



**Parties in Parliament¹
The Relationship between
Members of Parliament and
their Parties in Zambia**

**By
Neo Simutanyi**

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¹ In this paper we use the term 'Parliament' and 'national assembly' interchangeably. While technically Parliament in Zambia is understood as the national assembly and the President, in everyday usage people refer to the legislature as Parliament.

Introduction

Africa's democratic transition, which was ushered in at the beginning of the last decade, has produced mixed but yet disappointing results. While regular elections have taken place, this has been under an environment of weak political institutions, such as political parties and Parliament, and deep disagreements over the rules of the political game. On the other hand, the dominance of the executive over other arms of government has been pervasive. This, coupled with the inexperience of the new political actors and the low levels of institutionalisation of democratic institutions, combined to undermine confidence in Africa's democratic project.

After years of marginalisation, Parliaments have begun to emerge as the key institutions in African governments. In many countries legislatures have been given a new lease of life, after a long hiatus². The former -dominated Parliaments now boast an increase in the numbers of opposition members who have greatly contributed to the quality of Parliamentary debates. However, the introduction of multiparty competition has not substantially altered the status

² Gyimah-Boadi, 2004

and formal powers of Parliament. The popular image of African Parliaments being rubber stamps for executive initiatives has not changed. With very few exceptions, executive-legislative relations exude greater control and influence in favour of the executive, more significantly the President.

Instead of Parliaments being an arena of independent debate and expression, Members of Parliament have had to contend with the pervasive influence of the Executive on the one hand and their political parties on the other. For example, Members of Parliament from the ruling party and often even the opposition parties have been induced or pressured into supporting government bills and motions in anticipation of government appointments or other political favours. This is not at all unusual in a continent in which state power is prized trophy to which elites aspire as it is a passport to accumulation of wealth, prestige and influence.³

Political parties have also come to play a crucial role in controlling the conduct of Members of Parliament. It is not only expected that Members of Parliament will vote according to the instructions of their parties, but also that those who do not do so may risk severe sanctions. These may include not being adopted as a candidate at the next election, suspension or even expulsion from the party. The power and influence of the political party in Parliament is so pervasive that it has serious implications on the consolidation of parliamentary democracy. Unlike Europe, in Africa the organisation of political parties in Parliament through parliamentary groups or caucuses is still very poor, causing the main party to play an influential role in parliamentary

affairs, especially regarding voting on bills and motions.

A multiparty system presupposes a plurality of political parties to ensure political competition for power. This would afford the electorate an opportunity to choose from different sets of political leaders. Thus political parties are the *raison d'être* of a multiparty system. Political parties have been variously defined in the literature.⁴ (The main conceptualisation of political parties is that, they are organisations that are primarily established to compete for power and, in doing so, fulfil specific functions that include social mobilisation, interest aggregation and articulation.⁵ Political parties are distinguishable from pressure groups as their primary function is to win elections and thus to control government. In a liberal democracy, therefore, political parties can be said to be political machines designed to mobilise electoral support for purposes of controlling or influencing the government.

In Africa, political parties were formed mainly to contest elections. During the colonial period, African political parties emerged to prepare African elites to assume power when their countries were gained independence. In most cases, it took the political elite a short period, usually less than a decade, to go from establishing political parties to contesting elections.⁶ Thus the enduring feature of the African party system is not only that they are inherited Western political institutions, but were also

⁴ Duverger, 1954; Sartori, 1976 and Ware, 1995

⁵ Others such as Van de Walle (2003) dispute the interest aggregation function of political parties and instead argue that political parties' main function is that of representation of social interests. See also Randall, 2003.

⁶ Mohamed Salih, 2003, p2

³ Southall, 2003 p5-8

introduced against a background of inexperienced African politicians who were expected to manage them. It was this factor that led to the failure in institutionalising the African party system and this, in turn, gave rise to the system.

The study of African political parties since re-democratisation can be said to be fairly recent. Most work on political parties has been conducted in Latin America and East European countries. Since the re-democratisation process got underway in Africa, few studies have been undertaken on the emerging African parties and party systems.⁷ These studies have been preoccupied with the question of the role of political parties in institutionalising or consolidating democracy.

While a study of political parties in general is important and provides insights on the functioning of a democratic polity, the relationship between parties and parliaments has not received much scholarly attention. A proper study of the relationship between political parties and their Members of Parliament would provide a better understanding of the challenges facing African parliaments in furthering democratic consolidation.

Several questions come to mind in an attempt to understand the relationship between parties and Members of Parliament in Africa. How do political parties handle the challenge of party discipline on the one hand and parliamentary independence on the other hand? How do political parties relate to their parliamentary groups? How influential and cohesive are parliamentary groups? How is the conflict resolved between the responsibility of a Member of Parliament responsibility towards the

electorate and obligations towards the party on whose ticket the MP was elected?

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the relationship between parties and their Members of Parliament in Zambia. This will be done by first contextualising political parties and their relationship to Parliament in Zambia. Secondly, we discuss the role and structural organisation of parliamentary groups. Thirdly, the relationship between Members of Parliament is analysed within the context of influence, control and competition. Fourthly, inter-party Parliamentary cooperation is discussed, especially regarding building coalitions of support for or against motions and bills. The concluding section makes some tentative proposals regarding the future of party-MP relations, arguing for a system which will reduce the influence of political parties on their MPs and their protection from undue victimisation.

This paper is based on personal interviews with key informants working within the National Assembly of Zambia, political party officials, some Members of Parliament and retired politicians. The paper also relies on newspaper reports and popular discourses on Members of Parliament in general and their relationship with their parties in particular, especially the now common phenomenon of parties expelling erring MPs and thereby forcing by-elections. The paper discusses the subtleties of power and demonstrates that in the case of Zambia, the exercise of legislative power and authority is mediated by the intervention of political parties' influence. This undermines the latitude of Members of Parliament to exercise their own judgement in debating and voting on motions.

⁷ Bogaards, 2000; Randall and Svåsand, 2002; Erdmann, 2003; Mohamed Salih, 2003

POLITICAL PARTIES AND PARLIAMENT IN ZAMBIA

Zambia has a brief history of multiparty politics. During the first Parliamentary period (1964-1968) there were three political parties represented in the National Assembly - the United National Independence Party (UNIP), the African National Congress (ANC) and the United Federal Party (UFP). UNIP dominated the legislature with sixty-five seats, while the ANC had ten, with the UFP retaining the ten reserved seats. Despite having less than a third of the seats, the then Speaker of the National Assembly, Wesley Nyirenda recognised the ANC as the official opposition and its leader, Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula, as the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament.⁸ The first five years of Zambia's independence was challenging: Africans not only dominated the legislature but were also in control of the government. Despite its numbers, the opposition effectively challenged government policies in Parliament.

While Members of Parliament were relatively inexperienced, the quality of debate from both UNIP back-benchers and opposition MPs was fairly high.⁹ Parliament came to be viewed as an arena of opposition against government and was considered as potentially destabilising. Thus the formation of the United Party (UP) and the United Progressive Party (UPP) in 1966 and 1971 respectively, posed a threat to UNIP's political monopoly and led to their banning and the subsequent adoption of a one-party state in December 1972.¹⁰

⁸ Phiri, Banda and Haantobolo, 2004

⁹ Interview with a former UNIP MP and cabinet minister during the Second Republic, 30 October, 2004.

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion see Erdmann and Simutanyi, 2003.

The second Parliament (1968-1972) was characterised by inter-party rivalry and political violence. This was partly due to the increased share of opposition seats in the National Assembly. For example, the ANC increased its representation in Parliament from 10, in 1964, to 23 in 1968. These results gave a signal to the ruling UNIP that 'the ANC had become a formidable opponent, and that it was viewed by the majority of Zambians as a party that could form an alternative government.' The threat posed by the opposition to UNIP's stronghold on power influenced the party to abandon its earlier policy not to introduce a one-party state. UNIP had earlier refused calls to introduce a one-party state arguing that it would achieve that objective by defeating and wiping out the opposition at the ballot box. Hence, despite sustained opposition from the ANC including a high court petition, in December 1972, a new Constitution came into force. This Constitution proscribed the registration and operation of any other organisation other than UNIP.¹¹

The Constitution existent under the four Parliaments (1973-1991) affected the status and authority of Parliament. UNIP enjoyed supreme status over all state organs, including Parliament.¹² All Members of Parliament had to be UNIP members and were often expected to toe the party line. Surprisingly, however, during the latter part of the 1970s and 1980s UNIP backbenchers displayed a high degree of independence and viciously opposed those government policies that they felt to be against the interests of the majority Zambians. In the absence of organised opposition, parliamentary backbenchers, according

¹¹ Article 4 of *The Constitution of Zambia Act* No. 29 of 1972.

¹² Article 4 (2), *Constitution of Zambia*, 1973.

to Gertzel (1984), became the 'unofficial opposition'.

Government's reaction to this was to adopt a number of stratagems to contain or reduce the numbers of reform-minded, vocal and critical MPs. This was done by increasing the number of government appointees to include members of the Central Committee, district governors, parliamentary secretaries, cabinet ministers and deputy ministers. As at July 1991, there were 77 Members of Parliament who held government positions as opposed to 45 ordinary backbenchers. In this way the 'unofficial opposition' in Parliament was effectively silenced.

The other strategy adopted by UNIP was the vetting system. Aspiring parliamentary candidates were subjected to vetting by the UNIP Central Committee and it was through this system all the critical backbenchers were eliminated.¹³ The fear of being vetted at the next election and the expectation of political appointments caused some MPs to support government motions and bills. However, serious tensions developed between Members of Parliament and the main party, UNIP, as to the rights and obligations of Members of Parliament to their voters on the one hand, and their responsibilities to their party on the other hand. This was later to fuel the debate on the efficacy of the government system and provoked demands for the re-introduction of a multiparty system in mid-1990.¹⁴

The Parliament ushered in following the 31 October 1991 elections, confined the erstwhile ruling party -

¹³ For detailed discussion of the vetting system under the state see Gertzel, 1984.

¹⁴ For discussion on the events leading to the re-introduction of a multiparty system see Sichone and Chikulo, 1996 and Mwanakatwe, 1994.

UNIP - to the opposition benches. The MMD won both the presidency and majority seats in the National Assembly. The MMD presidential candidate and former trade union leader, Frederick Titus Chiluba, defeated former President, Kenneth Kaunda. His party obtained 125 of the 150 elective seats against UNIP's 25 seats. Many observers¹⁵ have argued that this Parliament reproduced authoritarian and undemocratic tendencies. The dominance of the MMD in the legislature meant that it could ride roughshod over opposition demands and ensure that its bills and motions were always supported. Those MMD MPs who opposed government bills, were either threatened with expulsion or actually expelled.¹⁶ This was to lead to the formation of the National Party in 1993 and later Zambia Democratic Congress in 1995 and Agenda for Zambia in 1996.¹⁷

Having lost power, UNIP suffered constant harassment and victimisation. In Parliament, UNIP was very weak and played a minimal role in challenging government bills given the paucity of its numbers. Further, the longevity of UNIP in power and its record of mismanagement made it lack the moral authority to challenge the MMD in Parliament.

Despite having only twenty-five MPs, UNIP was recognised as the official opposition and Dingiswayo Banda became the Leader of Opposition. However, there was an incident in which Dingiswayo Banda accused Speaker Robinson Nabulyato of

¹⁵ See Ihonvbere, 1998) and Burnell, 1995 and 2001.

¹⁶ In 1993 a number of MMD MPs were either expelled or threatened with expulsion for having opposed the amendment to the Penal Code meant to deny bail to certain types of crimes, such as drug-trafficking.

¹⁷ For recent work on the dynamics explaining the expulsions of MMD MPs and formation of rival parties see Mbikusita-Lewanika, 2003.

favouring the ruling party. He was suspended from Parliament and stripped of his position as Leader of the Opposition when UNIP demanded that he be replaced by a high-ranking party official. Internal wrangling within UNIP as to who should succeed Banda and the government's insistence that Banda should continue to lead led to UNIP losing its status as the official opposition in Parliament.

A number of new parties emerged in the run-up to the 1996 elections. These included the Liberal Progressive Front (LPF), the National Lima Party (NLP) and Agenda for Zambia (AZ). The 1996 presidential elections were contested by five political parties. The MMD won the Presidential and Parliamentary elections with an increased share of seats. The MMD secured 131 seats, independents 10, National Party five, Agenda for Zambia two and Zambia Democratic Congress two. The opposition totalled 19 seats.

The 1996 elections were described as being seriously flawed by both local and international observers.¹⁸ Four opposition parties unsuccessfully challenged the results in the courts. The period following the 1996 elections was characterised by political tension leading to an attempted coup in October 1997 and the detention of prominent politicians. These included the first President, Kenneth Kaunda, ZDC president Dean Mung'omba and MMD Women's Committee chairperson, Princess Nakatindi Wina. The period was also characterised by the intimidation of opposition parties. Most importantly however, it saw the birth of new and serious political parties, such as the National Citizen's Convention (1997), the United Party for National Development (UPND) (1998), Zambia Alliance for Progress

(ZAP) (1999) and the Republican Party, later renamed Zambia Republican Party (ZRP) (2000).

During 2001, there was a campaign for supporting a presidential third term of office by Chiluba loyalists. However, a vigorous opposition led by civil society organisations, opposition parties and prominent MMD politicians led to its abandonment. The third term debate had the effect of dividing the ruling MMD, leading to expulsions of those who were opposed to it, including Vice-President Christon Tembo.

This was to set the stage for the formation of the Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD), Heritage Party (HP) and Patriotic Front (PF). The first two parties were formed by individuals who had been expelled from the MMD as result of being opposed to Chiluba's third term bid, while the third was established in reaction to the adoption of Levy Mwanawasa as MMD presidential candidate.

The MMD's decision to expel 22 of its MPs on account of being opposed to Chiluba's third term was challenged in the High Court. The Court decided that they would hold their seats until the matter was determined. On the other hand, the demands of 65 MPs to petition the Speaker of the National Assembly, Amusaa Mwanamwambwa to convene Parliament in order to debate an impeachment motion were not granted. Parliament was not convened for eight months in 2001 and only met for two weeks in November.¹⁹

The 27 December 2001 elections were characterised by very high number of candidates. There were a total of eleven candidates for the presidency.

¹⁸ Bratton, 1998; Burnell, 2002.

¹⁹ Phiri, et al., 2004: 57-64.

Levy Mwanawasa of the MMD was elected President with about 28.7 percent of the votes cast, with Anderson Mazoka of the UPND coming a close second with 26.8 percent of the votes. Others with significant share of the votes were Christon Tembo, FDD (13%), Tilyenji Kaunda, UNIP (10%), Godfrey Miyanda, HP (8%). In terms of parliamentary seats, the MMD obtained 69 seats, UPND 49, UNIP 13, FDD 12, Heritage Party 4, Patriotic Front one, Zambia Republican Party one and one independent.²⁰ Thus the complexion of the legislature after the 2001 elections was altered by this large representation of opposition parties in Parliament. This is perhaps, the first time since independence that the opposition has had such a large representation in Parliament. In fact, while the MMD had the largest share of seats by a single party, it fell short of an overall majority. Even after nominating eight MPs, the opposition outnumbered the MMD MPs 81 to 77.

Given Levy Mwanawasa's narrow electoral mandate and the challenge to his election by three losing presidential candidates, a strategy to co-opt opposition MPs to the MMD ranks was effected. In this regard, between 2002 and 2003, a total of seven opposition MPs were re-elected to Parliament after joining the MMD.²¹ The state of affairs has now changed with the MMD commanding 84 seats against the opposition's 74 seats. MMD again has a working majority in Parliament and enjoyed the advantages of incumbency to ensure adherence to its instructions by its Members of Parliament.

What has been the role of political parties in Parliament, especially after

²⁰ Electoral Commission of Zambia, 2002.

²¹ Heritage Party lost two MPs, while UPND lost five due to either defections or as a result of expulsions from their own parties.

the 2001 elections? How are parties organised in Parliament and how do the Parliamentary group relate to the main party at headquarters?

PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS IN ZAMBIA

As already discussed above, political parties form the cornerstone of a democratic society and serve a function of aggregating and representing social interests and also provide a structure for political participation.²² The role of political parties in policy-making is even more pronounced in Parliament. This is the arena in which political parties either control government or demonstrate capacity or potential to offer an alternative government.

The Zambian Parliament, like most of those in Africa, is an inherited institution. The practices, procedures and conventions are almost a carbon copy of what prevails in the British House of Commons. The Speaker, Deputy Speaker and other Parliamentary officials wear wigs and preside over the house in almost the same fashion as in the British House of Commons. There is a particular dress code, adherence to which all Members of Parliament are strictly bidden (such as wearing Western suits and tie).²³

As regards the status of Member of Parliament, the convention is that they are all equal and receive equal treatment by the Speaker. Their parliamentary salaries and allowances are the same, save for those Members who also hold ministerial positions. However, in terms of political parties they are not treated equally. For a political party to be recognised by the

²² See Randall, 2003.

²³ Until very recently, even members of the public were required to a similar dress code. This has now been relaxed with the introduction of parliamentary reforms.

Speaker it has to have a membership equal to form a quorum, which is a third of the Members of Parliament or 53 Parliamentary seats.

Since independence, the requirement that an opposition party has to constitute at least a third of Members of Parliament to be recognised, has been highly contested.²⁴ While they have been instances where opposition parties were accorded the status of 'official opposition' this was outside the established norm and depended on the goodwill of the government. When the relationship between the governing party and opposition deteriorated, such recognition was also withdrawn. In the current Parliament, the main opposition party, UPND, secured 49 seats at the last elections and fell short of the required number by four seats. It has not been recognised as the official opposition.²⁵

It can be argued, however, that the recognition of a party with the second largest number of seats in Parliament is more dependent on the goodwill of the government. In a country without a tradition of multiparty competition however, denying the major opposition party such recognition may only help to bolster dominance, a practice which inherently undermines the very basis of parliamentary democracy. Even after the overwhelming dominance of the MMD during the first two post-

²⁴ This is a convention in legislatures of the Commonwealth based on the practice in the British House of Commons.

²⁵ In 2003 President Mwanawasa stunned the nation when he announced that his government would recognise the UPND as the 'official opposition' and appointed the then UPND secretary-general as Leader of the Opposition. The move was roundly condemned as an usurpation of the prerogatives of the Speaker and not having sought the approval of the party concerned. The whole idea was abandoned, as the Speaker ruled that he would not recognize the UPND as the official opposition in Parliament as it did not meet the threshold of 53 seats.

1991 Parliaments (1991-2001), it is surprising that the Speaker would want to perpetuate the *status quo*.²⁶

The organisation of parties in Parliament is through parliamentary caucuses or parliamentary groups. All Members of Parliament of a particular party belong to the same parliamentary caucus or group. Each parliamentary caucus is led by a party whip²⁷, who is supposed to be an experienced parliamentarian. The party whip is a liaison between the party and Members of Parliament. He/she ensures that MPs debate and vote according to the instructions or preferences of the party. MPs who do not toe the party line may risk serious sanctions. These may include suspension from the party, non-adoption at the next election or even expulsion.²⁸

In the Zambian case, Parliament has recognised four parliamentary groups. These are: the MMD, UPND, UNIP and FDD. Their recognition is based on the number of seats they hold in Parliament. The party with the largest number of seats in Parliament is given the position of Government Chief Whip. The Government Chief Whip is also the party whip for the ruling MMD and is appointed by the party president. The holder of the position has the rank of a cabinet minister, sits in cabinet meetings, receives a government salary and the benefits of a member of cabinet. Other party whips who also draw an allowance from Parliament are not recognised in the same way.

²⁶ The Speaker's attitude may not be surprising given the fact that he is sponsored by the ruling MMD.

²⁷ The party whips as at 31 January 2005 were: MMD Vernon Mwaanga, UPND Crispin Sibetta, UNIP Lucas Phiri and FDD Chrispin Shumina. The Patriotic Front, Heritage Party and Zambia Republican Party have no party whips given the small number of their MPs.

²⁸ Interview with a senior MMD national executive official, January 2005.

The Chief Whip also chairs meetings of a Committee of Whips in Parliament. This Committee discusses the order of business in Parliament and acts as an inter-party liaison committee for Members of Parliament. In terms of Parliamentary discipline, all MPs seek permission from the Chief Whip and not their party whips. Through this, Committee, efforts are made to reach accommodation and consensus on certain controversial issues.

All Parliamentary groups are free to use the facilities of Parliament, such as professional staff and meeting rooms if they so request. Parliamentary groups may meet at Parliament or elsewhere. The current structural organisation of the Zambian Parliament does not provide office accommodation to Members of Parliament, and neither do they have personal staff. All MPs share only one room, the Members Room, which is not adequate.

In Zambia, unlike in established parliamentary democracies, the party is a driving force in party-parliamentary relations. It exercises control over its MPs by ensuring that they support party policies and instructions. The parliamentary group lacks cohesive organisation and leadership. It looks to the party to provide that leadership. Thus party leaders are very important and are able to discipline Members of Parliament for going against party rules, and indeed do so. Such acts of 'discipline' can even cause an MP to lose his/her seat.

Members of Parliament are organised around the parties they represent. Each of the main parties has a parliamentary group or caucus which plays both a social and a political role. The parliamentary caucus calls meetings to discuss matters relating to party policy and to strategise on how to vote on important bills. These meetings are held either at the request of Members

of Parliament or the main party. The organisation of parliamentary caucus differs from one party to another.

The MMD Parliamentary Group

Within the ruling MMD, the parliamentary caucus is a very important body. Government, through its whip (the Chief Whip) ensures that it marshals its members to support government positions, bills and motion and oppose those introduced by the opposition. Meetings of the MMD parliamentary caucus are not regular and are only called when there is a need. The meetings can be convened by the Members of Parliament themselves or at the request of the party. There are two forums at which MMD Members of Parliament meet. First, they meet as a parliamentary caucus to discuss their relationship with the party and engage the attention of the whip on certain of the policy positions to which they are opposed to or seek clarification. These meetings are chaired by the Chief Whip, but these meetings have usually been chaired by the President. Often the venue of the meetings has not even been Parliament but State House. Second, MMD MPs meet with the National Executive Committee in the party-parliamentary liaison committee, chaired by the national chairman.

Both the parliamentary caucus meetings and that of the party-parliamentary liaison committee are convened when there is a likelihood of MPs contradicting the party line or voting against the President. While these meetings have witnessed serious disagreement, MPs have often followed the instructions of party bosses and supported government bills and motions. Those MPs who have shown consistency in defending the government during debates and supporting government motions have often been rewarded with ministerial appointments. On the other hand, those

who have either been critical of government policies and bills or occasionally voted with the opposition have received threats or actual sanctions. For example, former Vice-President Enock Kavindele faced expulsion from the party due to the manner in which he debated in Parliament when he accused President Mwanawasa of corruption. He publicly apologised and his suspension was lifted.

It is also believed that the expulsion of MMD Chembe MP, Dalton Sokontwe, was as a result of having voted with the opposition during the impeachment debate. Since MPs enjoy immunity for their actions in Parliament, the MMD was constrained to discipline their MP on account of his voting behaviour. Instead, he was slapped with charges of indiscipline and disloyalty and belonging to an opposition party.²⁹ Sometimes parties use subtle ways to discipline their MPs by citing their conduct outside Parliament.

The influence of the MMD Parliamentary party *vis-a-vis* the main party is almost insignificant. On account of being in power, MMD MPs avoid being antagonistic to the party as this would undermine the party's electoral prospects. Those MPs who criticise party policy are viewed as working in collusion with the opposition and have often been challenged to resign or face expulsion.

The party, especially the party president, plays an extremely influential role in the business of the MMD parliamentary party. Almost always, party parliamentary caucuses are held at the State House, where the President instructs his Members of Parliament to support the government

²⁹ The MP has appealed to the High Court against expulsion and obtained a court injunction restraining the MMD from expelling until the matter is determined.

bills. Where Members of Parliament have voted against the party instructions, the President has publicly condemned them. This was the case, for example, when MPs unanimously voted in support of a motion to fund political parties represented in Parliament. President Mwanawasa condemned his MPs for having voted and referred to the action as 'irresponsible,' given that the government had no money. He vowed that the resolution passed by Parliament would not be implemented as long as he remained President.

It has been observed that there is an overbearing influence from State House and the Executive on the ruling party MPs. The Chief Whip does not play a significant role in marshalling members' support. Members of Parliament seem to be afraid of the party but not the Chief Whip. This explains why ruling party MPs have tended to be unanimous in the adoption of motions and bills.

Because the MMD is in power, there is a lot of pressure from the party on the MPs to support its position. There have been instances when the MMD parliamentary caucus was opposed to the party position. For example, the MMD parliamentary caucus expressed displeasure with the policy of appointing ministers from the opposition. They felt the policy went against the idea of rewarding loyalty from MPs with ministerial positions. This was especially the case, given that most of the opposition parties had hurled insults at the presidential candidate and the MMD during the 2001 elections.

The other issue to which the MMD Parliamentary caucus was strongly opposed, was the idea of whether or not to postpone local government elections. From a budgetary viewpoint the government argued that it would

not be possible to hold the elections in 2004, however, a number of MMD MPs reasoned that it would further the political interests of the MMD, if local government elections were held as the party would capture some seats currently controlled by the opposition.

The relationship within the MMD Parliamentary caucus has been characterised by tension and suspicion. The vilification of former President Frederick Chiluba has affected those MPs who served in his government. Some MMD MPs are appearing in the courts on alleged corruption charges, which has made it difficult for the parliamentary caucus to cleanse itself of the stigma of corruption levelled at the MMD government, especially as the anti-corruption campaign was launched by President Mwanawasa.

There have also been occasions when MMD backbenchers have attacked government policies. This is because there has been a conflict between the pre-determined position of the Executive and the perceptions of the MPs. To demonstrate the independence of Parliament, the Speaker has protected Members of Parliament from victimisation from their parties. The example of Dalton Sokontwe, Katele Kalumba, Enock Kavindele, Chitalu Sampa and Peter Machungwa are cases in point, where despite having been expelled by the ruling party and having received letters from the MMD requesting their parliamentary seats to be declared vacant, the Speaker has not done so.

The problem is that while the MPs may survive expulsion, they may not succeed in securing the party adoption in the 2006 elections. This demonstrates the vulnerability of MPs to the power of the party. It is therefore imperative that MPs, more so those of the ruling party, are seen to publicly support the government and openly

show their loyalty to the President. Failure to do so has long-term implications for their continued tenure.

Other than through the parliamentary caucus and the party-parliamentary committee, the MMD MPs have no other formal link with the party. There is no officer at the party headquarters charged with the responsibility of coordinating parliamentary affairs. MMD MPs are not given technical and professional advice by the party on matters on which they are expected to debate and vote. The 'Presidential Whip' and the party whip have been sufficient to shepherd MPs to toe the party line.³⁰

The MMD parliamentary party's relationship with other parties has been good on the whole. The decision by President Mwanawasa to co-opt opposition MPs from UNIP, the Heritage Party and FDD in the government has fostered a spirit of inter-party cooperation. In particular, a formal memorandum of understanding between UNIP and MMD has virtually meant that the MMD has been assured of UNIP support on all important bills and motions. The perceived hegemonic attitude of the UPND has also contributed to opposition parties voting with the government.³¹

The UPND Parliamentary Group

The UPND has the largest parliamentary group of any opposition party since independence. However, the parliamentary group is not properly organised. It has no shadow cabinet or spokesperson on a number of policy areas. There is observable conflict as some UPND MPs also hold senior party positions. For example, the

³⁰ The term 'presidential whip' was used by one of my informants, who is a member of the MMD National Executive Committee, Lusaka, 9 January 2005.

³¹ Interview with two FDD and one UNIP MPs, Lusaka 4 - 5 February 2005.

UPND parliamentary caucus has two vice presidents, a national chairman and two senior national executive members.

The UPND parliamentary caucus is chaired by the party whip who ensures that members debate and vote according to party guidelines. However, meetings of the parliamentary caucus are not regular and do not take place at Parliament. They are called when need arises, especially when there is a bill that the party wishes to oppose and defeat. On contentious and controversial issues, meetings have been chaired by the party president, who is not a Member of Parliament. This was the case with the election of Speaker, nomination of Leader of the Opposition and the impeachment motion.

All members of the UPND parliamentary caucus are also *ex-officio* members of the National Management Committee (NMC). The NMC meets every month. By attending NMC meetings, MPs are made to understand party policy and expected to support the party positions in Parliament. However, even with this close association between the UPND MPs and the party leadership, there are observable disagreements on policy positions. The UPND MPs does not present itself as a coherent body speaking from the same script. There have been conflicting statements made in Parliament by UPND MPs on the same subject.³² This lack of harmonisation seems to be a function of poor coordination between the party headquarters and the parliamentary group.

The UPND headquarters has a media centre supported by the British Liberal Democrats. The function of the media

centre is to publicise party activities, including those of the Members of Parliament. It's staff is supposed to attend Parliamentary sessions and report on the debates by UPND MPs. However, they have not been able to do so. It publishes a newsletter, which has a very poor circulation.

While UPND MPs support the work of the party secretariat through monthly contributions of K200,000, there is not much policy or technical assistance from the party to Members of Parliament. There is no desk at UPND headquarters dealing with parliamentary matters. The only interaction MPs have with the party is through the party whip and the National Management Committee, where the attendance is not mandatory.

The influence of the party over MPs is pervasive. MPs who do not toe the party line or contradict party instructions risk serious sanction. This was case when Mwandia Member of Parliament Sipula Kabanje voted for Amusaa Mwanamwamba for Speaker against the party's candidate Frederick Hapunda. The party's disciplinary committee recommended his expulsion citing allegations of missing executive meetings and conduct inimical to the reputation of the party. While the party did not specifically cite his voting for Mwanamwambwa as the reason for his expulsion, it is common knowledge that he was expelled as a result of having gone against the party's instructions. Kabanje was re-elected on the MMD ticket and rewarded with a deputy ministerial appointment.

In 2003, three UPND MPs were either expelled or resigned for having gone against the party's position. The party rejected the appointment of two MPs - Benny Tetamashimba³³ and Austin

³² Interview with two National Assembly officials, 3 and 5 January 2005.

³³ Benny Tetamashimba was UPND secretary general at the time.

Liato - to sit on the Constitution Review Commission. When they insisted upon sitting on the Commission against the will of the party, they were expelled. The two were then adopted by MMD and successfully defended their seats.

In March 2003, when President Mwanawasa co-opted some opposition MPs to ministerial positions, he offered one deputy ministerial position to the UPND. He appointed Kennedy Shepande as deputy minister without prior consultation with the party. The UPND objected to the manner in which the appointment was done as well as the choice of the person appointed and demanded that Shepande decline the appointment or risk being expelled. He refused and instead opted to resign and re-contest the seat under the MMD. He won.

There was a diversity of opinion in the UPND parliamentary party regarding how the matter of Shepande, Liato and Tetamashimba should have been handled. Some members of the UPND parliamentary party were of the view that expulsion was not the best way to deal with the case. Since all those affected held party positions, relieving them of their party positions would have been sufficient punishment. It was feared that expelling them from their party and having to undergo the subsequent by-elections did not assure the party of victory. As it transpired, the party lost four by-elections as a result of its decision to expel its Members of Parliament.

On the other hand, party leaders were adamant that those who breach party regulations and instructions should not be allowed to represent the party in Parliament. They argued that that it was better to have the by-elections, even if it meant losing the seat. Party discipline, it was argued should be

enforced on all party members, including Members of Parliament.³⁴

The UPND, unlike other opposition parties, tends to suffer from the arrogance of numbers. It has often decided to pursue causes without consulting other members of the opposition. This has resulted in resentment from other members of the opposition who have rewarded this behaviour by voting with the government. Some opposition MPs have also complained of the 'fear to be swallowed.'³⁵

The UNIP Parliamentary Group

The UNIP Parliamentary group is the third largest group in the Zambian Parliament. As a former ruling party, UNIP faces a number of leadership challenges, especially within the main party. The leadership problems of the party have been reflected in the relationship between the parliamentary party and the main party.

Like other parties in Parliament, UNIP Members of Parliament belong to a parliamentary caucus. The caucus is chaired by the party whip. Its meetings are not regular and often take place at the Parliament Motel when the need arises. The meetings are held at the request of MPs or at the instigation of the party. Issues discussed in the meetings relate to reaction of the party to government decisions and policies, attitude to government bills and the general state of the party.

Apart from the party whip, UNIP's parliamentary caucus also has two deputy ministers and a deputy chairperson of committees. While the parliamentary caucus is cohesive group, events outside Parliament have affected the stability of UNIP MPs.

³⁴ interview with a senior UPND official, Lusaka, December 2004.

³⁵ Interview with a UNIP MP, 4 February 2005.

Since the departure of Kenneth Kaunda as a UNIP stalwart, the once formidable ruling party has been rocked by leadership wrangles. First, there was Francis Nkhoma who barely served a year after succeeding Kaunda. Then Tilyenji Kaunda, Kenneth Kaunda's son, was elevated from secretary general to party president by a special National Council. The accession of Kaunda to the party presidency was viewed with disdain by some party members who claimed that by having Tilyenji Kaunda in the leadership position that Kenneth Kaunda was still in charge. Others blamed Tilyenji Kaunda for lacking the capacity to provide effective leadership, for selling out to the ruling party and for destroying UNIP. This divided the party between those who supported Tilyenji Kaunda's leadership and those who did not.

There is no formal liaison between UNIP parliamentary caucus and the main party, other than through consultative meetings. In the last two years, the UNIP parliamentary caucus held several meetings with the party leadership. Two issues have occupied the UNIP parliamentary caucus. These were the appointment of UNIP Members of Parliament to ministerial positions and the memorandum of understanding with the MMD. In 2003, when President Mwanawasa appointed two UNIP MPs - Rosemary Banda and Chile Ng'uni - as deputy ministers, there was confusion in the parliamentary caucus. While the UNIP parliamentary caucus opposed the decision to appoint UNIP MPs as ministers given the different policy orientations of the two parties, the main party approved the appointments. After much persuasion, the parliamentary caucus reluctantly agreed to support the party position.

The other conflictual issue on which the UNIP Parliamentary caucus has

been involved with the main party concerned the memorandum of understanding with the MMD. In May 2003, UNIP and the MMD signed a memorandum of understanding. UNIP recognised and was grateful to the government, especially President Mwanawasa for according former President Kaunda recognition as a former Head of State. UNIP also appreciated the government's gesture of honouring Kaunda with Zambia's highest honour. For this UNIP pledged to support the MMD government's anti-corruption fight and cooperate in other areas. UNIP MPs summoned party president, Tilyenji Kaunda to explain the background to the memorandum of understanding, as many of them felt that UNIP did not have anything in common with the ruling MMD, given the two parties' different ideological positions. While others argued that the memorandum of understanding served the selfish interests of Tilyenji Kaunda, who was keen to show appreciation to the MMD government on behalf of his father. These meetings yielded little in terms of bridging the gap between the party and its MPs.

In a spirit of respecting the dictates of the main party, UNIP MPs reluctantly decided to toe the party line, by translating the memorandum of understanding into practice through their debates and support of motions and bills. It may be argued that while this memorandum of understanding does not amount to a formal alliance, UNIP has consistently voted with the Government since then on all important bills and motions. However, UNIP has also challenged the MMD in by-elections, showing that the party still retains some independence.

The influence of the party over Members of Parliament was demonstrated over matters outside Parliament. For some time now, the

UNIP parliamentary caucus has expressed concern over party management. These issues included the absence of meetings held by the central committee, the unconstitutional removal and replacement of central committee members and the accounting of public funds. MPs expressed disquiet at the unilateral way in which party president, Tilyenji Kaunda, expelled some senior members of the party, such as vice-president, Rabbison Chongo and central committee member, Muhabi Lungu.

During 2003 and 2004, there were calls for the removal or replacement of Tilyenji Kaunda by low-level party officials and some UNIP MPs who argued that he was destroying the party. In October 2004, Tilyenji Kaunda dismissed vice-president, Simon Mwewa and appointed acting secretary-general, Njekwa Anamela as his replacement. Simon Mwewa was installed as party president by one faction of the party. Thus the party is now divided into the Kaunda faction and the Mwewa faction. Some UNIP MPs identified with one or other of the factions. One of the vocal UNIP MPs, Timothy Nyirenda publicly identified himself with the Mwewa faction and called for the removal of Tilyenji Kaunda. For his public support of the Mwewa faction, Nyirenda was expelled from the party and Tilyenji Kaunda, in a letter to the Speaker, demanded that Kasenengwa constituency be declared vacant. Nyirenda has retained his seat as he appealed to the High Court.

There is no real coordination between the UNIP parliamentary caucus and the main party. UNIP MPs who are deputy ministers do not attend caucus meetings and do not brief their fellow Members of Parliament on what is going on in the government. Surprisingly, UNIP ministers have proved to be very loyal to the MMD

government and have not attempted to use their positions to obtain concessions on behalf of their party.

The relationship between UNIP and other opposition parties has been good. The UNIP parliamentary caucus has cooperated with the other opposition parties on some important bills such as the District Administrators' Bill and the impeachment motion. It has been observed however, that given the attitude of the UPND to ignore other opposition parties and pursue certain of its own issues, the UNIP parliamentary group has reacted by supporting the government. Others have expressed fears of being 'swallowed' by the UPND as it has demonstrated a hegemonic posture.

The FDD Parliamentary Group

The FDD Parliamentary caucus is perhaps the most political party in Parliament. The parliamentary caucus is chaired by a party whip, who ensures that MPs understand party positions and vote according to party preferences. The FDD caucus meets whenever there is an issue to discuss. Meetings are held at Parliament Motel or at the home of any Member of Parliament. Occasionally, meetings have been held jointly with the national executive - the National Policy Council.

Whenever meetings have been held with the main party, they have been chaired either by the party president or senior party officials. Three are five FDD MPs who hold positions on the national policy council, including the party's vice-president. The main issues that have exercised the Parliamentary caucus include the appointment of party's MPs to ministerial positions and the party's response.

In 2003, three FDD MPs were appointed to ministerial positions

without prior consultation and approval of the party. The FDD parliamentary party convened meetings with the main party and advised that instead of expelling them, they should be allowed to keep the positions but instead bargain with the government for some concessions. The main party was adamant and expelled Dipak Patel, Geoffrey Samukonga and Chance Kabaghe. The three appealed to the High Court against their expulsion arguing that the Constitution provides that only the convention could expel them. While they continue to sit in Parliament, all the indications are that they are no longer FDD.

The relationship between the FDD parliamentary party is very weak. While FDD MPs contribute K250,000 monthly towards a party fund, MPs receive no technical or policy advice from party headquarters. There is no real coordination between the main party and the parliamentary party on matters of policy. FDD MPs are not compelled to toe the party line, though it is expected that they will do so as implications for not supporting the party are well known. The overriding fear of not being adopted as the party's candidates at the next election or a threat of expulsion, may be the only reasons that would compel FDD MPs to support party positions.

The relationship between the FDD MPs and the main party has been characterised by mistrust. A number of party officials who hold senior positions lost elections, while some of those without party positions were successful. This has created tension between MPs and party officials, who interpreted party instructions as aimed at victimising those who fail to comply.

It has also been argued that FDD Members of Parliament do not feel any obligation to the party, as all FDD

parliamentary candidates did not receive any financial or material assistance during the 2001 elections. The party secretariat still does not provide FDD MP with any policy or technical advice relevant to their work.

The relationship between the FDD parliamentary caucus and other opposition parties is good, though there is an observable lack of cooperation on some issues. The FDD Parliamentary caucus cooperated with the UPND over the impeachment motion and the election of Speaker. However, some FDD MPs have decided to vote with the government as a reaction to UPND's paternalistic and hegemonic attitude.

Other Parties in Parliament

Three other parties in the Zambian Parliament do not enjoy recognition as parliamentary groups. These are the Heritage Party, which obtained four seats following the 2001 elections, the Patriotic Front with two seats and Zambia Republican Party with one seat. The HP lost two of seats when two of its members resigned to join the MMD in early 2002. The two remaining HP MPs were co-opted into government as deputy ministers. Despite their expulsion by the party and protests to the Speaker to declare their seats vacant, they have continued to occupy their seats as HP MPs.

The two MPs have no relationship with the main party and operate as members of the MMD. On the other hand, the HP does not recognise them as representing their party in Parliament. The experience of the HP raises important questions about the role and influence of parties in Parliament, especially when it involves executive decisions to appoint opposition members. This does not address the situation in which the HP ministers find themselves, but

technically they cannot claim to represent their party in Parliament.

The ZRP's only MP was appointed cabinet minister in 2003. The decision to appoint the party's only MP as a minister was considered by the party. It was resolved by a vote of the national executive committee to allow the MP retain the seat. That notwithstanding, the party president did not approve of this decision. Attempts were made to have ZRP MP expelled, but instead, a faction of the party expelled the party president, Ben Mwila. Two factions emerged: one led by the expelled party president and the other by vice president, Wynter Kabimba. The matter went to court and a ruling was made in favour of Mwila.

The ZRP MP, who is also secretary general, bears no allegiance to the party national executive led by Ben Mwila. As a cabinet minister she is more aligned to the ruling party and has, on many occasions, defended MMD's position in Parliament.

The two MPs of the Patriotic Front (PF) are fused into the party leadership. The PF has used its MPs to advance the party causes over taxation and the constitution. As a small party, however, PF MPs suffer from being eclipsed by the bigger parties and has on many occasions have voted with the government.

Conclusion

The Zambian case shows that parliamentary groups are only minimally institutionalised. While Zambian politics cannot be described as programmatic or ideological, parties play an important role in the behaviour of Members of Parliament. While parliamentary parties may not be well organised and have a structured leadership, as is the case in Western Europe, they mirror party preferences in parliamentary debates and voting.

It has been observed in this paper that the Zambian Parliament lacks certain facilities which would make Parliamentary groups more effective. These are informal groupings that have no schedule of meetings or office accommodation. Apart from the chief whip, other party whips lack office accommodation. They are not serviced by technical staff, either from their party headquarters or Parliament. They meet, only to conveniently ensure that certain bills are passed and members support them.

In the on-going saga of proposed parliamentary reforms, mainly aimed at MP-constituency relations, it would be important to address the issue of MP-Party relations. The fact that MPs are unable to effectively represent their constituents for fear of victimisation by the party needs to be closely examined. For example, no MP should be expelled on account of the views they hold or for refusing to toe the party line. Such reforms would not only improve the quality of debates, but would ensure that MPs play the watchdog role and hold the government accountable.

The other related issue is the use of presidential appointments and inducements as a way of 'disciplining' MPs, in particular, those from the ruling party. The desire to be appointed to a ministerial position is fairly high among ruling party MPs and in consequence, they may do anything to attract the attention of the President who rewards those who show loyalty both to him personally and to the party. Achieving these two may sometimes be at the expense of fulfilling the role of people's representative.

This paper has shown that due to the minimal development of the party system in Zambia, the Parliamentary

groups are not institutionalised, and there is an absence of cohesion within them. It was also shown that there is lack of coordination between parliamentary groups. The neo-patrimonial character of the political

system explains partly the reason for the enormous control and influence that parties have over their Members of Parliament. The practice undermines parliamentary democracy and needs to be reformed.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Institute of Economic and Social Research, University of Zambia, P O Box 30900, Lusaka, Zambia
Telephone: +260 (0) 1 295055
Fax: +260 (0) 1 294291
Cell: +260 (0) 97 702089
Email: neosimutanyi@yahoo.co.

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