INTERPRETING POLITICAL CULTURE[*]

The Zambian presidential elections of 2006

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this article is to broaden the interpretation of African politics. Concepts such as neo-patrimonialism tend to be used in a wide variety of situations and close off further enquiry. This article interprets the Zambian presidential elections of 2006 in terms of a particular cultural pattern that has at its centre the drive towards a maximum coalition under a leadership that claims to be morally superior. This explains a phenomenon that has been widely observed in Africa: the dominance of one big party around which there is a continuously changing constellation of smaller parties. Political culture is seen here as evident from behavioural patterns rather than from symbolic constructs. Culture is seen as open to continuous change a social construction because it is . In these elections, change manifested in the emergence of an urban/rural divide in contrast to the regional or ethnic identifications that are usually expected.

THERE HAS BEEN A SURGE IN THEORIZING ABOUT THE AFRICAN PARTY SYSTEMS THAT HAVE EMERGED SINCE DEMOCRATIZATION.[1] Such studies tend to be systematic comparisons of as many cases as can be collected, rather than analyses in depth of one particular case. This paper, in contrast, looks intensively at one particular election: the September 2006 presidential election in Zambia,[2] the fourth such election since the abolition of the one-party state in 1991.[3] It is therefore timely to search for particular patterns of party formation that emerge in these elections. Looking in detail at this particular election against the background of the preceding ones leads to clarification of seemingly contradictory patterns that have emerged in two quite influential studies of the general type.

Mozaffar and Scarrit write about the puzzle of African party systems in that they exhibit low fragmentation and high volatility: 'the entry of large numbers of short-lived political parties, producing high volatility, and the electoral and legislative dominance of a small number of large parties producing low system fragmentation.'[4]

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[1] S. Mozaffar, J.R. Scarritt and G. Galaich, 'Electoral institutions, ethnopolitical cleavages and party systems in Africa's emerging democracies', *American Political Science Review,* **79** (2003), pp. 379-390; N. Van de Walle, 'Presidentialism and clientelism in Africa's emerging party systems', *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* **41** (2003)**,** pp. 297-321; S. Mozaffar and J.R. Scarrit, 'The puzzle of African party systems', *Party Politics,* **11** (2005), pp. 399-421; Staffan I. Lindberg, 'Consequences of electoral systems in Africa: a preliminary inquiry', *Electoral Studies* **24** (2005), pp. 41-64; T. Brambor, W.R. Clark and M. Golder, 'Are African party systems different?', *Electoral Studies,* article in press, posted on the world wide web 2006.

[2] Zambia's last two general elections were tripartite elections where the president, parliament and the local council were elected on the same day. The outcome of the parliamentary elections mirrors to a very great degree the outcome of the presidential elections. Local elections, on the other hand, would be a totally different topic because of local diversity. Therefore, only the presidential elections are discussed here.

[3] For the previous Zambian elections, see: J.K. Van Donge, 'Kaunda and Chiluba: enduring patterns of political culture in Zambia', in J. Wiseman (ed.), *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (Routledge, London, 1995), pp. 193-219; J.K. Van Donge, 'Reflections on donors, opposition and popular will in the 1996 Zambian general elections'*, The Journal of Modern African Studies,* **36** (1998), pp. 71-99; J.K. Van Donge, 'The EU Observer Mission to the Zambian elections 2001: The politics of election observation as the construction of narratives', *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics,* (forthcoming 2008).

[4] Mozaffar and Scarrit 'The puzzle of African Party systems', p.399.

Van de Walle distinguishes three characteristics of 'Sub Saharan Africa's fledgling multiparty systems':

Parties that won founding elections are almost invariably still in power. Secondly, the typical emerging party system has consisted of a dominant party surrounded by a large number of small unstable parties. Thirdly, party cleavages have been overwhelmingly ethno-linguistic in nature, while ideological and programmatic debates have been rare.[5]

The Zambian case fits these conclusions remarkably well. The Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) has won all four elections since 1991. The main opposition parties were different in all four elections: United National Independence Party (UNIP) (1991), Zambia National Conference (Zanaco) (1996), United Party for National Development (UPND) (2001) and the Patriotic Front (PF) (2006). Some parties have disappeared as an electoral force; others have come up. Ethno-linguistic considerations seem to be prime determinants in voting behaviour.

Mozaffar and Scarrit explain this situation primarily as resulting from the fact that party systems operate from a weak base after years of authoritarian rule. Van de Walle has a much more cultural explanation:

The combination of presidentialism and clientalism helps to explain the peculiar type of party fragmentation. These systems create disincentives for opposition party consolidation and incentives for individual 'big men' to maintain small, highly personalised parties or join the winning party [6]

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[5] Van de Walle, 'Presidentialism and clientalism', p.297.
[6] Van de Walle,   'Presidentialism and clientalism', p.313.

Although Mozaffar and Scarrit as well as Van de Walle base their conclusion on conscientious observation and collection of data, their explanations are not immediately warranted as a consequence. The motives they ascribe are to a large extent imputed motives of a very general nature, whereas the intensive study of a particular case could be more illuminating.

In Van de Walle's explanation, presidentialism and clientalism are the driving force in African politics. Presidentialism is undoubtedly a major characteristic of Zambian politics, but this is much more a consequence than a cause of values underlying political behaviour. Similarly, Mozaffar and Scarritt write about the dominance of presidential elections and the mobilisation of ethnic political cleavages in these elections. .

I agree with the importance of ethnic identification but it is not a consequence of political practices; rather, it is the starting point. The first inclination of African voters is to support a candidate from their own area or linguistic group. Unless one such group has a majority in the country and there is an uncontested leader in that area, the candidates need to get support in areas other than their home area. The aspiring candidate with a solid home base must manifest him or herself as a national candidate. In order to do that, the candidate has to play on consensus and not on divisive issues. Therefore programmatic differences are a threat as these may divide, and an attempt is made to create a maximum coalition that is as national as possible, rather than regional. There is thus a major difference between African coalition building and coalition formation as portrayed in Schelling's classical study.[7] If parties are programmatic, then they will aim

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[7] For the theory of the 'minimal winning hypothesis', see W. Riker, *The Theory of Winning Coalitions* (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1962). M. Szeftel, *Conflicts, Spoils and Class Formation* (University of Mancehster, unpublished PhD dissertation, 1978) noted even back then the role of maximum coalitions in Zambian politics.

to have as small a coalition as possible in order to compromise as little as possible, whereas an African politician strives to represent the national consensus. Instead of looking for a minimum coalition, politicians in Africa aim for a maximum coalition. The argument in favour of making such a coalition is usually based on the moral superiority of the candidate.[8]

Dominant, broad-based African parties are by their nature also coalitions held together by their leader who has an appeal that is larger than the base from which he/she comes. Coalitions between opposition parties usually do not have this binding force. Yet, they may need to form coalitions in order to dislodge the incumbent party. In Africa, when the governing party has a huge majority, the opposition stands little chance of winning. However, when the governing party has a simple majority, a combined opposition can defeat it. This leads to another particular characteristic of African politics. Whereas in Western contexts parties will negotiate after elections on the basis of their electoral strength and attempt to realize as much of their programme as possible, in Africa the need for a coalition is felt primarily before the elections among opposition parties driven by the need to combine in order to defeat the incumbent.[9]

This interpretation does not deny the particular importance of sectionalist identification in African politics, but it does not see it as a mere result of political manipulation. The perspective in this paper differs also fundamentally from the one proposed by Dan Posner in a recent book on Zambian politics,.[10] He views ethnic voting

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[8] This set of rules also emerged from an analysis of the 1994 Malawian general elections. See J.K. Van Donge, 'Kamuzu's legacy: the democratization of Malawi', *African Affairs*, **94** (1995), pp. 227-259.

[9] This theorem is elaborated in Dennis Kadima, (ed,) (2006) *The Politics of Party Coalitions in Africa* Johannesburg: EISA and Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

[10] Dan Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, 2005).

as inspired by strategic considerations. There are many arguments against this, but the most important one is that it makes no sense for an area to stay loyal to an ethnic politician who remains out of power. That happens frequently in Africa however and is found regularly in Zambian elections.

Zambian politics was characterized from 1964 to 2001 by a dominant party system in which opposition was concentrated in the area from which the opposition leader came. UNIP had support in the whole country, except Southern Province, the power base of Harry Nkumbula, the opposition leader. When it looked as if UNIP would lose support in the Bemba-speaking areas after Simon Kapwepwe left UNIP and started the United Progressive Party (UPP), UNIP's leader, Kenneth Kaunda, imposed a maximum coalition on the country through the introduction of a one-party state. After the reintroduction of a multi-party system, MMD became the dominant part, except in Eastern Province. Kenneth Kaunda, then the main opposition leader, was identified with the east.[11] The phenomenon did not appear in the 1996 general election[12] but it returned again in 2001 when the main opposition candidate, Anderson Mazoka got a massive vote in his home area, Southern Province.

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[11] Kaunda's regional affiliation is however much more complicated than this. He was until the defection of Kapwepwe in 1971 identified primarily as a Bemba speaker and after the rift appeared he was seen as Nyanya speaking from the East. He is born in Chinsali in the heart of Bemba speaking territory. His parents were originally Nyanja speakers because they originated from then Nyassaland. Chinyanya is the language of the East in Zambia. See for a discussion of the role of origins of presidential candidate in the 1996 elections Van Donge ,'Donors opposition and popular will in the 1996 elections'.

[12] The main opposition candidate in 1996 was Dean Mang'omba, the candidate of the Zambian National Conference (Zanaco). He obtained roughly ten percent of the votes throughout the country as he mainly appealed to a young intellectual audience. Kaunda boycotted that election, but this was only slightly followed in the Eastern Province. See: Van Donge, 'Donors opposition and popular will in the 1996 elections'.

These examples show that African political behaviour cannot be automatically explained by opportunism: obvious losers can attract loyal followings. The stress on opportunistic use of loyalties is, however crucial, in Mozaffar and Scarrit's, as well as van der Walle's, interpretations. Of course there is opportunism in African politics as in all political systems. However, a single minded stress on opportunism ignores important elements in the political game, such as building a maximum coalition and portraying moral superiority, that are essential features of African politics.

The interpretation proposed in this paper starts from the cultural elements in politics. Culture here is not merely used in the sense of interpretations through language[13], but as taken-for-granted realities in political behaviour that emerge through social practices. The use of the term political culture can be a moot point. For example, Hagmann in debate with Abbink considers that the use of the concept leads to a stifling and static interpretation that does not do justice to the variety of, and change in, political behaviour.[14] I do not think that this is necessarily the case. A cultural interpretation clarifies political behaviour, but it does not causally explain in deterministic terms. The interpretation in this article is close to the approach of Chabal and Daloz:

> "Individuals can be simultaneously the product of a given culture and the artisans of cultural change. In this sense the relationship is dialectical. For this reason a cultural approach is less concerned with establishing the primacy or independence of the cultural variable than it is with understanding how culture shapes the practice of politics in specific settings". [15]

It does therefore not fix political behaviour in a mould, but on the contrary it directs attention to such behaviour that is at variance with the prevailing cultural patterns. For

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[13]   M.Schatzberg, 'Power, legitimacy and democratisation in Africa', *Africa,* **63** (1993), pp. 445-426.

[14] T. Hagmann, 'Ethiopian political culture strikes back: a rejoinder to J. Abbink', *African Affairs,* **105** (2006), pp. 613-621; J. Abbink, 'Interpreting Ethiopian elections in their context – a reply to Tobias Hagmann', *African Affairs* **105** (2006), pp. 173-199.

[15] P.Chabal and J-P Deloz, *Culture troubles: Politics and the interpretation of meaning* Chicago: Chicago University Press 2006 p.69

example, in the 2006 Zambian presidential elections an urban/rural divide appeared that broke with the simple interpretation of ethnic voting.[16]

The 2001 election: a fragmented nation

One cannot understand the Zambian presidential elections of 2006 without taking into account what happened in the 2001 elections. Then, the dominant coalition. MMD became a minority party and its presidential candidate, Levy Mwanawasa, attracted only 29 percent of the vote. A huge loss as compared to previous elections and in terms of a political culture that considers consensus and a maximum coalition as desirable, it was a disastrous election.[17] (Table I).

Table I
MMD share of presidential vote in four multiparty elections

Year	MMD share %	Non MMD share %
1991	75.21	24.79
1996	68.96	31.04
2001	28.96	71.04
2006	42.98	57.02

MMD did not succeed in overcoming the regional divide. It's vote was regionally concentrated: the party came first in only four of the nine provinces. Except for the capital, Lusaka, these were Bemba-speaking areas: Copperbelt, Luapula and Northern Province. The average score throughout the provinces was 30 percent. Mwanawasa was

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[16] This election result does not fit in paradigms that see ethnic identification as the determining factor in Zambian politics as is, for example, the case in Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics.*

[17] This was exacerbated by very critical observers reports, especially the report of the EU observer mission. See Van Donge, 'The EU Observer mission'

thus clearly elected on a minority vote. It is highly significant that there was only one area where MMD scored more than half of the vote (53 percent) and that was Luapula province, the home place of Frederick T. Chiluba[18], the previous Zambian president. Chiluba's moral status was the major factor in this election (Table II). The 2001 election was for reasons explained below an election about the moral status of Chiluba and this had diminished to such an extent that he could not extend beyond regional loyalties.

Table II
Comparison of regional performance of Levy Mwanawasa in 2001 and 2006 presidential elections

	2001 %vote	Ranking	2006 %vote	Ranking	Gain/loss
Central	31.26	1	59.96	1	25.7+
Copperbelt	38.01	1	34.65	2	3.37-
Eastern	16.19	3	44.29	1	28.1+
Luapula	53.37	1	33.26	2	20.11-
Lusaka	15.56	3	27.71	3	12.15+
Northern	42.01	1	50.14	1	8.13+
North- Western	32.25	2	69.93	1	37.68+
Southern	14.85	2	20.14	2	5.29+
Western	27.87	2	77.29	1	49.42+
National	28.69	1	46.32	1	17.63+

Chiluba had come to power running from behind. He won with a large margin in the first national convention in 1991 from other big names in the movement. A major

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[18] It should be noted that Chiluba claims to be from Luapula province and that he was an orphan. It is however more likely that he comes from the other side of the Luapuala river, from the Democratic Republic Congo. In earlier days, citizens from the Congo and from Zambia mixed to a much larger extent in the urban areas of the Copperbelt, the real political base of Chiluba.

reason for this was that he had been held in detention under the one-party-state regime but had never subsequently accepted a government post from Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia's first president for 29 years. (Offering a comfortable position in government to former detainees was a favourite tactic to create loyalty.) He became the champion of limiting the number of terms a president can serve. However, when he came to his constitutional limit of two terms in 2001, he tried to change the constitution so that he could serve a third. He succeeded in whipping the party into line, but the parliamentary party resisted. This led to a fragmentation of the MMD. In other respects also, Chiluba lost moral authority. He portrayed himself ostentatiously as a born-again Christian and this did not go well with a divorce in which dirty tactics were used, such as trumping up charges of theft against his wife's lover. Thirdly, he was accused more and more of corruption. Some members of parliament, especially the independent Dipak Patel and Edith Nawakwi who had left MMD because of the third term issue, claimed that Chiluba was a thief. Chiluba started a libel case, but the accusations stuck. Levy Mwanawasa was seen as handpicked by Chiluba and the election was thus viewed as a vote for or against Chiluba. The outcome of the elections were thus a defeat for Chiluba; and MMD, despite having won with a simple majority, had lost the maximum coalition.

This article argues that the winning candidate, Levy Mwanawasa, succeeded more than his rivals in coming near such an inclusive national coalition. However, it also draws attention to the fact that in this election there was a clear divide between the urban and the rural vote, a factor that brings a new dynamic to the elections.

On the other hand, the situation resulted in a much more sizeable opposition. Mwanawasa's rival in 2001, Mazoka lost narrowly. His votes were much more

concentrated in a particular area than Mwanawasa's: he had swept Southern Province –
his home area - Western and North-Western Province. An important element in his
success was the regionalist appeal: the east, Nyanaja-speaking areas, have had a president
as well as the north; it is now our turn. Mazoka tried to appeal to the whole nation by
virtue of his status as an engineer and former director of Anglo-American, the big mining
corporation. A main theme in his campaign was the mismanagement of the country,
including threats to recover stolen funds through the courts.

Mwanawasa's struggle with the Chiluba inheritance: establishing moral credentials

The result of the 2001 election meant that in 2006 both Mwanawasa and Mazoka needed
to reach outside their regional base, and moral credentials were especially significant in
this fight. It is crucial to keep in mind that Mwanawasa was seen as handpicked by
Frederick Chiluba and the moral status of the ex-president was central.

Chiluba made many mistakes towards the end of his second term, but probably the
greatest was starting the libel case because of the accusation that he was a thief. The
allegedly libellous MPs used parliamentary privilege to unearth massive evidence of
financial misappropriation during his tenure. Mwanawasa reacted by asking parliament to
lift Chiluba's immunity and by asking the judicial system to initiate court cases. This had
enormous consequences for Mwanawasa's moral stature. Instead of being associated with
the moral corruption at the end of the Chiluba regime, he became the anti-corruption
champion. On the other hand, Mwanawasa tried to portray his moves as filled with regret

and often said that the court cases could be squashed if Chiluba gave back the money. This led of course to great protest from the prosecutors because that was seen as obstructing the course of justice..

Mwanawasa's ascendancy to moral superiority was accompanied by a bitter power struggle within the MMD. Chiluba was still chairman of the party after the elections. At a meeting of the National Executive Committee it was decided that he would lose this position and Mwanawasa would take his place, During the rest of his term in office, Mwanawasa had to cope with opposition from within the party that aimed to remove him from this position. Most notable were a group of Luapula MPs, for example Chitalu Sampa and Peter Machungwa, who remained loyal to Chiluba.

Mwanawasa's image as a crusader against corruption was tarnished as it became clear that corruption was not only something in the past. Arthur Yoyo, his spokesman, became involved in accusations of financial misbehaviour. It was particular damaging that he tried to stop a case against Bulaya, a previous permanent secretary of health, who came from Luapula. Bulaya had also testified in favour of Mwanawasa in the hearings for the petititon against the election result.[19] The political connection was obvious.

Mwanawasa lacked a strong regional base. He was a professional, urban person, a lawyer. He had grown up on the Copperbelt. His father was Lamba, the original inhabitants of the Copperbelt, and his mother Toka, a Tonga-speaking group. In the Bemba-speaking areas, he came up against those loyal to Chiluba; in the Tonga-speaking areas, his main opponent, Mazoka, was strong. He did not make much progress in building a political base.

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[19] It concerned the accusation that Mwanawasa's wife Maureen had distributed Rural Health kids of the Ministry of Health in the campaign,

When general elections came near, he started to rely on old hands at organizing the party. He had parted bitterly with the veteran politician, Vernon Mwanga, whom he later brought back as national secretary of the party. In the national convention before the general election, Mwanga ironically lost that post to Katele Kalumba, a Luapulan who had been very close to Chiluba and one of the accused in the corruption trials. Kalumba had been one of the main strategists in the 1991 and 1996 campaigns.[20]

Finally, Mwanawasa's image was tarnished by the squabbles about constitutional reform. MMD had from the beginning made campaign pledges to review the constitution so that the president's power would be curtailed. This gained new urgency after Chiluba's bid for a third term. However, a previous constitutional commission installed by MMD produced no results. It was seen as logical that a president in power would never allow his power to be curtailed. Therefore civil society NGOs did not believe in a new constitutional commission, but they insisted on a constitutional assembly as the organ to carry this through. Mwanawasa agreed to that after his own constitutional commission recommended it as well, but claimed that there were so many political obstacles that it could not be done before the next election.

Even more controversial was the recommendation of an electoral reform commission that the president should require 51 percent of the vote to be elected, even if this necessitated more rounds of voting. Mwanawasa ignored this issue as much as possible.

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[20] This interpretation assumes a desperate need of Mwanawasa for party strategists, but it can also be seen as a continuation of political culture: just like Kaunda, Mwanawasa created loyalty through bringing back people that had been sent into the political wilderness, Kalumba made for example a profuse public apology and declaration of loyalty..

Once the election date was announced, constitutional issues and matters of electoral reform did not play a role in the campaign.[21]

Opposition coalition building

UPND had emerged as the major opposition party in the 2001 election, but it appeared to be in the first place a regional party. Its leader, Anderson Mazoka, got an absolute majority of 71 percent in Southern Province, his home; but he was fifth and six in three provinces, Northern, Luapula and Eastern, where he scored less than five percent (Table III). Parliamentary representation provides the opportunity to build up a national profile. However, Mwanawasa's MMD usurped their role: it became in fact the opposition party to the previous regime. A major factor in UPND's lack of success was Mazoka's failure to establish his moral credentials. He incited his supporters to riot in protest against losing the election, and there were several violent incidents in which he was involved afterwards; most notably a demonstration in protest against the way government handled constitutional reform. This demonstration was quelled by brute police intervention, but, as mentioned above, it appeared in the election that constitutional reform had no constituency among the electorate. It was not a cause to establish moral credentials with among the electorate. Thirdly, Mazoka became ill and died of AIDs just before the 2006 election.

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[21] Oasis forum, the NGO network co-ordinating the campaign for constitutional reform announded to decampaign candidates who did not support their call for a constitutional assembly free of control by parliament and president. This did not materialise.

Table III
Comparison of regional performance of UDA alliance in 2006 with score of combined
parties in 2001 and score of UPND in 2001

	2001 %vote Mazoka	Ranking	2006 Combined score%	%vote UDA	Ranking	Gain/loss UDA	Gain/loss UPND
Central	28.31	2	46.07	24.1	2	-22.06	-4.21
Copperbelt	11.95	3	25.41	7.15	3	-18.26	-4.8
Eastern	4.21	5	68.28	39.01	2	-29.27	43.22
Luapula	4.23	5	19.94	4.22	3	-15.72	-0.01
Lusaka	30.72	1	60.78	21.29	3	-39.49	-9.43
Northern	4.51	6	30.25	2.65	4	-27.6	-1.86
North-Western	48.22	1	57.83		2		
				6.52		-51.31	-41.7
Southern	70.93	1	77.23	74.35	1	-2.88	3.42
Western	48.92	1	64.32	12.38	2	-51.94	-36.54
National	26.27	2	47.10	25.32	3	21.78	-4.49

His deputy, Sakibwa Sikota, a Lozi from Western Province[22], became increasingly the spokesman for the party, especially in parliament. He seemed the logical successor, but he faced a ruthless campaign from Hakainde Hichelema. The latter had no credentials within the party, but he was a highly successful tax consultant and accountant. Not only had he access to money however, he also had the support of the Mazoka family. He won the leadership of the party in a bitter and rowdy election, after which Sikota and many with him left the party in protest. The result was that UPND became a narrow Tonga party. His success in winning the party leadership harmed his chances to mobilise a national appeal. The rough campaign had also alienated many of the intellectual members of the party whose background was rooted in the early history of the party.[23]

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[22] Sikota was and is MP for Livingstone, the capital of Southern Province.Livingstone has a large Lozi as well as a Tonga population. It usually returns a Lozi MP beginning with the legendary Arthur Wina in 1964.

[23] Hichelema had however support in the business community due to his longstanding activity in the African Business Forum. He also had much sympathy in the donor community as a perceived technocrat..

Before his death, Mazoka had already been taking the initiative in forming a coalition of three parties. Besides UPND, the coalition included the Forum for Development and Democracy (FDD), composed of MMD politicians who had left the party in protest against Chiluba's bid for a third term, and UNIP, the party that had brought independence. It was thus a coalition of very diverse backgrounds that also did not have a programme in common. The coalition's only rationale was to defeat Mwanawasa. If they could amass the vote that they had got in 2001 (47 percent), then they could win. The coalition was understandably also a supporter of introducing the 51 percent rule in the 2006 election: their position was such that they expected to win in a second round uniting the opposition.[24]

The coalition did badly however. The prime reason was the choice of leadership. For a very long time it had been kept in the dark who the presidential candidate would be. The leader of FDD, Edith Nawakwi, made it clear early on that she considered herself to be the proper candidate. However, once Hichelema was elected as leader of the UPND it became clear that he was the leader of the United Democratic Association (UDA) also. Nawakwi reacted by refusing to campaign for Hichelema, and indeed she absented herself from the country for a large part of the campaign. After the UDA lost the election, she announced immediately that she would be the UDA candidate in the next election. Although UNIP had retained a loyal following in the east of the country, since 1991 the party had been torn by conflicts between the Kaunda family and new politicians who wanted to rejuvenate the party. This had led to a gradual erosion of support. The equation of UNIP with Kaunda meant of course that those who voted for the name Kaunda had no

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[24] A coalition of opposition parties (Rainbow coalition) defeated the incumbent KANU in the Kenyan general election of 2002. This was an inspiration for the Zambian efforts to do the same.

reason to support the UDA. UDA did not have the name of a Kaunda as presidential candidate. Hichelema, as UDA candidate was merely Kaunda endorsed. As already stated, Hichelema's power struggle had reduced UPND to a mere Tonga party. The result was that the UDA only did well, indeed dominated, in Southern Province, Hichelema's home area. He scored only 25 percent of the votes as compared to the objective of recapturing the 47 percent vote that the three parties had secured in 2001. (Table IV)

The disenchanted north

The 2001 elections had been won mainly on the Bemba-speaking vote. This was a vote of loyalty for Chiluba as Mwanawasa had as yet no profile at that time. When the rift between Mwanawasa and Chiluba opened, an opportunity of course arose to organize support on the basis of the rift. One way to do that was to leave MMD and organize a Chiluba loyalist party. Such a party emerged under the name of Party for Unity Democracy and Development (PUDD). It was founded by Dan Pule, who, like Chiluba, is a born-again Christian. It attracted Chiluba loyalists who had fallen foul of Mwanawasa, such as Chitalu Sampa. However, the party did not attract a mass following and was divided by leadership disputes. A second Bemba-speaking politician who aspired to high office was Nevers Mumba. He was also a born-again minister and had been extremely unsuccessful in the 2001 presidential elections (2,24% of the vote). Mwanawasa made a surprise appointment and named him as vice president. That did not last long however, and Mumba was unceremoniously sacked because of meddling in

Congolese affairs. A third ambitious Bemba-speaking politician was Ben Mwila. He also had challenged MMD unsuccessfully in the 2001 elections (4.9% of the vote). These three aimed at an electoral pact called Northern Democratic Forces that was torn from very early on by leadership ambitions. Mwila considered himself the undisputed leader and tried to get this sanctioned by a council of traditional Bemba elders. The coalition collapsed before it could become a factor in the elections. Pule stood as a PUDD candidate in Luapula and lost. Nevers Mumba tried to become a parliamentary candidate for the Patriotic Front party in Chinsali, but they did not want to have him. Mwila then asked his followers to vote for Mwanawasa as president and for himself as MP. He succeeded in the latter. Mwanawasa told Mwila however that he had no rights to campaign in his name.

Sata's Patriotic Front and the Bemba vote

Michael Sata is a veteran politician who had remained loyal to Chiluba in the bid for the third term. Within MMD he had a contradictory image as a party bully and as an action man, a technocrat. For example: "the man who who brought sanity to the health sector". When MMD endorsed Mwanawasa as candidate, Sata was so disappointed that he formed his own party, PF and stood in 2001 as presidential candidate without success (3,45% of the vote). In the four years of Mwanawasa's presidency, Sata had provided a running commentary on the government, using especially the urban independent radio stations. He consistently attacked Mwanawasa's moral pretensions and did not, for

example, give the priority to Mwanawasa that the latter assumed to be his due as being in the office as president. He had supported mineworkers on the Copperbelt in a strike. He was jailed then for incitement to violence. Chiluba came to visit him in prison and this already showed the shape of things to come.

Sata is Bemba speaking and originates from Mpika district. His party did not hold a political convention to elect party leaders. He was not interested in coalitions and did not support the demand for the 51 percent rule. Sata aimed at winning the elections under his own steam by producing a bigger majority than Mwanawasa. It was expected that Mwanawasa would win, but it was not expected that Sata would do as well as he did.[25] (Table IV)

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[25] "If elections were held at the time of the interviews (mid-July 2006), the majority (46%) of the Zambian electorate would have voted for the MMD. The second most popular party in the country is the Patriotic Front with 12% followed by UPND (8%), UNIP (4%) and FDD (2%). While 22% of the electorate remains undecided as to which party to vote for were elections to be called at the time of the interviews (July, 2006), while almost 4% would not vote for any party". Pangolin Consulting, *Public opinion on popularity of political leaders, parties and issues in Zambia* Draft Report of a First Round Poll conducted in the framework of the Zambia Election Fund, 2006 p.17

Table IV
Comparison of regional performance of top three presidential candidates 2006

	Mwanawasa		Sata		Hichelema	
	% vote	Ranking	% vote	Ranking	% vote	Ranking
Central	59.96	1	14.47	3	24.1	2
Copperbelt	34.65	2	56.65	1	7.15	3
Eastern	44.29	1	10.96	3	39.01	2
Luapula	33.26	2	60.91	1	4.22	3
Lusaka	27.71	3	49.34	1	21.29	3
Northern	50.14	1	42.40	2	2.65	4
North-Western	69.93	1	1.95	3	6.52	2
Southern	20.14	2	3.65	3	74.35	1
Western	77.29	1	7.16	3	12.38	2
National	46.32	1	29.37	2	25.32	3

One could reasonably expect him to do well in the Bemba-speaking areas as there was a void there: no credible pro-Chiluba voice had developed. Indeed, he came first in Luapula and second with a large vote in Northern Province. He failed to make a national appeal however, and his support was negligible in Western, North-Western and Southern Provinces. Nonetheless, he appeared not merely to be a regional politician, because he dominated the urban vote. This was true not only in the two urban provinces of Lusaka and the Copperbelt, but also in provincial headquarters he gained much more votes than in the surrounding rural areas.. In the past, urban areas had voted along the language group that was dominant in the city. Now, an urban as compared to a distinct rural vote had emerged in Zambia.

What is more, Sata mobilized this vote much more on issues than had been common in the past. Three issues in particular played a big role: firstly, his protest against the immigration of Chinese traders and workers as well as Chinese investment; secondly, his advocacy of raising the taxation of the mines; thirdly, his advocacy of a stay of prosecution for Chiluba and his friends for the "theft" of national resources. This was a

fiercely nationalistic programme: the prosecution of Chiluba and his friends is sponsored by the donor community.

Conclusion

This article aims to broaden the considerations that are taken into account in interpreting African politics. Concepts such as neo-patrimonial politics, patron-client relations and prebendary politics have become a kind of mantra. Indeed, there is a danger of losing sight of the specificity of political situations through the use of words such as neo-patrimonial systems. The result is a kind of reductionism that leaves unexplained the differences between African political systems that can all be called patrimonial, and belittles all political change.[26] For instance, in comparison with neighbouring countries, Zambia has a more democratic political culture as is evident from the grassroots movement to abolish the one-party state in the early nineteen nineties and the movement to prevent Chiluba standing for a third term. Democratic elections have led to the overturning of established political positions. This specific aspect of Zambian politics cannot b explained by the abovementioned common concepts.

It is better explained as resulting from a particular political culture that succeeds regularly in giving a feeling of inclusion to the majority of the Zambian population through the formation of a maximum coalition.[27]

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[26] See: Hagmann, 'Ethiopian political culture', p.607.

[27] This does not imply an uncritical view of Zambian politics. All leaders regularly have strong authoritarian tendencies. However, this mostly arouses protest.

Essential in bringing about this maximum coalition is a struggle to establish moral credentials and Mwanawasa had succeeded in doing that. The nature of this struggle is clear in an editorial in the Post newspaper after a British court was allowed to give a verdict in the corruption cases against Chiluba:

> We are also conscious that Levy (Mwanawasa) has paid an extremely high price politically and socially for the position he has taken on Chiluba and his cohort of thieves. It would have been quite easy for Levy to U-turn and abandon this crusade. We do not forget that there has been a lot of contradictions from the government in the fight against corruption. And yet we must acknowledge that on the whole Levy has delivered the decisive victory for the Zambian people. It does not matter how active and pro-active is a free press, indeed it does not matter how pro-active and militant civil society might be, the victory that the Zambian people have scored could not have been scored without a willing government – Levy deserves the credit. [28]

Another consequence of explaining African political behaviour merely on the basis of opportunistic considerations is that the role of issues in African politics is belittled. The emergence of survey election research brings forward interesting conclusions in this respect.

> Zambians are mostly concerned with agriculture. Slightly over a third of the electorate (33.6%) consider agriculture as an important issue of concern in this election year. This was followed by general living conditions (19.5%), education and unemployment (14.1%) and health (10%). The constitution is not of much concern to the electorate as only an insignificant 0.1% considered it an issue. While 6.5% of the electorate either did not know or expressed no opinion at all on this question. [29]

The constitutional issues that seemed to excite the Zambian people were not considered as relevant in these elections by the mass of the people. An issue like access to fertilizer hardly reached the press and yet was of great importance in gaining support for Mwanawasa. Sata's particular strength in gaining the urban vote lay in his highlighting of nationalist issues that were strongly felt.

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[28] 'Give Levy the credit he deserves' *Saturday Post* 5/05/07

[29] Pangolin Consulting, *Public opinion on popularity of political leaders, parties and issues in Zambia* Draft Report of a First Round Poll conducted in the framework of the Zambia Election Fund, 2006 p.11

A sceptical reader may object that it remains problematic that losers do not accept the results in Zambian elections. That was particularly the case in the 2001 election, which was followed by a very long court case hearing petitions from the losers. This was fuelled also by observers' reports that were very critical. However, the petitioners failed to prove bad faith in the deficiencies in the electoral process. With the exception of the ruling party's access to government resources, these appeared to be merely administrative in nature and were not germane to challenging the results.[30] The losers in 2006 did not accept the results either, but they considered petitions as a waste of time and money as they assumed the courts to be biased.

Again, focusing attention on the particular cultural patterns in which the political process is embedded may bring clarity. If there is an inclusive interpretation of democracy that stresses consensus[31], then losing elections is an anomaly. It means that consensus has not been reached and that goes against central elements in the political culture. In the language of observer missions and human rights discourses, democracy is a set of values that are independent of culture, but that is not the case in political practices.

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[30] See: Van Donge, 'The EU Observer Mission'.

[31] The particular value of consensus in African political culture appear been most tellingly in the writings of Julius Nyerere. See: J. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity: A selection from his writings and speeches 1962-65* (Oxford University Press, London, 1967). See also: F. Schaffer,*Democracy in Translation; Understanding politics in an unfamiliar culture* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1998).and P. Mayer,'Witches', in Max Marwick (ed.) *Witchcraft and Sorcery* (Penguin Books, London, 1990), pp.54-70.

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