

# Zambian Democracy in Relation to Governance of Society

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will deal with the matter of Zambian democracy vis-à-vis Aristotle's view of society governance. The discussion will be done by looking at how Zambia democratically progressed in her three republics. The chapter will also reflect on how the republics' transitions brought challenges to values of democracy and leadership. We will show how political ideologies can be nurtured in a state by having active civil society groups and a constitutional rule. The paper will conclude by giving a critique on the matter at hand by analyzing a citizen with an *Aristotelian citizenry*.

### *Democracy And Multiparty System*

Zambian democracy has passed through three different republics. These republics have been experienced in the period of 50 years. The context, in which the word 'republic' should be understood, is in the sense of the type of government-system. "Zambia's post-colonial political history is divided into three periods: the First Republic, 1964 to 1972, the Second Republic, 1973 to 1990, and the Third Republic which began in 1991."<sup>1</sup> These are the periods which have shaped democratization in the political system of Zambia. As many African countries who experienced colonial rule, Zambia was not exception to arise from the challenge of manifesting democratic principles. Therefore there was an urgency to find its way or rather to have a political stance after independence.

### *Adoption of Democracy*

The system of governance which was adopted by Zambia after attaining independence in 1964 was that of a multiparty – democracy. This gave an opportunity for those who wished to exercise their freedom by forming political parties to do so, and to participate in the freedom of speech. The First Republic of Zambia gave chance to people to experience and exercise the values of democracy.<sup>2</sup> There were a lot of expectations to see how this new way of governance will change from the colonial masters. We have to understand that although there was freedom of expression and formation of political parties, this became a threat to the ruling party of that time. Kaunda wanted to find a way to gain more power in this new system of politics. He did this by oppressing and banning political parties which

he saw as a threat in to his leadership.<sup>3</sup> There was a characteristic of political dominance in participatory activities and majority complied with what the leader of the ruling party said. As some scholars have explained, "Politics is decision making on behalf of a collective which is characterised by power."<sup>4</sup> In Zambian politics power was monopolized and many people were coerced to participate in governance with preferential treatment. During the early stages of independence, Zambia was struggling to keep up with the multiparty system. As noted above, the leader of that time, Kaunda was uncomfortable seeing other political parties challenge his policies.

The challenges of the First Republic led Kaunda to change the constitution to the one – party participatory democracy in 1973. This way of governance was only confined to the leadership of the ruling party. "One – party participatory democracy as practiced in Zambia created a self – regulating practice where by MPs in the backbench thoroughly and critically scrutinised the government and ministers."<sup>5</sup> This manner of regulating politics was fundamental in helping the electorates understand the activities and performance of the government. Although this type of one – party participatory democracy was gaining ground, some critics were challenging the status quo. There were those who observed attributes of dictatorship in this type of representative democracy.<sup>6</sup> The issue only pointed at one – party elections for parliament and local government offices, and the banning of any independent participation: all these were seen as tendencies of being undemocratic which were means to silence political opponents.

The First and Second Republic did not manage to uplift the values of democracy adopted at Independence Day. As Aristotle explains on the perfect exercise of virtue in his Politics that, "The city is best governed which has the greatest opportunity of obtaining happiness."<sup>7</sup> Happiness in every governance – system has to be fulfilled and realized. In the two republics mentioned above the state was not actualizing the virtue of happiness. After a lot of challenges with governance of the state ranging from economic hardships, social unrest, and the fatigue of one – party state; Kaunda was compelled to agree

<sup>1</sup> Gavin Cawthra, Andre du Pisani and Abillah Omari, eds., Security and Democracy in Southern Africa (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2007), p. 206.

<sup>2</sup> Scott D. Taylor, Culture and Customs of Zambia (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Hubert Lerch, An Introduction to Political Philosophy, (Tokyo: Createspace Ltd, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Bizeck Phiri, Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy in SADC Countries – Zambia Country (Pretoria: SAHIA Press, 2005), p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Hubert Lerch, p. 67.

to elections in 1990.<sup>8</sup> This shows how Kaunda lost control over what he thought he could manage or govern.

#### *Adoption of Multiparty System*

Zambia's Third Republic in 1991 was ushered with the re-introduction of multiparty system. This new era of democracy was received with a lot of expectations and anxiety. After his defeat in the general elections, Kaunda helped in the smooth transition of power.<sup>9</sup> This gesture was highly applauded by the international community and the citizens at large. Although being authoritative during his rule, Kaunda showed that he stood for a good hand-over of power as a founding father of Zambia. Some critics explained that the rule of Kaunda had brought 'fatigue' in the political system, and his alliance with the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe were collapsing; Hence, this led him to amend the constitution and revert to multiparty politics.<sup>10</sup> This explains how multiparty system was brought into Zambian politics after the absence of 17 years. What we see with this, is that it is in difficulties of not doing what's right are leaders sometimes led to surrender to political pressure and challenges.

The coming of multiparty politics meant the step – up of doing democratic politics from the old – system. We have to understand that “African democratisation gains interest and support outside Africa since it appears to liberate local African populations from the poor constitutional and economic performance of the post – colonial states in that continent.”<sup>11</sup> This was the case with Zambia when it ushered its Third Republic system of doing politics in a multiparty democracy. There was much support in terms of financial, economic and social advice from the international community. The Western world saw this as an opportunity to cement the values of modern democracy. This can be seen from how “Democratisation in Africa since the late 1980s appeals to, and seeks to restore, constitutional rights and procedures which allegedly have gone dormant under failing performance of the post – states.”<sup>12</sup> The restoration of some of the values of democracy was a priority to those who offered help to nations willing to practice democratic principles and values.

In the Third Republic, Zambia had tried to exercise and witness the democratic values and principles. There were still more expectations from the citizens with this type of governance at hand. “Interestingly, the first ten years of the Third Republic produced a character of democratic practice that was not dissimilar to that of the Second Republic.”<sup>13</sup> This was observed from the elections which were held in 1991, that one party was voted with a majority vote. This type of electoral process produced a *de facto* one – party rule. This gave chance to the ruling party, MMD;

To exploit the power and resources of the state in much the same way, and arguably worse, than had UNIP and Kaunda. Indeed, given the economic precipice on which Zambia found itself in the 1980s, the corrupt activities of the Chiluba regimes had far – reaching consequences. Democracy was shallow in the period, despite the promise of the 1991 elections.<sup>14</sup>

The whole experience showed how power can be abused to the extent of intimidating other political opponent and marginalize those against the leadership those against the leadership. This type of governance made it difficult to see the transparency in the decision – making policies and law. Scholars explain that, “A government in other words, that abuses its authority by enacting laws which are unjust forfeit its right to be obeyed because it lacks moral authority.”<sup>15</sup> The abuse of the rule of law warrants lack of respect from citizens or the community. This stance was shown when the Chiluba regime wanted him to stand for the third term in office. The ruling party by then showed disrespectful tendency by wanting to change the constitution of the state to suit one person's ambitions. “The Zambia's civil society rose up and rejected Chiluba's bid for to seek a third term by altering the constitution.”<sup>16</sup> This made the president to back down after a massive public pressure. This experience was an echo of people who had come to know what belongs to them in the rule of law.

Although Zambia has faced challenges in implementing democratic values in the past 50 years, the 3 republics have shaped its political character and democracy. This is why democratization has become a process to have the fundamental principle at play in the governance of the state.

## II. CHALLENGES OF GOVERNANCE

The matter of following democratic values and principles has been a challenge to Zambian politics. This has affected the aspect or rather concept of good governance. The politicians who commit themselves to this type of doing politics do not show that willingness when they assume power or office.

#### *Leadership Crisis*

Zambian politics have been relatively good and peaceful in relation to the absence of war. This aspect has not guaranteed good leadership skill and management. For example, Kaunda ruled Zambia for 27 years leaving the nation in economic crisis and Chiluba ruled for 10 years plundering the economic resources when he was in power. The matters of decision making had belonged too much to the office of the presidency. This made them to use power in making personal choices than the national at large.<sup>17</sup> This shows how power is abused by leaders when they come into power. We see this because most of the public decisions and funds are in their domain and

<sup>8</sup> Scott D. Taylor, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Bizeck Phiri, p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Wim van Binsbergen, “Aspects of Democracy and Democratisation in Zambia and Botswana,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* Vol. 13, No.1 (1995): p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Garvin Cawthra, p. 208.

<sup>14</sup> Scott D. Taylor, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> Raymond Wacks, *Philosophy of Law*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Scott D. Taylor, p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> Bizeck Phiri, p. 22.

responsibility. Hence this is an opportunity to have their will or wish to be done and not the will of the people. The whole experience shows how one of the important guide or way of life of the state has been changed to suit each president when in office. This has mostly brought disorderly in the politic – life – style of the nation. Aristotle defines the constitution “As a certain ordering of the inhabitants of the city – state.”<sup>18</sup> This explains that if the thing which brings order in a state is tempered with, then this leads to confusion in the governing of the state. A constitution guides and gives life to a state.

The offices of presidency, minister and members of parliaments, have been used to the advantage of those in office than to the people who voted them into office. This has been observed mostly from the campaign promises which have been mere rhetoric to amass votes from the electorates. These promises most of them are not found in the political party’s manifesto. Scholars have explained that, “For a political party pursuing power, its manifesto matters as much as its track record. Political parties ought to ensure compliance with their manifestos. This can only be enforced by an informed population.”<sup>19</sup> This shows how those who vote should be vigilant and take time to scrutinize any political party’s manifesto. It’s in their vigilance are they able to take politicians to task in relation to their promises and manifesto.

#### *Ethnic and Regional Politics*

The other challenge which has hampered governance in modern democracy has been ethnic or tribal politics. The voting pattern is influenced by the candidate’s ethnic or tribe background. The electorates mostly do not base their voting on good leadership and integrity but ethnic affiliation. Scholars have observed that “In most of sub – Saharan Africa ethnicity and regionalism are considered to be the only lasting forms of political association because the societies are culturally heterogeneous.”<sup>20</sup> This aspect is mostly manifested during the time of elections. Leaders take advantage to swerve votes on their side because of the tribe, region or ethnicity they come from.

The ethnic – voting pattern have also been encouraged by traditional leaders. This has been observed from the loyalty and respect they have in the community to encourage voters or subjects which person they should vote into power.<sup>21</sup> This illustrates how electorates are left at the mercy of a traditional leader or chief to choose who they feel is a better candidate.

The challenges discussed above have been shaped partly by traditional and cultural mentality of the people, and partly by the civic leaders who are selfish and ambitious. This type of relations has made democratic principles and values to be side line in matters of governance.

<sup>18</sup> Christopher Shields ed., *The Blackwell Guide to Ancient Philosophy* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003), p. 201.

<sup>19</sup> Smokin Wanjala, Kichamu Akiranga, and Kirutha Kiburana, *Yearning For Democracy – Kenya at The Dawn of New Century*, (Nairobi: Clari press, 2002), p. 24.

<sup>20</sup> Bizeck Phiri, p. 36.

### III. POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

The political – system of Zambia need ideologies which will give guidance to democracy and governance. In this section we will give better ways or ideologies which can be of helpful to the multiparty system of Zambia. Also the discussion will involve citing works which have been done by the civil society in relation to Aristotle’s view on politics.

#### *Civil Society*

In the last 50 years of independence of Zambia, the civil society organisations have played a major role in the political – system. They have tried to remind the government of the day the promises they gave towards better governance during elections campaigns. As it has been observed “The role of these civil society groups is to organise and contribute to the exchange and sharing of ideas on a range of issues as they relate to governance.”<sup>22</sup> This role is very cardinal in the providing better ideas of political governance to any party in power. The civil society groups in Zambia have at times challenged and cooperated with the government of the day. It is in this experience they have mostly offered better solutions to selfish and ‘closed – minded’ leaders. These groups have helped to bring the abuse of power by leaders to be accountable, stopped amendment of the constitution to suit individual leaders and encouraged citizens to realize their rights in a democratic state.<sup>23</sup> This type of sensitisation brings awareness of civic rights and duties to fulfillment.

Although civic society organisations are not political parties, they offer ideological – platforms. In the their dialogue and challenging of the government of the day they offer better tools for shaping what each political party stands for. The efforts of these civil society groups establish new values in a democratic state.

#### *Constitutional Rule*

The presence of a constitution in any state is a step in a right direction for governance. Although there could be a constitution determining the way of life of a state, Aristotle puts it that it should be a better or good constitution. Zambian constitution has seen a number of amendments to suit the leader of a ruling party of the day not the people. Aristotle explains that, “The temperance and justice of a ruler are distinct from those of a subject, the virtue of a good man will include both; for the virtue of the good man who is free and also a subject.”<sup>24</sup> This shows that the ruler’s virtue should be in-line with that of his or her subjects. The one who rules should be able to nurture his or her selfish motives on the expense of the ruled.

In a democratic state a constitution needs to meet the aspiration and interests of the people to reach a common goal and good. As we have discussed in this paper the common goal is that a

<sup>21</sup> Nyambe Sumbwa, “Traditionalism, Democracy and Political Participation,” *African Study Monographs* Vol.2 No. 3 (July 2006): p. 119.

<sup>22</sup> Lee M. Habasonda, “The Military, Civil Society, and Democracy in Zambia,” *Institute for Security Studies* Vol. 10 No. 2 (2002): p. 231.

<sup>23</sup> Scott D. Taylor, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Benjamin Jowett, p. 57.

state or a constitution should provide have happiness. Aristotle explains that, “Men, even when they do not require one another’s help, desire to live together; not but that they are also brought together by their common interests in proportion as they severally attain to any measure of well – being.”<sup>25</sup> This illustrates that no matter how many differences in human life, there is a meeting point on common interests. This shows that even a constitution should provide a rule of common interests of all citizens. Aristotle emphasizes one of the fundamental common interests as Justice.<sup>26</sup> All matters of the people should be dealt in accordance with equality and equity; this should be with the purpose of uplifting the lives of all citizens. This experience can only be realized when there is a just government which is polity. This realization is where every citizen knows what his or her role is in the affairs of the state. The constitution is there to be at the service of the citizens and not to be a burden.

#### IV. ARISTOTELIAN CITIZEN

The critique to the challenges of governance in Zambian politics will be helped by Aristotle’s definition of a good citizen vis-à-vis virtue. In the last chapter Aristotle highlighted that a good citizen is one who shares in the administration of justice and the holding of public office. He is able to be virtuous by learning to rule and to be ruled.<sup>27</sup> This type of citizenry shows an altitude of a self-empowered and responsible person. It is in being responsible and empowered does a citizen exercise his or her given state – faculties. Aristotle explains that “the city – state (in unqualified sense) is a multitude of such citizens which is adequate for a self – sufficient life and he characterizes the constitution as the form and principle of identity of the city – state.”<sup>28</sup> In this way a city – state is organized and administered by a well-informed citizen.

Zambian citizens, mostly, have lacked ambition in desire to learning how ‘to rule’ and ‘to be ruled.’ As we have discussed in this chapter, most citizens are used or taken advantage by those in public offices or by the politicians. This can be observed from “The constant defection from one political party to another which is a reflection of the absence of a clearly identifiable ideological base for most political parties.”<sup>29</sup> This shows how most citizens do not believe in what they follow due to lack of political parties with issue – based debates or ideologies. They tend to search for ideologies and beliefs based on the political party’s financial muscle or status. Scholars explain that “A person who casts his or her vote on basis of immediate monetary gains, for example, money dished out during election campaigns should not expect to be respected by the politician as he or she has sold a birth right.”<sup>30</sup> This illustrates how an informed citizen should vote wisely. A citizen is self – empowered when she or he can discern and

make a wise choice based on a good ideology. This experience or decision making is made by a person who is virtuous.

As citizens exercise their civic or constitutional duties, Aristotle gives a caution that at times democracies may be founded on violence; hence, questioning the acts of democracy which will be neither more nor less acts of an oligarchy or tyranny state.<sup>31</sup> This highlights how a constitution can be unjust because of the character it has adopted. In this case Aristotle shows how a polity or constitutional state becomes a democratic state. Although Aristotle gives this analysis from the Athenian governance – system, today’s modern democracy needs to move towards respecting its ‘way of life’, the constitution. As Aristotle has argued that for a person to be good and virtuous, he or she needs to learn to be one. Therefore, even to be a good and virtuous citizen, a person has to learn to be such. Scholars have explained that, “Democratisation will take root when a number of conditions are met. One of the most important of these is the existence of the political will among stakeholders, who include politicians, and members of civil society.”<sup>32</sup> A political will creates enabling environment to all citizens to participate in the decision – making process of a state. This experience should not be denied to anyone but made available to all.

The experience where citizens are living well and happy is what Aristotle is referring to *Eudaimonia*. Its literal translation means ‘happiness’ or ‘wellbeing’ or ‘flourishing’. This is where Aristotle explains it in this famous works, *Nicomachean Ethics*, as an ultimate goal or end of an action for a person to be happy. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1097a30-34). We need to understand that by its nature ‘happiness’ is a virtue, which man desires and should attain. In this way, Aristotle suggested that such a virtue should be reflected in any citizen of any given state. Happiness reflects “the ‘good life’ which is the goal of the state, is identified with *eudaimonia*, which is the goal of individuals. States are natural entities, and like other natural objects they have a goal or end.”<sup>33</sup> This confirms why a citizen should reflect and participate in what a state wants to achieve and realize in its governance. As we have discussed earlier, the participation of all citizen can be bring good governance to Zambia.

Aristotle’s explanation of happiness is a concept which shows that enlightenment in any citizen is very important. This is by knowing the major differences in political atmosphere or environment. Citizens in Zambia should know that “what is peculiar to men, compared to other animals, is that they alone can perceive the good and the bad, the just and the unjust, and the rest – and it is partnership in these things which makes a household and a state.”<sup>34</sup> The whole argument by Aristotle calls for a person to be enlightened and wise when participating in political matter. There is no better way by promoting

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>26</sup> Hubert Lerch, p. 79.

<sup>27</sup> Christopher Shields, p. 202.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>29</sup> Bizeck Phiri, p. 36.

<sup>30</sup> Smokin Wanjala, p. 23.

<sup>31</sup> Benjamin Jowett, p. 54.

<sup>32</sup> Bizeck Phiri, p. 15.

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Barnes, *Aristotle - A very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 128.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.127.

Aristotle's citizenry with enhancing civic and electoral education to citizens. Aristotle was one of the philosophers who realized that education was a path way to happiness. The more one is educated, the more that person is enlightened to participate in politics with a good motive.

The civil society in Zambian politics and governance is fundamental because of what we earlier discussed in this chapter. Apart from it being a sensitizing group or organization, it can play a massive role in the *Aristotelian Citizen*. This is by having a one to one contact with citizens on the importance of civic enlightenment; which leads to consciousness of individual participation in politics. A civil society will make a person realize that she or he has the power in matters of governance not only during elections, but even beyond the period of elections. This is because "society and the state are not artificial trapping imposed upon natural man: they are manifestations of human nature itself."<sup>35</sup> This is understanding leads a citizen to share his or her values of humanness and make good judgments for the society. The concept of *Aristotelian Citizen* in any state is where a person is ready and willing to make the constitution be an instrument of better governance. This willingness is attained because a person to be virtuous or good, that individual has to learn to be virtuous. Therefore, Zambian democracy needs such kind of citizens who are ready to transform the unjust constitution to a just constitution. This transformation will give what every citizen yearns for; happiness.

#### V. CONCLUSION

This chapter has dealt with the complexity of governance in Zambian democracy vis-à-vis the Aristotelian concept of governance. The argument and discussion have been centered on looking at the past decades the three republics in Zambia have operated and evaluating their transition period. We have

seen that Zambian politics passed through leadership and governance challenges; and this led our discussion to use the *Aristotelian Citizenry* as the critique to the topic at hand. This critique has been used to show how civil society can be the best "working piece" in making sure that each citizen is enlightened about civic matters and knowledge politics. The idea of enlightenment in politics brings a happy life which Aristotle calls *eudaimonia* (happiness). This is the goal of political participation in any society.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.