

# REFRACTORY FRONTIER: INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY IN THE ZAMBIAN POLITY<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Despite the important role that intra-party democracy plays in democratic consolidation, particularly in third-wave democracies, it has not received as much attention as inter-party democracy. Based on the Zambian polity, this article uses the concept of selectocracy to explain why, to a large extent, intra-party democracy has remained a refractory frontier. Two traits of intra-party democracy are examined: leadership transitions at party president-level and the selection of political party members for key leadership positions. The present study of four political parties: United National Independence Party (UNIP), Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), United Party for National Development (UPND) and Patriotic Front (PF) demonstrates that the iron law of oligarchy predominates leadership transitions and selection. Within this milieu, intertwined but fluid factors, inimical to democratic consolidation but underpinning selectocracy, are explained.

**Keywords:** *Intra-party Democracy, Leadership Transition, Ethnicity, Selectocracy, Third Wave Democracies*

## Introduction

Although there is a general consensus that political parties are essential to liberal democracy (Teorell 1999; Matlosa 2007; Randall 2007; Omotola 2010; Ennser-Jedenastik and Müller 2015), they often failed to live up to the expected democratic values such as sustaining intra-party democracy (Rakner and Svasand 2013). As a result, some scholars have noted that parties may therefore not necessarily be good for democratic consolidation because they promote private economic interests, which are inimical to democracy and state building (Aaron

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2012: 5). Nonetheless, a counterview holds that despite their flaws, political parties remain an “inevitable evil” (Stokes 1999: 244). Parties fulfil several functions, which include: selecting and recommending candidates to stand for election to public office, advancing a policy agenda through which they canvass for votes in elections, and marshalling popular support in their quest to win elections (Yanai 1997: 7; Ezrow 2011). To accomplish these roles, parties must be viable and, as Omotola (2010) observed, internal democracy, among other factors, plays a pivotal role in safeguarding this viability. Despite this failure, both local civil society and foreign observers pay much less attention to this lapse than they do to inter-party contestations. We contend, therefore, that while violent conflict often characterises inter-party conflicts in third-wave democracies, intra-party conflicts are equally destabilising at the party and national levels. Observers have noted that regionally, while the reintroduction of multiparty politics is lauded, the culture of intra-party democracy remains a far cry from expectations (see Matlosa 2007: 8). The political events in Zimbabwe which saw a forced retirement of President Robert Mugabe at the end of 2017 make a compelling case for the importance of upholding intra-party democracy.

Drawing on more than two decades of multiparty democracy in Zambia, this article examines two aspects of intra-party democracy: leadership transition in, primarily, major political parties, and the selection rather than election of members to senior party positions. The article uses Bueno’s (2003) concept of *selectocracy*, to broadly explain leadership transitions and appointments to senior positions within political parties. In doing so, the article teases out what drives the selectorate in leadership transition in Zambian political parties since the 1990s.

By leadership transition, this article refers to a shift in the party presidency while appointments to key party positions explain, largely, how party presidents bypass their party constitutions to select and appoint some members to key party positions. Although Cross (2013: 101) noted the importance of the selection of leaders to political parties, this subject has only “recently and belatedly” received scholarly attention (Aylott and Bolin 2017: 55). This article contributes to an understanding of political parties and democratic consolidation in Zambia. Broadly, it contributes to the view that the

“existence of well-functioning political parties” is critical to democratic consolidation (Matlosa 2007:5) and that, despite the celebrated third-wave democratisation which has seen the liberalisation of the political space and subsequent peaceful transfers of power, the embracing of democratic values at the party level remains a work in progress.

## **Intra-party Democracy**

The concept and definition of intra-party democracy is multipronged (see Mimpfen 2007; Chinsinga and Chigona 2010; Cross and Katz 2013). However, it generally relates to transparency and inclusivity (Mimpfen 2007: 2) – the extent to which political parties permit their members’ participation in decision-making (Lotshwao 2009: 903), or how power is distributed within political parties (Cross 2013: 103). Among other elements, intra-party democracy comprises candidate and leadership selection (Scarrow 2005; Matlosa 2004), leadership succession, and adherence to party constitutions (Chinsinga and Chigona 2010). There is no consensus on the merits of intra-party democracy. While some consider it to be an albatross to political parties due to its tendency to weaken the power of leadership (Scarrow 2005), others extol it as a necessary tool for democratic consolidation (Lotshwao 2009). Proponents of intra-party democracy argue that it is an essential yardstick for evaluating vertical and horizontal linkages within a party (Mimpfen (2007: 2). This view assumes that a party that sets itself high standards of administration and governance will likely, once elected into office, demand the same standards from society. Conversely, less democratic parties may be purveyors of democratic reversal (Adejumobi and Kebinde 2007). Therefore, maintaining intra-party democracy has a bearing on the quality of democracy in a state (Debrah 2014: 58). As Elischer (2008: 196) observed, “... parties which are democratic internally also accept democracy as ‘the only game in town.’” In short, “democracy needs democrats” (Keulder and Wiese 2003: 1). However, Robert Michel’s *iron law of oligarchy* in which the elite few hold the reins of power (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011) undermines intra-party democracy. The elite few constitute the selectorate – an organ which decides, through patronage, who gets positions within a party hierarchy (Aylott and Bolin 2017: 55; Cross and Katz 2013: 3). The next section explains the general absence of

intra-party democracy and the prevalence of selectocracy in Zambian political parties from 1991 to 2016.

## **Politics of Leadership Transition in Zambia's Third Republic**

Since Zambia's return to multiparty democracy in 1991, competitive elections have taken place with relatively peaceful conditions and two power transfers to opposition political parties. Although gains of regular elections and interparty contests are palpable, intra-party democracy has remained a refractory frontier. In leadership transitions, lack of succession plans, for example, has endangered the very existence of individual parties. Where leadership transition affected ruling parties, their contestations during the interregnum have tended to destabilise the rest of society. Although party constitutions lay down rules for elections to all leadership positions, patronage has often supplanted elections for selections. Within this selectocracy, ethnic inclinations have either covertly or overtly been used, including contestations which disregard party constitutional provisions in leadership transitions and appointments to party positions.

## **Covert Ethnicity in Leadership Transitions and Appointments**

Zambia is a multi-ethnic society which has, since independence enjoyed relative ethnic harmony. However, the question of ethnicity in politics and leadership positions has been pervasive since independence in 1964. The return to multiparty democracy in the 1990s has created space for ethnic sentiments and expression. Covert ethnic considerations played out in the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) as President Frederick Chiluba was concluding his second and constitutionally last term in office. According to his former Press Secretary, President Chiluba "was experiencing some difficulty *determining* [emphasis added] which of the three senior-most members of the party would succeed him" (Sakala 2016: 113).

It soon became apparent in the year 2000 that he was interested in constitutional changes at the party and national levels to allow him to stand for a third term. Despite the strong opposition from more than 80 MMD members of parliament, who included the Republican Vice-President, General Christon Tembo and MMD vice-president General Godfrey Miyanda, the attempts to amend the constitution culminated into an extraordinary MMD conference called for April 2001 to proceed with the debate, as Chiluba's loyalists perceived it to be. Dissenting views were not accommodated, and Chiluba subsequently dismissed the Vice-President, eight cabinet ministers and several other prominent members of the MMD. What started as an internal party issue soon engulfed the country with the church, civil society, opposition political parties, and the Law Association of Zambia drawn into the question as it became clear that amending the Republican constitution was Chiluba's next move in the complex game of determining the country's future unilaterally. In the end, Chiluba conceded in May 2001 and announced that he was not going to stand for a third term after all. Despite this belated change of heart, albeit in the right direction, this came at high cost to the party as it saw the departure of scores of prominent members from the MMD. As Rakner (2003: 114) observed, "... the third term issue drained the Zambian state of considerable resources, split the ruling party, and suggested to the Zambian public and international observers that the ruling party's regard for the democratic process was, at best, shallow."

Rather than prepare an orderly transition, Chiluba sought to defy the constitution. When that failed, however, he had a Plan B – he unilaterally picked his former friend and lawyer Levy Mwanawasa out of retirement and made him the MMD presidential candidate. After expelling Christon Tembo, Godfrey Miyanda, Edith Nawakwi and others from the MMD, Sata, who was MMD Secretary-General and hoped to be named Chiluba's successor, now found himself unable to remain an MMD member. According to his version of the story, he told president Chiluba, "... I cannot work with this man. This man is incapable; he is politically impotent" (Phiri 2014). Sata left the MMD to form his own political party, the Patriotic Front (PF).

At party level, the end of Chiluba's presidency left a fractured party – all due to the failure to uphold democratic values – starting with respecting provisions of the party constitution on the length of tenure.

This episode underscored the view that those who fail to uphold intra-party democracy also struggle to promote democratic consolidation. Indeed, in the case of Chiluba, his seventeen-year hold on the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions would seem to indicate that he was averse to climbing down from the summit.

The Mwanawasa presidency coincided with an upswing in the economic situation, in part facilitated by the global Jubilee 2000 campaign to reduce the debt burden of developing countries and the rapid rise in copper prices, which attracted new investors. These positives gave the president the opportunity to implement some new development projects. To appease the foreign donors, he was obliged to conduct an anti-corruption campaign which exposed president Chiluba's excesses. Sata and others portrayed this campaign as an anti-Bemba strategy (Ntomba 2016). With the backdrop of removal of immunity from the former president, Chiluba lamented his decision that the choice of Mwanawasa "was probably the greatest crime I have ever committed against God and man" (Ngoma 2002: 1). Although Chiluba apologised to former colleagues for by-passing them to pick *an outsider* [emphasis added] for his successor, he justified the selection:

"I picked Mwanawasa in the interest of the nation so that we could move away from allegations which held that the presidency was forever going to Northerners, where I come from. To run away from tribalism, I settled for him leaving my colleagues who were with me all along" (Ngoma 2002: 1).

In this instance, it would appear that selectocracy and ethnicity were covertly used in leadership transition. Ostensibly, this logic was well-intended to ensure aversion of dominant ethnic groups from ascending to the party and state presidency. Despite this self-admitted altruism, this one-man selectorate was a regress on intra-party democracy.

The Mwanawasa presidency had its own failures in adhering to internal democratic values. For instance, when it became apparent that his preferred candidate for party vice-president, Lupando Mwape, was unlikely to win at the 2005 MMD elective national conference, Mwanawasa suspended the election for vice-president and froze the position. This freeze deprived the opportunity for Elias Mpondela,

Bwalya Chiti and Captain Austin Chewes to contest for the post, as they had planned.

Although Mwanawasa went on to win the 2006 election without a party vice-president, he subsequently picked Rupiah Banda, a retired former diplomat under the UNIP government. This appointment was a reward for helping Mwanawasa win votes from the Eastern Province (Sardanis 2014: 199). Before that, Mwanawasa had used the vice-presidency to give the Bemba section a symbolic leadership position, as he appointed Dr Nevers Mumba in 2003. When Mumba was fired in October 2004, ostensibly due to insubordination stemming from his comments on the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lupando Mwape, another Northerner, was appointed as vice president (Ngoma 2004).

President Mwanawasa's health had not been the same after his road traffic accident in 1992 and his rival, Sata, made political capital out of it, labelling Mwanawasa "the cabbage" (Larmer and Fraser 2007: 630; Phiri 2014). When Mwanawasa died in 2008, the MMD found itself in an administrative quagmire: owing to the freezing of the party vice-president position, they now had neither president nor vice-president. With shallow roots within the MMD, Acting President Rupiah Banda had to lean on MMD "godfathers" – an elite selectorate who encouraged and fervently campaigned for him to stand in the presidential by-election, which Banda won in a close contest against PF's candidate, Sata. As usually happens in closely fought contests, Sata cried foul but in the end accepted the result and went back to campaigning for the next round.

Even after Rupiah Banda's subsequent loss of power in the 2011 elections, the MMD was ill-prepared for the change of leadership. Banda's retirement from politics and the MMD presidency were interrupted as he announced a comeback in 2014 (see Mataka 2014) to stand as MMD presidential candidate in the presidential by-election of January 2015. It had to take a court ruling to disqualify Banda from supplanting Dr Nevers Mumba, the legitimate MMD president at the time (see Funga 2014a,b; Kalombe 2014b). Intra-party democracy and the respect for party-rules in leadership transition were still absent. These failures resulted in deep factionalism within the MMD which, in instances, turned violent and further weakened the party.

## Contested Leadership Transitions

Since 1991, Zambia has witnessed a number of contested leadership transitions which have evinced tendencies of patronage and interest groups. To varying extent, the United National Independence Party (UNIP) and the PF evince this challenge to intra-party democracy. In the first instance, UNIP failed to foster meaningful leadership transition. Although the founding President, Kenneth Kaunda, initially handed the party presidency to Kebby Musokotwane, a longstanding member of the UNIP government, he later challenged Musokotwane at the acrimonious June 1995 UNIP congress. Kaunda won the party presidency with 1916 votes against Musokotwane's 400 votes (Ihonvbere 2002). The UNIP presidency changed hands and later reverted to a Kaunda – Tilyenji Kaunda, in 2001 and has remained as such. Other political parties, such as the Patriotics Front (PF), have also experienced similar contestations with leadership transitions.

The PF had been in opposition for ten years, from 2001 to 2011. In the course of this period in opposition, the party's founding president, Michael Sata, had contested and lost three presidential elections in total: the general elections in 2001 and 2006 and, following the death of president Levy Mwanawasa, the presidential by-election in 2008. Sata, as the founder and face of the PF, held the presidency of the party and had unchecked power to appoint anyone to any party position. For instance, after losing two general elections in 2001 and 2006, Sata's hopes of winning the unexpected presidential by-elections were high. However, his performance in previous elections in the Eastern, North-western, Southern and Western Provinces was dismal. He reached out for an electoral alliance (Mupuchi and Michelo 2006) with Sakwiba Sikota who, after an acrimonious power struggle and exit from the UPND, formed the United Liberal Party (ULP). The alliance was expected to bring extra votes from the Western Province to the PF. The result of this merger was a handover of the vice-presidency to Sikota at the expense of Guy Scott (Malupenga and Chellah 2006). Although Scott later regained his position as party vice-president following the unsuccessful contest and the collapse of the alliance, no party positions were subjected to democratic electoral processes but based on the strategic wishes of the party president – the "big man" syndrome. It was clear that the "big man" of the party could give out and withdraw party positions at will. In this respect, the manner

of choosing party office bearers evinced godfatherism, which was inimical to the tenets of intra-party democracy.

Before the 2011 general elections, the ruling MMD under Rupiah Banda touted Sata and the PF as undemocratic due to the failure to hold a credible elective convention to legitimise the PF leaders. Based on the running of the PF affairs, it was difficult to dispute the lack of intra-party democracy, especially in the appointment of leaders to various positions. The party president demonstrated supreme authority to hire and fire party leaders. Mainly in response to this external pressure, the PF organised an elective general conference in July 2011. The conference retained Sata as PF president and hence the presidential candidate in the 2011 general elections. Although the MMD criticised the convention as a sham, Sata extolled it as a demonstration of intra-party democracy (Lusaka Times 2011). The PF went on to win the 2011 general elections and ended the MMD's 20-year rule.

Like Mazoka and Mwanawasa, Sata's health became a matter of public concern, which the opposition MMD and UPND Members of Parliament raised both in and outside Parliament. However, despite his apparent frailty, his party neither acknowledged this condition nor showed any transition plan. Instead, the PF kept insisting that the president was in good health. The health concerns were dismissed and followed up with internal campaigns of endorsing Sata as the sole PF presidential candidate for the 2016 elections.

When president Sata died in a London hospital in England, Edgar Lungu, who concurrently held two senior government portfolios as Minister of Defence and Minister of Justice, was the Acting President. Until then, Guy Scott, who was PF and Republican Vice-President had never acted as Republican President whenever the incumbent, Michael Sata, was out of the country. Instead, and for unexplained reasons, President Sata chose to appoint Cabinet Ministers. Although this by-pass attracted much touting from the opposition MMD, the parentage clause in the 1996 constitution – that a president must be born of Zambian parents – was often suspected to explain this odd by-pass.

Following the death of the president, two camps in the PF emerged around who was to be the legitimate Acting President for the next three months before a presidential by-election in line with the Constitution

of Zambia at the time. With the Attorney General's intervention, Lungu surrendered the acting presidency to Guy Scott. Acrimony characterised the brief period of transition from one Acting President (Lungu) to another (Scott). Evidently, this bitterness manifested itself first in the transfer of the Presidential Instruments of Power, on 29 October 2014, from Acting Republican President Edgar Lungu to the PF and Republican Vice-President Guy Scott. From the legal suit which a former deputy Minister of Finance, Newton Nguni, made to challenge this power transfer as irregular, it became apparent that deep fault lines along leadership preferences characterised the PF (Chulu 2014). As with the UPND, the PF's internal wrangles became a national problem.

Within a week of assuming the position of Acting Republican President, and that of Acting PF party president, Guy Scott's first significant action was to announce the firing of Lungu from his position as Secretary General of the PF on 3 November 2014. In Lungu's stead, Guy Scott arbitrarily appointed Davies Chama, a PF Member of Parliament for Chipili Constituency in Luapula Province. Mwila dramatically declined the position on camera at the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation. Mwila argued that he was still in mourning for President Sata. When Mwila turned the appointment down, Acting Republican President Scott turned to Home Affairs deputy Minister, Nickson Chilangwa. This action attracted a general outcry and instant sporadic demonstrations in Lusaka calling on Guy Scott to reinstate Lungu. Due to this pressure and volatile atmosphere it generated, Guy Scott backtracked his decision and reinstated Edgar Lungu as PF Secretary General. It was evident at this stage that intra-party democracy regarding leadership transition in PF was under strain but also that the battle within the PF had spread to the streets. At the requiem mass for the late President Sata, undertones of the tension of factionalism and contestations over leadership were palpable in PF Secretary General, Edgar Lungu's speech:

"It is a fact that Michael Sata was PF. But the question is: will the PF live beyond Sata? My answer is: yes because Michael Sata was a great teacher who passed on the skills, values and ideals to us, these are what will guide us ... PF is not for sale to the highest bidder. And will, therefore not allow selfish interests to hijack the party" (Kachingwe 2014: 3).

Despite this temporary truce, the two major camps had already emerged and threatened to tear PF and the country apart: the Guy Scott camp and the Edgar Lungu camp. The Lungu camp was more cohesive around Lungu's candidature than the Scott camp. Lungu had the public's sympathy as one whom Sata had recalled from a mission in Angola to assume the position of acting president before embarking on his fateful trip to the London hospital. The parentage clause in the 1996 constitution, which was still in force, disqualified Dr Scott from holding the office of Republican President, even though most Zambians did not support this exclusionary clause, which was perceived as having been used by president Chiluba to prevent Dr Kaunda from challenging him in the 1996 elections. Hence, Dr Scott, as Acting Republican President, played more of a "godfather" role in facilitating the process of finding the successor and PF flag bearer in the presidential by-election, in line with the provisions of the existing constitution. In fact, it emerged later that Dr Scott had his sub-group and favoured candidates within this camp. The Scott camp included Sata's widow Dr Christine Kaseba, Sata's son Mulenga, Sata's nephew Miles Sampa, former Defence Minister Geoffrey Mwamba, former Minister of Agriculture Wylbur Simusa, another former Foreign Affairs Minister Given Lubinda, former Minister of Commerce Robert Sichinga and former Minister of Youth and Sports, Chishimba Kambwili (Sunday Mail 2014). An accusation of being close to the selectorate, a shadowy clique of businessmen termed "the cartel" lingered on the Scott camp. The cartel was accused of having manipulated Sata and was now hell-bent on ensuring that he was succeeded by another gullible leader, as it were, who would further their business plans. Among this group, those closest to Sata quickly became the most unpopular as their scrambling for power was perceived with much disapproval as a betrayal of Sata himself. The former first lady, Dr Christine Kaseba, in particular, was given a most hostile reception as a presidential candidate. For instance, Bishop Nelly Chikwanda of New Life Ministries International counselled Dr Kaseba to withdraw from the presidential race to heal emotionally (Chaponda 2014).

Two options were suggested to elect the PF president: first, through an extraordinary general conference and, second, through Cabinet vote. The latter was seen as quicker, cheaper and less fractious while the former was in line with the party constitution. Despite the fervent

debate, the party settled for the conference route aided by a PF member's court injunction to restrain the PF central committee from selecting the party president. The member argued that in electing the next party president, a panel of 42 members could not supplant the conference of 5000-strong membership (Katongo 2014: 1). However, the general conference, called for the weekend of 28-30 November 2014 at the iconic Mulungushi Rock of Authority in Kabwe, Central Province, was plagued with organisational challenges of determining legitimate delegates. PF never had membership cards, although party lists of some kind existed. In what unfolded, the Lungu faction outwitted the Scott faction in electing the party president. Lungu won the 30 November election while the Scott group chose to be absent, claiming that there was a campaign of intimidation by Lungu's supporters and announcing that the legitimate election was going to be on Monday, 1 December 2014. Following Lungu's election as PF president on 30 November, Inonge Wina, the PF National Chairperson, swiftly obtained a High Court injunction to restrain anyone from announcing a different party presidential candidate. In the consent judgement, the High Court judge stated that:

“...the election of Honourable Edgar Chagwa Lungu as party president at the extraordinary general conference held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2014 be and is hereby declared the president of the Patriotic Front and the sole presidential candidate on the Patriotic Front ticket in the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2015 elections” (*The Post* 2014: 1–2; see also Kalombe 2014a: 1, 3).

The Scott faction elected Deputy Minister of Commerce, Miles Sampa, as president, although the returning officer apparently refrained from announcing the poll results officially after being served with an injunction (Funga and Kalaluka 2014). Although Sampa and his supporters tried to challenge Lungu's election, the High Court ruled in Lungu's favour.

Prior to the convention, 14 members of Lungu's faction of the PF Central Committee members suspended Dr Guy Scott from serving as the acting PF president. In return, Scott issued a counter suspension of the same group who included the PF National Chairperson, Inonge Wina (see Kuwema 2014: 1; Chirwa-Ngoma and Mataka 2014:1). Scott's suspension could not take effect, but Lungu's faction risked exclusion

from contesting the PF presidency at the conference. However, Lungu's group apologised to Dr Scott and got their respite (Kuwema and Habaalu 2014:1).

This conflict in leadership transition persisted as the two major factions became embroiled in further acrimony when 14 Cabinet Ministers passed a vote of no confidence in acting Republican President Dr Guy Scott, arguing that Scott's actions had become a threat to national security (Zambia Daily Mail 2014). The vote of no confidence followed Dr Scott's perceived manoeuvres to prevent Edgar Lungu from filing his candidature for the presidential by-election. Although the PF wrangling was internal politics, the threats to peace were national and had to take the external intervention of the church. This standoff between the two camps continued until, at least temporarily, a church-brokered reconciliation was agreed. Despite this reconciliation, the fallout followed again between the January 2015 by-election and the 2016 general elections, both of which Edgar Lungu won. Of all the PF members who challenged Edgar Lungu at the contested convention, only Given Lubinda remained in the Cabinet. Chishimba Kambwili survived until after the 2016 general elections when he was accused of corrupt practices, demoted and expelled. Scott, Sampa, Mwamba and Sata's son sided with the UPND, but Sampa later made a very public apology and subsequently reconciled with president Lungu and the PF. Although ethnicity was not a major overt factor in the PF leadership transition, the eventual election of Lungu to party presidency was used to brand the PF as more internally democratic and ethnically inclusive.

The PF experience of leadership transition underscored the point that in the absence of a clear transition plan, ambitious leaders will wish to try their luck and fill the power vacuum, and many will be overwhelmed by the complex battles that a head of state must fight to gain power. The interregnum, however, is a time of anxiety for ordinary citizens who have to wait until polling day to cast their votes and put an end to the unpredictability. In the case of president Lungu, the post-Sata politics of transition persisted despite his two electoral victories.

All this negativity is avoidable by having an heir apparent and a transparent succession plan, as often articulated in party constitutions. The case of Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe and the ZANU-PF demonstrates the potential national risk of failure of a smooth

succession plan. Countries, where this seems to have worked, include Botswana and Tanzania. Zambia, like other African countries, has in the past shown that rulers do not seem to accept their mortality. Only by enshrining the succession of the president by the vice-president can the mystique and intrigue be removed from the transition process. In this regard, the Zambian constitutional amendment requiring a presidential running mate is a move in the right direction because now, at least at the national level, the death or incapacitation of a Republican President will not leave a power vacuum or precipitate an internecine power struggle.

At the parliamentary level, the 2016 general elections also revealed glimpses of flawed intra-party democracy in the main contending parties, but more so for the PF. The effects of *selectocracy* demonstrated that the PF Central Committee's imposition of parliamentary candidates on the Zambian Copperbelt, for instance, could be debilitating even when the party wins elections. The victory of independent candidates in Kitwe and Mufulira over the preferred PF candidates in a part of the country full of safe seats for the PF should have sent a message to the Central Committee that they could not always have their way.

### **Overt Ethnicity in Leadership Transition**

Although the UPND's leadership transition was fraught with overt ethnicity, the fractious effects on the party were similar to those of the MMD or, rightly put, Chiluba's covert ethnic considerations. Anderson Mazoka formed the United Party for National Development (UPND) after falling out with the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) in 1998. Drawing overwhelming support from his home area, the Southern Province, he narrowly lost the highly disputed 2001 elections to Levy Mwanawasa of the MMD. Following the 2001 electoral defeat, the UPND embarked on consolidating their support and sought to extend this support to other parts of the country. Coupled with the marginal victory which the MMD had in the 2001 elections, and the surging opposition groups which broke away from the MMD, the UPND looked poised to mount a formidable challenge for the presidency in the 2006 general elections. However, Mazoka's health was deteriorating. Although several voices expressed anxiety at his continued involvement in active politics, Mazoka and the

UPND were unwilling to concede and allow for a smooth leadership change before it was too late. This unwillingness attracted abrasive ridicule of Mazoka's failing health from *The Post*, a leading private newspaper at the time (*The Post* 2005). Typical of political parties built around an individual, often the founder, major financier and with fame, the UPND failed to proactively deal with the question of leadership in spite of Mazoka's declining health. Although Mazoka's deteriorating health was widely talked about outside the UPND circles as the 2006 general elections were drawing nearer, both Mazoka and the UPND were unyielding and argued that there was no cause for concern. The UPND were undeterred in presenting Mazoka as the UPND presidential candidate for the 2006 general elections. However, Anderson Mazoka died in May 2006 while receiving treatment in a South African hospital – months before the general elections. In the case of Mazoka and Mwanawasa, Zambian politicians pretended that their leaders were in good health despite all the visual evidence to the contrary. Their deaths triggered bitter succession battles which weakened their parties.

Following the impressive performance in the 2001 general elections, the UPND had managed to attract leading political elites from major ethnic groups from other parts of Zambia and gave the party a national character reminiscent of that enjoyed by UNIP after independence and the MMD when it unseated UNIP. However, Mazoka's death resurrected the sharp ethnic sentiments last witnessed in the UNIP factional fights of 1967-68 that resulted in the resignation of vice president Mwansa Kapwepwe. The leading political voices who hailed from Southern Province sold the ethnic card and resolved that the only person who could succeed Mazoka had to be a fellow Southerner – that to ensure that a Southerner rules Zambia, party presidency was a reserved position for a Southerner. Among these voices was that of Rex Natala, Mazoka's cousin, who remarked: “a Tonga must replace Mazoka” (Chellah 2006: 1). Although Sakwiba Sikota, a lawyer by profession from Western Province, was a vice-president and the acting president following Mazoka's death, the intra-party ethnic mobilisation systematically weakened his chances of taking over the leadership of the party. Zambia's founding president, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, later commented on these ethnic sentiments:

“... I was shocked, beyond description, when I read media reports that some young men we know for some time were shouting, very loudly, ‘We want a Tonga to take over from Mazoka!’ Such expressions are in the year 2006, very sad, as they were around 1967 and 1968....The young men [who are] calling for a Tonga to lead UPND after Mazoka are doing a disservice to the name of a clean young Zambian [Hakainde Hichilema]. It also has not helped Zambia as a whole” (*The Post* 2006: v).

However, some party leaders always resort to ethnic mobilisation. In particular, the Eastern Province usually unites behind one party or one presidential candidate and was the only province that stuck with UNIP in 1991. Despite the multi-ethnic nature of the Northern part of the country, politicians usually mobilise the Bemba speakers into a single block-vote. For instance, when former MMD Minister of Finance, Emmanuel Kasonde, joined the National Party with other former ministers opposed to Chiluba’s agenda, Michael Sata dramatised Kasonde’s “conversion” by branding him “Emmanuel Liswaniso” – “Liswaniso” being a characteristically Lozi name (Posner 1995: 188). By calling the National Party a Lozi party and Kasonde a sell-out, the MMD was defining itself as a Bemba party although, of course, it continued to draw members from across the country.

In the course of the tumultuous succession disputes, the name of Hakainde Hichilema, a wealthy businessman emerged as Mazoka’s preferred successor. In fact, some UPND loyalists had argued that apart from being a Southerner, Tonga to be specific, the successor had to be wealthy to finance the party as Mazoka had done. In both cases, Hichilema fitted the party requirements as he entered the succession fray. Both Mazoka, a former Anglo-American executive, and Hichilema had played prominent roles in the privatisation of parastatal companies, and although Hichilema was not a UPND vice-president, in reality, he had always been Mazoka’s junior partner and heir apparent. The UPND held succession elections under the dark cloud of ethnic proclivities, which undermined the hitherto not-so-firm foundation of One Zambia One Nation. Sakwiba Sikota contested the election and lost to Hakainde Hichilema, but the former alleged violence and intimidation of his supporters and subsequently left the UPND to establish his own party, the United Liberal Party (ULP). The consequence of the ethnic sentiments in the UPND succession

turmoil was the departure from the party of prominent non-Tonga political elites. These included Given Lubinda, Patrick Chisanga, and Robert Sichinga. Worse was the decline in political support from other parts of the country which, under Mazoka's first attempt at the presidency in the 2001 elections, were easily won (Table 1). Except for significant gains in Eastern Province and the traditional base in Southern Province, UPND regressed in other provinces. In reality, the gains in Eastern Province were due to the tripartite alliance – the United Democratic Alliance (UDA), which included UNIP and the Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD). Eastern Province had remained the last stronghold of UNIP and hence brought the votes to the alliance rather than evidence of the UPND's penetration of Eastern Province, as subsequent electoral performances revealed.

**Table 1. Electoral performance of the UPND in the 2001 and 2006 general elections**

Province	Electoral share (%)		Net gain
	2001	2006	
Central	28.30	21.26	-7.04
Copperbelt	11.95	7.43	-4.52
Eastern	4.21	37.53	+33.32
Luapula	4.23	4.21	-0.02
Lusaka	30.72	21.48	-9.24
Northern	4.51	5.61	+1.10
North-western	48.22	26.13	-22.09
Southern	70.93	74.35	+3.42
Western	12.76	12.10	-0.66

*Source:* Compiled from Electoral Commission of Zambia ([www.elections.org.zm](http://www.elections.org.zm))

The invocation of the ethnic card in order to retain the party presidency for a Southerner was to later haunt the UPND for a decade of subsequent electoral cycles. Despite taking steps to grow the party outside Southern Province, the ethnic tag remained the Achilles' heel of the UPND, which political opponents recurrently reminded the electorate about (Sichikwenkwe 2016; Syapeyo 2016) even as they also implemented their ethnic mobilisation strategies.

The UPND faced rejection from other provinces, primarily due to the daunting albatross of the ethnic card the party drew when it seemed to favour a Southerner. Despite the severe threat to the political fortunes regarding the lack of a national appeal, the UPND managed to survive as the third largest political party between 2006 and 2016 general elections. Although other political parties could have easily collapsed following the succession disputes, the same Achilles' heel, from the perspective of UPND members, served as the glue which kept the party from disintegrating and which all but expelled other parties from Southern Province. For ten years, and five elections – three general and two presidential by-elections – the UPND received overwhelming support in the Southern Province while support from other regions remained thin. After the 2011 elections, the ethnic card of “a Tonga must rule Zambia” had morphed into what in policy terms was an anti-PF alliance but which was portrayed wrongly as an anti-Bemba crusade. If Southern Province wanted a Tonga president, the central issue in Western Province was that the PF had reneged on its promise to grant the province autonomy as Barotseland, a former British Protectorate. In North-western Province, the grievance was that the benefits of the privately owned copper mines in the region were benefitting the province less than other areas.

The internal politics of the UPND are no longer a members' concern, the rest of the country, and especially the rival parties, accuse them of ethnic chauvinism and also of failing to hold free and fair elections or even to hold conventions as required by their constitutions. As with Chiluba, who detested Kaunda's autocratic style but did the same when he had power in the Zambia Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU) and the MMD, the UPND complains of the PF's undemocratic practice while similarly behaving internally. By failing to go for a convention to renew leadership mandates, the UPND's practice of internal democracy fell short. Consequently, *selectocracy* determined the award of leadership positions below party president, such as party vice-presidency. For instance, by-passing the UPND rank and file, Dr Canisius Banda, was poached from the MMD after the 2011 general elections and appointed to one of two vice-president positions. Later, Geoffrey Bwalya Mwamba, who ditched the PF after a failed bid to win the party presidency in 2014, was appointed as vice president for administration. Both Dr Banda and Mwamba held these senior party positions without the popular mandate of a party convention.

The selection of Geoffrey Mwamba as the UPND presidential running mate in the August 2016 general elections was even more dramatic and contributed to Dr Banda's eventual resignation from the UPND. Evidently, selected leaders tend to have little loyalty and switch allegiances at short notice – selling their vote-winning abilities to the highest bidder.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Like democracy itself, the meaning of intra-party democracy remains contested (Cross and Katz 2013: 2) and, invariably, investigating this phenomenon in political parties is both complex and daunting (Spoerri 2008). However, evidence across the African continent has demonstrated that elections do not automatically lead to democracy but may produce “feckless pluralist regimes” (Rakner and Svasand 2013: 365). As such, the multiplicity of political parties in new democracies has not produced intra-party democracy and democratic consolidation. Chitala (2002: 250) highlights this about Zambia's deregulation of the political space in 1991:

“The 1991 events that resulted in the overthrow of the one-party state were in reality not a transition to democracy. They were a drive towards political liberalisation or pluralism... While the political liberalisation was occurring in Zambia, there was no concurrent development of the democratisation process.”

In particular, intra-party democracy in leadership transition has been problematic as incumbents often handpick their successors (Osei 2013). In some respect, the Zambian experience has shown that the participation of ordinary members is mainly limited to the implementation of party policies – a relic of the Second Republic. During the UNIP days, Sikota Wina's attempts, for instance, to initiate a discussion on the possible return to multiparty democracy was not tabled for discussion but circulated unofficially. An opportunity was thus lost for UNIP to democratise itself. Wina was lucky, however, that Kaunda's supporters neither harassed nor intimidated him as they often did when anyone attempted to stand against Kaunda for the position of party president. While other party positions were open to competition, the Central Committee had the power to vet candidates who they did not trust, and this centralisation of authority, as we have

shown, consolidates the power of the presidents but weakens the party and undermines democratic consolidation. This has persisted in contemporary Zambian political parties.

Although, on paper, each party has branches and sections, practice shows that the rest of the structure crumbles in the absence of the head. In third wave democracies such as Zambia, participation, particularly in the selection and recommendation of candidates for elections or to positions within the parties is often a flouted aspect of intra-party democracy. As Matlosa (2004) noted, a centralisation of power stifles internal democracy. The contention, therefore, has been: if political parties are central to democratic consolidation, they should necessarily uphold democratic principles such as internal democracy. Conversely, do non-democratic political parties build or undermine democratic consolidation? In searching for answers Carty's (2013) question further complicates matters: whether political parties are in fact meant to be internally democratic. We agree with Keulder and Wiese (2003) that democracy needs democrats, and Hofmeister and Grabow (2011: 48) that "a democratic state cannot be governed by parties with undemocratic structures." In Zambia's major and minor political parties, the lack of clear leadership succession plans and *selectocracy* have continued to evince the lack of internal democracy. To a large extent, individuals' possessions of "own resources and personal networks" govern the selection of candidates for elections into party positions (Randall 2007: 640).

As noted regarding the running mate clause in the Zambian case (The Constitution of Zambia 2016), clear rules and regulations can enhance democracy. If everyone understands that the vice-president automatically takes over from the president when the leader is unable to function, the emergence of other contenders is eliminated or at the very least postponed until the next elective party conference. Zambian politics has learnt this lesson from the death of president Sata, but this has not yet percolated down to the internal democracy of most Zambian political parties. When political parties do not espouse internally democratic principles, their internal struggles for power spill on the national level and often threaten national security. It follows therefore that intra-party democracy ought to be given more attention by political scientists as well as the good-governance activists who spend most of their time trying to prevent the abuse of power by

ruling parties. Checks and balances, we suggest, are suitable for both inter-party and intra-party democracy. Overall, intra-party democracy in Zambia has not been attained since the 1990s. Challenges to this democratic value constitute the interplay of overt and covert ethnic considerations and varying expressions of selectocracy and the iron law of oligarchy.

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