zambia has seen a growing concentration of power in the executive office. After two electoral turnovers and fierce political competition, electoral institutions have been routinized, but it is still not possible to argue that democracy in Zambia has been fully institutionalized and that all democratic norms as identified by Robert A. Dahl (1971, see Chapter 14) are followed. On 11 August 2016, Zambia held its 6<sup>th</sup> elections for the presidency, National Assembly, local councillors, and mayors. Concurrently, a referendum was held on whether to enhance the Bill of Rights in the Zambian constitution. The elections marked a break with the Zambian history of arranging generally peaceful elections and featured an electoral playing field that was notably tilted in favour of the incumbent party. Ultimately, the incumbent President Lungu of the Patriotic Front edged out opposition challenger Hakainde Hichilema of the United Party for National Development. The election was controversial and the opposition mounted an unsuccessful legal challenge to the final results. The 2016 elections represent a reversal in the quality of Zambian democracy and raise questions about the country's prospects for democratic consolidation (Goldring and Wahman 2016).

The persistence of some notable continuities with the past testifies to the constraints that a country like Zambia faces. The continued challenges in terms of democratic development are witnessed in the Freedom House score of 3 and 4 on civil and political rights respectively (see Table 2.1).

## Key dates in Zambia's recent history (1964 - 2017)

1964 Independence

1972 (December) President Kaunda declares Zambia a one-party state (Second Republic)

1990 (December) President Kaunda signs constitutional amendment permitting return to political pluralism (Third Republic)

1991 (February) First national convention of Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) adopts Frederick Chiluba as its presidential candidate

1991 (October) Chiluba and the MMD defeat Kaunda and the United National Independence Party (UNIP) by large margins in presidential and parliamentary elections

1996 Constitutional changes effectively prevent Kaunda from contesting the presidency

1996 (November) Chiluba and MMD again sweep the board in elections that UNIP declined to contest.

2001 (June) Chiluba renounces intentions of running for a third term as president and seeking constitutional change to permit this after strong civil society-led opposition

2001 (December) Levy Mwanawasa narrowly wins the presidency for MMD but MMD loses majority in the parliament

2004 Mwanawasa (July) says it is unlikely that a new constitution will come into being until after the general elections in 2006

2006 (September) Elections return Mwanawasa to the presidency, and a new party, the Patriotic Front, becomes the leading opposition party in the legislature. The conduct of the elections is generally regarded as an improvement on the previous elections

2006 (November) Much of Zambia's 7 billion USD debt is cancelled as Zambia reaches the HIPC debt cancellation targets

2008 (June) Mwanawasa dies (in Paris) and vice-President Rupiah Banda takes over as acting President

2008 (October) Rupiah Banda is elected President in a presidential bi-election with 40.8% of the vote against Michael Sata (Patriotic Front), who takes 38.6%. Sata claims elections were fraudulent

2011 (September) Michael Sata of Patriotic Front wins the presidential elections. In the parliamentary elections, PF secures 60 seats, MMD 55 and United Party National Development (UPND) 28. The PF's election campaign focussed heavily on issues of redistribution and promised Zambians "more money in their pockets"

2012 (March) Chief Registrar of Societies deregisters MMD for allegedly having failed to pay registration fees since 1993

2013 (February) Arrests of key opposition politicians, violations of the constitution, and intervention in the judiciary lead to international and national media concern that Sata and PF are stepping away from democratic ideals

2013 (March) - Former president Rupiah Banda is charged with abuse of power shortly after being stripped of immunity.

2014 (January) - Opposition politician Frank Bwalya is charged with defamation after comparing President Sata to a potato in a radio interview.

2014 (October) - President Sata dies.

2015 (January) - Edgar Lungu (PF) becomes president after winning presidential by-election.

2016 (January) - Constitutional Amendment 2016 signed by President Lungu

2016 (June) - Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) closes main independent newspaper The Post due to unpaid taxes.

2016 (August) -, Zambia hold its 6<sup>th</sup> elections for the presidency, National Assembly, local councillors concurrently with a referendum on the Bill of Rights. President Edgar Lungu (PF) is reelected, PF wins majority of votes. Bill of Rights does not acquire the necessary votes.

2016 (August) - Presidential election petition rejected in Zambian Supreme Court.

2017 (April) - Hakainde Hichilema (UPND), arrested and charged with treason-incarcerated.

2017 (April) - Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops condemn the arrest of opposition leader Hakainde Hichilema (UPND), holding that Zambia is now a dictatorship.

## Political developments in Zambia (1991-2017)

Democracy and democratization have implications for social and economic development. Socio-economic development has implications for democracy and democratization. Zambia illustrates the relationships among social, economic and political variables, including the limitations of economic liberalization as a force for development, the impact of political reform on development, and more generally the socio-economic constraints on democratization.

Zambia achieved independence from Britain in 1964, through a largely non-violent struggle. Since then there have been three Republics, each with its own distinctive profile. The First Republic (1964-72) was characterised by political pluralism combined with the political dominance of President Kenneth Kaunda and his party, the United National Independence Party (UNIP). This was a period of social and economic progress and considerable optimism. Kaunda's decision, finally, that a *de jure* one-party state would be in the country's best interests was not uncommon in Africa around that time. In the Second Republic (1973-1990), then, power was centralised and became increasingly concentrated in President Kaunda's hands, with the state assuming ownership of much of the modern sector of the economy. Elections were held regularly, but Kaunda's hold on the presidency was not seriously challenged. However, although politically stable, from the mid-1970s Zambia began to experience difficulties financing its development and foreign borrowing increased. By the late 1980s popular dissatisfaction with living standards was increasingly hard to ignore. Opposition to the government was voiced by the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), led by Frederick Chiluba.

In 1990 Kaunda finally conceded the restoration of political pluralism, and general elections were called for October 1991. In 1991 the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD), with Chiluba as its presidential candidate, capitalised on widespread dissatisfaction with the government by emerging as the single most credible alternative contender for office. This greatly improved the chances of a smooth political succession. In October 1991 the MMD won a sweeping victory in the parliamentary and presidential elections, which were conducted peacefully. Kaunda conceded defeat graciously. A new dawn for Zambia seemed possible. The MMD's manifesto promised economic liberalization, social progress and greater political freedom. Foreign governments in the West warmly applauded Zambia, wanting to see its example as a bell-weather for Africa as a whole.

In the decades that have followed Zambia's democratic transition, it cannot be argued that the MMD government who ruled until 2011, nor its successor PF, has been able to fulfil the high - possibly very unrealistic hopes - of 1991. Despite the economic growth rates experienced over the past 5-6 years, more than 60 per cent of Zambians live in poverty, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to be a major problem, although the risk level has stabilized in the past decade, according to World Health Organization statistics. Data for basic indicators can be found in Table 1 on the web site (separate document). The political system remains closer to a form of electoral democracy than liberal democracy, although this is a matter of judgment.

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Referring to the discussions of how to define democracy (Chapter 14), Zambia's democratic development illustrates the problems of classifying and understanding political developments in countries that find themselves somewhere between autocracies and fully-fledged consolidated democracies. Since 1993, Freedom House has labelled Zambia as 'partly free'. Data from the Afrobarometer survey project suggest that as of 2009, 70 per cent of the Zambian respondents view opposition parties as a key element of democracy but only 47 per cent believe that Zambia is a democracy. Zambian political parties and civil society operate in an environment relatively open to free and fair debate and the political debates are linked to real political issues. Yet above all, political developments in Zambia in the past decades must be understood within a context of excessive executive dominance.

Zambia belongs to a select cluster of African countries where the opposition secured an electoral victory in the transition elections. As noted earlier, the 1991 political transition in Zambia was closely linked to protest against the economic austerity measures known as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Economic grievances were channelled into political demands for multi-party democracy. Soon thereafter, Zambia experienced a peaceful transfer of power from the one-party government of UNIP in a multi-party election and served as a model of African democratization; an electoral turnover without violence, in which the incumbent party was replaced by a cross-ethnic pro-democracy movement, the MMD.

The success of the MMD in the first multi-party elections has been attributed to the organizational reach and mobilizing success of trade union structures, Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). Since then, Zambia has held three multi-party parliamentary and four presidential elections. In the September 2011 elections, the populist appeals by Michael Sata and the Patriotic Front (PF) led to the first change of government since the MMD gained power in 1991. However, as pointed out by Gyimah-Boadi (2004) and Bogaards (2007), result-oriented definitions of democracy do not always reflect the reality in the context of SSA new democracies. Instead, they argue for more inclusive concepts of democratic consolidation that include viable and competitive party systems, respect for and efficacy of key institutions, accountability to citizens, and tolerance of participation by the media and civil society in the political process.

The uneven process of democratization in Zambia post-1991 reflects the limits of applying regime survival and uncertainty of electoral outcome as key yardsticks of democratic consolidation. After the 1991 election, the MMD ensured that rules and regulations of the electoral process remained opaque. Institutional reforms failed to produce influential 'watchdogs' and counter-forces against state malpractice and corruption. As a result, there has been a growing concentration of power in the executive office. Despite the MMD's strong electoral mandate and scope for institutional change after 1991, attempts to reform constitutional rules that would have allowed more autonomy for the electoral commission, parliament, and the media failed. As a result, two decades of multi-party rule under the leadership of MMD were

marked by uncertainties and conflicts concerning the constitutional review processes while the MMD retained the advantages of incumbency and enhanced the position of the executive (Rakner and van de Walle 2009).

## The nature of party competition

Following the democratic turn-over in 1991, the MMD retained power in four subsequent elections. In fact, while Chiluba's successor in the 2001 elections, Levy Mwanawassa, won with only 29 per cent of the votes, he was re-elected in 2006 with 43 per cent of the vote. At the same time, the MMD narrowly gained control of the parliament (see Tables 2.2 and 2.3).

Table 2.2: Votes won by party in Presidential elections in Zambia, 1991-2016

Party	1991	1996	2001	2006	2008	2011	2015	2016
MMD	75.8	72.6	28.7	43.0	40.1	36.2	0.9	-
UNIP	24.2	-	10.1	-	-	0.6	0.6	0.2
ZDC	-	12.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
UPND/UDA	-	-	26.8	25.3	19.7	18.5	46.7	47.6
PF	-	-	3.4	29.4	38.1	42.3	48.3	50.4

Source: Nohlen et al. (1999); Electoral Commission of Zambia (2016).

Percentage of seats won by largest parties in Parliamentary Elections in Zambia, 1991-2016

Party	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016
MMD	83.3	87.3	46	48.6	36.6	2.7
UNIP	16.6	-	8.6	-	-	0.2
ZDC	-	1.3	-	-	-	-
UPND/UDA	-	-	32.6	17.3	18.6	41.7
PF	-	-	0.6	28.6	40	42

Source: Nohlen et al. (1999); Electoral Commission of Zambia (2016).

Yet, the 2006 elections were notable for the emergence of an 'urban protest vote'. Specifically, the PF under Sata won every urban parliamentary seat in the capital of Lusaka and the Copperbelt region as well as seats in most local constituencies (Gould 2007). Sata's attacks on foreign investors, particularly those from China, for their poor treatment of the mining workforce and their supposedly corrupt relationship with the MMD resonated with urban Zambians, who were already angered by the negative impact of economic liberalization.

The death of President Mwanawasa in August 2008 led to a new succession crisis within the MMD. The Zambian constitution states that a vice-president is only allowed to serve as acting president for 90 days, pending a presidential by-election. As a result, the death of Mwanawasa resulted in political uncertainty and further fragmentation of the party system. In November 2008, the MMD won a narrow victory and the former Vice-President Rupiah Banda became the new president of Zambia with 40.6 per cent



of the votes compared with Sata's 38.6 per cent. Given that the 2008 elections were carried out with the same voters' registry as the 2006 election, Zambians who had turned 18 after 2006 were effectively disenfranchised during the elections. This possibly cost Sata the victory, given his popularity among the urban youth (Cheeseman and Hinfelaar 2010).

However, Sata's moment came three years later with an updated voters' registry when he finally won the Zambian presidential election. In a context where the incumbent party had vastly superior resources to distribute, the opposition ran a very effective campaign. A key element was the PF's catchphrase of 'Don't Kubeba!', which meant that Zambians should accept clothes and food distributed by the MMD but should not tell the former ruling party that they would not be voting for its candidates.

President Sata's time in office was short as he died in October 2014. In accordance with the Zambian constitution, Sata's death triggered the need for a by-election. The vacancy in the presidential office created serious infighting in the ruling party as prospective candidates wrangled to become Sata's successor. In the succession struggles two factions emerged within the PF. The matter was eventually resolved in court where Lungu was declared duly elected as PF nominee for President.

The 2015 by-election was a close two-horse race with Lungu defeating UPND's Hakainde Hichilema by a narrow margin of 27,757 votes, or 1.66 percent. The 2016 election was widely seen as a re-run of the 2015 contest with Lungu and Hichilema remaining the only two viable candidates. However, a number of factors created uncertainty in the election. The fractionalizations in PF caused by the earlier succession struggles resulted in significant party defections from PF to UPND. The presidential results showed that Lungu had defeated Hichilema with a margin of 100,530 votes, only 13,022 votes above the 50 percent-plus-one threshold required to be the outright winner in the first round (Goldring and Wahman 2016). The results showed strong regional clustering of support. As expected, the threshold of 50 percent turnout was not met, meaning that despite the Bill of Rights being supported by 71 percent of the total valid votes, it failed to pass. The UPND filed a legal challenge with the Supreme Court August 2016, citing that a recount was required due to the various election irregularities pre-election, on election day, and post-elections. The petition was unsuccessful, and rejected by the Constitutional Court on technical grounds.

Overall, it cannot be argued that the 2016 elections contributed to democratic consolidation, as the elections were characterised by election violence, intimidation, closure of independent media, and significant media bias. While polling day itself appeared largely successful, the post-election period was characterized by additional violence, particularly in the Southern Province and Lusaka, and further infringement of independent media. Key democratic institutions failed to protect the Zambian democracy. Parties were guilty of the various manipulation tactics described above; state media failed to engage in balanced coverage, while independent media were frequently shut down; the Electoral Commission ran disorganized and slow counting and verification processes; and the judiciary oversaw intrasparent legal proceedings. As

a result, the legitimacy of the election was questioned and there was no general acceptance of the results (Goldring and Wahman 2016).

## The quality of democratic institutions

Political contests in Zambia must be understood in the context of excessive executive dominance where the president's prerogatives for allocation of government resources produce important incentives for individual members of parliament to support the president in exchange for increased resources for their constituencies. The president has far-reaching decision-making authority, which includes making key public appointments in the Zambian state and veto powers over decisions by parliament. Opposition members complain about the dominance of the Speaker and the ruling party in selecting committee members, and that they are not actively involved in planning and setting priorities (Amundsen 2010). Rather than formal or informal coalition formation with the opposition parties in the legislature, the MMD government has since 1991 preferred to build coalitions with individual opposition members of parliament to try to secure support. The ability to 'buy off' individual MPs has greatly undermined the effectiveness of the opposition parties. Executive dominance has also meant that the opposition can only use its parliamentary position to check government powers to a very limited extent.

Before the democratic transition in 1991, Zambian civil society organizations were regarded as comparatively more influential than those in many other African states (Erdmann and Simutanyi 2003: 40). After 1991, the nature of Zambian civil society changed. While the political visibility of traditional, member-based interest groups declined, a multitude of new organizations were formed with international donor funding. According to Erdmann and Simutanyi (2003), the changes in the composition of Zambian civil society are explained by two combined factors. First, civil society, especially the trade unions, had achieved their main aim of democratization and getting 'their' government in power. Second, the force of the trade unions declined due to the effects of economic reforms that led to redundancies and dramatic membership loss, as well as internal political conflict. The new NGOs, while strong in numbers, often had some common shortcomings such as lack of members, weak roots in society, weak organization and capacities, donor dependence and lack of lobbying skills.

The turn of the millennium saw an increase in new, professionalized NGOs, linked to a new emphasis on civil society in the international donor community. With the new liberal democratic regime and foreign funding, civil society came to be dominated by the legal community, churches and above all a number of new, professionalized NGOs. There are currently 5,000 NGOs registered in Zambia. A marked strength of Zambia's civil society is the ability to act together and mobilize around key issues of economic and political governance. One notable example was the Oasis Forum, which was formed to oppose Chiluba's attempt to change the constitution to run for a third term in 2001. The Oasis Forum was supported by donors and included a number of NGOs, as well as opposition parties.

However, in part due to excessive presidential powers, civil society has often failed to sustain pressure on government and secure lasting changes in the form of

constitutional reform. For instance, after a few years of sustained political pressure on the Chiluba regime, the Oasis Forum lost momentum. Zambia's major civil society alliance was subjected to heavy strains under Mwanawasa's administration, which took decisive measures to dissipate the momentum of the Oasis Forum. Above all, the constitutional reform process that was a key demand of the Zambian civil society was delayed by Mwanawasa, who instigated a cumbersome Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) that took three years to produce a draft constitution. From here, a National Constitutional Conference (NCC) was established with a mandate to debate the CRC draft. The NCC, seen by civil society and the PF to be dominated by MMD loyalists, succeeded in deflecting all of the key liberal reforms advocated by the Forum and its allies. The CRC draft failed to pass parliament in 2010. This inconclusive constitutional reform process illustrates some of the limitations of Zambian civil society in the context of strong presidential powers (Gould 2011: 18).

Media legislation in Zambia is restrictive and few new licenses are provided. Although the Independent Media Broadcasting Bill has been debated for nine years, it has not yet been passed by parliament. As a result, all media licenses are provided by the Minister for Information, and there is clear evidence that licenses are used in order to control the private media (Makungu 2004). Similarly, the NGO Act that was passed by Parliament in 2010 effectively enabled government to regulate NGOs who are required to renew their license every 5th year with the Minister of Information. One of the PF's main campaign issues was that they would introduce a Freedom of Information Bill if elected but PF has shown little interest in tabling the Freedom of Information Bill since it attained power in 2011. The new bill has been postponed on numerous occasions. In a move considered to seriously challenge media freedom in Zambia, the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) closed *The Post* newspaper in June 2016, allegedly due to unpaid tax debt. As the majority of Zambian media is state controlled the closure of the main independent newspaper meant that the opposition had no coverage in the 2016 election campaign (Freedom House 2016).

## Zambia and the world

### Zambia in the region

As a landlocked country, Zambia has borders with eight other countries: Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, formerly Zaire). In Zambia's Northern Province there is Lake Tanganyika, which has shores with Burundi. Zambia's various peoples share close ethnic ties with many of their neighbours. Kenneth Kaunda's family hailed from Malawi and speculative claims in the Zambian press place Frederick Chiluba's background in Zaire. As a large country with heavy seasonal rains and an underdeveloped infrastructure, internal transport and communications can be poor, especially around the outlying rural areas. This, together with reliance on extended rail connections to the sea at Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania and via Zimbabwe to South African ports, make Zambia vulnerable to instability in its neighbours.

Zambia's multiple borders with so many countries almost dictates a policy of non-aggression towards neighbours, but at no time since independence has the country known stability all around. Indeed, Zambia is virtually unique in having remained stable, without experiencing civil war or other substantial political violence, in a conflict-prone region where at least one state - former Zaire - virtually collapsed. Civil war in Mozambique after independence only came to an end in 1990. Angola had to wait another decade before seeing internal peace, by which time Zaire/The Democratic Republic of the Congo had descended into chaos that has only recently seen a fragile settlement.

An interesting question is how Zambia has managed to remain politically stable, especially given the poor record of development from the 1980s on. An answer can be provided at three levels: the relative absence of factors inside the country that typically give rise to conflict elsewhere; second, a capacity for conflict management and prevention; third, some combination of the aforementioned which has insulated Zambia from contagion by conflict outside its borders.

First, the kind of forces that have given rise to violent conflict and undermined states elsewhere in Africa have been more subdued in Zambia. The multiplicity of ethnic groups has already been mentioned and, along with considerable inter-marriage and cross-cutting religious and other affiliations it means Zambia escapes high polarisation. Also, up until the mid-1970s Zambia enjoyed considerable development, and for some time afterwards the government's readiness to borrow heavily to fund spending avoided violent struggle over scarce resources. Here, the neo-patrimonial and clientelistic approach can be said to have helped social integration and nation-building. And it is not a tautology to say Zambia's rulers have displayed a fairly impressive record of conflict prevention and resolution. Kaunda gave priority to building 'one Zambia one nation'. He was helped by the fact that prior to independence there was a unifying force in the rejection of the Central African Federation - Britain's ill-fated solution to the governance of Southern Rhodesia (today's Zimbabwe), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia ) and Nyasaland (today's Malawi). There was no secessionist

movement within the country, jealous of the valuable natural resources located within its territory.

Second, in the Second Republic the use of UNIP's legal monopoly on power to prevent rival politicians from seeking to mobilise support on potentially divisive ethnic or regional lines was a stabilising force at a time when the country began to experience difficulty in maintaining development. Authoritarian rule was sustainable for a while, but by the time mounting discontent could have turned to significant violence Kaunda acceded to the demands for political reform – a return to pluralism - which at the time seemed to offer Zambians the possibility of a solution to their discontents.

Finally, the above factors have helped insulate Zambia from its 'bad neighbourhood', even though the country has played host to well over 200,000 refugees from different neighbouring countries, principally Angola. During the cold war Kaunda maintained good connections with the West, refusing to align Zambia with the socialist bloc and warning against Soviet political interference in the region. Later, his successor President Chiluba, while determined to prevent political disturbances in Namibia's Caprivi Strip spilling over into Zambia's Western Province, also devoted considerable energies to bringing peace in the DR Congo. And the MMD government's formal commitment to economic liberalization also led it to pursue efforts to build on the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern African States (signed in Lusaka by eight states, in 1981). In 1993 agreement was reached to upgrade the organization to a Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), of which 20 states are now members. In 2003 a decision was taken to establish a regional customs union within COMESA by December 2004. That said, Zambia's importance in the region was bound to decline once cold war superpower rivalry ceased and the end of apartheid and onset of black majority rule restored South Africa to respectability in the international community. South Africa has now become one of Zambia's most prominent investment and trading partners but it also provides major competition to Zambia as a location for international capital and as the manufacturing hub for the entire region.

## Zambia and international financial powers

Mineral resources, primarily copper, were what attracted British and other foreign adventurers to Northern Rhodesia. More white immigrants came in to settle the best land, producing grain and meat to feed the growing townships along the copper belt. The indigenous people lost access to large tracts. Many left their villages and sought paid employment to meet the new financial burdens the authorities placed on them, which is precisely what the mining industry required. Few resources were allocated to educating the black population and the indigenous workers were denied significant opportunities to become entrepreneurs. The opportunities for small-scale domestic traders were often captured by Asians.

Copper's value increased dramatically during the Second World War, and although it dropped soon afterwards the industry flourished and remained the mainstay of the country's growing economy up until the mid-1970s. Then the internationally traded

price fell sharply, and Zambia has never fully adjusted since (Lamer and Fraser 2007). By the late 1990s the parastatal Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM), while still the country's major foreign exchange earner, no longer produced net revenue for the government.

In many ways Zambia before and after independence fulfils certain conditions spelled out by dependency thinking. The demand for, and price of, Zambia's commodities have always been determined far away. The big transnational mining companies have invested heavily in expanding competing sources of supply from countries like Chile. By the late 1990s the world copper market exhibited structural oversupply, able to reward only the most low cost producers, although the situation was reversed in 2004 partly due to rapidly increasing demand from China. Although not entirely a monocrop economy, the economic distortion of Zambia that mining encouraged has inhibited effective measures to achieve greater economic diversification. Kaunda took the industry into majority public ownership, leading eventually to ZCCM, but the government's national development strategy always remained heavily compromised, with severe constraints on its ability to pursue socialist policies (Turok 1989). In contrast other analysts identify economic mismanagement as being more responsible for the country's declining fortunes (Rakner 2003; Graham 1994). As early as 1973 Zambia sought the first of what were to be many agreements on financial support from the IMF.

Sooner or later the goose's capacity to deliver golden eggs was bound to decline; and by the time ZCCM's assets were privatised in the second half of the 1990s the government had great difficulty in realising any financial benefits, and was left holding the accumulated debt. Copper's proportional contribution to Gross Domestic Product more than halved between 1970 and 1980; Zambia's international terms of trade continued to deteriorate, and fell by over 8 per cent in 2002 alone. Once the foreign banks became increasingly reluctant to advance more credit the state was left with few means of meeting the rapidly growing population's welfare needs. It is debatable whether this outcome could have been prevented if Kaunda's rule had not encouraged a dependency culture inside the country (as for instance claimed by Chiluba on many occasions) in addition to the country's external dependency.

#### Box 2.1 Dependency culture in Zambia

'Kaunda's rather vague philosophy of 'humanism' dictated that the state would take care of every Zambian...the belief that the state should dictate and provide all services free of charge made people less willing to help themselves or maintain their infrastructure. Donors, meanwhile, sanctioned such policies for decades with large flows of assistance. Indeed, decades of party and government handouts have all but destroyed Zambia's tradition of self-help'.

Source: Graham 1994: 164

The international dependence that led to cumulative indebtedness gave increasing leverage to bilateral aid donors and the Bretton Woods institutions. In the 1980s Kaunda briefly abandoned an IMF agreement and substituted his own development

plan, but this strategy proved unsustainable (Bates and Collier 1993: 406-29). By then the international community was making clear that it wanted Zambia to return to pluralist democracy. In the approach to the decisive 1991 elections the IMF stopped disbursements and the World Bank suspended negotiations on a structural adjustment loan, citing debt payment arrears and the government's reluctance to comply with requests to remove maize subsidies. The incoming MMD government inherited an external debt of around US\$7 billion – on a per capita basis one of the highest in the world. It immediately reached agreement with the Bretton Woods institutions in return for a commitment to implement key elements of the 'Washington consensus' on economic policy and institutional reform.

### International involvement in Zambia's Third Republic

The effects of the economic opening and privatization that Zambia was encouraged to undertake in the 1990s decimated some of its manufacturing industries, for example in clothing, textiles and household detergents. And other factors outside Zambia's control have deterred international investors. In some measure the entire region came to be blighted by the political disturbances in Zimbabwe, although Zambia's tourist industry has been a partial beneficiary of Zimbabwe's plight. In an increasingly integrated global economy Zambia has difficulty competing with larger and more dynamic developing countries with good transport links. Zambia is one of those countries that has not yet reaped substantial benefits from economic globalization and yet still incurs some of its costs. What have been the political implications? Has growing financial and economic dependency lessened the government's political independence and undermined its democracy in that way? There are arguments on both sides.

Evidence for saying yes includes the external influences on budgetary policy that have followed from agreements reached with the international financial institutions. For example the agreement on non-inflationary cash budgeting reached in 1993 had the effect of rendering parliament's vote of the annual appropriations meaningless. The finance ministry uses cash budgeting as a reason for denying ministries the funds they need if they are to enact expenditures authorized by parliament (Burnell 2001: 53). Accountability to parliament and the people is undermined. Social spending has been hit particularly hard. The setbacks to social and human development then have negative implications for Zambians' ability to develop stable democracy.

Box 2.2: Social costs of economic adjustment and political choice

Any strategy to address the social costs of adjustment entails domestic political economy trade-offs. Under the UNIP, while donors financed social expenditures, the government squandered an enormous amount of public funds elsewhere. A sustainable strategy for protecting the poor must entail Zambians themselves exercising political choice among setting priorities for public expenditure.

Graham 1994: 160



Only late in the 1990s did the World Bank acknowledge that its lending conditions had placed excessive emphasis on debt servicing at the expense of social needs, and since 1999 it has been trying to encourage the government to adopt a more pro-poor approach. As part of the process for qualifying for debt relief under the heavily indebted poor countries initiative (HIPC) the Zambian government has engaged in developing a poverty reduction strategy. By 2006 Zambia had reached the HIPC completion point and its international debt was cancelled. However, due to falling copper prices from 2012 onwards, Zambia's debt has almost doubled and in March 2017 a new debt rescheduling agreement was signed with the International Monetary Fund (Lusaka Times, April 19 2016). As the economic growth has stalled foreign reserves are in sharp decline, the fiscal deficit is rising, and Zambia appears to be returning to the International Finance Institutions to reschedule an escalating foreign debt burden.

Many critics hold Zambia's government responsible for consistently failing to pursue economic diversification effectively, for using copper revenues to subsidize inefficient import-substituting manufacturing activities without seeking to make them internationally competitive, and for failing to develop the country's considerable agricultural potential. They blame the government in the Second Republic for borrowing excessively to subsidize consumption and for encouraging a dependency culture inside Zambia that stymies a productive entrepreneurial spirit now. These economic failings can be construed as the product of a political strategy by an increasingly unpopular government (Kaunda) to stay in power. As we have seen, political expediency and informal neo-patrimonial politics have continued to mark the Third Republic, to the country's economic detriment. The international donors are placed in a no-win situation: either they continue to fund the public purse and risk prolonging what eventually will prove to be unsustainable, or they withdraw their support and are accused of trying to bring down the regime.

## Conclusion

Since 1991 Zambia has held five multi-party parliamentary and seven presidential elections. Zambia now belongs to a select group of African multi-party systems that have experienced two peaceful electoral turnovers. But as this case study has shown, Zambia's democratic developments must be put in the context of an excessive executive dominance, in a highly centralized state structure. Similarly, economic growth has not translated into sustainable growth and development, indicated by persistently high poverty levels and rising foreign debts.

Zambia has entered a period of reduced levels of traditional aid, and the monitoring capacity and advocacy of civil society, parliament and the political parties will be essential in order to enhance the rule-based system of government and institutions. In order for Zambia to move toward a deepening of democracy, emphasis must be put on the enhancement and enforcement of accountability mechanisms.

At the time of writing in mid-2017, Zambian democracy appears to be at a crossroad. The 2016 election exhibited many of the democratic deficiencies normally associated with competitive authoritarian regimes (Levitsky and Way 2010, see chapter 14). Arguably, the amended constitution further strengthens the executive grip on power and reduces the checks and balances in the political system. The harassment of the opposition, the incarceration of the main opposition leader, the increasing attacks on civil society and the free press suggests the need to closely monitor future political developments and possible signs of further democratic erosion.

## Questions

1. What kind of democracy is Zambia today?
2. What can explain Zambia's marked economic development and the fact that growth has not been matched by reduced poverty levels?
3. How does the concentration of power in the presidency affect the conditions of civil society, opposition and media in Zambia?
4. Why can it be argued that the 2016 elections put Zambia's democracy at a crossroad?
5. How far does the colonial legacy and Zambia's historical role as an exporter of mineral wealth explain the character of its politics from independence to the present day?
6. In what respects should Zambia be characterized as a typical developing country and in what main respects is it untypical?
7. Can it be argued that Zambia is characterised by a "resource curse" (see chapter 4, 12, 14).

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## Web links

Freedom House, 2016: Zambia: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/country/zambia>

Afrobarometer: <http://afrobarometer.org/data/zambia-round-6-data-2015>

Zambia Watchdog: An independent electronic newsletter by Zambian journalists which was recently blocked from domestic viewing in Zambia  
[www.zambianwatchdog.com/](http://www.zambianwatchdog.com/)

All Africa Zambia. Contains daily news updates from Zambia from newspapers throughout the region. [www.allafrica.com/zambia/](http://www.allafrica.com/zambia/)

The site of the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum, launched in 1996 to bring together the parliaments of the twelve member states including Zambia to give support to democracy in the region.  
[www.sadcpf.org](http://www.sadcpf.org)

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