

# Corruption, Ethnicity and Violence as a Triple Political Strategy

## The Changing Face of Politics in Zambia



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# Abstract

Recently, Zambian politics have been changing in a pretty checkered manner. The threat of corruption, political violence and ethnic-politics has been growing since the ruling Patriotic Front Party (PF) assumed power in 2011. Most of the political conflicts and tensions in Zambia are an offshoot of political control which has undermined institutional independence. Due to this type of political control that uses corruption, violence, and ethnicity, Zambia can no longer be adequately understood without reference to the government's role in influencing the conduct of citizens. Whether force is used to gain political power, violence between rival political groups and state police, is usually undertaken toward a political-economic end.

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# Introduction

As political competition in Zambia becomes stiffer, corruption, ethnic politics and political violence have overtly become part and parcel of the political environment. The current governing party, the Patriotic Front (PF), has especially found it expedient to apply a triple strategy for its political survival.

The past three presidential elections (2011, 2015 and 2016) have witnessed many incidents that have threatened the country's democracy.<sup>1</sup> These include uncontrolled violence, hate speech based on tribe and corrupt behavior by political contestants. Although these vices have been practiced in the past, they have become overt since the PF assumed office in 2011.<sup>2</sup>

The PF government won the elections in 2011 under the leadership of the late president Michael Chilufya Sata and ushered in a mobilization strategy that encouraged the intimidation and the harassment of opponents never witnessed before under their predecessor, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD).<sup>3</sup> Coupled with the above strategy is the increasing reliance on ethnic identity as a strategic form of control to increase the party's hold on economic and political power. Ethnic identity has become an explicit qualification for control of state institutions to frightening and alarming levels.

The corruption strategy has been tacitly used through the creation of by-elections, threats to judges, illegal collection of money from markets and bus stations as well as the illegal allocation of land. This article illustrates how the triple strategy is being used by the governing party for the purpose of political control and assesses the possible consequences of such a strategy.

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1. E. Goldring and M. Wahman, "Democracy in Reverse: The 2016 General Elections in Zambia", *Africa Spectrum*, Vol. 51, No. 3, 2016, pp. 107-121.

2. "Lungu's Costly Power Play", *Africa Confidential*, 26 January 2018, available at: [www.africa-confidential.com](http://www.africa-confidential.com).

3. C. Malambo, "Michael Sata and the Threat of Political Violence in Zambia", *Zambia Reports*, No. 29 November 2012, available at: [zambiareports.com](http://zambiareports.com).

# Political violence

The use of political violence as a form of mobilization is certainly not unique, but in Zambia, the phenomenon has become particularly acute since the PF has been in power. While the focus of this analysis is on the PF rule, it is important to acknowledge that the problem of political violence in Zambian politics is not new. Political violence dates back to the Kaunda era just before the establishment of the one-party system when the newly independent country experienced spouts of violent clashes between rival political party cadres in many areas of the capital city Lusaka during the period leading to elections. Kaunda eventually used the pretext of political violence and tribal politics to forcefully introduce a one-party state in 1972. During the first decade of independence, political violence and tribal politics triggered tensions both within the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP) and between parties.<sup>4</sup> After initial attempts to please different groups by reshuffling ministerial portfolios, Kaunda established a one-party 'participatory democracy' in 1973 and in doing so, centralized power firmly in the office of the president, away from competing power struggles.<sup>5</sup> However, Kaunda's growing authoritarianism also had a destabilizing effect, with growing dissatisfaction escalating into widespread riots by the late 1980s. This dissatisfaction eventually led to the rebirth of multiparty politics. From 1990, political violence under the MMD was managed successfully mainly due to the accommodation of divergent views and critical media voices.

Upon assumption of power on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2011, the PF supporters that had helped mobilize votes became an unruly gang, which begun to terrorize and beat anybody with dissenting views. These supporters or cadres are mainly composed of unemployed youths who are usually paid or given alcohol to harass and intimidate all those considered to be non-PF supporters. The cadres are largely restricted to urban areas of the country particularly in the strongholds of the governing party, but from time to time they are also sponsored to travel to rural areas during elections. They have become so powerful that the police authorities seem to be afraid of them because of the backing they receive from those in high political offices.<sup>6</sup>

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4. M. Burdette, *Zambia: Between Two Worlds*, Westview Press, 1988.

5. *Ibid.*; J. Mills, *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa*, Oxford University Press, 1985.

6. "Police Scared of PF Cadres – Lungu", *Daily Nation*, 28 September 2013, available at: [zambiadailynation.com](http://zambiadailynation.com).

Although there are many cases of violence perpetrated by the ruling party cadres, the state authorities have decided to pay less attention to this violence, and as such has tacitly become a strategy to control political activities.

When President Sata died in 2014, a split became eminent over his succession. This split came to the fore barely a day after Mr. Sata's burial in Lusaka on November 11, 2014.<sup>7</sup> Intra-party fighting ensued thereafter with one camp proposing Edgar Lungu to stand as the presidential candidate on the PF ticket and another camp headed by Sata's former right-hand man Guy Scott who picked Miles Sampa as their eligible candidate. There were reports of attacks on Sampa perpetrated by those who supported Lungu's candidature. In fact, on the morning of Saturday the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2014, prior to the general conference proceedings of the party, alert police intercepted an unregistered white van with several wooden planks which Edgar Lungu's supporters wanted to use to beat opponents at the PF general conference in Kabwe.<sup>8</sup> However, Lungu won the presidential candidature in court and became both the leader and the presidential candidate of the PF to stand in the tightly contested 2015 presidential by-election.

The worst version of political violence in recent years was witnessed in the run-up to the 2016 general elections. There were cases of violence and arson in many parts of the country, which forced the Electoral Commission of Zambia to suspend campaigns in certain areas. The 2016 elections, by and large, represented a reversal in the quality of Zambian democracy and raised questions about the country's prospects for democratic consolidation. Zambia's electoral history has been peaceful compared to many other sub-Saharan African countries. Nonetheless, the recent presidential elections in 2015 and 2016 have marked a shift in this trend, with increasing violence manifesting new patterns where political supporters carried and used gun canisters against their opponents.

Currently, political violence in Zambia has become a central part of political competition across the country due to its perceived rewards, arguably the political and economic control and empowerment to its perpetrators. This violence takes many forms - from assaults to armed clashes between gangs called "cadres" employed by rival politicians from the ruling PF and the opposition United Party for National Development (UPND). This violence is mostly carried out by "cadres" whose members are openly recruited and paid by politicians and party leaders to attack their

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7. A. Simuchoba, "Zambia: Post-Sata, PF Splits over Lungu's Presidential Bid", *African Arguments*, 17 November 2014, available at: [africanarguments.org](http://africanarguments.org).

8. "Police Intercept Van Loaded with Planks Meant for Maiming Opposing Delegates at PF Convention", *Zambian Watchdog*, 29 November 2015, available at: [www.zambiawatchdog.com](http://www.zambiawatchdog.com).



sponsors' rivals, intimidate members of the public, and protect their patrons from similar attacks.<sup>9</sup> The opposition UPND and other minor parties have also formed these cadre gangs in response to the state police's failure to protect them when they are under attack by the PF members. This has created an ever present volatile political environment.

Even after the 2016 elections, there are still reports of politically motivated attacks on ordinary citizens by suspected PF cadres. There are also still hundreds of political opposition detainees following the presidential election petition fall out by the two major parties. The detainees were arrested on suspicion that they would cause chaos in the aftermath of the controversial election, shortly after president Lungu was sworn in as president in 2016. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2016, the opposition leader together with his deputy and his party supporters were arrested and detained by the police on suspicion of sedition.<sup>10</sup> The opposition has accused president Lungu of encouraging acts of violence. They argue that president Lungu cannot end violence because he is a product of a violent PF convention, which catapulted him into power.<sup>11</sup>

In December 2017, a horde of PF cadres invaded 5 FM radio stations and attacked and damaged vehicles belonging to the newly formed PF splinter party-the National Democratic Congress (NDC) when they were on a live program to discuss their new party and its manifesto. In January 2018, PF cadres once again stormed the Feel Free Radio station in Eastern Province and ordered staff to stop airing a paid-for political program that featured National Democratic Congress (NDC) officials. A recent incident of political violence in 2018 was one that happened in Lusaka when suspected cadres from the ruling party attacked the former PF Minister Chishimba Kambwili's supporters at the Central Police station in front of the police. The supporters had gone to show solidarity to their leader who was taken in by police for questioning before the anti-fraud unit.<sup>12</sup>

## Political use of the state police

It is not just the cadres that are used to intimidate the members of the opposition. The police have been frequently used to disrupt meetings held by the opposition political parties. A tactic the PF borrowed from their

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9. B. C. Kapika, "Zambia Political Violence and the Hell of Political Cadres", 11 March 2016, available at: [www.lusakatimes.com](http://www.lusakatimes.com).

10. A. R. Alfa Shaban, "Arrested Zambia Opposition Leader and Deputy Denied Food and Water", *African News*, 6 October 2016, available at: [www.africanews.com](http://www.africanews.com).

11. "Lungu a Product of Violence, says RP", *The Zambian Observer*, 11 February 2018, available at: [www.zambianobserver.com](http://www.zambianobserver.com).

12. "9 Foreign Nationals Invited to Witness the Launch of Fred Mbembe's Socialist Party Deported", *Lusaka Times*, 1 April 2018, available at: [www.lusakatimes.com](http://www.lusakatimes.com).

predecessor the MMD. This has made it difficult for those in opposition to freely interact with the electorate. In the first quarter of 2018, attempts made by the opposition to conduct membership renewal and recruitment have been denied, thwarted or delayed by the police, while the ruling party counterparts have been meeting their members to explain government development programs. This has been another form of control to limit the opposition from mobilizing and strengthening their structures.

The two main opposition parties, as well as smaller parties, have also been weakened in recent years by harassment and intimidation from the PF, including the use of the police and the Public Order Act to prevent them from holding both indoor and outdoor meetings and rallies. Such incidents were frequent in 2015. In one high-profile event in June, police broke up an indoor meeting in which UPND Member of Parliament Stephen Katuka was addressing constituents; officials claimed that he had failed to secure police permission for the gathering. In October of the same year, the Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD) leader Edith Nawakwi was detained by the police in Kitwe after she held an indoor meeting with party members. She was questioned for several hours and later released with a warning. Nawakwi noted at the time that police officers suggested that the meeting caused a breach of the peace. In December 2015, police inspector general Kakoma Kanganja defended as legal the actions of the police in Lundazi, who had thrown a tear gas canister into a meeting hall to break up a party meeting of the MMD attended by its president, Nevers Mumba. Kanganja claimed that the MMD did not have a police permit to hold the meeting.<sup>13</sup>

The main opposition party - UPND - regularly claimed that President Lungu was secretly funding the Home Affairs Minister to organize political violence in the country.<sup>14</sup> It is now trite that committing violence is a strategy of the governing party to perpetuate their party's hold on power. The idea is seemingly to instill fear in both the organizers and the public so that they do not associate with the new party. Despite cover-ups and denials, the public is aware that it is the governing party who possesses a greater capacity, in terms of resources and motivation, to use violence before, during and after elections.

## Violence and Elections

Under the PF, there were many incidents of how violent intimidation of undecided and opposition voters reigned during the run-up to the 2016

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13. "HH Summoned for Public Order Act Breach during His Township Visits", *Lusaka Times*, 15 May 2015, available at: [www.lusakatimes.com](http://www.lusakatimes.com).

14. "Lungu Secretly Funding Kampyongo to Organize Political Violence – Hichilema", *Zambian Observer*, 10 October 2017, available at: [www.zambianobserver.com](http://www.zambianobserver.com).

elections. The 2016 elections in Zambia have shown that electoral violence is an effective strategy that can keep “those likely to vote for opponents away from the polls” as observed in the case of Nigeria.<sup>15</sup>

During the election campaigns, voters were not only discouraged from voting given the atmosphere of fear generated by violence but also motivated to vote for candidates that seemed capable of protecting them from violence. In this case, the ruling party seemed capable of doing so owing to the control of the military and police commands which were all appointed on the basis of patronage<sup>16</sup> to replace those appointed by their predecessors. Unfortunately, this trend and tactic was also evident under the MMD to the extent that they kept pliant high ranking officials in charge of the security institutions. This controlled, coercive nature of the state apparatus and its role in the electoral process produces leaders whose attitude towards violence is ambivalent and certainly contributes to the explanation of the use of violence to influence electoral outcomes by the ruling party during elections or even after.

The strategy in the pre-election period such as disruption of opponents’ campaigns, intimidation of voters and candidates — occurs primarily during voter mobilization, campaigns and at other important electoral events such as political rallies or market tours by politicians. The violence takes the form of inter-party clashes, attacks on party offices, attacks on campaign teams and attacks on candidates and the media.

During the actual Election-day, incidents of violence such as forcibly switching off power supply, hiding of electoral forms that have original vote statistics, destruction of electoral facilities and voter intimidation are replete in all past elections including 2016. The ruling party and the major opposition to a lesser extent use violence to prevent reportage of their breach of the code of conduct. This behavior is also linked to the suspicion by the ruling party that election observers and the media work with the major opposition party.

In April 2018, a new party, the Socialist Party, was launched and nine invited foreign journalists and two other dignitaries were barred at the airport from entering the country to witness the launch on account that the government did not clear them.<sup>17</sup> The government has since expelled the Cuban Ambassador to Zambia for attending and pledging support to the new

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15. P. Collier and P. C. Vicente, “Votes and Violence: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Nigeria”, *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 124, No. 574.

16. K. Höglund and A. Piyaathne, “Paying the Price for Patronage: Electoral Violence in Sri Lanka”, *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, Vol. 47, No. 3, pp. 281-307.

17. “Zambia: PF Cadres Attack Kambwili’s Supporters at Central Police as He Was Arrested”, *Lusaka Times*, 23 January 2018, available at: [www.lusakatimes.com](http://www.lusakatimes.com).

party.<sup>18</sup> This is an extension of the opposition's intimidation which is a form of violence used through state institutions, in this particular instance, the immigration authorities.

The government's response to the violence has been characterized by inaction towards its perpetrators and the demonizing of the victims of violence. Public media is used to demonize citizens who sympathize with the opposition or those in opposition, instead of providing fair coverage and treatment to protect them. The police also seem to discriminate based on political affiliation. Even if an opposition member took a complaint to the police, they may end up being charged, or the case will die of natural causes. Whereas on the other hand, sympathizers of the ruling party are shielded and rarely punished or condemned for acts of violence, hate speech or corruption. In fact, public perception is that the police only punishes opposition offenders and critics, but only apply the law on governing party offenders when it is clear that they have no way to cover it up. This has seriously eroded public confidence in the professionalism of the police as an institution.

In cases where such violations are taken to Court, the judicial system appears to respond to political pressure. Political cases have from time to time put the judiciary to the test such as when they hear an electoral petition or trial of opposition figures for alleged political offences. The judicial system has, consequently, suffered from a credibility gap and it is not viewed as neutral particularly after the Constitutional Court failed to adjudicate the electoral petition of 2016 in a fair and just manner. The constitutional court judges kept adjourning the petition case, giving false hope to the petitioners that the matter would proceed but eventually overturned it on a technicality that it had run out of time.

Despite the sensationalizing of violence in the media, most violent events only receive on-the-spot coverage. There is hardly any attempt to look for explanations and causes or links and patterns.<sup>19</sup> Currently, the PF has appointed a Commission of inquiry on electoral violence and voting patterns. However, critics have accused president Lungu of using it as a smokescreen to deceive citizens that his government is committed to addressing these problems when, in fact, he is the architect.

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18. "Zambia Expels Cuban Ambassadors for Attending and Addressing an Opposition Party Meeting", 1 April 2018, available at: [www.lusakatimes.com](http://www.lusakatimes.com).

19. J. Salmi, *Violence and Democratic Society: New Approaches to Human Rights*, London, Zed Books, 1993.

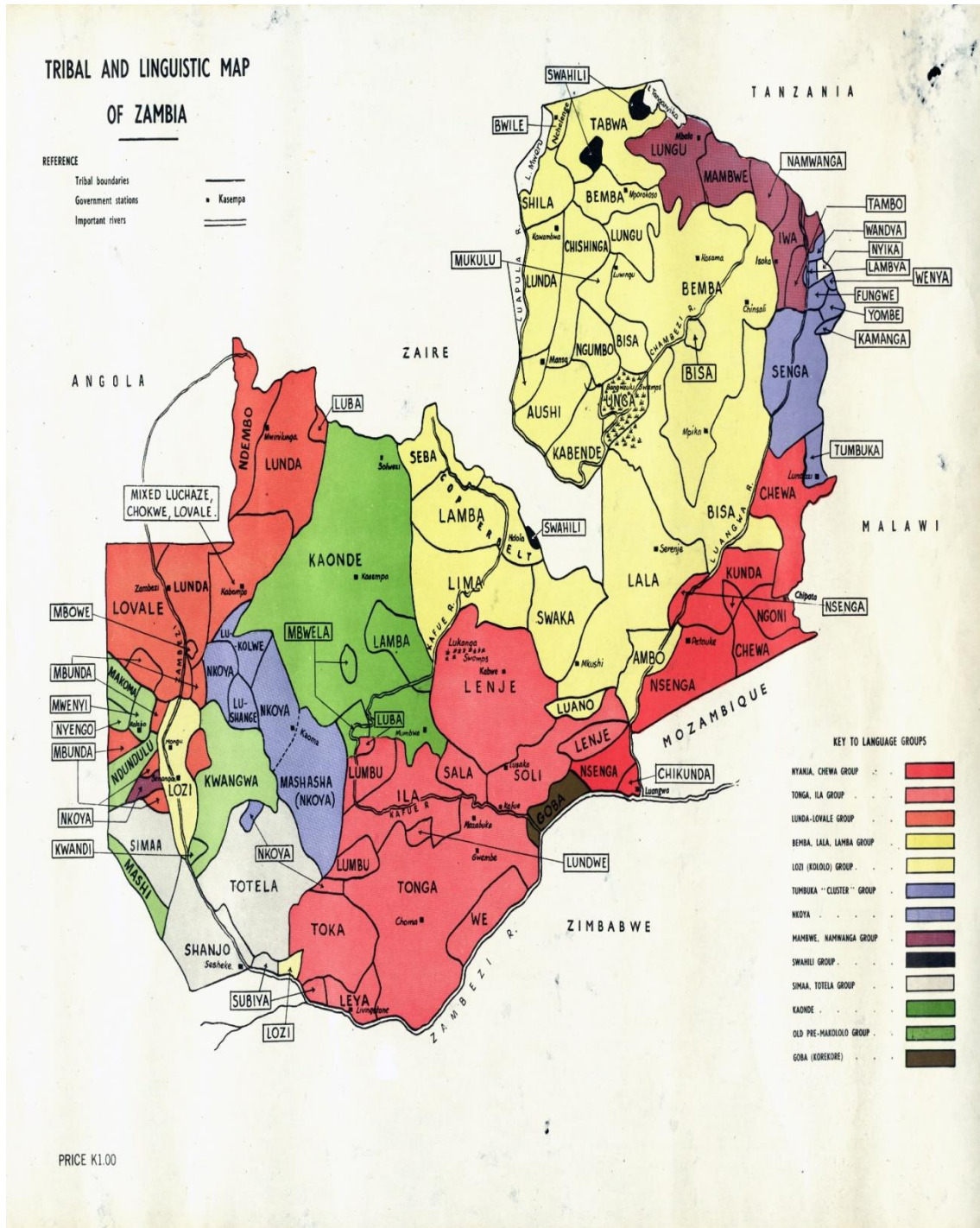
# Ethnicity

The colonial education policies, newspaper publishing, and radio broadcasts promoted four main languages: Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, and Lozi.<sup>20</sup> This emphasis on linguistic identity formed the basis of the main ethnic and political cleavages which we still see today in Zambia. It is on these four linguistic identities that tribe and tribal cousinship which have been a political mobilizing factor subsist on to this day. The Bemba and Nyanja enjoy a tribal cousinship and together with their associated minor languages usually vote as a block, whereas the Tonga and Lozi also enjoy tribal cousinship and also vote in the same manner together with minor language groups associated to them. This has been presented in the maps below, the first map (figure 1) shows all the ethnic linguistics groups in Zambia, and the second map (figure 2) shows the vote distribution of the recent past 2016 presidential elections.

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<sup>20</sup>. *Ibid.*

Figure 1. Ethnic linguistic groups



Source: Brelsford (1965).

Zambia has 73 ethnic groups, 7 officially recognized languages and 30 different dialects. Kaunda, the first president of Zambia, with his strong sense of purpose to build ‘one Zambia, one nation’, feared that ‘tribal’ conflicts could pull his governing party, the United Nations Independence Party (UNIP) apart. From early on he reckoned that the opposing parties, including break-away parties from UNIP, politicized tribal differences in order to draw votes and he, thus, ensured that his government had national appeal.<sup>21</sup> Although he was bitterly opposed in certain regions of the country, he made sure that his government had representatives from those regions. The UNIP and the MMD have managed to demonstrate a genuine appeal across the whole country.

When Zambia’s post-1990 multi-party president Fredrick Chiluba failed to gain a third term and nominated a presidential candidate from a minor ethnic group, ethnic patterns were developed along party lines. The ruling party, MMD, led by Mr. Mwanawasa, became a party of minority ethnic groups. Mr. Sata dominated the PF party, which was mainly associated with the Bemba speaking tribesmen. The Tongas dominated the UPND party - led by Anderson Mazoka, a fellow tribesman. The Ngonis dominated the FDD led by Mr. Christon Tembo – a tribesman. Other small parties emerged but have mainly served to align themselves with a party from a major ethnic group, affecting the voting patterns. In more recent years, there has been realignment but essentially keeping the ethnological blocks, which form the ruling and opposition parties.

In order to maintain a grip on power, the ruling party, which is mainly composed of Bemba and Nyanja, constructs solidarity amongst its ethnic strongholds, while promoting nationalism and condemning tribalism outside this region, preserving the ability to win pan-ethnic support. Such patterns are evident in the PF’s depiction of UPND leaders as “a manifestation of Tonga tribalism”,<sup>22</sup> with the PF government’s subsequent arrest of the UPND leader in April 2017 in order to isolate the Tonga people. This type of behavior is also currently demonstrated as a response to the formation of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) party whose electoral appeal, the governing party is attempting to contain and stop from extending beyond the regional enclaves of its leaders. The PF has responded by publicly branding the party as a vehicle for Bemba’s interests.

At first sight, public condemnations of “tribalism”, which are made by public officials present the Zambian political orientation, seem remarkably

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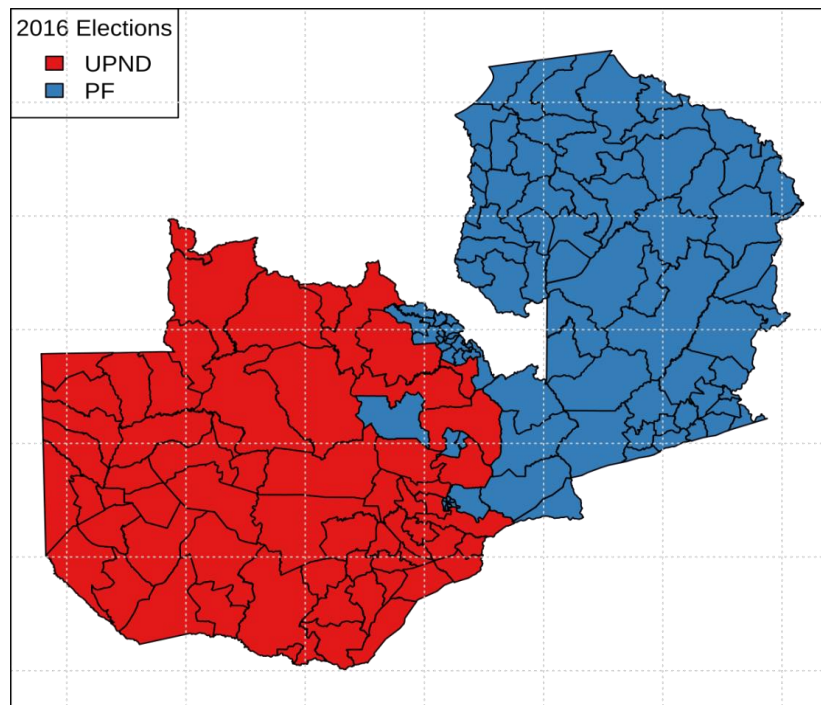
21. P. Burnell, “The Party System and Party Politics in Zambia: Continuities Past, Present and Future”, *African Affairs*, Vol. 100, No. 399, 1 April 2001.

22. “Tribalism and the Tonga People: A Curse or a Natural Phenomenon?”, *Lusaka Times*, 21 August 2016, available at: [www.lusakatimes.com](http://www.lusakatimes.com).

non-sectional. Zambian newspaper reports are always warning of the dangers of tribalism, the need to root out tribalism, to discourage tribal differences, and embrace the slogan of “One Zambia, One Nation”.<sup>23</sup> However, in the heat of these proclamations, the actions of politicians continue to promote sectional cleavages quietly. Clearly, the public media is used to hide the ethnicity strategy, while it is also the means at the core of political control of the ruling party.

## Lungu’s cabinet

**Figure 2: 2016 Presidential election Results**



*Source: Electoral Commission of Zambia (2016).*

Even if it is a requirement for the president to appoint members of the cabinet from the parliament, in this instance where he has no representatives from opposition regions, he is also empowered to nominate eight members amongst the citizens. He chose to pick from his own ethnic political grouping, further skewing representation at the governmental level

23. T. Bass, “The Perils of an Imported State: Explanations for Democratic Failure in Zambia”, Centre for Studies in Democratization, Working Paper No.8/ 2011, University of Warwick.



and deepening the voting bloc division. Although the ethnicization of government has been taking place since 1991, this trend has intensified under the PF government.

The Zambian Cabinet under president Lungu is a one-sided affair, which mainly represents the regions of Zambia associated with the ruling party. President Lungu is consolidating his rule by mainly appointing people from his regional ethnological block not only in the cabinet but in all the major government ministries, including the Defense, Finance, Police, judiciary, Foreign Service, Education sector, Land and all the other important sectors of the civil service. For example, when president Lungu assumed office, the Army chief of staff (usually deputy army commander) was a Tonga from the Southern Province but was replaced by a Ngoni from the Eastern province where the president is said to be from. Ministers, members of the cabinet, ambassadors and local commissioners are chosen mainly from the same ethnological regional group he draws his support base. It also does not seem to be a coincidence that the heads of the key and politically sensitive institutions such as the Electoral Commission, the Zambia Intelligence Security Services, the Judiciary and Anti-Corruption Commission all share ethno regional ties with president Lungu. This tribalization of the central authority is openly encouraging regionalist ideas and ethnic identity to the doom of the unitary state.

Parliament is equally a one-sided affair, making decisions and laws mainly in the interest of the ruling party which has a slight majority. This ethnic, regional political behavior is seemingly promoted through the public media, which broadcasts statements that seek to further ridicule and divide the people not only on political lines but also on the regional and tribal basis. For instance, while serving as the Secretary General of the PF in 2015, the defense minister, Mr. Davies Chama, once said: “Tongas are polygamous by nature. Maybe their wives should produce more children for them to have a president in 100 years from now”.<sup>24</sup> Chama’s comments came barely a month after his deputy Mumbi Phiri described the Tonga people of the Southern province as herdsmen, casting doubt on their ability to lead.<sup>25</sup> Mr. Chama was nominated to the parliament and appointed defense minister, while Mrs. Mumbi Phiri was nominated a member of parliament after the 2016 elections.

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24. “I Never Insulted People of Southern Province-Davies Chama “, *Lusaka Times*, 22 June 2015, available at: [www.lusakatimes.com](http://www.lusakatimes.com).

25. “Kasempa Chief Upset with Chama’s Insults on Tongas”, *Zambian Watchdog*, 11 June 2015, available at : [www.zambiawatchdog.com](http://www.zambiawatchdog.com).

## Elections and ethnic mobilization

In the last two presidential elections (2015 and 2016), the use of ethnicity as a strategy for winning elections, became pivotal. Under the first republic and the initial multiparty elections in the 1990s, ethnicity was clandestinely promoted, however in the last two decades; it has slowly been intensified and has become overt. During the 2015 and 2016 election campaigns, power brokers such as the former President Rupiah Banda exploited ethnic backgrounds to drum up support for the PF candidate whom they shared origins with, for their own political advantage. As of now, all corruption cases that were leveled against the former president are in abeyance possibly for having supported president Lungu during the campaigns. Like in many other countries, political power in Zambia is used as a means to access scarce resources and protect itself from the levers of law.

Of late ethnicity in Zambia is being manipulated by those who are in control of State power in order to further their political objectives. The political campaigns and media have been the modicum through which such ethnic manipulation has been propagated. As a result, there is a false perception and notion that Bembas and their associated tribal groups are ordained to rule, while the Tongas and their associated tribal groups should never be given a chance to rule because they are considered to be tribal people who will destroy the country. However, since Tongas have never assumed the presidency and have no national media platform, the state machinery and some of their sympathizers have effectively socialized the younger generations with narratives in order for them to believe that Tongas and their associated tribal groups are tribalists and must be stopped from assuming the presidency in Zambia.

Since 2015 the PF under president Lungu has allowed senior members of the party to wage tribal hate speech through state media against the Tonga ethnic group. While a number of voices condemned these dastardly acts, no real action has been taken to discourage this behavior. On the contrary, many of those from the ruling party who have verbally abused the Tonga people of the Southern province where the main opposition opponent Hakainde Hichilema originates, have been rewarded with government appointments and business contracts.

The Constitutional Court judges also demonstrated the ethnic interests during the presidential petition hearing in 2016 when the vote on whether to hear the petition or not was made. The judges aligned to the governing party's ethnological regional group voted against hearing the petition, while those aligned to the opposition's ethnological regional group voted in favor but lost. In other words, the Constitutional Court's decision was no longer

about the law but about the ethnic regional block's interests to preserve political control of the state. This was accentuated by the dominance of the executive over the other branches of the government. Firstly, the constitutional requirement to hand over power to the speaker of the National assembly, when a petition is filed to challenge the election's outcome, was not observed. Secondly, the shift in the manner in which the case proceeded with regards to the interpretation of the fourteen-day period (whether it included weekends or not) allocated for hearing the matter, was symptomatic of an invisible hand in the decisions.

Authorities seem to believe that this is a strategy to stamp out opposition, consolidate their power and run the government smoothly, oblivious to the fact that the consequences of such seemingly well calculated political strategy of ethnic divisions and promotion of hatred against their opponents could soon be detrimental to the population at large.

## Ethnic purge

After the 2016 elections, many citizens who occupied senior positions in government, Foreign Service, security services and parastatal bodies have been purged mainly on the basis of their names being associated to opposition areas in what appears to be a well calculated ethnic cleansing project. For example, out of approximately forty positions for Permanent Secretaries in the various Government Ministries only less than forty percent of those appointed, are from outside the ethno regional group of the president. Those who were removed from positions but hailed from the ruling party strongholds were suspected of supporting the main opposition party. The story of a pass out parade for Zambia National Service cadet officers that took place in June 2018 was indicative of an ethnicization of not only the public sector but also the security sector. Of all the graduating officer cadets, only ten percent hailed from regions outside the ethnic, regional group of president Lungu.<sup>26</sup> The PF has further sought to punish other ethnic groups that allegedly supported the political opposition during the 2016 elections, such as the Lenje, Lozi, Lunda, Kaonde, and Luvale. Many of whom were retired because of national interest or transferred to places that were intended to frustrate them.

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26. "WAKO NI WAKO MUKWASU: Outrage As 90% Of ZNS Cadet Officers Who Graduated Today Are From The Same Region", *Zambian Observer*, 22 June 2018, available at: [www.zambianobserver.com](http://www.zambianobserver.com).

## Classical corruption techniques

Corruption remains a major problem in Zambia despite the existence of a number of anti-corruption watchdogs and rigorous changes in the law to curb the vice. The public sector remains the most severely affected. Reviewing corruption trends in Zambia from 1964 to 2017 shows that corruption has increased since the transition into multiparty democracy and the subsequent economic liberalization of 1991.<sup>27</sup>

In 2017, while addressing a meeting of party officials in the town of Kabwe, the Secretary-General of the PF was clear on how the party rewards its members and supporters. He instructed all PF controlled local councils to share land in such a way that before any allocation is made, party members are first considered with the allocation of two-thirds of the plots of land and the rest are then competed for by everybody.<sup>28</sup> The Secretary-General also directed PF cadres and officials to take control of markets and bus stations.<sup>29</sup> These are places where the local authorities raise part of the money to run the councils.

Consequently, the majority of local authorities in Zambia are failing to effectively perform their statutory obligations of providing goods and services such as clean water, sanitation, proper drainages, garbage collection, street lighting and other social amenities because the taxes and levies that they rely upon to provide these goods and social services, are controlled by party cadres outside the provisions of the law for the purposes of political control.

Another corruption strategy used by the ruling party for political control is to entice opposition politicians with business contracts, jobs and cash so that they can defect from their parties to join the ruling party. A recent example in 2018 was when a councilor from Sinda on the opposition

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27. M. Mushumba and J. Sapkota, "Understanding Corruption in Zambia: An Analysis of the Challenges in Eradicating the Scourge", 2018.

28. "Davies Mwila Encourages Councilors to Share Plots", *Tumfweko*, 19 January 2017, available at: [tumfweko.com](http://tumfweko.com).

29. "Obeying Davies Mwila, PF cadres seize Kapiri Mposhi bus station", *The Zambian Observer*, 10 February 2017, available at : [www.zambiawatchdog.com](http://www.zambiawatchdog.com).

UPND ticket in a PF stronghold claimed he was given money, equivalent to US\$2000, to defect and join the ruling party.<sup>30</sup>

In 2015 three members of parliament from the opposition UPND were given ministerial positions and were, consequently, adopted as candidates on the ruling party in the 2016 elections, but all of them lost their seats. These defectors are usually paraded before public media television cameras to denounce their former parties. In fact, this strategy was rampant until recently, when the constitution provided a limitation clause which bars such candidates from seeking reelection in the life of the council or parliamentary term in which a person has defected.

The recent increase of by-elections in between elections can be attributed to the fact that the ruling party is able to focus their resources more effectively on a smaller area such as a ward or constituency than the opposition. The ruling party does so by using the whole government machinery to campaign for the governing party candidate with fairly high prospects of winning the seats, thus, consolidating their power by increasing their numbers. This constitutes an abuse of public resources prohibited under the electoral code of conduct.

Evidently, Zambian politicians and state agents entitled to make and enforce the laws in the name of the people, are using this authority as a strategy to sustain their power, status and wealth. Companies regularly pay kickbacks and bribes in the tendering process for government contracts.<sup>31</sup> In addition, there is a perception of discriminatory tendering inclined towards those who show political solidarity with the ruling party.<sup>32</sup> This makes opposition politics unattractive to the ordinary citizens who have to protect their livelihoods.

There are also allegations by opposition politicians that contracts are given to individuals who in turn remit an agreed percentage as a commission to the ruling party and that opposition business people are never given contracts. They further note that allegiance to the governing party is a critical factor to consider in the recruitment to the civil service, allocation of market stores or land.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, there is an unbridled misallocation of resources, but this also perverts the manner in which decisions are made. If this continues unchecked, systemic corruption will completely cripple institutional trust, and public confidence in the political system and the state will degenerate. Opposition parties have even alleged that court judges are

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30. C. Moonga, "I Was Given K20,000 at State House to Ditch UPND' Claims Sinda Councillor", *The Mast Online*, 15 March 2018, available at: <http://www.themastonline.com>.

31. *Zambia Corruption Report*, GAN Integrity, 2018.

32. *BTI Zambia Country Report*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, available at: [www.bti-project.org](http://www.bti-project.org).

33. Discussion with a senior opposition official.

also given money when adjudicating political cases.<sup>34</sup> Sometimes, they are tacitly threatened by the governing party in case they do not rule according to the governing party's wishes. For example, President Edgar Lungu warned judges in November 2017 while at a public meeting in the North western province that there would be chaos in the country if judges tried to emulate the Kenyan courts<sup>35</sup> and stop his third term bid in 2021. He further warned them that they should not try to become a copycat and think that they would be heroes.<sup>36</sup>

Evidently, while money and other resources play a role in the politics of Zambia, the issue is not only money as such but the potential private capture of the powers of the state. Citizens are currently concerned that a Chinese company – AVIC International - has several major contracts with government and raising suspicion that the company may begin to influence government decisions. In January 2018, Harry Kalaba who was the Foreign Affairs Minister resigned from his position claiming widespread corruption in the PF government.<sup>37</sup>

Under the rule of the PF government, it is difficult to maintain moral and conceptual distinctions between party and collective interests. The pressure to recruit civil servants *en masse* is intense following extensive political mobilization that ushered president Lungu into power and the build-up of huge armies of political party cadres that need employment. The high levels of unemployment have spurred allegations of non-meritocratic processes of bureaucratic recruitment and promotion. Apparent favoritism in public tendering and the nepotism arising from political solidarity is allegedly pervasive.

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34. "Subversion of the Judiciary; Creeping Dictatorship and Arrogance of Power in Zambia", *Lusaka Times*, 7 November 2017, available at: [www.lusakatimes.com](http://www.lusakatimes.com).

35. Kenyan Court Overturned Presidential Election after Ruling It Was Marred by "Illegals" in September 2017.

36. "President Lungu Warns Judges, but Insists that He Is not Intimidating the Judiciary", *Lusaka Times*, 3 November 2017, available at: [www.lusakatimes.com](http://www.lusakatimes.com).

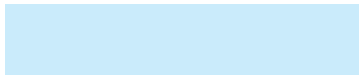
37. "Zambia Foreign Minister Harry Kalaba Resigns Over 'Greed'", *BBC*, 3 January 2018, available at: [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com).

# Conclusion

Zambia's political scene is full of contradictions and surprises. Sometimes, after intense external pressure, the Government concedes dialogue, market forces, freedom of the press and opposition rights, but as soon as the international pressure subsides, the government regresses to the status quo of impunity, intimidation and harassment of the opponents. It muzzles the press, arrests activists and puts pressure on civil society organizations including the media to toe a certain line of thought.

The response of the international community to these political developments has been varied. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has been ambivalent with a "wait-and-see" posture. For the western countries, they have deplored the developments in Zambia and endeavored to help with facilitating dialogue. In the case of China, it has consolidated its relationship with the PF and is providing the much needed economic support particularly for infrastructure, which has become a scapegoat for not addressing the governance concerns in the country.

There are worrying signs of a degenerating political environment in Zambia. Firstly, the power base at the centre of government is being ethicized, and a small clique at the centre has taken over, with a philistine attitude towards the broader community. Secondly, there is intense infighting by the inner circle, and massive witch-hunting is evident. The PF leadership is preoccupied with attacking those who are opposed to their policies. In the Zambian context, the desire for national cohesion was clearly illustrated by the nation-building slogan of "one Zambia one nation". Unfortunately, this has now been abused by successive governments. The Zambian experience shows that unless ethnic contradictions are correctly and quickly resolved, they will have adverse consequences for communication, mutual understanding and co-operation within the Zambian society.



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