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Cities and dominance: Urban strategies for political settlement maintenance and change – Zambia case study

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Abstract

This paper tracks how the Patriotic Front (PF) – Zambia’s main opposition from 2006 to 2011, when the party won power – shifted its strategies of dealing with the urban poor, civil society and the middle class, in order to manage its vulnerability. While all three groups fully supported the PF in 2011, they are now in a more ambivalent position, thereby creating insecurity for the ruling regime. We contextualise these dynamics vis-à-vis Zambia’s broader political landscape, from 2001 to date, relying on historical processing tracing, in-depth interviews with key elite actors and a survey with informal traders. Using the case study of the PF, the paper demonstrates how political settlements can deepen the analysis of how and why particular strategies for dominance emerge in a given context, where the threats to this dominance emerge, and why governing elites target particular groups for co-optive or coercive interventions. It concludes that, due to its size and influence, the PF’s hold on Lusaka is crucial to its survival past the 2021 elections. Consequently, it is anticipated the party will continue to exert repressive pressure on sources of countervailing power and opposition and co-opt poorer but numerically large support bases (e.g. marketeers and vendors)

Keywords: Zambia, politics, middle class, urban poor, civil society, informal sector

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Introduction

Zambia's capital, Lusaka, has long been a major site of political contestation, and securing votes from the city's residents is often key to gaining a foothold on the national political scene. In 1991, support in Lusaka catapulted the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) to victory and ended one-party dominance under the United National Independence Party (UNIP). A decade later, gains by opposition parties in Lusaka assisted in gradually eroding the MMD's dominance until 2011, when the Patriotic Front (PF) won the city and the presidency.

The rise of the PF initially hinged on support specifically from Lusaka's urban poor and the informal sector. In the run-up to the 2011 elections, the party strategically expanded its support to also build alliances with urban-based civil society and the middle-class, as well as with particular ethnic communities in rural areas. By 'civil society', we mean organisations such as religious bodies and various similar umbrella associations representing students, women and lawyers that have the capacity to mobilise citizens and check the power of the government. The term 'middle class' is deployed in this paper to refer to typical 'middle class' occupations, such as civil servants, managers, senior officials, legislators, professionals, associate professionals and technicians. This relatively affluent segment of the population is less vulnerable to economic shocks, as compared to the lower middle class, and has earnings above the tax credit threshold (Nalishebo 2013). As Szeftel found in the 1970s, Zambia's middle class had a strong material ethic, in which an overlap of public position and private business interests was very common (Szeftel, quoted in Tordoff, 1980: 110). This still holds today and explains the dominance of the 'tenderpreneurs' in the political settlement. These are simultaneously civil servants and business people, who vie for and profit from government contracts. Resnick found that the recent numerical expansion of the middle class in Zambia has not necessarily translated into the solidification of a middle-class consciousness and identity (Resnick 2015: 711). This again emphasises the lack of associational life, which is more typical of the Copperbelt (Sishuwa 2019a). Defending the individual interests of this affluent middle class is undermining social spending (ZIPAR/UNICEF, 2019) and, with it, the undermining of the popular base of PF. After capturing the presidency, the PF deliberately relied on co-optation of those groups to prevent their defection to the opposition, namely the United Party for National Development (UPND). But, as the party became more vulnerable in the wake of Sata's death, due to threats posed not only by the UPND, but also intra-party fractionalisation, violence and intimidation of some of these same constituencies became more commonplace tactics for the PF to retain its urban dominance.

In this paper, we track how the changes in the PF's vulnerability shifted its strategies with the urban poor, civil society and the middle classes – ranging from co-optation to repression – and the degree to which these constituencies have resisted such tactics. While all three groups fully supported the PF in 2011, they are now in a more ambivalent position, thereby creating insecurity for the ruling regime. We contextualise these dynamics vis-à-vis Zambia's broader political landscape, relying

on historical processing tracing, in-depth interviews with key elite actors (political leaders, urban planners, business people, civil servants and civil society actors), and a survey with informal traders.

This paper forms part of a comparative research project, entitled *Cities and dominance: Urban strategies and struggles in authoritarian transitions*. It compares four capital cities, namely Addis Ababa, Dhaka, Kampala, and Lusaka, all in various stages and forms of authoritarian rule. Lusaka is arguably the ‘newcomer’, and the least ‘effective’ in enforcing dominance, given its relatively democratic past. The basis for the comparative analysis is the political settlement framework (Khan 2010, 2017) as developed by the Effective States and Inclusive Development (ESID) Research Centre at The University of Manchester. A political settlement in this instance refers to the ‘distribution of organizational power... [which] reproduces itself over time’ (Khan 2017: 6). The political settlements approach provides a way to analyse the balance of power between different groups in society, how this contains violence and provides a degree of political stability or order, and how it maps onto the formal political and economic institutions (Goodfellow and Jackman 2020). In terms of the Cities and dominance project, the research focuses on how coalitions seek and maintain dominance, both through generative and repressive interventions. Political settlements can deepen the analysis of how and why particular strategies for dominance emerge in a given context, where the threats to this dominance emerge, and why governing elites target particular groups for co-optive or coercive interventions (ibid.).

The paper first describes the importance of Lusaka in shaping Zambia’s political settlement and highlights how the PF became more vulnerable over time. Subsequently, we focus on the three core constituents of the PF, situated in two distinct historical phases. The first phase focuses on the party’s attempts to build a solid and populist base ahead of the 2006 and 2011 elections, while the second discusses the cooptation and coercion strategies that it implements when in power, from 2011 to date. The final section concludes.

Situating Lusaka

Zambia currently has an estimated 40 percent of its population living in urban areas.¹ The capital of Lusaka, along with cities in the northern Copperbelt region of the country, has long been key to the country’s urbanisation trends. It became the country’s official capital in 1935 during colonial rule, due its strategic location on the railway line stretching from the copper mines in modern-day Democratic Republic of Congo to South Africa (Mulenga 2003). Originally built for only about 125,000 people (Home 1997), the city currently houses a population of approximately 2.1 million people. Although certainly not as large as many other cities within Southern Africa,

¹ In Zambia, the definition of ‘urban’ is localities of 5,000 inhabitants or more, with a majority of the labour force not in agricultural activities.

Lusaka does constitute Zambia's primate city based on Jefferson's (1939) classic definition of being at least twice as large as the next biggest city. Indeed, the cities of Kitwe and Ndola, which are located in the Copperbelt Province, contain about 590,000 and 500,000 residents, respectively (UN-DESA 2014).

In contrast to the cities on the Copperbelt, which are strongly tied to the fortunes of the copper mines in the region, the economic base of Lusaka is much more diverse. Though strongly dominated by communications, financial services and retail trade, especially petty informal trade, the city also has some manufacturing and construction services (Resnick and Thurlow 2017). Outside of mining, most foreign direct investment, particularly from South Africa, is concentrated in the city, especially in the formal retail sector. During the 1990s, a collapse in copper prices led to a one-third reduction in mining jobs in the Copperbelt, resulting in a trend of de-urbanisation, as many retreated to rural family farms as a safety net (Potts 2005). However, over 100,000 people also migrated from the Copperbelt to Lusaka during this period (Central Statistical Office 2003).

Successive waves of migration into Lusaka have made it ethnically diverse. In the 1960s and 1970s, most migrants came from Eastern Province, due to the lack of jobs there and the proximity of the capital. This resulted in Nyanja, the main language of a number of ethnic groups in that region, becoming the lingua franca for the city (Mulenga 2003). Yet, during the 1990s, the in-migration from the Bemba-dominant Copperbelt increased the prevalence of Bemba in the city. Today, approximately 63 percent of the city's population speaks Nyanja, while another 20 percent use Bemba (Central Statistical Office 2014). Bembas have become the main ethnic group, constituting 22 percent of the population, with the Chewa (10.8 percent), Nsenga (10.5 percent), and Tonga (9.9 percent) ethnic groups each separately making up next largest ethnic groups (Central Statistical Office 2014). The rapid increase of the population in Lusaka Province has several consequences. In terms of the number of votes, Lusaka's urban constituents are higher than the total urban constituents in all of the Copperbelt towns (Electoral Commission of Zambia [ECZ] 2016). Whereas urban Copperbelt has voted rather homogenously, Lusaka is a battleground and remains one of the main election kingmakers. As the seat of government, Lusaka is the place where political coalitions are forged and where for the purpose of maintaining dominance, political institutions and space have to be controlled.

At the same time, it is a highly unequal city. During the colonial period, the government had no interest in allowing the African urban population to concentrate and, therefore, made no investment in public housing to discourage migration to the city. However, many white settlers earned money by renting their land to black Africans and allowing them to build houses on it, even though those houses had no real legal status. This tradition has had a major impact on the physiognomy of the city landscape to this day, with about 70 percent of the city's population living in high-density, poorly serviced areas of the city in informal settlements popularly known as shanty compounds (Mulenga 2013). The array of these compounds around an affluent city centre, with multiple shopping malls and high-end living estates, conveys

a clear sense of inequality. Indeed, inequality remains one of Zambia's most pressing concerns, with the urban Gini coefficient stubbornly hovering at 0.61 for the last decade (Central Statistical Office 2016). Services within these informal communities are often substandard, with many relying on pit latrines and lacking solid waste collection or potable water (Kennedy-Walker, Amezaga, and Paterson 2015). Consequently, in order to win over Lusaka, politicians often must forge cross-class coalitions, through generative interventions, or impede opposition parties from doing the same.

The urban factor in Zambian history: Dominance and political settlement

Urban areas have always been central to political settlements in Zambia. At the time of independence, the nationalist United National Independence Party (UNIP) had its strongholds in Lusaka, the Copperbelt and the city of Kabwe, along with Northern and Luapula Provinces (Larmer 2011). Following the inauguration of one-party rule in 1973, the party maintained its dominance by, among other techniques, requiring party membership in order to access market stalls or land plots in urban areas (Fraser 2017). Street protests in Lusaka during the late 1980s after the removal of maize subsidies, proved the major impetus for democratic transition. When multiparty democracy arrived in 1991, it was a party backed by the country's labour movement, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), and a union leader, Frederick Chiluba, that defeated UNIP at the polls. However, during the course of its 20-year reign, the MMD gradually became a more rural-oriented party, often buying support through appeals to ethnicity and its massive fertiliser subsidy programme (Mason, Jayne, and Van De Walle 2017).

Towards the end of Chiluba's tenure, the MMD began to splinter, a development that was to have profound consequences on Lusaka's position as an important epicentre of political contestation. The absence of a viable opposition between 1991 and 2001 had seen Lusaka, like other urban areas, retaining its support for the MMD. This position changed towards the end of the 1990s, when new opposition parties with the capacity to threaten the MMD's hold on power emerged. The first was the UPND, formed in 1998 by Anderson Mazoka who left the ruling party after differences with the party leadership. More defections occurred when Chiluba attempted and failed in his bid to change the constitution to run for a third term. The Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD) was founded in mid-2001 by mainly MMD figures opposed to the third term, led by Zambia's former vice-president, Christon Tembo. Chiluba subsequently selected Levy Mwanawasa as his successor, a move that contributed to the establishment of the PF. This new party was led by the charismatic Michael Sata, who, while ethnically Bisa, identified himself as a Bemba (Sishuwa 2016). A seasoned politician, Sata had climbed the ranks of UNIP until 1991, when he switched allegiances to the MMD and held multiple ministerial portfolios in Chiluba's government until his defection in 2001. At the elections in December 2001, the UPND narrowly lost to the MMD, but the party, which rose to become the main opposition,

won Lusaka Province at the presidential level.² The PF garnered only 3 percent of the votes. Over the next decade, Lusaka remained in opposition, though the UPND's dominance in the province declined over the first five years, especially following Mazoka's death in early 2006. The dramatic collapse of the UPND in Lusaka created an opening that was seized by the PF as Sata crafted a populist campaign with urban constituents and successfully recreated himself as a political outsider. As a result, the PF's electoral fortunes in Lusaka began to grow.

During the 2006 and 2008 electoral campaigns, Sata focused heavily on Lusaka and cities on the Copperbelt. He spent a majority of those campaigns mobilising street vendors, marketeers, and bus and taxi drivers and held large rallies in shanty compounds. Among other campaign slogans, one of the PF's most notable was 'lower taxes, more jobs, more money in your pockets'. He often attacked the MMD's poor record on employment creation and promised to upgrade, rather than demolish, shanty housing, provide a clean water supply, and end harassment of street vendors. The PF, in turn, won large numbers of votes in these cities in those elections, particularly in the high-density settlements and among the urban poor (Cheeseman and Hinfelaar 2009; Resnick 2014). After the 2006 elections, the PF won control of the city councils in Lusaka, Kitwe, and Ndola. But, being an opposition party within a highly centralised government, the party's power through the council governments was rather limited.

Sata shifted campaign tactics after 2006, adapting his campaign message to maintain his urban poor constituents, but expanding his base to include middle-class voters. He also engaged civil society leaders by actively supporting their causes, most notably the constitutional review process (Sishuwa, 2020a). This tactic, combined with overtures to particular ethnic groups in rural areas, enabled Sata to finally capture the presidency in 2011.

Intra-PF fragmentation increases party vulnerability

It soon became clear that the characteristics of populist parties, like intolerance of independent institutions and civil liberties, as well as intra-partisan dissent, proved equally true under Sata's presidency as it has elsewhere (see Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013). One side effect of internal factionalism was that Sata failed to clearly designate a successor, which resulted in political chaos when he passed away in October 2014. Edgar Lungu, the PF's general secretary at the time, was ultimately selected as the party's flagbearer for the January 2015 by-election.³ Lungu went on to win Zambia's election, after narrowly defeating Hakainde Hichilema, who succeeded leading the UPND after Mazoka's death in 2006. The PF leadership at that point recognised its vulnerability and sought to consolidate its hold on power ahead of the elections, through a mix of government programmes and increased

² In Lusaka, Mazoka obtained 30.7 percent of the total presidential votes in Lusaka, and was closed followed by the FDD's Tembo, who polled 23.5 percent. The MMD's Mwanawasa finished a distant third, with 15.5 percent of the total votes.

³ Before the 2016 amended Constitution, the death of the president in office caused a 'presidential by-election' within three months.

control of state institutions (e.g. Electoral Commission of Zambia, judiciary, police, etc.).

In the 2016 general elections, Lungu won 50.3 percent of the votes and therefore only marginally passed the 50+1 threshold needed to defeat Hichilema. Importantly, UPND polled 30 percent in Lusaka's constituency and local government elections (ECZ, 2016). This is especially notable, given that UPND has long been regarded as a 'regional' party with electoral support confined to Southern Province and surrounding regions. Its resurgence in 2015 was partially a result of a violent succession battle within the PF, which split loyalties, disrupted patronage networks and undermined Lungu's ability to benefit fully from the PF's incumbency (Beardsworth, 2015). As a liberal, business-minded party, the UPND did not gain the same traction among the urban poor as the PF did in its heyday, but it still attracted 30 percent of the votes in 2016, both in high-density, low income areas as well as low-density, more affluent neighbourhoods. This momentum was achieved despite limited opportunities to campaign in Lusaka as a result of the severe restrictions placed on the party's campaign activities and high levels of electoral violence in the city (Wahman forthcoming).⁴

Lacking Sata's charisma and everyman appeal, Lungu has struggled to gain legitimacy as the PF leader and faces opposition even within the capital. Many founding members and 'ideologues' of the PF defected under his presidency and the party no longer has the same appeal to the urban poor. As the political settlements framework suggests, a shift in the distribution of power among the ruling coalition, caused by threats both within the party and outside, increases contestation and, in turn, the vulnerability of the elite coalition's dominance (Whitfield et al. 2015). Confronted by an increasingly popular opposition leader, Lungu has heavily resorted to more overt ethnic nationalism to discredit the UPND. Since the UPND is largely seen as a party of the Tonga and Lozi ethnic groups, many of Lungu's political appointments revolve around Bemba and Nyanja politicians (Fraser 2017). In addition, Zambia's relationship with the international community has shifted, affecting the prevailing political settlement. For instance, Western donor support dropped from over 35 percent of the national budget in the late 1990s to less than 3 percent in 2016⁵ – a massive decline, which has had an impact on the donors' leverage vis-à-vis the Zambia government. In particular, declining funding for civil society has affected the ability of the latter to serve as a countervailing force. Zambia has economic leverage as well, independent of the West. In 2011, the year of political turnover in Zambia, the World Bank reclassified Zambia as a lower middle-income country, which meant that the country could have access to private loans. In recent

⁴ In Kanyama, UPND polled slightly over 50 percent in local government elections, and just missed the national assembly vote (36,674 for PF v 31,934 UPND). Indeed, originally 14,049 UPND votes were missing, but were added up after they were found dumped into bins: see Mukela (2018).

⁵ Republic of Zambia, National Budget Speeches 1996-2019. Available online: <http://www.parliament.gov.zm>.

years, Zambia obtained 3 billion dollars of Eurobonds. Money for patronage was now widely available and fully utilised (see annual reports of the Office of the Auditor General and the Financial Intelligence Centre⁶).

Not only has Zambia become more independent of the West, but it has become more dependent on other donors, especially the Chinese. While the Chinese were particularly targeted by opposition politicians like Sata during the early campaign speeches for taking away jobs and opportunities from Zambians, the rhetoric was substantially toned down before the 2011 general elections. Once in office, PF received the Chinese ambassador as the first official visitor at State House, setting the tone for a close relationship between China and Zambia. The Chinese state and companies have a strong presence in mining industry and infrastructure projects, but also provide security systems (CCTV) to public institutions and ministries. Chinese concessional loans support Zambia's police force, the Zambian Air Force and the army, in terms of providing housing, uniforms and equipment.

Collectively, then, these external shifts have reduced the presence of pro-democratic forces, at a time when the ruling PF feels threatened by both an increasingly stronger UPND and internal dissension. This has had key implications for the PF's engagement with three key critical constituencies: the urban poor, the middle class, and civil society. The following section first details the contours of these relationships during the period of Sata's rise and tenure.

Cultivating urban support in opposition: The PF's hold on Lusaka, 2006-2011

The literature has explained PF's electoral success by its capability to mobilise the urban poor by promising radical pro-poor policies, combined with a broader ethnic mobilisation in rural areas (for instance, Cheeseman, Hinfelaar, 2009). In recent works, Sata's electoral success is also explained in his ability to win over Lusaka's middle class as an important political ally. He did so by siding with civil society in the fight for constitutional reforms that took place during the reigns of Presidents Levy Mwanawasa and Rupiah Banda, and promising a new constitution within 90 days if PF got into power (Sishuwa, 2020a). He also did so by promising civil servants better working conditions. When Rupiah Banda's MMD showed signs of increased corruption and indifference towards governance, Sata emerged as an alternative to middle-class Lusaka voters. The support from both constituencies is borne out by the election results in 2011 general elections; all Lusaka constituencies, both those in the poor, high-density areas and those in the affluent, low-density neighborhoods went to PF, while the surrounding (rural) areas still supported the MMD. Below, we discuss how Sata was able to garner support from such diverse constituencies.

PF's erstwhile urban constituents: Vendors and marketeers

As in other African countries, markets and street trade play a critical role in providing both food security and employment in Zambia. Within urban Zambia, approximately

⁶ Available at: <https://www.ago.gov.zm/downloads.html>

81 percent of the labour force works in the informal sector (Central Statistical Office 2015). Trade is the dominant occupation within the informal sector; in fact, during the 2000s, more than four-fifths of new trade sector jobs were in the informal economy (Resnick and Thurlow 2017). Within Lusaka, many of those in the informal economy labour as merchandise and food sellers within the city's more than 60 open-air markets, or they hawk their goods along the capital's streets. These informal markets and street vendors are the major source of food for most of the city's poor, due to a lack of affordability and accessibility to supermarkets for those living in shanty compounds (Mulenga 2013).

The numerical importance of informal workers in Lusaka makes them a constituency that is vulnerable to both co-optation and harassment, depending on whether the ruling regime views them as a source of political support or a threat to their dominance. This can be exacerbated when there are partisan divisions between the Lusaka City Council and the national government, since control over vending and markets is one of the few responsibilities of the LCC and a major source of revenue. These dynamics have become more pronounced in the democratic era, and especially as the country has attempted to decentralise, in fits and starts.

The simultaneous processes of economic and political liberalisation that Zambia encountered in the early 1990s temporarily shifted the balance of power in favour of informal traders. Not only were price controls lifted, but also traders became a critical source of votes in the new democratic environment. Under Chiluba's tenure, Zambia began a structural adjustment programme that reduced the number of jobs in the formal sector, as state-owned enterprises were disbanded, and removed controls on imports and prices, which reduced barriers to entry into the informal sector (Hansen 2007). The MMD minister of local government (MLG) in the early 1990s, Michael Sata, also instructed the councils to leave vendors alone, further causing a growth in *tuntembas*, or wooden shacks, on the streets and pavements. Collectively, these policies and dynamics further expanded the informal economy. The number of markets in Lusaka also grew, from about 36 in the 1980s to 57 by the mid-1990s (Nchito 2006).

As the decade progressed, however, the conflicts between the LCC and the national government that existed under UNIP re-surfaced, creating alternative periods of alienation and co-optation of traders. A violent crackdown by the LCC in 1993 resulted in large-scale riots, ultimately convincing President Chiluba to intervene on their behalf. In 1996, an election year, he established a vendor's desk at State House and appointed a deputy minister in charge of street and market vendors' affairs. Because of the protections they were afforded, vendors were collectively referred to as the 'Office of the President'. By 1998, however, Hansen (2004: 62) notes that street vending had reached 'anarchic proportions', with the whole city centre becoming an outdoor market. When the LCC pursued a massive sweep across the city in 1999, destroying hundreds of *tuntembas*, Chiluba deviated from past behaviour and decided not to intervene (Hansen 2007).

When his successor, Levy Mwanawasa, took office in 2001, the MMD was already beginning to lose its popularity in urban areas. A large-scale fertiliser subsidy programme initiated under Mwanawasa's first year as president, enabled the MMD to consolidate a greater hold in rural areas. Under his New Deal government, Mwanawasa sought to attract the private sector, generate growth, and combat corruption, and by the mid-2000s, growth rates rebounded, and inflation fell to single digits. However, urban inequality became more pronounced, and formal sector employment had declined by 24 percent between 1992 and 2004 (Larmer and Fraser 2007). As part of the 'Keep Zambia Clean and Healthy' campaign launched in 2007 by Mwanawasa and his MLG Minister, Sylvia Masebo, more stringent provisions were added to the 1992 Street Vending and Nuisances Act and many hawkers and *tuntembas* were removed, often with the use of bulldozers and paramilitary officers (see Times of Zambia 2007).

At the time, the PF already had grown in popularity among Zambia's urban poor and had taken over control of the LCC, as well as cities on the Copperbelt. Sata vocally decried crackdowns on vendors. In fact, members of the PF-dominated LCC admitted trying to sabotage the MLG's attempts to remove vendors as much as possible, even obtaining temporary court injunctions against planned MLG evictions of traders (see Resnick 2014).

PF inroads into Lusaka's middle class

Despite the lack of jobs that has pushed many into the informal economy, Lusaka is the seat of a very centralised government system. All ministries, state owned enterprises (SOEs), such as the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), ZCCM-IH) and statutory bodies (pension funds, revenue authority, etc.) have their headquarters in Lusaka. As a result, most (senior) civil servants live in Lusaka, and make up a good part of Lusaka's middle class. The same applies to international organisations, such COMESA, UN, WaterAid, donor agencies, foreign embassies and local organisations. Zambia's economic boom from 2003 to 2014 (around 6 to 7 percent, which has dwindled to less than 3 percent in recent years) further benefited the urban middle class more than any other group in society, as discerned from a rapid rise of Zambia's middle class and increased inequality (Resnick 2015). Consequently, the middle class, though proportionally small, not only occupy a privileged spatial position in Lusaka in terms of access to land and services, but also form an important political constituency.

Wragg and Lim (2013) show how the liberalisation policies of the 1990s affected space making in Lusaka, highlighting how increasingly foreign-global-capital spaces are overtaking Lusaka, at the expense of its informal sector population. The new visions of space increasingly exclude the poor, and have allowed for their dispossession. Although there have been a couple of state-sponsored housing projects in recent years, these have all targeted civil servants, many of whom are already known to have built houses (Embassy of the Republic of Zambia 2018). Although the 1996 Housing Act required for 15 percent allocation of the national

budget to housing, the figure has never surpassed half of that amount (Mbatimwengwe 2001). The highest planned allocation to housing as a percentage of the total national budget between 2006 and 2017 was 6.5 percent, and the highest actual expenditure was 5.4 percent. Since then, the housing expenditure has plummeted to below 1 percent, out of which a minimal goes to actual low-income housing projects and initiatives. Largely regarded as an entitlement, civil servants in Lusaka overwhelmingly supported PF in the run-up to 2011, despite these favourable conditions. It was based on an anti-Banda sentiment, because of discontent with state corruption. But it was also a pro-PF vote, because of promises of increased wages for workers and civil servants and a fairer distribution of wealth.

Besides monopolising urban space, the urban elites have also been involved in a formalised 'land grab' in rural areas, especially in the vicinity of urban areas like Lusaka (i.e. Chongwe, Chilanga and Kafue). The 1995 Land Act, drafted in an era of neoliberal reforms, commodified land by opening up the possibilities to transfer customary land into private hands. As Sitko and Jayne (2014: 201) argued,

'the rapid growth in urban incomes in Zambia over the past decade has provided a growing number of urban wage earners with the financial capacity to seek out new investment opportunities. In the context of a favourable agricultural development strategy, and given the uncertainty of many other types of investment in Zambia, many salaried urban-based Zambians are directing their resources towards investments in agricultural land...'

While this land distribution to the urban middle class was not part of an official policy, it was definitely a way to incentivise and co-opt the middle class. It did not have the productive outcome that the drafter of the 1995 Act had in mind, as land acquisition by urban wage earners seems to have had little effect on agricultural growth in Zambia, as these individuals, particularly those who acquired title to their land, are utilising just a fraction of their land for the purpose of agricultural production.

PF and civil society

Concurrent to these interactions with informal workers and the middle class from Chiluba onwards, Zambia was also experiencing an opening of civic space. Countries that feature a strong "civil society" are often assumed to have the best prospects for democratic consolidation in Africa (see, for instance, Von Doepp 2005 and Sishuwa 2020b). Zambia is often held as an example of the democratic gains that can result from a robust non-state sector capable of checking the power of the government. Indeed, the literature on this subject is characterised by a remarkable consensus on the capacity of trade unions and religious organisations to force presidents to compromise, whether under authoritarian or democratic rule (see Von Doepp 2005, Sishuwa 2020b, Gould 2009). A review of the country's political developments since the 1990s renders credence to this view. During the 1990s, and in the absence of a viable and effective political opposition, it was civil society organisations, represented by the three Christian church mother bodies, the Law

Association of Zambia (LAZ) and the disparate women's organisations in the Non-Governmental Organisations Coordinating Committee (NGOCC) that largely held power to account during this period (Gould 2009).

One of the peculiar features of Zambian civil society organisations is that they are largely concentrated in Lusaka alone, apart from the churches that retain a wider membership beyond the city. This scenario meant that opposition forces were much stronger and, indeed, more regularly found a united voice in Lusaka than in any other part of the country. The democratic political environment that thrived under the MMD administrations of Chiluba and Mwanawasa provided the incentive necessary for the growth of non-state actors with the capacity to affect public opinion. As noted earlier, it was civil society organisations grouped around the Oasis Forum, a coalition of civic associations formed by the three broad institutions earlier mentioned, to defend term-limits against the attempts of former President Chiluba to secure an unconstitutional third term in 2001 (Gould 2011).

After the democratic transition in the early 1990s, the private media expanded, hundreds and then thousands of civil society organisations were formed, and these associations faced fewer official and unofficial restrictions on their activities. University students, who had been one of the organised opposition movements to UNIP during the era of the one-party state, continued to find their voice. All these groups had an important sway on urban politics especially in Lusaka, where they constituted an important electoral constituency whose support was coveted by both opposition and ruling parties in the 1990s and early 2000s.

The independent media

More specifically, one of the pre-election pledges that swept the MMD to power in 1991 was the liberalisation of the media after nearly two decades of one-party state censorship. Following their victory, Frederick Chiluba and the MMD moved to implement this campaign promise, partly in response to demands by donors for media freedom as a precondition for accountability, transparency and good governance. Over the course of the next decade, hundreds of independent radio stations and newspapers were established, mainly in Lusaka. *Radio Phoenix* and *The Post* newspapers, both headquartered in the capital city, emerged to become emblematic of this new independent media that held power to account and provided an important platform for opposition forces such as civil society organisations and opposition parties. Phoenix's *Let the People Talk*, a weekly broadcast programme that hosted prominent personalities to discuss different national issues, became a household name and one that many Lusaka urbanites looked to. Thanks to *The Post*, state-driven corruption was exposed throughout the 1990s, civil society organisations found their voice on important national topics and many Zambians became increasingly critical of the ruling MMD, largely thanks to the high consumption of information available in Lusaka. When Chiluba attempted to seek an unconstitutional third term of office in 2001, it was *The Post* and *Phoenix* that successfully galvanised

opposition forces against the move, demonstrating the power and influence of the independent media in post-1991 Zambia.

The next MMD administration, led by President Levy Mwanawasa, who succeeded Chiluba in 2001, generally remained committed to the promotion of media freedom, notwithstanding the constant frictions that occasionally arose mainly between the state and *The Post* throughout the early 2000s. Under Mwanawasa, a number of private television and radio stations were opened in Lusaka and even the public media, long disparaged by the public as a mouthpiece for the ruling party, gained some semblance of credibility by giving coverage to the opposition. Opposition forces, and especially Sata's PF, thrived under this political environment.

Following Mwanawasa's death in August 2008, the space for media freedom began to shrink. The administration of Rupiah Banda, the MMD leader who succeeded Mwanawasa, threatened to shut down critical media institutions and banned government ministries from advertising in publications that were deemed hostile to the ruling party, in an attempt to cripple their revenue base. This response reflected attempts by the MMD to tighten its grip on power in response to a narrow electoral mandate and in the face of mounting opposition by the PF. Since then, space previously opened up to non-state political actors has progressively been eroded. Critical media has been closed down or intimidated into compliance. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been muzzled, and the right of university and college students to engage in protests has been sharply curtailed.

PF and University of Zambia students

University students were central to the broader political processes that eventually led to the collapse of one-party rule in the early 1990s. At the centre of these activities were students at the University of Zambia (UNZA), which is located in Lusaka, who frequently expressed outrage against the Government's positions through protests in the 1970s and 1980s (Phiri 2006: 112). UNZA students, through their University of Zambia Student Union (UNZASU), were also responsible for organising the national conference that led to the talks between the opposition MMD and the governing UNIP in early 1990 – talks that partly paved the way for the introduction of multiparty democracy.

UNZA students found their voice in 2001, when they joined ranks with other opposition forces to protest against Chiluba's attempts to amend Zambia's constitution in order to extend his rule. The students picketed parliament and successfully threatened to undermine the campaign efforts of Lusaka-based MPs who supported Chiluba's plans.⁷ Under the MMD's Mwanawasa, students protested against some of the government's economic policies. In January 2007, for instance, UNZA students objected to the government's announced sale of the Zambia National Commercial Bank, the country's leading bank, as part of an International Monetary

⁷ Interview, September 2018, with Edith Nawakwi, former minister of finance (1997-2001) and leader of the opposition party FDD.

Fund precondition for a financial package.⁸ The students threatened to vote for the opposition PF and campaign against the MMD at the next elections. Thanks to their efforts, the government reversed the move and announced that it would instead only sell half of the bank's shares.

In the run-up to Zambia's 2011 election, University of Zambia students formed an important strand of the PF's urban base. Such was Sata's appeal among students that the government threatened to shut down the university until after the election to effectively disfranchise the 30,000-plus electoral constituency. Public criticism of the planned move forced the government spokesperson to deny such plans. At the polls, Sata and the PF won Munali constituency, under which UNZA falls, by huge margins, as they did at the university polling station itself.

Consolidating dominance while in power: The PF's control of Lusaka, 2011 to date

Empowered or extorted? Traders navigate the PF's waning urban dominance

In 2011, Sata won the presidential elections with overwhelming urban support, bolstered by his support from traders in Lusaka and the Copperbelt (Resnick 2014). Shortly after his victory, he issued a letter to all the councils in Zambia ordering them to cease harassment of street vendors. As a policy of the 'PF Caring Government', the PF general secretary at the time even claimed that vending should be legalised. In 2012, Sata demoted his MLG minister when she planned to sign a new statutory instrument against vending. PF cadres were even allowed to have their own market, known as Donchi Kubeba, on a flyover bridge in Lusaka.⁹

After Sata's death and the subsequent political jostling for power in the PF, the PF policy of co-opting marketeers and street traders continued. The most obvious attempt to do this was Lungu's announcement in 2015 of a Presidential Empowerment Initiative Fund (PEIF), which would be funded by 10 percent of his own salary. The PEIF still continues today, with the aim of supporting marketeers, who typically struggle to access capital from financial institutions. The terms are extremely generous; the only qualification is that an applicant should hold a National Registration Card and operate from an established market. There is no application fee or required business plan for how the loan will be used, nor is there a ceiling on loan amounts, and most applicants receive their money within 48 hours of the request. In selecting recipients, the PEIF administration prefers to work directly with traders, rather than engaging with any intermediary, such as a market association.¹⁰

⁸ S. Mupuchi and G. Chellah, 'UNZA students boo Levy Mwanawasa', *The Post*, 19 January 2007, pp.1 and 4.

⁹ 'Donchi Kubeba', or 'don't tell', was the PF's 2011 campaign song. In it, voters were encouraged to take gifts from all political parties, but not tell them that they ultimately were going to vote for the PF.

¹⁰ Interview with the national coordinator and fund manager of the PEIF, July 2018.

Besides PEIF, Lungu continued Sata's policy of benign neglect of street vendors. They generally were left unmolested and protected by the national government, even as they were not necessarily provided with better trading conditions. An analysis of media events shows that episodes of crackdowns on traders in Lusaka were non-existent between 2011 and 2016, when the PF finally controlled both the national government and the LCC (Resnick 2019).

The accommodative approach of successive PF presidents has undermined the authority of the LCC. Based on the Street Vending and Nuisances Act of 1992, the LCC is technically responsible for street vending.¹¹ In reality, the national government has prevented the LCC from exercising its control over these two domains. In mid-2017, a representative for the MLG admitted, 'Street vending, no one is controlling it right now The councils are supposed to enforce, but they were told not to at the moment'.¹² Likewise, a former deputy director at the LCC admitted, 'Everyone is on the streets, but we're [the LCC] not allowed to fight to take back the streets now'.¹³

Similarly, based on the Markets and Bus Stations Act of 2007, the Ministry of Local Government (MLG) delegates authority for the management of authorised markets to the local councils (GRZ 2007). Legally, therefore, all markets in Lusaka should be under the control of the LCC. In reality, many of the markets, especially in the CBD, are controlled by the PF in a few ways. As in UNIP days, the PF has market offices in most of the central markets. Although PF party members claim that this allows politicians to get firsthand information on marketeers' needs,¹⁴ such offices facilitate surveillance of marketeers' activities. In addition, the PF also benefits from using lower-level party cadres.¹⁵ The attraction of markets for cadres is that they are not just a concentrated source of information and votes, but also a major source of revenue, with some of the major ones generating more than a million Kwacha per month.¹⁶

The politicisation of informal trade through the entrenchment of cadres and market offices has made markets unfortunate targets for inter-party fighting. Most dramatically, a series of politically motivated arson attacks have spread throughout markets in Lusaka and cities on the Copperbelt in recent years. After a fire outbreak in July 2017 within City Market, one of Lusaka's largest, Lungu responded by blaming the opposition UPND and invoked emergency powers for three months to prevent what he claimed was further 'sabotage' by the UPND. These emergency

¹¹ This has been amended, with stricter restrictions, in both 2007 and in 2018.

¹² Interview with Department of Housing and Infrastructure Development, Ministry of Local Government, July 2017.

¹³ Interview with former deputy director of housing and social services, July 2017.

¹⁴ Interview with Hon. Elizabeth Phiri, Kanyama constituency, July 2018.

¹⁵ Party cadres is a term that first emerged during Zambia's socialist, one-party period of history, when UNIP had a youth wing that played a largely vigilante role. Today, it refers to young men who engage in violence and raise money for the party under dubious means on behalf of a party (Hansen and Nchito 2013).

¹⁶ Interview with Department of Housing and Infrastructure Development, Ministry of Local Government, July 2017.

powers enabled the police to prohibit public meetings, search without a warrant, close roads, impose curfews, restrict movements and detain suspects longer than usual. Lungu insisted such actions were needed to allow for a thorough investigation of the market blaze and other market fires (Cotterill 2017). Yet, given such an unprecedented tactic in Zambia's democratic history, the fires appeared to provide Lungu an excuse to consolidate power and suppress civil liberties.

Shortly thereafter, in late 2017 and early 2018, a large-scale outbreak of cholera prompted a sharp deviation from the PF's strategy of accommodation and benign neglect of street vendors. Despite having come to power through the support of traders, the PF issued Statutory Instrument (SI) No.10 in February 2018, known as an amendment to the Local Government Street Vending and Nuisances Regulations. The SI updated the fines for contravening any of 55 potential restrictions, including working as a hawker in the same area for more than five days in a calendar month, selling food in any street or public place besides a market, and failing to provide adequate clean and safe water on one's business premises (GRZ 2018). In sharp contrast to Sata's calls a few years earlier to legalise street vending, the new SI essentially penalised the practice again.

To implement the SI, the government razed a number of *tuntembas*, removed traders from the streets, and closed down 30 markets in Lusaka for several weeks (Kasonde 2018). To enforce the restrictions, the government relied on bringing in the national military, even having them stationed within some markets for up to four months (Blomfield 2018). While this decision most likely was made because of the low levels of capacity among LCC police to enforce regulations, the tactic created the impression that traders were miscreants who needed to be controlled to protect other citizens of Lusaka. The presence of soldiers on the street further symbolised efforts by the state to intimidate the broader citizenry and control any resistance to the regime. These actions limited the ability of traders, both street hawkers and marketeers, to pursue their livelihoods. More importantly, it failed to address the root of the epidemic, which is the substandard water, sanitation, and garbage collection facilities, both in the shanty compounds where most traders live and in the markets where they work.

How did traders react to the government placing restrictions on their livelihoods? There were some signs of outright resistance. Most notably, when a seven-day curfew was placed on the compound of Kanyama, which is one of the most densely populated townships in the city and considered to be the centre of the cholera outbreak, residents reacted with riots and burned tyres in the roads. They resented being unable to earn an income, given that a majority of residents in the compound depend on trade. Police reacted by firing tear gas and arresting 55 people (see Mitimigi 2018).

Such riots though seemed to be isolated. Associations of traders and marketeers have, by contrast, demonstrated a more accommodating approach to the government's actions. For example, the president of the former United Street

Vendors Foundation quickly renamed his organisation the Zambia Micro and Small Traders Federation in the wake of SI No.10 of 2018, in order to retain its legitimacy.¹⁷ ZANAMACA senior leadership even embraced the government's actions, appreciating the clean-up of street vendors: 'We don't have street vendors now. Street vendors do not paint a good picture'.¹⁸

Such reflections indicate that there is a larger challenge to resisting the PF's actions, which is that informal traders are a heterogeneous constituency and street vendors and marketeers do at times have competing interests that prevent them from developing a united front towards government policies (Hansen and Nchito 2013). In addition, marketeers' experiences are quite different, depending on whether they are in LCC or cooperative markets, and in the CBD or in the compounds. Furthermore, despite a proliferation in associations claiming to represent these traders, the membership of such organisations is relatively low. Consequently, aside from elections, they have few modes of effectively voicing their preferences over public policies related to vending and the markets.

Middle class

After Sata's rise to power, the government's close relation between political elite and middle class continued, and with it the deeply rooted urban-elite bias in policymaking. Indeed, as with the 1991 electoral turnover, regime change never brought fundamental changes. Sata's cabinet consisted of many 'recycled' politicians who came from UNIP and MMD-Chiluba days and belonged to the same economic elite as Lusaka's middle class and, equally, were benefactors of these policies. With the Lungu faction gaining the upper hand within PF, and the incorporation of a more 'neoliberal' section of MMD, there has been a move away from PF's affinity with the urban poor and a preferential treatment of the middle class.

The Lusaka civil servants also profited from a boom in public expenditure, most notably in terms of wage increases and enhanced emoluments which included utility vehicles and out-of-town allowances of up to \$500 a day when travelling abroad for work.¹⁹ Sitting allowances in statutory bodies became another means of clientelism which benefited senior civil servants and politicians. The pledge to improve the living situation of the informal and working class was partially undermined by wage increases initiated by the PF administration. In the 2018-2020 Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), the government disclosed that the public service wage bill consumed over 51 percent of domestically generated revenues, crowding out domestically financed operational capital expenditure (National Budget Speech 2018²⁰).

In as much as the middle class was an important factor in PF's hold on power, it can potentially be its undoing as well, since the wealthy have a greater ability to lobby

¹⁷ Interview with the president of the former United Street Vendors Foundation, July 2018.

¹⁸ Interview with the president of ZANAMACA, July 2018.

¹⁹ Interviews with senior civil servants in Ministry of Finance, 2018.

²⁰ See <http://www.parliament.gov.zm>.

and fund political campaigns, resulting in a greater amount of leverage in policy making (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2002). The close-knit networks of Lusaka ensured that loyalists are given government positions or contracts. The PF co-opted those who had been strong advocates of media freedom when PF was in opposition (i.e. former Press Association of Zambia vice-president, Amos Chanda, who until recently was State House spokesperson and Amos Malupenga, former managing editor of The Post newspaper), as well as transparency (the former TIZ director, became deputy high commissioner to Botswana after the 2016 elections).²¹ There is resistance within PF itself to Lungu's succession, mostly as a result of the disorderly transition from Sata to Lungu, which left many politicians on the sidelines. This disunity is undermining the party and, as we have seen above, has resulted in divergence in policy making. The internal disagreements and the overruling by PF of technocrats' decisions, has resulted in ad hoc policy making, and many reversals, which has undermined the overall functioning of the government.

Moreover, there is quiet resistance from within the civil service. While ministers, permanent secretaries and even directors of departments are political appointments, the civil service as a whole is not entirely loyal to PF. This has led to high-level leaks to foreign media, most notably Africa Confidential, which has uncovered hidden debts and high-level corruption cases. It is also shown through the resilience of the Auditor General Office, which has remained steadfast in reporting corruption within the ministries. The emergence of a strong Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) within the Ministry of Finance has revealed high-level political involvement in financial crimes such as corruption and tax evasion, among others (in 2017 this amounted to a record-breaking K4.5 billion). Their case studies show direct involvement of politicians and their business networks (companies, accountants and lawyers)²². FIC demonstrated how institutions that should provide oversight (PACRA, ZRA, etc.) are not fulfilling their role, or, as they put it privately,²³ are prevented from fulfilling their role. While constantly under attack, FIC's particular status within the ministry, combined with international support and a seemingly incorruptible board, makes it relatively autonomous from the usual political pressures.

Thirdly, passive resistance by the quiet refusal of the middle class and civil society to follow newly introduced rules and regulations also shows the limited capacity of the state to enforce these rules. We have seen this in the non-compliance with the newly introduced (draconian) NGO Act, when most civil society organisations simply withheld registration, as explained below.²⁴ More generally, the public has withstood compulsory registration of their bank account with Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA), resulting in a continued extension of the given deadline. Most recently, we have seen this with the registration of private boreholes.

²¹ See <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2018/01/22/former-tiz-director-appointed-zambia-deputy-high-commissioner-botswana/> (accessed 10 February 2020).

²² See <https://www.fic.gov.zm/>.

²³ Interview FIC, November 2017.

²⁴ Interview Zambia Governance Foundation (ZGF), June 2018.

Voting is a more obvious form of expressing opposition/resistance. The 2016 elections saw Lusaka more divided among the total main parties than the previous general elections in 2011, though in the end PF took all the seats in urban Lusaka. It must be noted that two constituencies, namely Lusaka Central and Munali (which contain middle-class areas) were contested in the high court on account of violence and intimidation. While the election results were overturned within the stated three months of the election petition, an appeal was launched in the constitutional court and in 2018 ruled in favour of the PF candidates.

But while the largest opposition party, UPND, has made inroads in Lusaka, it has been unable to gain a majority. Recent by-elections, like the Chilanga one in 2017, were marred by electoral violence targeted at opposition members. For instance, UPND supporters cannot freely express their support on the streets of Lusaka without risking being beaten by PF cadres. Intimidation of voters by a show of weapons (pangas, sometimes guns) has seen a lower voter turnout. As a result of loss of support, PF moved from co-optation and clientelism to more coercive means of maintaining dominance as an overall strategy in Lusaka, aided by the courts who have lost a neutral position in political cases.

Co-opting and controlling civic space

One way of demonstrating coercion is by muzzling the media. For example, critical media platforms have simply been closed down. The case of *The Post* is most salient here. A trenchant critic of the government, *The Post* was forcibly shut down in June 2016, ostensibly over a tax dispute, and its former editor Fred M'membe, was assaulted and harassed by police. The removal of a critical voice had a chilling effect on other private media organisations which sought to avoid the same fate by moderating their coverage. State security forces also briefly shut down two private television stations, Muvi and Prime, after both broadcast what the authorities deemed as subversive content. In addition, the government has co-opted compliant private media by offering incentives to remain silent on controversial political matters or, indeed, support the ruling authorities. The Lusaka-based *Daily Nation* private newspaper has assumed notoriety for discrediting opposition forces and defending government as well as ruling party positions. In return, the government advertises in the *Nation*, boosting the newspaper's revenue base, and previously helped in the transportation of newspapers to areas beyond Lusaka.

The urban character of the established private media in Zambia drives much of the PF's media strategy of co-optation and control. Of the country's four major private daily newspapers – *News Diggers*, *The Mast*, *Daily Nation* and *New Vision* – only one (*Daily Nation*) is distributed throughout the country. *The Mast* and *News Diggers* have their highest circulation and readership in Lusaka, where the two publications are produced and concentrated. The remaining paper, *New Vision*, is sold in Lusaka alone. Similarly, the broadcast media, that is both radio and television private stations, is predominantly concentrated in Lusaka. Official figures from the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), the state-run licensing body and regulator

of broadcasting in the country, show that the capital city alone has 32 radio stations, four times the average number (seven) in the remaining nine provinces.²⁵ Zambia's two major private television stations, Prime and Muvi, only cover Lusaka, though both also offer digital services.²⁶

The net result of this increased media presence in the capital city is that the consumption of information, especially among middle-class urbanites, is very high. The attempts by the ruling coalition to control and suppress the flow of information, and to placate the middle class with other incentives, should be understood in this context: as a response to the potential political consequences of the capacity by these private media to shape and influence the thinking of urban voters. As noted earlier, Zambia's urban areas, especially Lusaka and the Copperbelt, have historically tended to be the major sources of political dissent and change. Lusaka and Copperbelt provinces provided the bedrock on which the MMD rose to successfully challenge UNIP's political hegemony in 1991. The two areas served a similar role for the PF's defeat of the MMD in 2011. What crucially facilitated the ability by both the MMD and the PF to mobilise urbanites in these constituencies was the presence of several independent print and broadcast media outlets, which have only proliferated over time. Worried that the private media stations, and publications that they had relied upon to ascend to power, may serve as organising platforms for their political opponents, the ruling core has employed a strategy of co-optation and control. The IBA, despite its name, has largely served at the behest of the state. The body has ignored repeated opposition complaints of blackout and imbalanced coverage in the public media, but has been quick to threaten to withdraw the licences of media institutions that are overly critical of the ruling coalition.

Besides the media, the civil society movement has also encountered repressive interventions by the ruling PF. In 2011, the strength and vibrancy of Zambia's civil society movement was also demonstrated, when it campaigned against the enactment of an MMD-sponsored constitution that was widely unpopular with sections of the country's body politic. As well as organising public protests in Lusaka, civil society organisations grouped around the Oasis Forum forged successful links with the opposition PF, built around constitutional reform, to shoot down a Constitutional Amendment Bill that the MMD took to parliament in early 2011, where it needed the support of all PF lawmakers to pass (Sishuwa 2020a). That victory, however, belied the attempts by ruling authorities to control and undermine the effectiveness of non-state actors that had begun to coalesce around the same time, and which gained considerable ground after PF's rise to power.

The legal climate of civil society organisations changed markedly following the passage of the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Registration Act in 2009. The

²⁵ Independent Broadcasting Authority, 'Breakdown by province for radio and television stations', email correspondence, Lusaka, 17 January 2019.

²⁶ As of January 2019, Zambia had a total of 40 private television stations, but many of these are community based, limited to one province and focused largely on religious and non-political content. Ibid.

passage of the Act represented an early attempt by the governing MMD and President Banda, following his narrow victory in late 2008, to control the activities of civil society organisations, many of which were generally seen to be aligned to the main opposition, ahead of the 2011 elections. As argued by Ndulo (2010), this legislation gives broad discretion to the government to deny registration to NGOs; gives powers to dictate NGOs' thematic and geographical areas of work; and imposes mandatory re-registration every five years. Although it was introduced by the MMD, and the PF opposed its enactment at the time, it was ironically the PF that took significant steps to fully implement the law after ascending to power. The introduction of the NGO Act represented part of official state efforts to limit the freedom of civil society organisations to operate independently and effectively. Prior to the introduction of this law, some 10,000 NGOs were estimated to be operational in Zambia. Only 550 are registered under the Act as of September 2019.²⁷

In more recent years, there have also been more heavy-handed and arbitrary methods to control the operations of non-state actors. Prominent civil society activists who questioned the government over sensitive areas such as corruption have been harassed by police, arrested on trumped up charges or denounced as opposition sympathisers or Western agents.²⁸ Arrests and court cases have a demonstrative effect on even those activists who are not caught up in them. It shows the costs of participating in political activities deemed inappropriate by the government. Strongly discouraging them from challenging the government, activists are made aware that at any time they could have their lives upended and spend months or even years in protracted legal cases. Where repression has not been employed, civil society organisations have been muted through co-option with government providing funds, effectively restricting their independence through dependence on the state.²⁹ Prominent figures from civil society have themselves been the beneficiary of what looks like a generous gesture on the part of the government, such as appointments to the diplomatic service or to public bodies.³⁰ The cumulative total is the removal of significant numbers of influential leaders from the opposition forces. The prospect that these opportunities are available secures the silence of others, who, as one informant put it, reason that even if they are not in receipt of such a reward at the

²⁷ *Lusaka Times*, 'Government revises the NGO Act'./ Available online: <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2016/05/05/government-revises-ngo-act/> (accessed 1 November 2018).

²⁸ A case in point is that of Laura Miti, arguably Zambia's foremost civic activist and leader of the Alliance for Community Action, who rallied Zambians to protest against suspected government corruption in September 2017. Police quickly arrested her alongside five other leading civil society activists, charged them with conduct likely to cause breach of peace and their case has dragged since then after several adjournments.

²⁹ Interview, September 2018, with Linda Kasonde (prominent lawyer and former president of the Law Association of Zambia, in which capacity she played an important public role). (September 2018).

³⁰ For instance, a prominent civil society activist who served as executive director of the anti-corruption Transparency International Zambia prior to the PF's election in 2016, was subsequently appointed Zambia's deputy high commissioner to Botswana,

time, they might be in the future and would not wish to undermine their chances by upsetting the government.³¹

Finally, the government has also sought to undermine the effectiveness of critical civil society organisations by way of advancing its supporters to lead or run such bodies. In April 2018, for instance, the influential Law Association of Zambia held its elective conference, at which a number of key individuals supporting the PF and holding positions in the ruling party were elected to the body's leadership. As Sishuwa (2018) argued, the aim of putting partisan deployees on such critical civic organisations is to advance the interests of the ruling elites and undermine potential criticism against the government.

As described above, university students have long been a critical component of Zambia's civil society. In power, eager to cement his support, Sata publicly directed the minister of finance to effect a 100 percent increment on the monthly living allowances that the government paid to students.³² In the PF's first budget, this directive was implemented, elevating Sata's popularity among students. Sata's appointment of John Phiri, a former popular student leader, lecturer and longtime dean at the University of Zambia, as minister of education was also well received by students, who saw him as someone familiar with and sympathetic to their concerns.³³

In more recent years, however, particularly since Lungu's ascension to power, the relationship between students and the ruling party has taken a negative turn. The poor performance of Zambia's economy has resulted in the implementation of a series of austerity measures that have undermined Lungu's capacity to placate students with patronage increments that had helped Sata's appeal. The appointment of Nkandu Luo, a divisive figure extremely unpopular with students, as Phiri's successor at the ministry of education, has only served to deepen the split. The wider context has changed markedly too and students have found it increasingly difficult to express their outrage against the government on diverse national issues, for four main reasons. First, in May 2017, the minister of higher education, Nkandu Luo, announced an indefinite suspension of all student union activities at UNZA following a series of protests by students over non-payment of meal allowances.³⁴ The move was part of official attempts by the state to effectively undermine the organisation of student activism. Second, effective from November 2015, UNZA students are now required to sign consent forms, in which they pledge never to take part in any form of protests while at the university, and to sanction their expulsion if this regulation is violated. The objective is to intimidate students into submission, to enforce the compliance of one of the most potent alternative sources of power, and reinforce the official narrative that access to higher education is not a right, but a privilege from the government.

³¹ Interview, Linda Kasonde September 2018.

³² Interview, Wynter Kabimba, 11 January 2019, Lusaka.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Priscilla Mwila and Nancy Siame, 'State bans UNZA Union Activities', *Zambia Daily Mail*, 30 May 2017, p. 1.

Third, university authorities, acting in concert with the government, have installed CCTV cameras around the university premises. A top university official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, disclosed that the CCTV equipment and its associated security systems came from the Chinese, demonstrating a transnational element to this measure of control. The installation of CCTV took place in March 2016 and came after a demonstration that the government, without providing any evidence, claimed was sponsored by the main political opposition ahead of that year's general election.³⁵ The move officially was justified as part of providing security. However, the fact that the cameras have been placed in key locations, mainly where student protests start from, suggests this is only a cover for masking the actual objectives: to provide surveillance, identify student agitators or those involved in demonstrations for possible expulsion and establish which opposition political actors visit campus to politicise student protests, however legitimate and whatever form they take. This reinforces the narrative that independent student protests are not possible unless the opposition induces them. In early 2018, nearly ten students were expelled under this measure and it was only after they pleaded for leniency from the president that they were re-registered.³⁶

Fourth, the government has moved to reorganise the occupation of student hostels on mixed sex lines. Historically, student protests have started from male-inhabited accommodation residencies popularly known as 'The Ruins'. In 2018, the government, through the Ministry of Higher Education, introduced changes to the existing guidelines. For the first time since the creation of the university in 1966, female students were fused into 'The Ruins', while their male counterparts were also incorporated into the previously female-only residencies. By bringing females nearby, the authorities are hoping that they will help to diffuse student organisation and isolate those who are considered to be 'the bad eggs'.³⁷ This measure, it must be noted, was not one that students lobbied for. As a matter of fact, the mainly male students protested against these changes when they were announced. The government, aware of the potential of students, even a few, to organise and mobilise against the state, upheld the move, partly in an effort to weaken their capacity to do so.

Civil society, media and students' resistance to domination and control

Opposition forces have not been complacent or passive in response to the aforementioned restrictions placed upon them by the government. Instead, civil society organisations, students and the media have managed to create and maintain some level of autonomy. First, individuals who previously had been associated with *The Post* were, in the wake of its closure, involved in forming two new independent newspapers, *The Mast* and *News Diggers*. Both publications have a frequently

³⁵ Voanews, 'Zambian government say opposition fuelled student protests'. Available online: <https://www.voanews.com/a/zambian-government-says-opposition-fueled-student-protests/3179540.html> (accessed 1 November 2018).

³⁶ Interview, October 2018, with Misheck Kakonde, one of the expelled students. He is the current president of Zambia National Students Union.

³⁷ Interview, Misheck Kakonde October 2018.

updated web presence. This scenario points to a more significant development in terms of media: the widespread adoption of social media and its use as the way to communicate news events quickly and to expose the excesses of government. This move represents in some ways a response to the restrictions on traditional media and has itself invited further restrictions, in the form of the proposed Cyber Security and Cybercrime Bill, which gives the police the power to confiscate electronic devices of individuals and organisations suspected to be promoting interests that are inimical to those of the state.

Secondly, the suppression of the student unions at UNZA and elsewhere has not prevented students from organising. In fact, late 2018 saw some of the largest protests organised by students, in the absence of formal leadership following the death of a student on the UNZA campus at the hands of the police. Notably, these protests were well advertised and reported on social media. The fact that student protests have continued to occur in the face of potential expulsion demonstrates students' resistance to control, especially given the state's lack of capacity to enforce the surveillance measures noted earlier.

Finally, civil society groups have refused to register under the NGO Act, and the number of courageous individuals willing to brave arrest and harassment to draw attention to official corruption and other abuses of power has increased. Institutions that make up the Oasis Forum have, in recent years, also found their voice on a significant number of national issues, such as the shrinking democratic space. Although the space for opposition forces has been significantly curtailed, it has not been eliminated and the government's measures of control continue to be heavily contested.

Conclusion

Due to its population density, concentration of wealth, and as the seat of power, the dominance of Lusaka is just as critical to Zambia's political settlement now as it was in the past. Lusaka's residents were at the forefront of democratisation efforts in the early 1990s under the MMD, and the urban poor, middle class, media, NGOs and university students were fundamental to the PF's victory in 2011. As such, their gradual disaffection with the PF since Lungu's tenure is a worrying sign for the ruling party and has coincided with growing support for the UPND in Lusaka, which saw its vote share increase from 9 to 32 percent between the 2011 and 2016 elections.³⁸ The threats to the party's hold in Lusaka have coincided with a sharp rise in political violence and repression in the city.

Unlike its predecessors, the PF is encountering this gradual erosion of its traditional urban base without having been in office long enough to establish a stronghold in rural areas. Under Sata, the PF garnered ethno-regional support in the northern provinces (Muchinga, Luapula and Northern provinces). Since the change in the

³⁸ Calculated from results from the Electoral Commission of Zambia, available at: <https://www.elections.org.zm> (accessed 13 February 2020).

ruling coalition in 2016, the electoral dominance of PF in the urban Copperbelt and northern provinces is no longer a certainty. The ruling coalition shifted more towards Eastern Province, and has less affinity with the urban poor. Social programmes like farmers' inputs and social cash transfers are no longer supported as an ideological cause, but are ringfenced in order to award patronage in the rural areas, albeit with limited effects in the traditional opposition strongholds. PF has shifted towards liberal policies, favouring foreign capital over local entrepreneurship, with middle-class interests prioritised over those of the poorer population (i.e. infrastructure, housing and land). Yet, PF is facing increasing middle-class discontent. Zambia's debt crisis has resulted in a slowdown of the economy, resulting in a sharp reduction in government contracts and delays in payment of civil servant salaries. Both are big drivers of Lusaka's economy.

The PF's estrangement with its original social foundations is undermining its attempt to achieve dominance. This was precipitated by the flawed internal PF transition process in the wake of Sata's death in 2014, which has created elite rifts; the rise in UPND's popularity, which was facilitated by that flawed transition process and also threatens the PF's hold; and the decline in the macro-economic situation that began under Sata, but worsened under Lungu, making his ability to dispense patronage to maintain both elite and popular support increasingly less viable. As a result, the PF has relied on more legally repressive or explicitly violent tactics to maintain dominance. This has occurred most markedly with respect to civil society, especially the media, NGOs and university students, whose support for political liberalisation and competition was key for the PF's rise when in opposition but seems inconvenient now that it is in power. These constituents, however, have shown some capacity to repel such tactics, by taking advantage of social media, ignoring legal restrictions, and still engaging in protest activities on the UNZA campus. Another key support base for the party – marketeers and vendors – endures simultaneous tactics of cooptation, intimidation and surveillance. Such tactics are often unevenly enforced across the city and justified on public health grounds (e.g. preventing cholera), which, when combined with the highly heterogeneous interests of informal workers, generates very little overt resistance.

Due to its size and influence, the PF's hold on Lusaka is crucial to its survival past the 2021 elections. Consequently, it is anticipated that the party will continue to exert repressive pressure on sources of countervailing power and opposition and co-opt poorer, but numerically large support bases (e.g. marketeers and vendors). The question is whether such strategies will prevail and further undermine the country's hard-won democratic credentials.

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