Taking Stock of Democracy in Zambia

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Abstract

Democratisation in Zambia in the 1990s is assessed along with a review of approaches to explaining its limitations. A brief resumé of events between 1991 and 1998 is followed by a survey of the ‘conditions’ normally considered helpful to democracy are present in Zambia, chiefly socio-economic, cultural and associational values. The problems facing democracy are located in an international context and set against the background of formal and informal institutional patterns carried forward from previous decades. Path-dependence, the relative significance of structure and agency, and the implications of crises and shocks are briefly considered in relation to Zambia’s experience. The mixed nature of the evidence, when viewed from a plurality of perspectives and reference points, suggests that a nuanced assessment of Zambia’s version of democracy is more appropriate than one simple uni-dimensional judgment. The future prospects range from modest further progress to significant but not fatal erosion of democratisation in Zambia.

Introduction

Initially, a climate of optimism greeted the most recent advance of democratization around the world. It reached a climax around the beginning of the 1990s, but as the decade wore on it went into marked decline, moving towards quite pessimistic conclusions, or what Carothers calls ‘democracy without illusions’.¹ That the forces which propel political liberalisation or bring about democratic transition might not be adequate to sustain that transition, let alone guarantee the consolidation of democracy, has become the conventional wisdom. Equally, the factors that can stabilise a new democracy might not necessarily promote its further ‘democrativeness’. The distinctions that Diamond draws on the one side between electoral democracy and liberal democracy, and on the other side between these and different types of ‘pseudodemocracy’ (which lack fair contestation, and may be more like ‘semi-democracies’ or hegemonic party systems), and even more authoritarian regimes, is pertinent, as is his view that the challenge now is to prevent a ‘hollowing out’ of the new democracies – a trend that ultimately could constitute a new ‘reverse wave’.²

Diamond’s view is that although the number of democracies increased in the 1990s as did the number of independent states, the proportion that are liberal democracies began to decline after 1992. And of all the countries that were embarked on democratisation or redemocratisation at the outset of the 1990s (and certainly among those in Africa), it is Zambia - or more specifically the trajectory taken by appraisals by scholars and journalists about political developments in Zambia - that stands as a bellwether of the global trend in opinions concerning attempts to establish democracy and future prospects, worldwide. The evidence of a good deal of press coverage and several academic studies implies that Zambia is on course to fit the paradigm case of a political rake’s progress: democracy regained followed by democracy lost.

At first, regular commentators on African affairs and beyond heaped considerable satisfaction on the outcome of Zambia’s 1991 elections. They saw a new party, the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) and its leader, the former trades union official, Frederick
Chiluba, sweep to power following a peaceful ballot. They witnessed the standing down with dignity of former President Kaunda, who together with his United National Independence Party (UNIP) ruled the country continuously since independence in 1964. For much of that period (1973-90) Zambia was a de jure one-party state – the Second Republic. However, looking back from the end of the 1990s the mood has changed quite dramatically. Well before the MMD’s first term in government expired in November 1996, there were increasingly unfavourable assessments of the regime’s democratic credentials. The critics included not merely opposition politicians but also the independent press and civic associations, Lusaka’s resident international diplomatic corps, and political analysts inside and outside Zambia. They even included some notable politicians who, for a time had enjoyed a close association with the MMD government, for example several ex-cabinet ministers. The chorus of disapproval culminated in the circumstances surrounding the 1996 presidential and parliamentary elections. Those elections saw Chiluba and MMD returned to power, retaining an overwhelming majority in the legislature (131 out of 150 seats), on slightly reduced majorities among the votes cast. Amendments to the constitution made by the MMD-dominated National Assembly earlier in the year made election victory almost certain, and robbed the results of legitimacy in the eyes of the losers and many vocal critics.

Almost ten years have elapsed since the days when a strong popular momentum brought Zambia’s Second Republic to an end - April 1990 being a significant milestone, when President Kaunda bowed to pressure and agreed to stage a referendum on whether to allow multi-partyism. The turbulence of the decade since then makes now an appropriate time to take stock of democracy in Zambia, all the more so as attentions begin turning to the political manoeuvrings in advance of the 2001 election campaigns, raising questions about the political complexion of the government and the health of democracy in Zambia after Chiluba.

**Political Transition in Zambia**

First, the most salient political trends and events in Zambia from the formation of the new government in November 1991, through its re-election in 1996 to the present.

The coalition of forces and personalities that came together in the MMD – intellectuals and trade unionists, lawyers, prominent farmers and businessmen, some politicians who had long been disaffected from UNIP and others who ‘jumped ship’ only when they saw the political tide running strongly away from UNIP - exhibited various ideological persuasions. Some displayed few obvious political principles at all. The coalition’s intrinsically unstable nature soon became apparent. A succession of MMD cabinet ministers and Members of Parliament resigned or were removed from office; a number left the MMD to form other parties. Unfulfilled personal ambitions mixed with dissatisfaction at Chiluba’s leadership provide common threads explaining these movements. UNIP survived. But, notwithstanding the existence of more than 30 registered political parties, no new political grouping with a broad enough base and the resources to mount a serious electoral challenge across the country has emerged to seriously threaten Chiluba and MMD. Thus, since 1991 Zambia has been a one-and-a-half party system plus a few bit-players, although as 2001, the year of the next general elections comes closer, there could realignments in the political opposition to MMD and new presidential aspirants may emerge.

UNIP has not yet recovered politically from the resounding defeat in 1991, which confined its parliamentary representation to just one of Zambia’s nine provinces, Eastern
Province. The UNIP government’s serious mismanagement of the country’s economy during the 1970s and 1980s and the accompanying marked deterioration in social conditions and increased foreign indebtedness will not be forgotten easily. The party seems unable to devise a distinctive and credible new programme and fresh identity, confining itself to populist appeals that hold the government and its willingness to pursue neo-liberal economic policies responsible for the great economic and social hardship in the country. Having stood down from the party leadership in January 1992 Kaunda engineered his return in 1995 in circumstances that confirmed bitter divisions over the issue of who should lead the party - divisions that persist to the present day. Nevertheless, by 1995 Kaunda and UNIP seemed capable of staging a modest political revival, having won several parliamentary by-elections outside of Eastern Province. They threatened to capitalise on the decline in the government’s popularity brought about by: repeated corruption scandals; the rise in casualties from the privatisation and restructuring of industry; and the continuing deterioration in conditions experienced by the majority of small peasant farmers, who were adversely affected by the authorities’ bungling attempts to replace the state purchasing of maize by a market-based arrangement.

A constitutional commission of inquiry, set up under the chairmanship of John Mwanakatwe at the end of 1993, took extensive soundings around the country and completed its review in late 1994; the report was released in June 1995. The government chose to support only some of the recommendations. Its decision in May 1996 to legislate constitutional change in parliament, where the MMD’s majority would predetermine the result, rather than to follow the commission’s own preference for a constituent assembly and national referendum, led to a quantum leap in dissatisfaction with the regime. Not only partisan opponents of the government but also civic organisations and, very strikingly, foreign donors and their official representatives joined the chorus of complaint. For the constitutional amendments effectively barred Kaunda and his deputy from standing for the presidency, by requiring presidential candidates to be Zambian citizens born to parents who were Zambian by birth or descent, to have been domiciled in Zambia for at least 20 years (Article 34), and by disqualifying tribal chiefs. (Later, in November 1998 a Supreme Court verdict on Chiluba’s eligibility announced that anyone ordinarily resident in Zambia on 24 October 1964 satisfies the requirement that a presidential candidate must be a Zambian citizen – a condition Kaunda fulfills). Additionally, anyone who had served any two five-year terms as President would be ineligible (Article 35). In 1996 the effect was to cause UNIP to boycott the general elections due to take place later that year, so removing the strongest challenge to MMD in both the parliamentary and presidential elections. While Kaunda is unlikely to have produced a close contest for the presidency, UNIP would probably have won as many as 50 parliamentary seats – an achievement which, when combined with the minor parties and Independents, could have made MMD’s parliamentary majority quite fragile and, perhaps, unlikely to last the full term. By-elections happen frequently (45 by-elections were held between 1991 and late 1995 alone), due to mortality and because the constitution requires that MPs who resign from their party must seek re-election. So, if UNIP had contested the 1996 elections a re-elected President Chiluba would have become more vulnerable to demands from individuals and groups within his own party; it is unlikely he would have accepted ‘cohabitation’ with other parties as an alternative.

In 1996 the electoral register had serious shortcomings: the 2.27 million citizens who were registered were fewer than the 2.91 million who were on the roll in 1991. It understated possibly by over 2 million the true number of eligible voters. This fact made the election
exercise invalid according to some of the MMD’s political opponents and critics. Needless to say, the government’s part in awarding the contract for the flawed registration exercise in 1996 (to Nikuv, an Israeli company) was held to blame. In the event, five other parties as well as UNIP boycotted the elections in November 1996, but a total of 495 candidates representing 11 parties and a further 99 independents did stand for the 150 seats in the National Assembly, and five candidates contested the presidency. The ballot was conducted in a peaceful and orderly fashion. Chiluba and MMD were voted back in by over three quarters of a million Zambians, or between one fifth and a quarter of the true electorate. There were some irregularities in the poll, but in the view of the Supreme Court inquiry that took place afterwards these were due to inadequacies of the National Registration Office and did not benefit any one of the presidential candidates. Even so, the degree of legitimacy that the election could ever feasibly convey in the circumstances, and the amount of legitimacy that the outcome actually bestowed on the winners, remain politically contested. Several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) including the Zambia Independent Monitoring Team (ZIMT), Foundation for Democratic Process (FODEP), AFRONET (Inter-Africa Network for Human Rights and Development) and the Committee for a Clean Campaign (a consortium of 19 NGOs) all expressed doubts that the campaign and the election were free and fair. They were subjected to harassment by the authorities as a result, but did not change their views.

Democracy Beyond Elections
Elections are not synonymous with democracy, not even when the contestants are evenly matched and the process is universally judged free and fair. Elections can be held in a non-liberal democracy, even in an ‘illiberal democracy’; they certainly fall well short of the more demanding versions of participatory democracy, especially when – as in Zambia - the levels of political participation are low (the turnout in the 1996 election was under 60 per cent of an electoral roll from which perhaps half the eligible voters were missing. The first round of local elections in the Third Republic in 1992 saw turnouts fall below ten per cent; in the second round, held in December 1998, the average turnout overall was almost 27 per cent of the 2.4 million registered voters (out of an estimated potential electoral roll of 4.4million).

Elections are supposed to help enforce vertical accountability by government to the people. In addition there is the horizontal accountability of the executive particularly to other components of the state. Formally, speaking, Zambia has many mechanisms in place. There is an autonomous judiciary, which is central to the rule of law and its implementation, and on occasions the government has been unsuccessful in securing convictions. In March 1996 the High Court ordered the release from jail of the editor, managing editor and leading columnist of the newspaper The Post, who had been jailed in February for contempt of Parliament (the Supreme Court is presently considering an appeal by the state). The Human Rights Permanent Commission, successor in March 1997 to the Human Rights Commission which had been charged in 1993 with inquiring into human rights abuses prior to that date, has publicly criticised human rights violations by the authorities, and recently warned government ministers not to criticise named members of the judiciary in parliament. But its members are appointed by the president, and its powers to demand appropriate responses are very limited: it can recommend prosecution where it detects abuse, but does not have powers to institute or to instruct the Director of Public Prosecutions to commence criminal proceedings. Overall, opinions vary on the performance of the judiciary. Mphaisha’s view is that it is timid and ineffective in politically sensitive cases; to Maipose’s verdict made around the same time is that ‘a new culture to entrench the independence of the judiciary has been evolving relatively well’. 
In theory the legislature should also make a major contribution to enforcing executive accountability. But MMD domination has been an obstacle. And as recently as February 1999 the Vice-President acknowledged that the parliament’s present committee system is inadequate for the purpose of providing scrutiny, and should be improved if the conduct of government business is to become more transparent. Plans to open up committee meetings to the media are afoot, as is the televisation of parliament. In December 1998 the parliamentary Committee on Public Accounts did draw attention to accounting anomalies and fraud at the Ministry of Finance and the disappearance of privatisation revenues. But the likelihood of there being follow-up action is remote. Presidential control of appointments to bodies like the Anti-Corruption Commission and Drug Enforcement Commission, and a widespread perception that such bodies have been ineffective in practice, further contribute a sense of weakness in the system for checking and controlling government.

Moreover, in respect of political rights and civil liberties Zambia became less free over the decade, according to Freedom House’s annual surveys of freedom in the world. In 1996 Zambia rated 5 and 4 respectively (1=most free, 7=least free), compared with 3 and 2 for 1991/92. The 1996 survey classed Zambia as only ‘partly free’, marginally less free than Benin, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and South Africa. A major reason was that the country has been placed under a state of emergency twice since 1991. The first occasion was March-May 1993, against the background of an alleged ‘zero option’ plot by Wezi Kaunda (one of Kenneth Kaunda’s sons) and a few UNIP hotheads to destabilise the government, by fomenting civil disobedience, mobilising former military and police officers who had been UNIP-appointees, and encouraging the youth to resort to crime and ‘physically incite the general public against the government’. The second occasion was October 1997, after an inept coup attempt involving fewer than 100 military personnel. That emergency was extended in January 1998 and lifted in March. The opposition parties condemned the coup (although Dean Mung’omba, Zambia Democratic Congress party leader and unsuccessful presidential candidate in 1996) did call for violent opposition to the government, in the wake of the 1996 elections). The emergency provisions were used to detain some opposition figures. The police have used torture against detainees including Mung’omba to extract incriminating evidence (Mung’omba was released in December 1998, after the state prosecution failed to bring evidence linking him to the 1997 coup attempt).

Throughout the Third Republic a Public Order Act, which dates back to the colonial era, has been in force requiring police permission to be sought before staging political rallies or demonstrations. Although it was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in January 1997 it was immediately restored by parliament. The provisions are not routinely applied to MMD-related events, but have been used to forcibly break up opposition rallies; on one occasion, in August 1997, Kaunda and Rodger Chongwe, leader of the Liberal Progressive Front party, were shot at by the police. Chongwe later fled the country, fearing for his safety. Also, the independent press, notably The Post, Crime News and The Chronicle have been consistently subjected to harassment, and outspoken journalists have been taken to court on a variety of charges, and detained on several occasions.

Finally, virtually nothing has been done by the government to effect the MMD’s 1991 election commitment to rectify the ‘specific oppression which Zambian women have continued to suffer’ and its promise of a ‘principle of affirmative action on gender issues’. In 1996 a mere 13 women candidates were successful in gaining election to the National
Assembly, only one of whom, Edith Nawakwe, was appointed a minister in the 25-member cabinet of the new government (she was later promoted to Finance Minister). At the same time only 26 out of 1300 local government councillors were women. As of November 1998 women are represented among the Supreme Court judges, having gained the appointment of the person who headed the Permanent Human Rights Commission, but discrimination against women remains widespread in the customary courts; and in the words of Freedom House, ‘societal discrimination remains a serious obstacle to women’s rights even where fair legislation exists’. In socio-economic terms the United Nations Development Programme ranks Zambia 134 out of 163 countries for gender disparity.

Taking Stock of the Literature on Zambia

Zambia has never been as popular a subject of study to social scientists, and specifically political scientists as some other parts of post-colonial Africa, for instance Nigeria (fascinating by virtue of its size, power and dismal political record), Kenya (which for a while appeared to be an economically successful example of African capitalist development) and its ideological opposite neighbour Tanzania (which attracted leftist researchers and Scandinavian interest especially, although by the 1990s patience with the country’s poor economic record had run out, President Nyerere retired and the country’s socialist direction was virtually abandoned). By and large the academic studies of Zambia’s First and Second Republics, while containing some very substantial and well informed political analyses, were not cast in the form of democratic audits. Some seemed more fascinated by Kaunda’s homespun philosophy of humanism and the pretensions to one–party participatory democracy, during the Second Republic. As the country’s financial and economic fortunes went into dramatic decline from the mid-1970s onwards, it was development economists who came to supply the bulk of scholarly work about Zambia. That may be a reflection largely of the diverging patterns of professional recruitment and research funding opportunities in political science and development economics in Europe (especially Britain) and North America. The 1990s by comparison have witnessed a modest but growing body of literature surveying recent political developments, including an increasingly weighty contribution by Zambian and other African scholars (for Sichone and Chikulo’s *Democracy in Zambia: Challenges for the Third Republic*). So, how well has democratization in Zambia fared, through these and other eyes?

Basically there are two camps. The most prominent, the negative camp, is well represented by Joseph’s claim that Chiluba has taken Zambia back to the worst period of what had been, by prevailing African standards, relatively mild authoritarian governance under Kaunda: ‘What is especially alarming is the ease with which Chiluba has manipulated voter support and development aid to withstand demands to follow a more democratic course’. By the mid-1990s not only had Zambia missed the opportunity to take its new democratic opening further forward but also it was exhibiting democratic decay or reversal. The demonisation of Chiluba, held to be responsible for the growing democratic deficit, is typical. Mphaisha’s 20-page account of Zambia’s ‘retreat from democracy’ names Chiluba more than 50 times (twice as often as the references to ‘Chiluba’s government’) while disclosing his ‘real motives’ and autocratic tendencies. Perhaps such a focal point follows perhaps inevitably from the fact that politics were dominated by another individual - Kaunda - for nearly three decades; Zambia has retained a strongly presidential system, with the cabinet’s constitutional status being that of an advisory body only, although in 1991 there was a general expectation that after Kaunda the powers of the presidency would be curtailed. For Joseph, it is the deliberate weakening of constitutionalism, rule of law and judicial independence under Chiluba that ‘foreshadows the

Then there is the second, more cautious camp. It accepts that Zambia’s political transition may not yet have issued in transition to democracy or that there is no case for arguing that democratic consolidation is well under way. Zambia is an example of ‘stalled’ or ‘frozen’ transition, although it might still be too early to judge that it has made a ‘false start’ on the road to sustainable democracy. Thus Ihonvbere defended the government’s right to interpret the security implications of the ‘zero option plan’ in the way that it did, and argued that the international community’s criticisms displayed double standards and were not warranted. Van Donge, who in 1996 wrote that democratisation in Zambia ‘can be considered a success story’, later commented on the 1996 elections that if a comparison is made with other elections whose validity is not doubted by anyone, then it is hard to condemn the Zambian case on grounds of voter registration and turnout. After all, at over 58 per cent the turnout was considerably higher than in 1991 (45.5 per cent), and we now know that the turnout in the December 1998 local elections was a considerable improvement on 1992. Bratton, who believes that electoral democracy is slowly dying in Zambia, researched the attitudes of the 19.1 per cent of Zambians who are said to have disputed the quality of the 1996 elections and concluded that what was perceived to be a flawed election by many outside critics was in fact far more acceptable to most Zambians. The question should be asked, then, what yardsticks should be employed, whose views should count most, when passing judgment on political developments?

In a shrew insight van Donge adds that at times Chiluba may be less an autocrat than a prisoner of his party, particularly in relation to the constitutional issue of eligibility to stand for the presidency – a number of MMD MPs had most to lose, materially and politically, from allowing Kaunda to stand in 1996, for their seats were vulnerable to a UNIP revival. Other commentators have noted that Chiluba has tried to ‘take a collective approach and has allowed his ministers a significant degree of autonomy’, and has been politically weak in cabinet and unable to assert authority over certain colleagues. Several MMD MPs openly voiced criticisms of Chiluba’s opening address to Parliament in January 1999, concerned by his frank admission that the government’s stewardship of the economy and average living standards need improving. So, contrary to the view that Chiluba has ‘had the space to do as he pleases’, Zambia is not an example of what has been called in a Latin American context, ‘delegative democracy’. In a party system like Zambia’s, poor discipline in the ruling party and, for the first half of the 1990s cabinet disunity have provided some checks against the chief executive.

There is no third camp willing to argue that democratization in Zambia is unambiguously on track to sustainable democracy. Not even Chiluba has tried to persuade us of that, although he has called the December 1998 local elections a ‘landmark in Zambia’s democratic history’, because all of the parties took part. In fact Chiluba has consistently
argued that there are enemies within, and that unless there are sustained improvements in the economic and social conditions the political prospects will remain insecure.

The next step is to examine the alternative approaches when trying to make sense of the record so far, and to establish whether they are capable of producing a uniform explanation.

Approaches to Studying Democratisation – and its Reversal

In the last ten years a proliferating literature has offered a variety of approaches to describing, explaining and comparing instances of democratization and predicting its future course. The conceptual schemas and theories arising in the context of studying Southern Europe, Latin America and the former communist societies of Central and Eastern Europe should be applied to sub-Saharan Africa with reservation. A smaller literature focuses on Africa, for example, Bratton and de Walle’s Democratic Experiments in Africa which emphasises the influence exerted by the domestic inheritance of neo-patrimonialism - informal relations of loyalty and patronage, translating into presidentialism, clientelism and the use of state resources for political legitimation. The processes of democratisation and its reversal may not be symmetrical, and the same is true of how we can best make sense of the developments they represent. For the purpose of illuminating Zambia’s failure to fulfil the initially high expectations of democratic advance, the following starting points for inquiry will be employed (the routes they offer are not all mutually exclusive; in principle they could generate similar conclusions):

i) examine the absence of ‘conditions’ whose presence is normally considered to be helpful to democratisation, by enabling, or facilitating, or promoting democracy, perhaps serving as requisites (possibly even as prerequisites) for certain stage(s), level(s) or phase(s) of democratisation.

ii) establish whether there is a significant historical legacy that is unfavourable to democratic breakthrough and sustainability.

iii) investigate whether the process of political reform in this case has created its own difficulties for maintaining the momentum

iv) identify the problems that currently beset the democratic agenda including problems that originate abroad as well as those arising at home.

v) apportion responsibility as between structural deficiencies and shortcomings of human agency.

vi) look for crises and shocks.

i) Absent Conditions

Social science has identified a number of ‘conditions’ associated with successful democratisation. But the discourse raises a number of contested issues: do the conditions relate more to some particular stage(s) or phase(s) than to others (for instance more to democratic transition than to consolidation)? Do they relate to one dimension (for example stability) more than to others (such as democratic deepening’)? What is the precise nature of the connection (how essential are the ‘conditions’? Do they merely facilitate, do they enable, or do they actually promote democratic advance’)? How are the relationship best explained? For example, exactly what is it about economic development that seems to improve democracy’s chances? In some of the early aggregate data surveys that sought to establish a
cross-temporal or cross-national correlation, the formulations hint at economic prerequisites; subsequent and more cautious statistical analyses venture that certain ‘conditions’ might be necessary only in the long run and are never sufficient. But the common thread is that democracy is contingent, it is a dependent variable. Thus if the ‘conditions’ are absent or only weakly present, then the odds are stacked against democratisation. Three candidates are preeminent and are sometimes advanced as alternatives: first, the realm of the economic and socio-economic, second, political culture, and third, civil society.

Economic and Socio-Economic
Economic growth and economic development (the second defined to include a sustainable increase of productive capacity) together with associated measures like industrialisation, and social attainments especially education (or what have been collectively called socio-economic development, social development and human development), offer widely endorsed sets of ‘conditions’. A seminal account was Seymour Martin Lipset’s survey in 1959 of the social requisites for a democracy to survive, in the western world. Lipset was subsequently misrepresented, before more recent attempts to incorporate a number of indicators of well-being, as in Diamond’s conclusion that physical quality life is a better predictor (than per capita money incomes) of democracy and political freedom. For Diamond, reducing the level of absolute poverty and deprivation overrides all other aspects of economic development, for democracy’s sake. The degree of social inequality features prominently in some accounts. For instance Muller and Seligman claim to find that income inequality is the most important explanatory variable for determining democratisation; Przeworski et al also infer that reducing inequality plays a major role in their survey’s conclusions that poor country democracies are very fragile, that economic progress is ‘crucially important’ if they are to survive.

Convincing statements about measurable thresholds of achievement that must be reached in any of these matters before democracy can be sustained are largely absent, and as Hyden remarks, we still ‘do not know how big a macro-economic failure democracy or democratic forces in society can take’. Moreover, we can all nominate examples of ‘continuous democracy’ that remain rooted in the developing world. Nevertheless, it is worth investigating how well Zambia fares in socio-economic terms, even if that has more bearing on the longer run prospects than in the short term.

The reality is that Zambia’s situation looks more unpromising now than at almost any previous time, whether the focus be on absolute levels or the direction of trends. Take first the kind of indicators that featured in early examples of the literature: in Zambia electric power production declined by over 2 per cent per annum in the period 1980-95 leading to a halving in per capita electricity consumption; the number of telephone lines per 1,000 people is only a third of the average for all low income countries, and newspaper consumption is less than half the average. In the 1990s the overall level of economic activity has yet to improve significantly on the very poor performance of the Second Republic. Between independence and 1996 per capita Gross National Product (GNP) declined at an annual average rate of 2 per cent; the corresponding decrease in private consumption per capita was the worst recorded performance in the world bar three other countries. With average annual incomes of only $860 in purchasing power parity terms in 1996, Zambia was the world’s tenth poorest country. Over the period 1991-95 real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita fell 3.6 per cent. A few macro-level indicators exhibited favourable trends in the mid-1990s, for instance annual inflation fell from 200 per cent in 1992 to around 25 per cent; interest rates from the commercial banks dropped from 140 per cent in 1992 to around 40 per cent; and in 1996 there was an increase in average per capita GDP. However, the economy contracted by 2 per cent in
1998, when a renewed sharp depreciation of the currency (by 40 per cent in the first ten months) pushed the annual rate of inflation over 30 per cent, further damaging Zambia’s import-dependent manufacturing industry.

*Quality of Life*

The deterioration in social indicators that gathered pace in the late 1980s has not been reversed in the 1990s. Both the number and the proportion of people living in absolute poverty has increased – survey evidence in 1993 suggests 86 per cent live below the national poverty line, measured in relation to basic needs requirements (the 1991 figure was 68 per cent), and an astonishing 98.1 per cent were reckoned to be trying to survive on the equivalent of under US$2 a day. Poverty is so widespread that it can no longer be called a largely rural phenomenon - although that may still be true of extreme poverty, especially in respect of the most remote rural areas (56 per cent of the poor are reckoned to be small farmers, and the poor include 90 per cent of peasant farmers). A poverty assessment carried out by the World Bank claimed that average expenditures for the rural core poor were not much more than half of the poverty line value; the relevant figure for the urban core poor approached 90 per cent.31

Inequality is high: the Gini coefficient is 46 per cent; the top fifth of society account for over half of all income or consumption and the top 10 per cent account for almost a third. Although the 6,000 Zambians who invested on the Lusaka Stock Exchange (created as part of the MMD government’s programme of privatisation) saw an 88 per cent appreciation in the index in 1997, the index subsequently fell 51 per cent in US$ terms, in 1998. More importantly, some key social indicators of mass poverty have continued to worsen. The gender gap has become even wider in some respects, for instance access to education. At minus 8 per cent, Zambia’s performance in improving life expectancy at birth was the second worst in the world for the period 1970-95 (only two other countries recorded a minus figure). The current average life-span of 43 years is below all but a handful of other countries. Zambia is the only country to report a deterioration in under-five mortality, between 1970 and 1995, from 181/1,000 live births to 202/1,000 live births. For human poverty overall, the United Nations’ Development Programme records Zambia’s position in 1995 as number 48 out of 77 countries, and as number 146 out of 174 countries in its human development index.

A third of all children of school age do not attend school in the appropriate grade. By the early 1990s public expenditure on education had fallen to under two per cent of GNP (compared with 4.5 per cent of a larger GNP in 1980), and to 8 per cent of the public budget (compared with 37 per cent in 1978). Just as economists consider educational attainment, either by itself or in conjunction with economic freedom to be a significant positive influence on development prospects (schooling and literacy featuring in the standard measurements of human development), so political analysts including Lipset in 1959 maintain that education enhances the democratic prospect, directly as well as through raising income levels. It is the increase in average educational levels taking place elsewhere in the world that to Rowen’s optimism about the future of liberal democracy - he calls it the ‘tide underneath the “third wave”’: ‘a rule of thumb is that an additional year of schooling in a population improves the freedom rating of a country an average of 6.6 percentage points.’32 From 1994 the Zambian government’s budget targets for social spending including education and health began to increase, reaching 36 per cent in 1999 (a real terms reduction on the previous year), but the 1998 experience, when the budget articulated poverty reduction as a primary goal for the first time, tells us that actual disbursements can fall well short. Anyway, just as the promises reflect pressure from the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme and other
donors so they will be sustainable only while those sources earmark substantial financial help to these ends. The government’s December 1998 announcement of a public housing initiative is unlikely to make substantial inroads into a housing deficit that the president has acknowledged requires 100,000 new homes to be built annually for the next ten years.

Finally, there is major new threat to lives and livelihoods in the form of HIV and AIDS. Around a quarter of the adult population in the urban areas are reckoned to be at risk of contracting AIDS (half of Zambia’s population live in urban and peri-urban areas - the sort of indicator that used to be cited as evidence of development and of the potential for democracy). The AIDS phenomenon is a major reason for the number of orphaned children in the country - 400,000 in 1996 and likely to top one million by the end of the decade according to UNICEF, and in proportional terms already the highest in the world. The population is young and growing at an annual rate of around three per cent, almost half of the total of over 9 million being under fifteen years old. The dependency ratio to working age population is exceeded by only two other countries. All this makes it harder to generate an economic revival and more difficult for economic growth to translate into improvements in average consumption and living standards.

The State of the Country’s Finances and Industry
The country’s external financial indebtedness remains very high - 162 per cent of GDP in 1995 - only the Democratic Republic of the Congo was more indebted. Debt service, at 10 per cent of Gross National Product, consumed a quarter of export earnings; and in February 1999 reserves of foreign exchange fell to an all time low (US$67, sufficient for two months imports only). Some modest debt relief measures were granted in the early 1990s, but the total external debt has started growing again, from $6.3 billion in 1994 to over $7 billion in 1997 (making it comparable in nominal terms to the level when the MMD first took office). The largest share is owed to the multilateral financial institutions, who, unlike donor governments, cannot simply cancel outstanding loans.

On the positive side, the MMD government has abolished some of the main macroeconomic policy distortions that were inherited from its predecessor, such as by allowing free currency convertibility and by substantially ending public subsidises most notably of maize. The majority of inefficient, loss-making state owned enterprises have now been privatised, 225 parastatals out of a total of 326 state companies having been transferred to the private sector by April 1998. However, just as the development debate among economists now recognises that a neo-liberal approach (especially the injunction to ‘get the prices right’) by itself does guarantee success, so Zambia’s case illustrates that considerable attention still needs to be paid to what the state can do – such questions as does it have the institutional capacity to implement policy reforms effectively? Is it capable of correcting market weakness and market failure, in circumstances where private entrepreneurship is in short supply and structurally constrained? For Zambia, the answers are not encouraging. The chaos experienced in the marketing reforms for maize production, the staple activity of small and peasant farmers, is illustrative. Maize production fell 32 per cent in 1997; in 1998 the value added in agriculture as a whole fell by 11 per cent. Unfavourable weather was partly responsible, but the more permanent global climate change may well not be beneficial. Investment in rural infrastructure and human resource development and better credit facilities are desperately needed, especially if small agricultural producers are to benefit from the price liberalisation (which has had the effect of increasing the cost of essential farm inputs like fertiliser). For much of the 1990s these and other steps essential to improving the supply side of the economy have been subordinated to
the overall anti-inflation strategy, which severely constrains public investment. The economists’ view is that in Zambia substantial improvements in agricultural productivity and thus incomes can be expected only ‘over the medium to long term’. 33

On the industrial front, the removal of protectionism has undermined manufacturing. The protracted ‘on-off’ privatisation of Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM), which culminated in an agreement on terms only in December 1998, has been beset by political indecision - the fear of large scale redundancies on the politically important Copperbelt (ZCCM finally announced 7,000 retrenchments in February 1999, following a promise by the World Bank to fund compensation), the likelihood that privatisation would end ZCCM’s practice of heavily subsidising social objectives in the townships, a determination (ultimately unsuccessful) to prevent South Africa’s Anglo American Corporation gaining the most valuable divisions, and a fear of being seen to let go of the assets too cheaply. The intense donor pressure to conclude a sale could insulate the government from some of the domestic political fall-out, but not before the country has been badly affected by the delays (the World Bank’s withholding of programme lending for 20 months in 1997-8, on condition of concluding the sale of ZCCM, being one factor). The mining sector, principally copper is still responsible for over 80 per cent of the country’s foreign exchange earnings, but it has become a significant drain on the public sector budget, incurring annual losses as high as US$250million (and will continue to do so after privatisation, for the state is to retain the liability for ZCCM debts of $800 million). Mining provides a dwindling share of GDP, and for years has been starved of much-needed capital investment to renew outdated facilities and exploit new mineral deposits. 34 At production of 277,440 metric tonnes in 1998 – a fall of 13 per cent from the previous year and the second lowest level since independence – Zambia’s copper industry is in dramatic decline, and way below the 1970s peak of 700,000 tonnes. Zambia now accounts for under 5 per cent of world traded output. The parlous state of the industry damages the local suppliers of goods and services who depend on its custom, exerting a multiplier effect that depresses economic activity more broadly.

It is an observable fact that landlocked countries and countries with high ethno-linguistic fragmentation both grow significantly more slowly that the average. All in all, basing the analysis simply on present and prospective economic and socio-economic conditions the odds appear to be heavily stacked against sustainable and meaningful democracy in Zambia. A positive gloss would be that these ‘conditions’ can only get better. A realistic projection is that they will remain daunting for many years to come, in whatever however their significance for democratisation is more precisely understood: whether it be the continued absence of a sizeable middle class owning significant amounts of private capital, or the shrinking of the industrial working class (different schools of thought maintain that one or other of these social forces or the two together normally supplies the motor of democratic advance); or the persistence of major constraints on effective political participation for the great majority of the people due to the dismal social conditions and, for rural women, who are often the sole head of household, the excessive burdens posed by economic tasks and family responsibilities (one study from Mansa District, Luapula, found that on average women spent 43 per cent of available time engaged in productive work). 35 The structure of rural society is such that ‘lack of mobility, lack of security, lack of (self-) respect and recognition. lack of autonomy, and lack of (leisure) time’ are all ‘defining characteristics of women’s lives in Zambia’. 36
Other ways of interpreting the positive significance of economic and socio-economic progress for democratisation include: their contribution to reducing inequality in the long run; the generation of favourable cultural values such as tolerance and willingness to compromise; and the proliferation of civic associations and NGOs, which can complement opposition parties as interest intermediaries and as watchdogs keen to check any government’s abuse of power. All these developments have also been advanced as notable determinants of democratisation in their own right, independently of whether or not they progress as a result of economic advance.

Political Culture
The precise meaning of the concept of political culture (beliefs, attitudes and sentiments concerning politics), like that of civil society, is contested, and so is the significance they both hold for democratisation. Here is not the place to explore those debates, except in so far as to note that, just as with the economic and socio-economic ‘conditions’, propositions which state that a democratic political culture and a vibrant, benign civil society must be present early on are held by some and rejected by other analysts. A democratic political culture (sometimes called ‘civic culture’) is defined here to embrace tolerance, a willingness to participate and to do so within democracy’s rules of the game, a sense of political efficacy and some measure of political satisfaction. Inglehart has argued that its presence is important to stable democracy and its absence is a significant limiting factor. Some accounts of democratisation include specific reference to a democratic political culture as an essential part of the definition (the same is also true of civil society). However, other writers like Muller and Seligman maintain that a suitable culture can come into being after transition to democracy, and is more likely to emerge as a benign consequence of democratisation, without possessing any specific causal properties (similar views have been expressed about civil society); Pinkney sums up that the concept may be more useful in describing a situation than explaining it. The plausibility of any one or all of these views could vary in accordance with the circumstances of each country and its individual experience; the actual relationships may well be too complex and variable to fit some universal sequence.

In Zambia’s case, aside from any inferences we might make from behavioural trends like voting we simply do not have enough reliable information concerning the political attitudes, knowledge, beliefs and perceptions of a significant cross-section of society. On the one hand, van Binsbergen, a social anthropologist, revisited Kaoma (Western Province), where back in the 1970s he found a lack of democratic knowledge and attitudes, and claims to be ‘amazed by the ease with which ordinary villagers, men and women, talk about the national political issues of today, and define their position within what is essentially the democratic constitutional framework’. However, he warns against drawing any conclusions for the nation’s prospects of democracy. Mphaisha refers to an historically produced ‘near absence of democratic values in Zambia’s political culture’, even now. While this comment applied to the political elite, Mphaisha suggests a more widespread ‘culture of silence’ exists too. Bratton and his Zambian co-researcher, Liatto-Katundu, using attitude survey techniques in 1993 found inter alia a failure by ordinary people to grasp the significance of political pluralism: Zambians persist in identifying the ideas of the state and the party in power, and fail to understand that representatives should be held to account between elections. Their study concluded that the ‘political culture of single-party rule has inculcated habits of obeisance and dependence that have an inertia of their own’. Perhaps this will erode as new generations of young Zambians who have no memory of the one-party state become enfranchised.
Having said that, van Donge detects in Zambia’s political culture a gravitation towards consensus, which chimes with advice given to Chiluba concerning the longevity of political loyalties in Zambia and the benefits of incumbency, which mean that once one party and its leader gain political pre-eminence they should be able to maintain it more or less indefinitely. After all, something like a one-and-a-half party system has a history going back to the First Republic; and it was only because Kaunda and UNIP committed mistakes that they felt obliged to proscribe political pluralism in order to retain power. The personalist or ‘big man’ focus of political allegiance so typical of sub-Saharan Africa will die hard even in Zambia, where the populace has already shown itself ready to transfer its allegiance once, following years of mismanagement in the Second Republic.

One aspect where a change of attitudes has been suggested is the claim that Zambians are shedding their previous disposition to look to the state as provider – a disposition that UNIP in power actively encouraged and made concrete through various socialist-oriented measures. In fact the imperatives of self-reliance and self-help have been forced upon most Zambians, because of the parlous public finances the government’s implementation of economic liberalisation. The claim is a highly personal one, but if it is accurate then the consequences for political relationships between government and society could ultimately be profound. Just as statism has been said to be ‘uniquely toxic to democracy at low levels of development precisely because it places such a high premium on control of the state’, in the furtherance of economic self-advancement, so a reduction in the citizens’ economic and material dependency should reduce their political dependency too. It enhances liberty in the form of autonomy from the state, even it does little for liberty in the more positive sense of enablement and commitment to participate in determining the common weal, which some democratic theorists insist is integral to the democratic concept and culture.

The voter registration exercise carried out in August-September 1998 in preparation for the local government elections is very telling here. The aim was to rectify the much publicised shortcomings of the 1996 electoral roll, and it was extended twice before finally being closed. Nevertheless it added only around 200,000 names of the estimated more than 1.5 million citizens who could have come forward.

Civil Society
The democratisation literature discusses the importance of civil society (the public associational space existing between state, market and family), social capital (trust, norms and networks that facilitate social co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit) and ‘civic networks’ (formal and informal consultation networks connecting civic groups and government departments, and contributing public trust in elites and state legitimacy). The correct way to understand civil society and social capital and the reasons why they are important, their relationships to one another and to political culture have been much debated. To mandate just one ‘correct’ interpretation would be unrealistic; again the context could be significant. Some of the contributions, for instance those which maintain that civil society is a valuable, participatory political arena in its own right, look somewhat detached from the circumstances of a country like Zambia, where strategies for survival must take priority. Nevertheless, the picture looks rather more encouraging than it does for the economic, socio-economic and cultural variables, even though the one-party state which preceded the Third Republic did not encourage the development of autonomous civic associations.
Civic associations (usually called non-governmental organisations, or NGOs, in Zambia) played a considerable role in bringing about the reforms that ended the Second Republic and in placing a new party and leader in power, in 1991. The trade union movement, the churches, and bodies of students and intellectuals all made notable contributions of different sorts, and businessmen helped fund the MMD at a time when UNIP monopolised state resources. In formal terms the landscape was rather thin: *A Directory of Nongovernmental Organisations* commissioned by the Office of the President in 1993 identified 11 ‘democracy and human rights’ NGOs alongside various church-based and other bodies, but none was very substantial. The apparent decline of civic associations in the post-communist societies of Central and Eastern Europe in comparison to the heady days of political transition is not paralleled in Zambia, even if Zambia’s NGOs have difficulty in rendering the government more accountable. Indeed, it would seem that Chiluba felt so threatened by the NGOs’ commentary on the 1996 electoral registration exercise and elections that he gave notice to introduce a regulatory framework for the election monitoring and other NGOs, when addressing Parliament in January 1997 (he was later persuaded to abandon the idea). The offices of the election monitoring bodies were ransacked and allegations of being in the pay of foreign powers were levelled; the heads of AFRONET and ZIMT were actually charged with receiving funding from a foreign country, under a 30-year old law that had not previously been invoked.

However, the trade union movement and more specifically the mineworkers union, which historically have been prominent independent actors (under Chiluba’s direction as Chairman-General from 1974 to 1991, the Zambia Confederation of Trade Unions, or ZCTU, came to play the role of de facto opposition to the UNIP government) have largely been neutralised as a political force in the Third Republic. The unions having played a major organisational role in bringing Chiluba and MMD to power in the first place and observing that support on the industrial Copperbelt has remained quite strong for these politicians, they have become uncertain and divided over how to relate to the government. Privatisation measures, public sector retrenchment and attempts to restrain the civil service wages bills have impacted on job security and real incomes in state employment; but until recently most mineworkers have been sheltered from the full impact of restructuring. Even so, total trade union membership has declined, by over 500,000 in the first five years of the MMD government alone, as has employment in the formal sector of the economy (down from close to a third of the labour force in 1974 to ten per cent by 1990. Over 80 per cent of the urban labour force is now outside the formal sector). Fackson Shamenda’s successful bid for re-election to the leadership of ZCTU, which he won by a narrow margin in November 1998, was received by his opponents as clear evidence that the contest had been manipulated by the government (Shamenda was one of the few notable voices outside government to give support to the declaration of state of emergency in 1997).

A listing of other leading civic associations would include the Institute of Policy Studies, Economics Association of Zambia, Zambia Association for Research and Development, the Law Association of Zambia, Legal Resources Foundation, and the National Women’s Lobby group (whose stated aim is ‘to sensitise and empower women to participate in governance’), although the last-named’s urban, educated and middle class membership is unrepresentative of the vast majority of Zambian women especially the rural poor. The death in 1998 of Lucy Sichone, chair of the Zambia Civic Education Association, deprived the political scene of its most prominent female lobbyist. The churches, which were instrumental in facilitating the 1990 constitutional reform and, while formally remaining non-partisan in
effect signalled support for a change of government, have also been divided. Neither the Anglican Church nor the Catholic Church was enamoured with Chiluba’s declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation in December 1991. That decision continues to stir controversy; and Chiluba closeness to elements of the ‘born again’ churches like the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia and Gospel Outreach Fellowship seems to have increased. The more traditional churches with long established roots in poor rural communities are alert to the harsh social realities, and the criticisms that some church leaders levelled at the 1996 election exercise demonstrated their political voice. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) monitors the social impact of the structural economic reforms and has consistently admonished the government and political elite for ignoring the poor and for apparently using power for their own self-enrichment. These subjects have also been amply ventilated in the independent press.

Press Freedom
The 1991 constitutional revisions incorporated press freedom in Zambia’s Bill of Rights as a fundamental right. But the independent press has been subjected to repeated harassment by the law enforcement agencies and editors have faced legal prosecutions on several occasions, over most of the decade. The government has entertained legal measures intended to make the tasks of acquiring and publishing critical political intelligence more difficult and more risky. For example the Ministerial and Parliamentary Code of Conduct Act (1994), provides for a tribunal before which journalists must substantiate their allegations made against parliamentarians – the requirement to disclose sources can be a deterrent to ‘whistle-blowing’. The government subsequently proposed to establish a Media Council, appointed by government, with which all journalists would have to register and which could take punitive steps against mavericks. The proposal, which occasioned international protest, would have embodied one of the features that Chiluba had found most disquieting in Zambia’s statist past – the state’s ability to control people’s lives through power over their livelihoods. It was blocked by a High Court decision in August 1997, on the grounds that it would abrogate constitutional safeguards concerning freedom of expression and association. The government’s response was to say it did not abandon the intention to legislate at a later date.

In the early years of the Third Republic the chief organ of the critical independent media, The Post (originally Weekly Post) could be accused of falling well below professional standards of journalism, so enthusiastic was it to expose government failings at a time when the opposition parties, notably UNIP lacked the ability to do so (hence Chikulo’s point that the MMD’s overwhelming victory was a severe setback for democratization). By sometimes behaving irresponsibly (one European commentator claimed the Weekly Post was ‘harder hitting than would be possible under the libel laws of certain longer established democracies in the industrialised world’) the independent press made it easier for the authorities to acquire the habit of threatening press freedoms when it suited their own political purposes.

Even so, The Post remains overtly anti-MMD and anti-Chiluba, and by January 1999 was openly supporting not only Kaunda’s entitlement to stand for the presidency in 2001 but his candidacy. The paper is a regular constituent of the media site for Zambia on the worldwide web, as are the state-owned Daily Mail and Times of Zambia, which are invariably more favourable to the government. The writer’s impression is that the content of reporting on economic, social and even political developments in Zambia has improved over the 1990s, reflecting the improved quality and volume of statistical information provided by international organisations and the government, and the numerous discussion workshops, seminars and
conferences on public issues that take place in and around Lusaka. Moreover the internet itself is a potential force for democratisation by making communication easier to carry out and more difficult to censor. And at 0.27 internet hosts (computers with a permanent internet connection) per 10,000 people in July 1997, Zambia actually compares rather favourably with other low income countries (the average, excluding China and India, is 0.07; Zambia is on par with Puerto Rico and better endowed than Kenya for instance). Among the growing number of web site addresses are the Zambia Legal Information Institute and a Zambian discussion group that connects correspondents around the world, plus bulletins from AFRONET. Of course only the wired-up elite have access, but then even the newspapers and the television service of the state-owned Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation hardly penetrate the rural areas, where wireless is the main source of information (it is estimated that there are 820,000 radio receivers and 267,000 television receivers in Zambia. As is true the world over, satellite dishes now adorn the wealthiest urban properties in the capital). So far, the independent radio services that have been allowed to open are ones that, like Christian Voice are politically safe for the government.

To conclude this section, democracy lacks a sound economic and socio-economic base in Zambia; the infrastructure of civil society is evolving and becoming more complex rather than becoming obviously stronger in net terms; and the political culture seems to be characterised by some positive and some negative features.

ii) The Influence of History

Although difficulties can arise during and because of attempts to democratise, problems can also have origins in the past, predating democratic opening; they bequeath unhelpful legacies which then persist in exercising a malign influence. This is sometimes described as a form of path dependence. In Zambia’s case the run-down state of the economy and large foreign debt have already been mentioned. And although they helped destroy the authority of the one-party state, those factors now obstructive in as much as they retard the polity’s ability to acquire performance legitimacy. However, Zambia has not had to cope with the situation that for instance Chile in 1989 and South Africa in 1994 inherited: large scale human rights abuses committed by the previous regime. Zambia established a Human Rights Commission (HRC) in 1993 to investigate past misdemeanours, but it is the human rights record of the current administration that has attracted more comment. Indeed, the HRC’s own report, published in 1997, observed that human rights violations continued ‘on a significant scale’.

The personal animosity entwined with the political rivalry between Kaunda and Chiluba became a central feature by the middle of the 1990s, but it dates back at least as far as the 1970s (in 1978 Chiluba declined Kaunda’s invitation to serve on UNIP’s Central Committee, which he saw as an attempt to curb his independence). At times the campaigning during the 1991 elections degenerated into undisguised personal acrimony. The fact that Zambia’s independence constitution actually names Kaunda as the country’s first president rankles with Chiluba even now, feeding the notion that to terminate Kaunda’s grip on power (and the prevention of a Kaunda dynasty succeeding in office) is a final and necessary act in the saga of decolonisation - a second coming of independence, one that has more meaning than in the other African countries which liberalised at the outset of the 1990s. At the same time Kaunda’s continued political presence contributes an exaggerated sense of insecurity for Chiluba; even at the height of his political triumph in early 1992 Chiluba was convinced that Kaunda and his cronies ‘will be back’, by fair means or foul. It is simple to speculate that if
Kaunda had retired permanently from politics in 1993, the next few years might have witnessed an unambiguous transition to democracy. But after Kaunda formally re-entered the fray, Chiluba acted as his ‘best campaign manager’; the authorities’ harassment of Kaunda extended at one point to threatening to deport him to Malawi.

Van Donge is right to point out that Kaunda’s acceptance of the new democratic order after the 1991 defeat should not be ‘overstated’, even though his urging of fellow citizens to practice civil disobedience and make the country ‘ungovernable’ tended to fall short of condoning the use of violence (his repeated warnings that the country is likely to descend into violence unless the government vacates office, might be thought to amount to the same thing). The government’s pattern of high-handed response can be explained in part by fears about what would happen to the country and to themselves if Kaunda did regain office. There is a temptation always to be cynical about such motives, but they can be sincerely held. The MMD leadership is probably right to fear the economic as well as political consequences of a new Kaunda-led regime; the chances of attracting desperately needed inwards investment would suffer; and they could not foresee the conclusions of recent research that claim civil liberties have a strong positive and statistically significant impact on development performance, in respect of World Bank projects at least. Moreover, it is difficult to deny the gulf between the rather dismissive attitude that the international human rights organisations have taken towards the security threats inside Zambia and the rather different reading the government has used to justify the emergencies; both sides have an interest in presenting the view they each give. It is equally true that Kaunda’s permanent withdrawal from politics would simply have made it easier for the MMD leadership to behave as if it was wholeheartedly committed to liberal democracy, while feeling confident that in so doing there was no risk of losing power.

Democratisation can succeed in spite of a burdensome legacy from the past, just as it could fail in places even where the omens from history look good. History’s significance should not be understood simply like the passing on of parcels, bad or good. For no less pertinent is the way that patterns and practices, informal as well as formal, persist over time or resurface after an interlude, and thereby provide continuities (interrupted in some cases) of political tradition. The evidence in this regard (as in all others) can be presented in a selective or partial manner. First, the good news.

**History as Good News**

A favourable picture would draw attention to Zambia’s previous record of sustaining political pluralism, although historians might disagree with Chiluba’s rather favourable impression of healthily competitive party politics in the First Republic and of the sound preparations that were laid for democratic self-government in the latter stages of colonial rule. Then, in the Second Republic competition between candidates for election to the National Assembly continued to take place through regularly staged general elections (1973, 1978, 1983, 1988), and in numerous instances ministers lost their seats. Bratton and de Walle’s finding in Africa is that getting to a democracy where there is a tradition of competition but little participation is easier than where there is a tradition of participation but no competition. That fits Zambia, where the ‘one-party participatory democracy’ which Kaunda invoked was participatory in name only. The government was highly centralised and power was concentrated in one person’s hands; electoral turnouts declined, to under 60 per cent by 1988. Even so, in the view of Maipose for instance there is overwhelming evidence to show that the National Assembly was lively throughout both the First and Second Republics.
Next, Zambia has never experienced a successful military coup, and the coups that have been attempted over the years all appear to have been instigated by very small numbers of discontented soldiers. And even the Second Republic witnessed vigorous activity by civil society, not just in the form of the trade union movement but a growing voice among the press and the churches. Zambians who are conscious of their country’s past record, which manifests much greater tolerance among the various communities and far less turbulence than in other parts of Africa, have good reason to try hard to maintain political peace and, in the light of what happened during the Second Republic, to resist a major assault on the fundamentals of democracy. Reports of the violent conflict that persist elsewhere in Africa should continue to reinforce the Zambians’ attachment to constitutionality.

**History as Bad News**

A less favourable reading of history would highlight the urge to subordinate all the institutions of state including parliament to the ruling party and its leader (a trend which according to Sichone goes back further than the Second Republic). There is an unbroken tradition of presidentialism, with its in-built reluctance to permit effective challenge from within or without the ruling group, which Tordoff portrayed in 1980 as being a direct inheritance from the colonial model of Governor’s rule. The perpetuation of such features in the Third Republic gives rise to the view that, notwithstanding the surface changes to the political structures, nothing has changed about the manner of rule. So, although an end to the existing state of emergency a notable, declared objective of MMD’s successful campaign in 1991 (an officially sanctioned state of emergency existed for the entire period from independence to 8 November 1991, having been kept on from the days of British rule), the MMD government’s readiness to reintroduce emergency powers, by invoking the Preservation of Public Security Act, should occasion no surprise. The bureaucratic-authoritarianism of colonial rule still casts a long shadow in parts of Europe’s former empires in Africa, although only with increasing difficulty can it be held responsible for the divergent patterns of present day events.

Similarly, the neo-patrimonial style of political rule has an ancient history that predates even colonial times. While the penury of the Zambian state today and close supervision by the Bretton Woods institutions serve to limit the scale of neo-patrimonial and clientelist behaviour, they have not removed their influence entirely, from the national, or provincial or local levels of politics and particularly at critical times like elections (during the local elections campaign in 1998 MMD leaders made clear that the government would only ‘work with’ MMD councils; local government is heavily reliant on the centre for subventions). In former, more luxuriant times the slogan was ‘it pays to belong to UNIP’; a modern day equivalent could be ‘it costs if MMD is not preferred’. Disbursements from the Presidential Discretionary Fund (worth Kwacha 12 billion in 1998, compared with K5 billion allocated to disaster relief) are one of the vehicles for patronage; the fact that the government budget presentation to parliament in January 1999 conceals how much has been set aside for this fund in 1999 is a guide to how important it is. The dismantling of state enterprises and their sale in some instances by private treaty have also offered opportunities to politically well-placed individuals, together with the de-regulation and marketisation of other aspects of the state’s inherited economic activities.

In fact, the cement that binds political parties has never looked particularly strong once the African nationalism evident during the struggle for independence lost its initial relevance, after 1964. At the mass level, the strength that UNIP derived from its exercise of patronage could last no longer than the economic good times. And the faction-ridden nature of elite
politics has been a characteristic of all three Republics. Indeed, this trait has been held responsible for Kaunda’s original decision to banish multi-party politics, which was brought forward so as to pre-empt the erosion of UNIP’s and his own political dominance by an acceleration of fractional trends in the ruling party. Yet far from eliminating the personal manoeuvring and internecine rivalry, the Second Republic simply provided one central place where it could continue – inside UNIP – thereby consolidating this particular aspect of political culture. It continues to frustrates the institutionalisation of stable and disciplined political parties even now. That the upper echelons of the MMD should suffer some defections soon after taking office was entirely predictable. But the continuing inability of opposition political groupings to coalesce around a recognised leader(s) and their complete failure to develop distinct programmatic identities, either singly or through forming lasting alliances among themselves (successive rumours of attempts to form alliances and mergers have so far all come to nothing) continues to be a limiting factor for democracy, in as much as it leaves the MMD in too dominant a position.

Connected with this is the general disenchantment with politics and the politicians, manifest in the modest rates of popular political participation and the more anecdotal evidence provided by letters to the newspapers. The tone of public debate evidenced in the independent press has been unremittingly negative, with a strong focus on the personalities (character assassinations of Chiluba specifically), rather than sustained analysis of the issues. The tone betrays an absence of confidence in the polity and in the country. A participatory poverty monitoring exercise carried out in 1994 found that the view that life has ‘gone from bad to worse’ was held unanimously, and the following, from a letter in *The Post* (December 1998), speaks volumes: ‘Now, what shall I say about Zambia – a country without food, medical care system, education, security, jobs, and hope, a country where the only news you hear is sad?…A country where leaders do not hear the cries of the citizens …Zambia – a country that belongs to no one’.

The sense of despair is understandable, given that lying behind the many serious problems facing the country is a 20-year period of uninterrupted economic decline. There is awareness too of being in almost constant thrall to the international financial institutions. A ‘stabilisation package’ of financial support was first broached with the International Monetary Fund as early as 1973. Subsequent rounds of negotiations issued in five successive agreements up to 1991. The period 1966-69 to 1990-93 saw no less than 18 adjustment loans from the World Bank, and structural adjustment has become an easy target for opposition criticism. For the economic reforms seem to have made matters worse. Even the Bank in internal reports admits that the increasing depth of poverty in Zambia’s poor is a result of stabilisation and structural adjustment reforms the Bank promoted in the first half of the 1990s; Chiluba too has publicly acknowledged that despite years of adjustment the economy ‘is not doing well and our people are suffering’.

However, a lack of creative thinking by the opposition parties and consequent weakness of policy debates render government that much more reliant on the international financial institutions for strategic policy initiatives. This is not a recent development. Right from the start at independence the absence of a sizeable educated, well trained and professional elite among the indigenous population predisposed Zambia towards a culture of external dependency, which in time was confirmed by an increasing reliance on conditional financial support. Thus Saasa and Carlsson link the consistent failure of the Zambian authorities to determine and impose their own priorities, procedures and plans, when dealing
with the donors, to the absence of a supportive local environment – one where Zambian interests and potential stakeholders participate in a constructive dialogue. Of course, it takes two to tango, and requires not just a responsible approach from opposition politicians and civil society but also the sort openness and transparency on the part of government that has been missing in the past and which for example the CCJP called for in its ‘1991 Pre-budget Statement’. Nevertheless, at times it has seemed that if an epitaph were ever needed for Zambia’s recent brush with democracy, a strong candidate would be Saasa and Carlsson’s remark made apropos aid, that the institution is not owned by anyone and consequently no one feels responsible. A determination to build democracy in Zambia requires a degree of confidence and good feeling about the country that very few of the political actors seem to evince, Chiluba’s publicly stated commitment to democratisation and sense of conviction born of religious zeal notwithstanding.

In sum, there is a mixture of evidence from the past. History alone cannot explain or determine the nature and extent of democratisation in Zambia in the 1990s. But that does not mean that the process whereby political change has been made might not itself exert a significant influence on the course of events, the present situation and probable future outcomes.

iii) The Path and Pitfalls of Change

The Travails of Transition

The Challenge of Change is the sub-title chosen by President Chiluba for his book about Zambia’s democratic prospect.66 Democratisation, a process of change, introduces opportunities for things to go wrong, for mistakes to be made. In some contributors to the democratisation literature the way in which the previous regime came to an end and the manner of succession occupy a central place in their analysis of what happens next. On the one side there is the ‘birth defect theory’: democracy will be doomed if difficulties are experienced in the early stages (how early is not clear). A narrower version of path dependence than one which refers to the pre-history of political transition claims that the outcome of transition is contingent on the mode or process of transition. Such matters as the structural position of the key actors and the tactics they employ (violent or non-violent action?, transition ‘from above’ or transition ‘from below’?; the speed of democratic breakthrough, and so on) are all vital considerations. Thus for instance Munck and Leff 67 believe these have far more influence than such pre-existing structural circumstances as the level of economic development, although it should be added that transitions can themselves be shaped by the contours of the pre-existing order.

On this score, Zambia’s Third Republic could be said to have enjoyed a flying start. The return to political pluralism in December 1990 was conceded without much violence, although only after an unsuccessful coup attempt on 30 June 1990. The 1991 election campaign was fairly orderly and the ballot a peaceful one; the hand over of power was immediate and smooth. The new government came to office with an enormous amount of international goodwill, and was quickly made an exceptionally favourable offer by the World Bank. The changes had been made in Zambia, by Zambians. The people rejoiced. Few analysts believe that only those political reforms that follow protracted and violent mass struggle will be cherished by the people and kept firmly on track. So, if the 1990s have turned into a decade of disappointment for democracy in Zambia, where does the problem lie?
Munck and Leff helpfully remind us that the factors which can keep a democracy stable are not necessarily identical to those which helped bring it about; similarly, the forces that are most functional to democratic transition could differ from those that bought about the end of the previous regime. To illustrate, the military might play a key role in forcing democratic opening (as in Portugal for example) but afterwards should abdicate any intention of interfering in the running of the democracy. In Zambia, the military have never been in government, they did not dictate the reform process and they were not formally given any privileges or reserved powers in the new constitutional and political dispensation; that at least should reduce the chances of democratic reversal coming about by military take-over. In fact the 1990s have seen a virtual halving of military expenditure as a proportion of the total government budget.

Institutional Matters

Theories claiming that the decisions (and non-decision) which comprise the process of transition significantly affect the transition outcome place a premium on being able to locate the break points distinguishing the different stages of democratisation. Put differently, do we know whether Zambia still ‘in transition’? Whatever the answer, the literature attaches considerable importance to institutional design as a determining feature of transitional politics and governance. The choices can have long term consequences and, once made, become increasingly embedded, owing to the strength of vested interests that accrue around them. Wise ‘crafting’ may not be everything, but it is important that the arrangements governing the competition for power and use of high office provide inappropriate incentive structures – both to mobilise engagement and inculcate a willingness to play by democratically appropriate rules of the game.

Zambia in fact provides a good example of an approach to constitutional engineering designed to suit the narrow political advantage of the rulers, rather than some detached, longer run appreciation of the best interests of democratic development. The development of formal mechanisms for greater governmental accountability has been slow and halting, in some instances made only after donor pressure and then with limitations attached. Doubts have been expressed about their political independence, the adequacy of their resources and their general effectiveness.

Furthermore, the retention of the first-past-the-post electoral system (another link with the colonial past), together with the presidential nature of government and the fact that the president’s and the National Assembly’s terms of office coincide, expose the political system to the weaknesses of the ‘winner-take-all’ mentality. That mentality has long been identified as a contributory cause of the earliest democratic reversals in post-colonial Africa. The electoral system occasions little debate in Zambia, but its potentially distorting effects on representation are clear - in 1996 five MPs were elected on less than 40 per cent of the vote and a further 27 were elected with under half of the votes; the National Party, Zambia Democratic Congress and Lima Party polled in total over a quarter of all votes received but won only 7 seats, whereas MMD’s 61 per cent of the vote translated into 131 out of the 150 available seats. The opposition parties in Zambia have seen little prospect of sharing in power. In that sense they are not stakeholders in the system. The incentive to make a constructive contribution is reduced accordingly. The failure of the transition period so far to bring about firmly institutionalised parties and a genuinely two-party or plural party system can only retard democratic progress. Although Mainwaring\textsuperscript{68} rightly notes that a high level of party institutionalisation is not necessarily good for democracy, there is equal certainty that while
personalism and patronage might have been functional for stability in the short term they offer no guarantee of political accountability for the longer term. It is a moot point whether MMD would survive its removal from office at the hands of the electorate, or, indeed, whether it will remain a coherent force once Chiluba retires. But no other political grouping convincingly looks like a possible alternative government. This is a signal failing of Zambia’s transition so far. The chances that another MMD type of coalition of forces will arise in the same way that MMD prospered in 1990/91 are not strong. To some extent the MMD’s performance in office has queered the pitch. And although the MMD’s clear overall victory in the December 1998 local elections has intensified speculation about possible alliances and mergers among the opposition, a lack of mutual trust among the leading figures and their ambitions to contest the presidency in 2001 stand in the way of a credible and sustained united front. Here is one important respect in which the path of transition to date could have unfortunate longer-term consequences for democratisation, because of the continuing uncertain prospects for a viable and genuinely competitive party system.

iv) Present Problems

Locating the ‘conditions’ for successful democratisation that are missing or only weakly present, examining the historical legacy and inquiring if the path of democratic advance itself throws up obstacles and distractions, are different ways of trying to explain the course taken by events. Alternatively, the analysis could start simply by identifying the current problems. For convenience problems can be sorted into categories.

One categorisation distinguishes between problems that begin at home (‘made in Zambia’) and problems whose origins are external or are strongly influenced by the international environment. But, in today’s increasingly interdependent world subjected to multiple forces of globalisation, the analytical distinction is not a statement of practical separation. A second categorisation distinguishes between problems arising within the political system and those which originate outside the polity, or outside the democratic framework specifically, especially the sort of economic issues that have already been noted or the strains thrown up by economic liberalisation (a politically-induced project), which can pose serious social and political consequences. Even so, a general point is that often it is not simply the problem that is important but the manner of response shown by the government, wider polity and society and how the response affect democratisation, directly and indirectly. A third possible template for classifying problems is to apply the currently fashionable dichotomy between state and non-state actors.

The State as a Problem

The state can pose problems for democracy, both by being overbearing and by being weak and ineffective. A strong state administration can help democratisation in many ways, such as by strengthening the rule of law, establishing impartial bureaucratic processes and undermining the logic of personal power. An overblown state – one that intervenes too readily in the lives of the citizens and tries to dominate economic activity as Zambia’s state tried to do in the past, can be just as detrimental. A combination of statism and low institutional capacity (as in the Second Republic) is doubly unfortunate, being detrimental not only to economic development (as is argued by numerous development economists) but also to political accountability, to the chances of winning performance legitimacy and to the generation of a sense of efficacy among the populace.
An internal World Bank report on Zambia in 1992 noted that there is a general shortage of well trained staff at every level of government. Responsibilities are often delegated to those who are ill equipped, and chains of command are ambiguous. Senior and middle-level managers delegate duties to junior staff with little or no training, without providing adequate supervision. Thus in essence, responsibilities are abdicated. Even quite recently the limited nature of the Zambian state’s ability to identify problems, design project implementation, manage, monitor and evaluate projects for development subsequently led Saasa and Carlsson to conclude the administration ‘at all levels, is in serious crisis’. The MMD government’s programme to decentralise the health service began as a notable exception, initially drawing favourable international comment, but the reforms have come under increasing criticism inside Zambia; anyway, the initial success only serves to highlight how resilient other parts of the central bureaucracy to change - especially change that would mean loo's of control over resources. Thus in the words of a Zambian academic, ‘we suffer from a diarrhoea in words and constipation in action’. At the same time, the manipulation of public office and public resources for purposes of political patronage has persisted, to the benefit of a few.

A particular weakness that impinges directly on the liberties of the citizen concerns the law enforcement agencies. They lack the resources to police crime effectively. Przeworski argues in Sustainable Democracy that social disintegration is the most acute danger facing new democracies, for it undermines the normal exercise of rights and obligations. The symptoms are evident as far apart as Johannesburg and Moscow; the rise in violent crime that Zambia is experiencing as a result of economic impoverishment provides another example, which is having unmistakable political reverberations. No less important and part of the same malaise, the police behave at times beyond the rule of law, blatantly infringing individual rights. There are regular reports of police brutality, unlawful killings of suspects, torture of detainees, and appalling conditions inside the prisons. The government resisted signing the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, until December 1998 when, under pressure from the World Bank Consultative Group, it ratified the Convention – although entering a reservation against Article 20, effectively barring UN investigation of alleged abuses.

Society
Non-state actors form a very broad category that comprises bodies as diverse as social movements and multinational corporations. Here it is the multi-ethnic composition of the population that is considered as a potential source of complications for democratisation. National unity has long been considered an essential requisite of democracy, and in some parts of the world such as the Balkans conflicts stirred by ‘ethnic nationalism’ are a significant obstacle. Democratic opening is likely to bring underlying divisions in society closer to the surface of politics. This is not necessarily problematic, for mechanisms like a stable and representative party system and an inclusive approach to government should provide channels for orderly political competition and responsive government. However, the potential for the freedoms associated with liberal democracy to encourage greater expression to non-negotiable demands, which, if frustrated, could generate disorderly conflict, is a risk. This is one reason why Huntington claims the process of democratisation can itself create or exacerbate problems for democracy, namely when political leaders appeal to particularist identities as a way of mobilising support for their personal ambitions.

The people of Zambia belong to 73 different ethnic groups; there are seven officially recognised indigenous languages and 30 different dialects. The relationships between the
country’s ethnic and regional composition and patterns of political behaviour have long been a focus of attention. The literature on Zambia has tended to downplay the political role and significance of ethnicity per se, denying that primordial sentiments exert a significant influence, when compared to the insights provided by an alternative lens such as sectionalism, or even class.\(^4\) In Molteno’s classic statement, sectional identification is manufactured through the process of political competition, it is not a pre-existing phenomenon. In Zambia the evidence suggests that where communal conflict has been most evident it is to a considerable the product of machinations by politicians seeking to advance their own ambitions. They make appeals to their own ‘group’ or seek to discredit their opponents on the grounds that they are tribalist, or deploy both sets of argument simultaneously. As Sichone and Simutanye point out, such tactics are used by young well educated elites and other ‘middle class elements’ and are not confined to traditional village elders.\(^5\) MMD politicians and their opponents have been equally culpable, for example the former have cast the National Party (confined largely to North Western Province) as a tribal party, and UNIP accuses the government of increasingly favouring Bemba-speakers in ministerial appointments, thereby abandoning the ‘ethnic arithmetic’ that President Kaunda practiced. This dimension to politics contributes to intra-party disunity too, although overlayed by clashes of unadorned personal ambition.

‘Tribalism’ is not a major threat to democratisation in Zambia in the way that it challenges order and stability in some African countries. Of course there are regional economic and social disparities. For example Eastern Region scores twice as badly as Lusaka on the human poverty index, and has much lower levels of access to health services and safe water. But their political significance at the national level is secondary to the fact that poverty is endemic, a shared characteristic that is no respecter of ethnic differences. Having said that, a special situation exists in Western Province.

Barotseland (now Western Province) was a protectorate of British rule. The royal establishment resisted incorporation first into Northern Rhodesia and then Zambia. In 1964 the Barotseland London Agreement arranged for the territory’s inclusion in the new, independent state of Zambia on condition that the litunga or chief retained powers over local government and land. The UNIP government subsequently rescinded the agreement, and Western Province was reduced to a status similar to the other provinces when a nation-wide referendum was conducted in 1969 - one year after Caplan’s observation ‘it is not unlikely that secessionist sentiments will long exist and sporadically manifest themselves in overt challenges to the cohesion of the nation-state.’\(^6\) The democratic opening since 1991 has given a new lease of life to this long running issue. President Kaunda managed the issue by reserving high level representation in cabinet for Lozi politicians from the province, which was made easier by the one party state. Chiluba has been unable to reproduce the formula with equal success in the new pluralist environment. Some members of the Barotse aristocratic establishment and ‘intelligentsia’, most notably Akashambatwa Mbikusita-Lewanika (one of the earliest members to resign an MMD cabinet post, seemingly out of disappointment at not being made Finance Minister; subsequently leaving the party to help found the National Party, before moving on to form his own party, Agenda for Zambia) have gone so far as to take their case to the Southern African Development Community (SADC). But so far the issue has been contained within democratic politics, and evidence from the ballot box suggests that autonomy does not command majority support in the province. The decentralisation of power from central government to the regions could be viewed as move towards greater democracy but it seems unlikely to happen in Zambia. Equally, the deconcentration of functions to local
authorities will have little substantive impact so long as the centre appropriates the limited
resources of finance and qualified manpower. It is too early to say whether Kaunda’s
declared intention to canvass the donors for their direct financial support of UNIP-controlled
local councils, following the December 1998 local elections (UNIP won in Eastern Province),
will come to anything.

External Problems
The prospects for sustaining emerging democracies in the post-Cold War world are enhanced
by the global increase in the number of democracies and the efforts being taken by some
democracies in the West to assist democratic transitions and consolidation in other countries.
But for a country like Zambia the external political environment is not a wholly positive force.
Three aspects are mentioned here: regional politics, international financial and economic
influences, and weaknesses in the donors’ interest in promoting democracy, good governance
and human rights.

Regional Politics
Zambia has borders with eight countries. One of them, the Democratic Republic of the Congo
(DRC - formerly Zaire), has descended into civil war, in what according to United States
Under-Secretary of State for Africa, Susan Rice, could become Africa’s ‘first world war’. Another
neighbour is Angola, which has not known peace since colonial times, that is before its
independence in 1975. A third is Zimbabwe, a country whose troops are taking part in the
conflict in the Congo. Zimbabwe is becoming less stable, due to growing economic hardship
and impatience with President Mugabe’s cronyism, autocratic and increasingly repressive style
of government, which by 1999 was threatening judicial independence and freedom of the
press. Zimbabwe’s costly military involvement in the war in DRC contrasts with the Zambian
government’s attempts to broker a diplomatic solution. It is unsurprising that the vague
commitment enshrined in the 1992 treaty to establish SADC that the organisation would
uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and adopt objectives of mutual
encouragement and co-operation to that end, has failed to deliver effective mechanisms for
reinforcing democracy in member states, notwithstanding the launching of an Organ of
Politics, Defence and Security, in 1996. There are several politically troubled states among the
14 strong membership of SADC, Lesotho for instance. And while South Africa’s Executive
Deputy President Mbeki has recently condemned his own country’s politicians who seek office
only to steal; politics in Malawi is said to be ‘ideologically and intellectually bankrupt’ and
power remains concentrated in the executive; Namibia has recently legislated a constitutional
amendment to allow President Sam Nujoma to stand for a third term (virtually a president for
life - seemingly also Mugabe’s intention in Zimbabwe, where his re-election in 1996 was
unopposed, on a voter of 35 per cent). Meanwhile Botswana’s elite-dominated democracy
maintains a significant concentration of executive power and infringements of press freedom,
despite being favoured by over thirty years of stability and remarkable economic growth since
independence in 1966.

Certainly, a number of political leaders in the region have mediated personally in
relations between Chiluba and Kaunda, most notably Nelson Mandela who tried to persuade
Chiluba to authorise a postponement of the 1996 elections pending the reinstatement of
Kaunda’s entitlement to contest the presidency. In June 1998 Mandela brokered a deal with
the Zambian authorities to release Kaunda from house arrest, in which situation Kaunda had
been placed following his arrest on suspicion of treason in the previous December. But
Chiluba is wary of the ‘comrades’ who date from the ‘frontline’ struggle against apartheid in
South Africa (Kaunda was chair of the ‘frontline’ group), and will not permit their intervention in Zambia’s domestic affairs. The point here is not that the adverse reporting on Zambia by western commentators looks somewhat unbalanced against the regional background. Instead, it is that Zambia’s political leaders and their local critics cannot draw much inspiration, or feel vulnerable to moral pressure and moral support from the surrounding countries. In other words, the chances that Zambia will benefit from a further ‘snowballing’ of democratisation (S. P. Huntington’s term) through contagion and reciprocal support in southern Africa do not look strong at the present time.

*International Economics.*

To the extent that economics matters for politics, the current global economic situation does not bode well for democracy in Zambia. In its annual report on *Global Economic Prospects and the Developing Countries (1998/1999)* the World Bank predicts very weak world economic at best in 1999 and only slow recovery thereafter. The outlook could be very much worse if the industrialised countries do not take the right initiatives to avert slump in the emerging market economies. Once the East Asian economies start to reap the benefits of the institutional and policy reforms they have undertaken to correct their late financial difficulties, they should regain their magnetic attraction to private international investment. Africa simply cannot compete on equal terms, certainly not a small, poor, debt-distressed and land-locked country like Zambia, with decaying transport links and no oil. Within southern Africa there is as much evidence for the proposition that South Africa will pursue its own interests single-mindedly and take the lion’s share of inward investment to the region and all the benefits that flow from that, as there is support for the proposition that South Africa will be an engine of growth serving development in the countries to the north.

By November 1998 the internationally traded price of copper had fallen to its lowest level for over eleven years – the decline being 28 per cent for the year as a whole. The world market is one of structural over-supply – stocks registered on the London Metal Exchange in February 1999 were at an all time high, beating the previous record set over 20 years ago. Output from Chile’s state-owned Codelco, the world’s largest producer’s and twice the size of ZCCM, increased by 11.5 per cent just in 1998. A resolution of the disturbances in the Congo, whose own mining activities (Zaire was once the world’s sixth largest copper producer) have been decimated, would further increase the international competition for market share.

*International Political Economy*

The timing of Zambia’s abandonment of UNIP’s one-party state was undoubtedly influenced by the events in Central and Eastern Europe, especially the fall of Romania’s Ceausescu (with whom Kaunda had close relations), and before that by the growing reluctance of the international financial institutions to be generous towards Zambia. Even so, the country’s political transition at the start of the 1990s was largely the product of internal political pressure, a groundswell of popular opinion heavily fuelled by domestic economic discontents. Since then, the forces of international political economy have exerted an influence, but not in one uniform direction.

First, Zambia exhibits a high level of dependency on foreign aid - as much as 70 per cent of GDP, and in 1996 equivalent to over 87 per cent of central government expenditure (only three countries were more aid dependent in that regard). Aid dependence has climbed in the 1990s (up from 44 per cent in 1991), so that aid received per capita is now also comparatively high (US$67 per head). In total over $2 billion was received in 1995 alone. This
all looks supportive. However, Zambia is also one of the most heavily indebted countries (on a per capita basis), and the Bretton Woods institutions have been slow to put in place a general initiative for substantial debt reduction for such countries. The debt service obligations detract from the resources available for social spending and human resource development, and the persistence of a substantial debt overhang deters private inwards investment. South Africa’s restoration to the international community poses a competing claimant on aid to the region, and Zambia’s importance to the donors’ strategic and economic interests has waned considerably with the end of South Africa’s pariah status and the belief that South Africa holds the key to stability in the region. International aid flows to South Africa have been rising to levels over half of Zambia’s aid, in an era when official development assistance from the Development Assistance Committee countries has declined steeply, in real terms by 7.1 per cent in 1997 alone.

Nevertheless, international financial support to Zambia remains a major forum whereby the donor governments involve themselves in the country’s political direction, particularly during the regular World Bank Consultative Group meetings with Zambia’s representatives and the periodic negotiations on debt relief. Lobbied intensively by international human rights organisations, the donors singly and collectively have used these opportunities to press their concerns about governance and human rights. On occasions they have deferred decisions or reduced balance of payments support, or promised further assistance only on condition of good behaviour (although it could be significant that the reason for most substantial and sustained withholding of programme support, in 1997-8, was the government’s procrastination over privatising ZCCM). Some plans for bilateral project aid have also been withdrawn, to exert political leverage. Conversely in the first half of the 1990s support was given to a number of small democracy promotion projects such as training in party organisation, and in the 1996 elections a few governments provided material support to the domestic monitoring groups. But what net effect does all this have on Zambia’s politics?

Such a simple question cannot be answered easily, for several reasons: the difficulty of making comparisons and aggregating distinctive aid and aid-related ‘interventions’ that are not strictly comparable (the political effects of different sorts of financial and economic development aid, ‘political development aid’, and the various conditionalities); methodological conundrums over the time horizons that should be selected for measuring effects (the different aspects of the total aid relationship commend different periods, some of them so long range that we cannot anticipate the results); the near impossibility of establishing causal connections and the need to separate out the ‘noise’ in the system – the influence of other variables and their complex interactions with aid. Finally there is the ‘anticipation effect’ - to actions and deliberate inaction or postponements of decisions by Zambian actors in anticipation of what the donors’ likely reaction would be, which often lies concealed from outside observation.

On the one side, the present government’s chances of remaining in power would presumably have been much reduced if the donor community had not in fact provided substantial assistance over the last decade. In the first half of the 1990s Zambia became one of the largest recipients of official development assistance of any African country, both in absolute terms and proportional to GNP. That situation changed as conditional aid sanctions began to take effect, but even now the World Bank is torn between punishing the government and upholding its own commitment to alleviate poverty and promote development in one of the world’s poorest countries. Poverty reduction has recently become a higher priority of the
donors, which should favour Zambia. Project aid continues to be provided for government priority schemes like the refurbishment of major trunk roads (as of November 1998 the European Union had 15 different projects or schemes under way or being appraised, totalling over ECU53 million). Furthermore, the know requirement of the Bretton Woods institutions to pursue orthodox economic policy measures shelters to some extent the government against domestic discontent about the harsh social consequences. What the Zambian political scene would now look like if much less aid had been offered is a counterfactual that cannot be known. The donors have bankrolled a regime whose democratic credentials they increasingly came to question; but a sustained withdrawal of support now presumably could (and might still) lead to political turmoil and an even less free state, not least by compounding the country’s bad financial and economic state.

The government knows that in important aspects of economic policy its initiatives have earned it some international credibility, even though the copper privatisation fiasco did cause disbursements to slow, by 1998. In May 1998 the World Bank Consultative Group expressly linked new balance of payments support to the sale of the mines and human rights improvements, adding to the existing conditionalities concerning economic policy and ‘good governance’ (previously, the Group had made clear that it would hold its meeting only after the state of emergency introduced in October 1997 was removed). All this has prompted complaints from Zambian ministers that the ‘goalposts’ are being continually moved. We can infer from this that the conditionalities are seen as unreasonable and to be viewed primarily as a means to the end of gaining financial support, rather than as containing intrinsic wisdom to be valued in its own right. That story is but a replay of past events. For Saasa and Carlsson amply demonstrated in the context of the economic conditions of aid to Zambia, that in circumstances like this no true ‘ownership’ of the proffered solutions is taken on board. ‘Ownership’ remains with the donors, who are the purchasers of local compliance. The ‘solutions’ make no sustained impression in the absence of local commitment. Such a finding in fact coincides with what most analysts now believe has almost universal application in aid relations, not just in the long history of development aid but in the much newer activity of international democracy assistance as well. If it is true that economic policy reforms rarely succeed unless governments are genuinely convinced that they must be implemented and see the reforms as their won, then the same may be no less true of changes to political practice.

Thus, while some political initiatives by the MMD government can be identified as probably the result of donor pressure, for they were made into specific requirements (for example the departure from the cabinet of three ministers believed to be trafficking in drugs, in January 1994, and the timing of the announcement to create a Permanent Human Rights Commission), they could be little more than political gestures. They were made with reluctance and their worth is questionable. Only if they become institutionalised, and are built on or taken further forward by succeeding administrations, can the international donors be credited with making a significant contribution to democratisation in Zambia. A more lasting benefit could come from continuing to provide practical support to the civil society infrastructure, like for example the Norwegian aid agency NORAD’s offer of a US$140,000 training grant to the Zambia Institute of Mass Communications in January 1999. But that kind of involvement too is not without risks – the risks of undermining the authenticity and local accountability of the recipient, of encouraging ‘gold diggers’ and developing relationships of external dependency. In the aftermath of the 1996 elections the MMD leadership sought to discredit those NGOs who were critical of that whole episode by challenging their financial links with diplomatic community: Chiluba warned that ‘non-indigenous’ NGOs were potential
sites of ‘mercenary operations’; election monitors who questioned the poll were called ‘unpatriotic’. Later, the government sought to blame Zambia’s NGOs for the human rights-motivated aid sanctions and their damage to the country. So, at minimum civil society in Zambia must develop its own resources of strength rather than look to the international community for backing and support, if it is to have the chance of gaining greater acceptance in the political process. For the time being, it is the judgment of Baylies and Szeftel (who have close knowledge of Zambia’s civic bodies) that the NGOs are not stooges of the donors, while conceding that the donors interest might have ‘served to encourage opposition elements and activists in local civic organisations in their protests’.

In its annual World Report (1998) Human Rights Watch states that the international community’s recent efforts to bring about improved human rights and governance in Zambia have been exemplary. But foreign observers like these tend to be much less sanguine in respect of how effective the international community’s involvements have been, overall. And even the specialised democracy assistance which characterised the first half of the 1990s (and included for example US funding for the Mwanakatwe constitutional commission) has fallen away. Zambia could almost qualify as an example of the countries that Carothers says provide ‘a sobering tonic for US policymakers and pundits who made overreaching claims for America’s influence on the political direction of other countries’. However, if, in contrast we had felt able describe Zambia as a ‘donor democracy’, then the matter of how far it enjoys political self-determination and, ipso facto how much democratic self-government the country enjoys, would be wide open to dispute. Perhaps the notion of ‘donor democracy’ is an oxymoron anyway. It is undeniable that some established democracies, Germany and Japan for example, could be said to have been ‘planted’ (by intervention from outside), whereas others simply ‘evolved’. But the record of trying to plant sustainable democracies in Africa in the years following independence is unconvincing, and the grounds for believing that a similar exercise should work better now are not persuasive. The democratisation literature is largely agreed that the crucial role that international forces can sometimes play in tilting the odds in favour of political or democratic transition (although less relevant to Zambia in 1990/91 than some other countries) is not replicable for more advanced stages of democratic deepening and consolidation. There, longer term forces of a structural nature internal to the country must supply the main positive ingredients. In the interim, however, a very adverse external environment could significantly increase the chances of democratic decay. Put differently, the international community’s power to advance democratisation further forward in Zambia today is less than both its power to reverse it and its capability to retard such a reversal. In short, the abilities to promote and to destroy or constrain are asymmetrical. In particular, whatever weakens the country’s economic prospects and seems to place power over its future in the hands of donor governments and international financial institutions must be problematic for democracy.

v) Structure and Agency

If problems occur, then an obvious question to ask is who or what is primarily responsible? In political studies there is a well-rehearsed debate about the relative importance of structure and agency in explaining outcomes. Unsurprisingly it has been applied to the study of democratisation too. In studying comparative politics, the old tendency to view politics as derivative and dependent, which often led analysts to search for the ‘inputs’ and the forces determining politics, is now being supplemented by attention to the difference that politics itself can make - that means the performance of the politicians as well as the political
institutions and structures. Thus inquiries can legitimately dwell on whether the principal political actors were the right persons, in the right place, at the right time. This is especially pertinent at times of flux or rapid change, when the entire course of history is at stake. In contrast, ‘outputs’ and outcomes in the longer term (democratic consolidation, for example) are more likely to be influenced by structural and institutional forces, both domestic and international. Thus Bratton and de Walle while noting that the closer the interpretation approximates to voluntarism the smaller are the explanatory and predictive powers, acknowledge the merits of contingency as an analytical lens, especially in Africa. That focuses on the actors and their choices as they react situationally to the dynamic of events. So, on the one hand we can agree with Munck’s words that a theory of regime transition and formation should incorporate ‘the simple yet theoretically complex notion that actors make choices but not in the circumstances of their own choosing’. On the other hand the absence of ‘conditions’ favourable to democracy only serves to increase the premium placed on good political leadership - or in Ottaway’s words ‘political organising must make up for the unfavourable underlying socio-economic conditions’ that are characteristic of much of Africa.

Here it is useful to present an argument made by several writers, Kohli for example, that a potentially greater threat to the survival of the newer democracies is posed by ineptitude and misconduct or subversion by the political elites than by the mass of the ordinary people. And contrary to former decades, the political elites are also a greater potential threat than soldiers or radical guerillas. The point looks particularly apposite to the less industrialised and still rural countries of Africa, where there are practical obstacles to the mobilisation of peoples into anti-system action (Zambia may be partial exception, where more than half of the population inhabits urban or peri-urban areas). Since the large public rallies and demonstrations that played a significant part in bringing down the one-party state, the old majority of Zambians have displayed political passivity, posing no serious direct threat to the Third Republic. On the one side, then, Bermeo’s claim the ‘parameters of tolerable mobilisation are broader than we originally anticipated’ has not been put to the test in that country.

On the other side, however, Zambia’s leading politicians often give the appearance of being more interested in personal advancement and too little committed to the public good. There is a responsibility deficit, which connects with the shortcomings of political accountability and is expressed in the popular belief that the political elite do not show solidarity with the plight of the poor majority. There is a lack of trust among members of the ‘political class’ and as between the politicians, civic associations and the people. The leaders set the tone, and that has a wider resonance for how the people perceive the practice of democracy; thus Bratton and Liatto-Katundu’s attitude research found that the presence or absence of tolerant attitudes among supporters of rival parties ‘depends very much’ on the example set by the leaders. There is no obvious messiah in sight with the potential to lift the reputation of politics on to a higher plane. Of course, the fact that expectations are depressed could be advantageous - disillusionment with democratic rulers has been called a ‘foundation’ of democratic stability and ‘an essential first step in the process of democratic consolidation’. However, if elite level political activity is discredited in spite of the presence of formally democratic institutions, then there is always a danger that public confidence in those institutions will recede. It is the elites’ duty to show that democracy can make a difference in terms of delivering accountable government, even where they cannot transform the basic living conditions of the people. Where the intrinsic legitimacy that democratic procedures should command is frustrated, democracy’s fate must become uncertain in the
continued absence of evidence for performance legitimacy. The inability to deliver meaningful development really would then make ‘the problematics of (democratic) survival and cui bono …the central dilemma of democratization’.95

vi) Shocks and Crises

Crises and shocks enter into the analysis of democratization in at least two ways. They can offer an account of when the process gets into trouble and the reasons. Secondly, they may provide a set of turning points or benchmarks which, if passed successfully could signify that a more stable or consolidated democracy has been reached. We might even be able to conclude that post-consolidation has arrived. Shocks, originating outside the polity can first arise inside the country or alternatively in the world outside, and they may be distinguishable from crises in the democratic system itself. In reality shocks may precipitate crises, but not invariably so. Views differ on their true meaning and full significance. One perspective maintains that shocks, or crises, or both are integral to democratic sustainability. By demonstrating robustness against adversity, a democracy confirms its durability. A related argument is that democratic consolidation by definition involves developing the capability to withstand such tests, although in practice the tests might never have to be faced. A different view makes the passing of such tests an essential part of the process, that is, a democracy cannot be said to be consolidated until it has actually demonstrated the ability to overcome crises and shocks (simulation would not be sufficient). What is more, the democracy is said to be made all the stronger as a result.

Applying this framework to any country requires that some operational values be placed on the key terms – how do we know that a crisis or shock has happened, and how can we judge its magnitude independently of the results? Will we have certain knowledge only after the event and on those occasions when a democracy actually or very nearly succumbed (Beetham reminds us that linking our understanding of democratic consolidation and deconsolidation to crises makes their application essentially predictive or counterfactual).96 For example in Zambia’s case what significance should we attach to the staging of the October 1997 coup attempt and to the separate fact that it failed, and to the way the authorities responded? Does the outturn conform to what Schedler97 defined as sufficient evidence of democratic consolidation, namely democratic survival per se together with an expectation of regime continuity (a definition that specifically excludes any reference to there having been a deepening or qualitative improvement of the democracy)? Whatever the answers are, the prism through which democratisation is assessed in relation to crises and shocks need not be preoccupied with just one or two dramatic events. Both a single massive haemorrhage and a succession of lesser disturbances that establish a cumulative effect can prove fatal. In Zambia so far it is the second that has proved so damaging to its reputation, and we have not yet had the opportunity to assess whether the pattern would be continued under a different administration from the one that first took office with the political transition.

The long wave effect of sustained reductions in donor funding could ultimately have political consequences far more significant than the tacking and trimming the government has undertaken in response to the aid conditionalities. Even so, the net effect will not be simple to predict. The country would be even more impoverished, the polity probably less stable and its government possibly even more predisposed to resort to illiberal measures. But a reduced level of external interference in internal affairs could be essential to the emergence of a stakeholder democracy. Moreover, at least as important as some apparent trigger(s) that
produce a democracy’s collapse are the fundamental underlying weaknesses that make it vulnerable in the face of an unwelcome shock, so creating a crisis that does serious harm. Here, the under-institutionalisation of democratic forms and behaviour, the failure to devise institutional mechanisms that could guarantee a more inclusive form of politics, and the slowness of political elites to embrace comprehensively a political culture fully consistent with liberal democratic norms and values, are most damaging. They make the unfinished business of Zambia’s democratisation susceptible to further erosion, through exposure to a continuation of adverse economic conditions and their negative social consequences.

Conclusion

Ottaway’s judgment is that it is far too early to talk of democracy in Africa, because the most difficult part of democratic transformation, namely the move from an initial opening to a sustained process of liberalisation and consolidation of democratic institutions, has yet to take place. That is as true of Zambia as of anywhere on the continent. In theory, Chabal’s question, ‘should Zambia be seen as a pioneer in the transition to democracy or a country in which the democratically elected regime has abused power so as to prevent democracy from working to its disadvantage’, could be answered by saying yes on both counts. In practice, Zambia’s democratic breakthrough in the early 1990s was greeted at first with an optimism that was excessive, grounded in too little familiarity with the country’s recent political past. The great dismay that has been voiced about later political developments probably magnifies the true nature of the dénouement. Put differently, the rise and fall of good opinions about democratisation in Zambia in the 1990s perhaps gives a clue to how such opinions are formed, as much they reflect the unfolding of events. We should remember Merkel’s dictum that democratisation is a multi-level process. The several constituents will probably move at different speeds. Indeed, there can be progress on some fronts while stagnation and even backward movement characterises some of the others, so blurring the dividing lines between the different stages on the way to democratic transition and consolidation.

Thus the evidence from Zambia is mixed. Democracy’s political and socio-political ‘inputs’ hardly provide strong enough support to outweigh the adverse economic and socio-economic circumstances. The formal institutional architecture of accountable government has been gradually taking shape, but in operation it has proven deficient and incomplete. A plurality of civic associations exists; some have been very vocal and remain unbowed (for example FODEP has criticised the December 1998 local elections as being ‘fraught with anomalies’). Far from seeking to co-opt all leading political actors into the ruling party and inhibit opposition, Chiluba seems to have encouraged politicians to leave MMD and experiment with alternative political groupings and parties, which may ultimately help UNIP become a credible opposition party. But for the time being the party system is fragile and unbalanced. The parties are probably less well institutionalised now than in the years surrounding the introduction of the First Republic, when UNIP and the African National Congress had roots in society and pretensions to an active mass membership. The democratisation literature is nowhere more agreed than on the proposition that the institutionalisation of parties and an appropriate party system are essential. But in Zambia’s case, the dearth of realistic policy options for the economy and the unattractiveness of parties divided along essentially regional and ‘ethnic’ lines leaves few obvious alternatives to a perpetuation of the present personalist and neo-patrimonial hue to party politics.
In the course of democratization various elements of consolidation can come into view even as certain aspects of transition are barely in place, or remain incomplete (some may even be showing signs of retreating). The actual direction of the movements and their full significance could become fully apparent only with the benefit of hindsight. It is a truism that only in the course of time can the long term view emerge, but the reminder not to be too focused at the level of immediate events is a worthwhile one. Snapshots taken at discrete intervals can present different images; over the years not only do new facts emerge, but our interpretation of the evidence often changes. All this makes it more difficult to reach confident conclusions, and although some studies already have a firm view about Zambia’s recent democratic experiment, and place it as a false start or as an example of reversal and decay, the account given here implies that a more nuanced assessment is appropriate.

What is certain is that Zambia has not yet fulfilled the most commonly touted benchmarks for democratic consolidation (Huntington’s double turnover test for example), even though two rounds of elections at the national and the local level have been held in the 1990s, and both the 1991 national and 1998 local elections were contested by all the relevant political parties. Neither the 1996 nor the 1998 contests harboured much actual uncertainty over the likely outcomes, and the outcome of the 1996 elections was determined in advance, by constitutional engineering – which is significant because institutionalised uncertainty over the outcomes of political competition is a much-touted hallmark of true democracy. Neither does Zambia comport with Linz and Stepan’s version of consolidated democracy as a political regime where democracy - considered as a complex system of institutions, rules and patterned incentives and disincentives - is accepted as the only game in town. Indeed, both the rules that are formally in place and the manner of their application are politically contested, in Zambia.

All the approaches deployed in this stocktaking of democracy in Zambia share one thing in common: they orient the analysis towards constraints, obstacles and limitations; to some extent they structure the evidence and predetermine the results, as must every approach. What they do not do is resolve the key question of what (or whose) frame of reference should be adopted when assessing how much or how little progress has been made. Because economic matters predominated in the attention paid to Zambia throughout much of the 1980s, it was the MMD’s intentions regarding economic reform that captured the imagination in 1991. And at that time too our acquaintance with the challenge of democratisation in the late twentieth century was more superficial than should be the case now, for so great has been the amount of scholarly attention paid to the subject in the last ten years. So, the initial reception given to Zambia’s democratic breakthrough in 1991 should not be judged too harshly. Perhaps in future there will be less scope to be disappointed about democracy’s progress, almost anywhere, if only because our expectations will be tempered from now on as a result of witnessing what has happened in the most recent democratisation ‘wave’.

It has been said that a poor democratic country with a high degree of observance of human rights is an oxymoron, but it would be tempting to conclude that democracy and human rights in Zambia are two agendas and the Third Republic’s record in the former has been more respectable than the latter – the focus of so much criticism. However, that conclusion is unsustainable, if we accept that the human rights abuses have been politically motivated and intended by people in power to hobble legitimate political opposition. They undermine competition and weaken executive accountability. At minimum the freedoms of expression, assembly and association are rights that are integral to democracy; and to infringe
them is to violate democracy. Having said that, no amount of comment on the government’s behaviour can by itself provide a full picture of how democratic the polity has become. The holders of high office have not got their own way all of the time. And it would be difficult to argue that the country’s present political condition compares unfavourably with the Second Republic, or even the First Republic. The constitution now excludes the possibility of a life president, something that seemed in prospect during the 27 years. The casting aside of the proprietorial claim to rulership, which Kaunda embodied and which finally caused people to turn against him, is in any case irreversible.

Beyond politics, the grounds for a private sector-led economy are being laid. In the Zambian context that will come to represent a dispersion of power resources, although it will not empower the masses or enrich them, for many years to come. Moreover the international climate is far more committed now to encouraging accountable governance and respect for human rights. While this might not have the power to advance democratisation much further forward, unless an appropriate political culture and civil society develop from within, it might be the backstop that ensures democracy could not be completely destroyed. However, the establishment of a continuous, constructive dialogue between the government and civic actors would be a far more positive development for the long term prospects of democracy, than a situation where these two sets of actors confront one another at home and conduct their relations with the international donor community more or less independently. Having said that, the sale of ZCCM could well clear the way for a resumption of substantial foreign aid to the government. And, given the approach of elections in 2001 and all the uncertainties that a change of government could invoke, the donors might refrain from making the ‘goalposts’ more demanding in the interim.

Zambia is in transition, but as Chikulo and Sichone argue that is not to say Zambia has enjoyed a transition to democracy. The November 1996 elections and subsequent events have done little to warrant revisions to that view. There remain shortfalls in respect of the perceived legitimacy of the government and its accountability (legal, political and financial), as well as its competence and respect for human rights. If the yardstick for democratic achievement follows the sorts of indicators of democracy and freedom that Freedom House and David Beetham’s ‘democratic audit’ suggest, then Zambia clearly still has a long way to go. In the terms of Diamond’s classification, the reality is closer to ‘electoral democracy’ than ‘liberal democracy’ (for Diamond the ‘free’ rating in the Freedom House survey is the ‘best available indicator of ‘liberal democracy’). If democracy is considered too generous a description, then Zambia would at least qualify as a ‘pseudodemocracy’, not an authoritarian regime. In any case the county’s exact position on the political spectrum is not static, and it would be wrong to assume that the same reasons which explain why democratisation is not proceeding rapidly will ultimately secure a complete unravelling of the political transition.

Contemporary political trends in other countries that are comparable, in sub-Saharan Africa or further afield, place Zambia neither near the front nor at the back of the field in respect of democratisation (irrespective of how comparability is measured, for instance by reference to the level of socio-economic attainments, to previous experience of democracy, and so on). The disappointment with Zambia could be all the greater because the pace of political reform has not matched the impressive economic liberalisation (whether a more evenly matched but gradual pace of reform would have been preferable, is debatable). Similarly, Zambia’s combination of a not very effective state, not very strong civil society, and weak economy need be no more harmful (and, possibly, less inimical) to democracy’s chances
than a situation where say two of these are in poor shape and one is overbearingly strong. Zambia’s jagged progress in the political sphere may even be viewed quite positively if set alongside some modern examples of decay in wealthy consolidated democracies, for example the decline of social capital that Putnam claims to find in the US and which he believes is causing that country’s growing ‘democratic disarray’\textsuperscript{108}

If the stocktaking of democracy in Zambia must conclude with a forecast, then it is that the country will continue to muddle along; the probabilities range from modest further progress to significant but not fatal erosion. All of which is consistent with Wiseman’s recent conclusion to an inquiry into the present and future prospects of democracy in sub-Saharan Africa.\textsuperscript{109} He finds no convincing grounds for strong and unambiguous support for a ‘demo-optimist’ position, but is just as wary of excessive pessimism. Zambia’s tale seems to sum up the predicament of much of Africa; and that includes Bratton’s\textsuperscript{110} double-edged observation: many of the so-called second elections have been problematic, but at least the local struggles over their convening, conduct and meaning suggest the institution of elections is beginning to matter. With the next round of presidential and parliamentary elections in Zambia due to take place in 2001, there will be everything to play for – not simply the issue of who governs, but the future of democracy in the country.

NOTES

2. L. Diamond, ‘Is the Third Wave Over?’, \textit{Journal of Democracy}, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1996), pp. 20-37). Diamond attaches the following features to liberal democracy over and above free and fair elections: executive power is constrained constitutionally and held accountable by other government institutions; electoral outcomes are uncertain and no group that adheres to constitutional principles is denied the right to form a party and contest elections; citizens have multiple channels and means for the expression and representation of their interests and values; individuals have substantial freedom of belief, opinion, discussion, speech, publication, assembly, demonstration, and petition; the existence of an impartial judiciary; the rule of law protects citizens. For a complete list, see Diamond, ibid., pp. 23-4.
18. Van Donge, ‘Reflections’ op. cit., p. 89.
19. Maipose, op. cit., p. 58
24. From Burnell, op. cit.
25. S. M. Lipset, ‘Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy’, American Political Science Review, Vol. 53, No. 1 (1959), pp. 69-105. The main indices of wealth used by Lipset were average per capita income, number of persons per motor vehicle and per physician, number of radios, telephones and newspapers per thousand persons. Per capita commercially-produced energy consumed and percentage of males in agriculture were his indices of industrialisation; further indices represented educational attainment and urbanisation.


34. In fact, at 7.4 per cent average annual decline for 1965-96, the economy’s performance in respect of gross domestic fixed investment was the worst in the world; the rate of decline halved in the first half of the 1990s.


36. Ibid., p.69.


40. Mphaisha, op. cit., p. 79.


42. Ibid., p. 562.

43. Van Donge, op cit.; and conversation with President Chiluba.

44. Without hesitation President Chiluba identified this change in attitudes as the most important achievement of his administration, in conversation with the author, 15 February 1997.


46. Usage of the term civil society is ubiquitous, ‘social capital’ is closely associated with R. Putnam, for example his ‘Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital;


51. Figures from World Bank, World Development Indicators.

52. See Human Rights Reports previously cited and Amnesty International, Annual Reports.


55. Van Donge, op. cit, p. 93


61. Professor Venkatesh Seshamani, 8 April 1998. Ihonvbere, op. cit. p. 29 makes an identical comment.


63. The Post No. 1115 (1 December 1998).

64. Chiluba, reported in The Post No. 1135 (30 December 1998).


69. Bratton and de Walle, op. cit., p. 249.


71. Professor Venkatesh Seshamani, 8 April 1998.


82. Saasa and Carlsson, op. cit. Finance Minister Edith Nawakwi remarked apropos donor-imposed benchmarks for assistance: ‘At first it was the issue of governance, later it was the sale of the mines. They may shift the goal post again and ask us to build a hotel next to one of the seven wonders of the world’, cited in *The Post* 1 February 1999.


86. Carothers, op. cit., p. 60. The web site of the United States National Endowment for Democracy records no grants for democracy promotion in Zambia after 1994. USAID in August 1998 claimed to have allocations worth $15 million for civil society out of a total portfolio of projects of all sorts in Zambia totalling over $154 million (life-of-project costs).


88. Bratton and de Walle, op. cit.


98. Ottaway, op. cit.
100. W. Merkel identified consolidation at the constitutional, representative, behavioural, and civic culture or civil society levels. Democratization, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1998), pp. 33-67.
101. Around 3,000 candidates from 16 parties and including 413 Independents contested 1,287 wards in the December 1998 local elections. MMD won 899 seats with over 60 per cent of the total vote, securing control of at least 45 out of the 72 councils. UNIP secured control of 9 of the 45 councils, 8 of them in Eastern Province. The outcome prompted renewed calls to iron out shortcomings and irregularities in the electoral administration and to abandon the Nikuv register. FODEP claimed the election was not free and fair, citing the government’s attempt to sway the voters by distributing food aid and announcing a Presidential Housing Initiative.
105. Chikulo and Sichone, op. cit., p. 228.