



The Patriotic Front (PF) Government under a Competitive Political Environment: Implications for Political Instability in Zambia

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Abstract

Political competition should generally improve government responsiveness just as competitive economic markets yield benefits to their consumers. However, this is not always the case. The competition between political parties in Zambia has been on the rise since 2001. However, increase in political competition tends to be associated with an unstable political environment. This paper brings to attention the potential effects of the increased political competition on Zambia's political stability, by looking at the changes to the vital governance indicators and fragility indicators. Since its ascendance to power in 2011, the PF has recorded marginal improvements in voice and accountability security apparatus. However, they have recorded deteriorations in political stability and absence of violence, human rights and rule of law indicators, and the fight against corruption. The overall political instability in Zambia has risen probably because of the increased competition in the political arena.

Introduction

Democracy in its narrow sense is expected to enhance political competition that in turn should be welfare enhancing for its citizens just as competitive economic markets yield benefits to their consumers. Whether political competition is conceptualized as the closeness of elections, the conflict between social groups, or the diversity of ideological views, it should generally result in improvements in democratic accountability and responsiveness such as the fight against corruption, independence of the judicial system, improvements in income distribution, reduction in riots and demonstrations. However, unlike economic competition, political competition results into complex outcomes that may be welfare enhancing or cost enhancing to some or all citizens.

Although the literature postulates that political competition is the primary mechanism driving policy responsiveness that is mediated by political institutions and government popularity, most studies show heterogeneous effects of political competition on democratic accountability and governance responsiveness. Competition for political authority or political influence has been reported to bring about improvements in policy outcomes in some cases and be a source of various political and social conflicts in others (Alfano and Baraldi 2012, Besley and Burgess

2002, Bardhans and Tao-Yang 2004, Gulati 2004, Griffin 2007, Cleary 2007, Faisman 2012, and Falkowski and Olper 2014).

In Zambia, competition for political authority has been on the rise since the inception of multiparty democracy in 1991, especially in the period after 2001. Despite extensive work by scholars about the potential effects of political competition, little is known about the possible effect of the rise in political competition, particularly, to democratic accountability, governance responsiveness and political stability in Zambia. Therefore, this paper tries to investigate to what extent governance and fragility indicators have changed with the rise in political competition i.e. the closeness of elections results between the competing political parties. Specifically, this paper brings to attention the responsiveness of the Patriotic Front (PF) government (that ascended to power after tightly contested elections in which the defeated the ruling party) given the rise in political competition measured by the average election victory margins.

Overview of Zambia's economic and political status

Zambia a heterogeneous country with 72 ethnic groups (Bemba 21%, Tonga 13.6%, Chewa 7.4%, Lozi 5.7% Nsenga 5.3%, Tumbuka 4.4%, Ngoni 4%, Lala 3.1%, Kaonde 2.9%, Namwanga 2.8%, Lunda 2.6%, Mambwe 2.5%, Luvale 2.2%, Lamba 2.1%, the rest 20.4% of the population) is a lower middle-income country with a GDP per capita of 1,800 USD and a real GDP growth rate of more than 6% per year for the past 10 years. The economic and political transformation that resulted in the privatization of the government-owned copper mines in the 1990s proved to have increased copper mining output through efficient production techniques that have improved profitability and thus spur economic growth especially with improvements in fiscal management after 2001.

However, Zambia's high dependence on copper as its major export that amounts to 80% of its foreign earnings makes it vulnerable to volatilities in commodity prices and government interventions in the sector but can benefit greatly from diversification and value addition in the primary products exported. Despite a steady economic growth, the distribution of income is highly uneven with a Gini coefficient of 57.5 (2010) coupled with high poverty levels at 60% of the population (Bank 2014). High demographic pressures such as the high birth rate, mortality rate, and relatively high HIV/AIDS burden have further frustrated the gains from economic growth. In addition, about 85% of the labor force is employed in the agricultural sector that is negatively affected by market distorting agricultural policies (CIA 2014, Mundi index, 2014, World Bank 2014, IMF 2014).

Zambia has had a long period of relative political stability, while experiencing seven successful presidential elections since the return to multiparty politics in 1991. The 1991 and 1996 Presidential and parliamentary elections were not tightly contested with the ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) dominating in both elections. However, competition for political authority has been on the rise since 2001 with the country being sharply divided along ethnic lines during elections and national policy. The presidential and parliamentary elections since 2001 have been tightly contested, with the victor, receiving less

than 44% of the votes and winning with small margins, i.e. 1.93%, 13.61%, 1.96% and 6.61% in 2001, 2006, 2008, and 2011 respectively. In terms of parliamentary election results, the 2011 elections were the most contested, with the Patriotic Front (PF) winning 60 seats, while the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) won 55, the United Party for Nation Development (UPND) won 28 seats, the Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD) and the Alliance for Democracy and Development (ADD) each won a seat, while the remainder were won by independent candidates with 2 pending parliamentary elections (electoral commission of Zambia, 2014).

To consolidate power, as was the case with the previous MMD government, the PF embarked on recruiting opposition members of parliament (MPs) into ministerial positions to get them on their side (Daily Nation, 2014). As expected, the recruited MPs were either expelled or suspended by their parties, and most of them lost their parliamentary seats despite challenging their parties in court. A record 22 by-elections were held within 3 years of ascending to power compared to 17 by-elections between 2007 and 2011. Most of the 22 by-elections were as a result of expulsions of opposition MPs appointed to ministerial positions. From the 22 by-elections, PF won 13, MMD 4 and UPND 5, indicating that the PF strategy of recruiting opposition MPs who were expelled, paid off. The PF increased its number of MPs from 60 in 2011 to 73 as of October 2014, while the UPND increased from 28 to 32, and MMD, the net loser in the game, was reduced from 55 to 37 MPs (electoral commission of Zambia, 2014). The by-elections were mired with violence between political party supporters, especially PF and UPND supporters, thus rendering the election results less credible, given the clear strategy by the PF of appointing opposition MPs. The heterogeneous effect of increased competition for political authority has to be seriously considered for Zambia especially, if the political competition is a source of social-political conflicts or unrest as this can cause or increase political instability.

Political competition, government accountability and political instability

Several studies show that political competition has the potential to accelerate political instability, especially when the ruling political parties try to suppress the opposition by intimidating them through threats of arrests or violence and other forms of political oppression to consolidate their power (Powell 2013). Although different dimensions of political instability have different effects, there is strong evidence from the literature showing that political instability has the potential to frustrate investment and affect economic growth negatively (Jong-A-Pin, 2009, Aisen and Veiga 2011, Hussain 2014).

Literature that measures effects of political competition on democratic accountability such as Adams 2012, Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008, Jones 2013, shows that political competition enhances democratic accountability in heterogeneous societies but may permit the incumbent to escape electoral control if the society is homogeneous because of variations in competitive behavior in these different types of societies. Voters in heterogeneous societies are less likely to trust their fellow citizens and as a result more likely to perceive a need to protect the benefits their group receives at the expense of others while voters in homogenous uncompetitive societies

assume that those around them share their preferences and are more willing to share public goods with them. Studies show that political competition can increase citizens' interest in politics due to the more exciting public conflict it creates and can increase citizens' perceived need to engage in politics to protect their own interests. As a result, competitive societies would hold incumbents more accountable for their policy record than uncompetitive societies through elections that are regarded as a sanctioning device that induces elected officials to do what they want. Political parties therefore, would be motivated to present policies that appeal to voters, whose bias toward these policies is based in part on reasons that have nothing to do with policy.

Furthermore, the unequal distribution of resources by the government of a political society seems to be the basic cause of continuing competition for political authority. Most studies show that when most political parties form government, their primary motive is to redistribute resources in line with the votes received. However, this tends to increase political instability as the inequalities in resource distributions lead to dissatisfaction and eventually increase uncertainty about future voting patterns as opposing political players use this imbalance to champion their cause, thus further increasing the competition for political authority (Belletini 1997, Alesina and Perotti 1995, Giskemo 2012).

Methods and data

This study uses the closeness of election results to measure political competition and relates the level of political competition to the trends in government and fragility indicators produced by the World Bank and the Fund for Peace respectively, and analyses changes since 1991 with a particular focus on the 2011 elections and the performance of the PF government.

Political competition

Closeness of previous elections, the level of diversity of ideological views, or the demographic diversity of the social groups are measures of political competition widely used by researchers (Jones 2013, Gulati 2004, Cleary 2007, Collingwood and Jochim 2013, Kayser and Lindstadt 2013). Margin of victories in previous elections is the most used measure of political competition by researchers, thus this paper also uses this measure to link the effects of political competition to government responsiveness using governance and fragility indicators. This paper measures the difference between the victor as well as the share of parliamentary seats to derive the scale of competition. The scale of electoral competition, EC , is constructed as a simple average of the margin of victory of winners of previous presidential elections in Zambia since 1991 and their party share of parliamentary seats relative to the competing party's share. If presidential and parliamentary elections are held at the same time

$$EC_i = 100 - \frac{1}{2}(PE_i + PS_i)$$

In the case of presidential by-elections

$$EC_i = 100 - PE_i$$

where PE_i is the absolute difference in the percentage of the vote between the winner and the runner up. PS_i is the absolute difference in the percentage between the winning party's parliamentary share in the elections and runner up party in parliament seats. The mean of these absolute differences is subtracted from 100 so that higher scores on the scale indicate greater electoral competition, and lower scores less competition.

Governance or institutional quality indicators

According to the World Bank (2013), Governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. The World Bank breaks down this definition to include, (a) the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; (b) the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and (c) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them. Two measures of governance corresponding to each of these three areas, resulting in a total of six dimensions of governance (worldwide governance indicators, WGI). They are categorized as follows:

(a)

1. Voice and Accountability (VA) – capturing perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media.

2. Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism (PV) – capturing perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including politically-motivated violence and terrorism.

(b)

3. Government Effectiveness (GE) – capturing perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies.

4. Regulatory Quality (RQ) – capturing perceptions of the ability of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permit and promote private sector development.

(c)

5. Rule of Law (RL) – capturing perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence.

6. Control of Corruption (CC) – capturing perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests.

These aggregate indicators are based on several hundred individual underlying variables, taken from a wide variety of existing data sources. The data reflect the views on governance of survey respondents and public, private, and NGO sector experts worldwide. The estimates of governance ranges from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performances. This paper analyses the extent to which these indicators have changed after a rise in political competition especially since 2011. The study analyses changes in voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness and control of corruption while others are included in the fragility indicators analyzed. These selected indicators provide a guide to the responsiveness of the PF government in a competitive political environment.

Fragility indicators

The Fragile States Index (FSI) is produced by the Fund for Peace. Each country is assigned a score based on major social, economic and political indicators to highlight the normal pressures that states experience and identifying when those pressures are pushing a state towards failure. Indicators are grouped into three categories, i.e. social indicators (demographic pressures, group grievances, human flight and brain drain), political indicators (state legitimacy, human rights and rule of law, security apparatus, factionalized elites and external intervention), and economic indicators (uneven economic development and poverty and economic decline). The FSI is used as a political risk assessment and early warning of conflict by policy-makers, investors and the public. High scores of these indicators imply low stability (high instability) and the low scores indicate high stability (low instability) in political environment (Fund for Peace 2014).

Although there is no consensus about the best measure of fragility and because these indicators may not accurately estimate the country specific economic and political indicators, they still provide useful information about the capacity of countries to handle pressure of social, economic or political and military nature. This study focuses on selected social, economic and political indicators as highlighted in the literature to be affected by strategies by political parties to consolidate power in the presence of high political competition, and thus, analyses group grievances, human rights and rule of law, and uneven development and poverty and economic decline.

Zambia's electoral competition

Table 1 shows that the former ruling MMD was dominant in all the elections except for the 2011 elections in which they lost to the then opposition PF. MMD, which was also an opposition party before 1991, managed to consolidate power with a majority in parliament for the 1991 and 1996 elections without a close contestation by other parties that were too weak to challenge it. The dominance during this period was because most the electorate had a common enemy, regardless of ethnic group, due to the frustrations with the President Kaunda's then ruling United Independence Party (UNIP) which formed a one party state, and viewed the MMD as a political party that liberated them from UNIP oppression, coupled with the decline in economic growth.

However, since 2001, the dominance of the MMD declined due to a number of reasons, one being the emergence of ethnically aligned political parties that resulted in votes being split along ethnic lines, and thus the reduction in the share of votes by the then ruling MMD. 2011 marked another milestone in Zambia's presidential elections when the incumbent president Rupiah Banda of MMD lost to President Michael Sata of PF. The loss is attributed to ethnic identity politics as well as perceived poor governance by President Rupiah Banda. The trend in parliamentary elections has been similar to the presidential one in terms of the dominating parties.

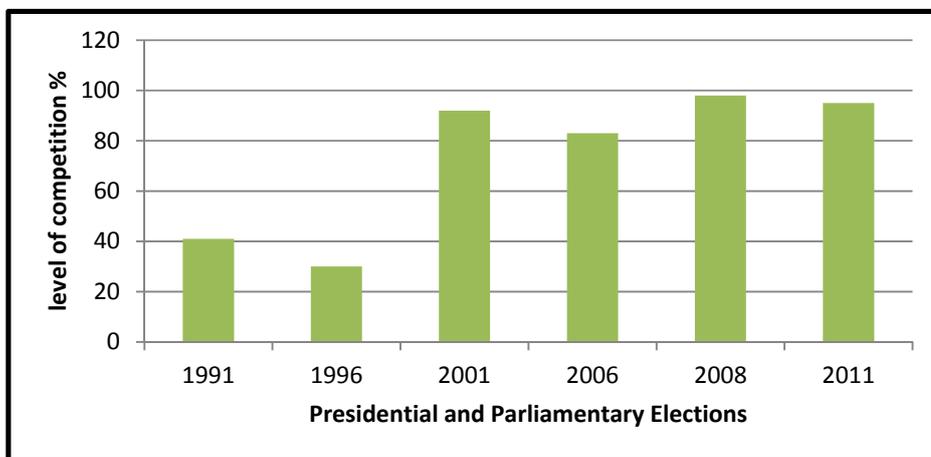
It is clear from Table 1 that the presidential and parliamentary elections in 1991 and 1996 were not competitive while the preceding elections were competitive. Figure 1 below shows the scale of electoral competition in Zambia since 1991. 1996 was the most uncompetitive followed by 1991 and this is due to the new constitution put in place that disqualified the main challenger, President Kaunda because his parents were not born in Zambia. All elections since 2001 have been competitive with the most competitive being the 2008, followed by the 2011 with a scale of 98% and 95%, respectively. This kind of competition puts pressure on the ruling party to perform or please the electorates, and in some cases work to weaken the opposition in order to consolidate power. However, the consequences of the strategies used by the ruling party in the presence of high competition have social, economic and political implications.

Table 1. Zambia presidential and parliamentary elections 1991 – 2011.

Election year	Presidential Candidate	Party	Votes Received	Votes %	Parliament Seats	Parliament Seats %
1991	Chiluba Fredrick J.T	MMD	972605	76%	125	83
	Kaunda Kenneth D	UNIP	311022	24%	25	17
1996	Chiluba Fredrick J.T	MMD	913770	68.96%	131	87.3
	Mung'omba Dean N	ZDC	160,439	12.11%	2	1.3
	Mulemba H	NP	83,875	6.33%	5	3.3
2001	Mwanawasa Levy P	MMD	506,694	28.69%	69	46
	Mazoka Anderson K.	UPND	472,697	26.76%	49	32.7
	Tembo Christon S (Lt.Gen.)	FDD	228,861	12.96%	13	8.7
2006	Mwanawasa Levy P	MMD	1,177,846	42.98%	73	48.7
	Michael MC Sata	PF	804,748	29.37%	43	28.7
	Hakainde Hichilema	UDA	693,772	25.32%	26	17.3
2008	Banda Rupiah B	MMD	718,359	40.09%		
	Sata Michael C	PF	683,150	38.13%		
	Hichilema Hakainde	UPND	353,018	19.70%		
2011	Sata Michael C	PF	1,170,966	42.24%	60	40
	Banda Rupiah B	MMD	987,866	35.63%	55	37
	Hichilema Hakainde	UPND	506,763	18.28%	28	19

Source: Electoral Commission of Zambia

Figure 1. Zambia’s electoral competition.



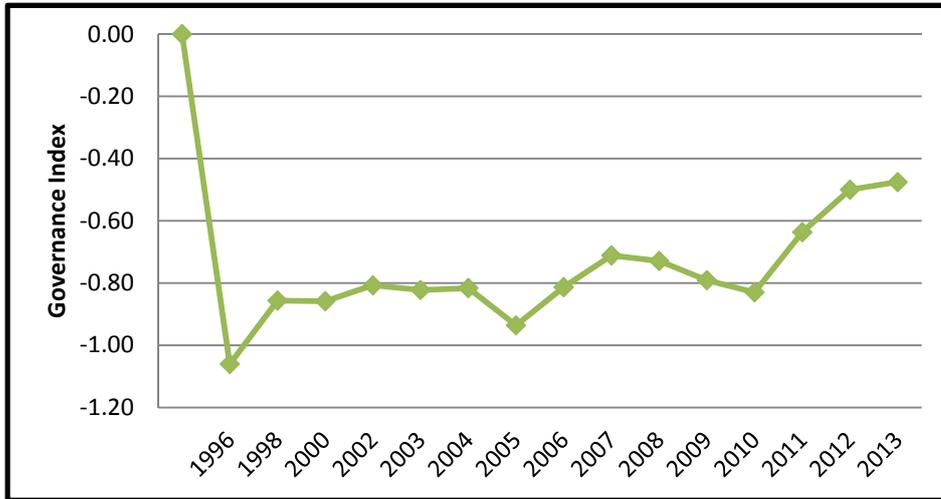
Source: Electoral commission of Zambia

Governance indicators

The PF government’s responsiveness to various pressures is strongly influenced by the competitive political environment and the consequences can be observed in the changes to the governance indicators.

Figure 2 shows a weak government performance at below zero estimates for all the years since the indicators were introduced. Although still weak, there was a significant improvement after 2010 under the MMD government. However, the quality of public service, policy formulation and implementation and credibility of commitments to policies has not improved under the PF government. The performance of the PF government has remained the same as it was in 2011 when they took power from the MMD, whose performance only improved after 2010. MMD’s improvements in government performance came only at a time when elections were a year away, implying that this improvement was meant to win votes in 2011. But due to the rise in political competition, MMD lost the elections as seen in Table 1, and this should be a lesson to the PF government whose performance is at par with the level that MMD left. While the non-improvement in performance may be due to the fact that they have been in power for three years, they only have two years to finish their term and this may not be enough to turn around how their government is perceived.

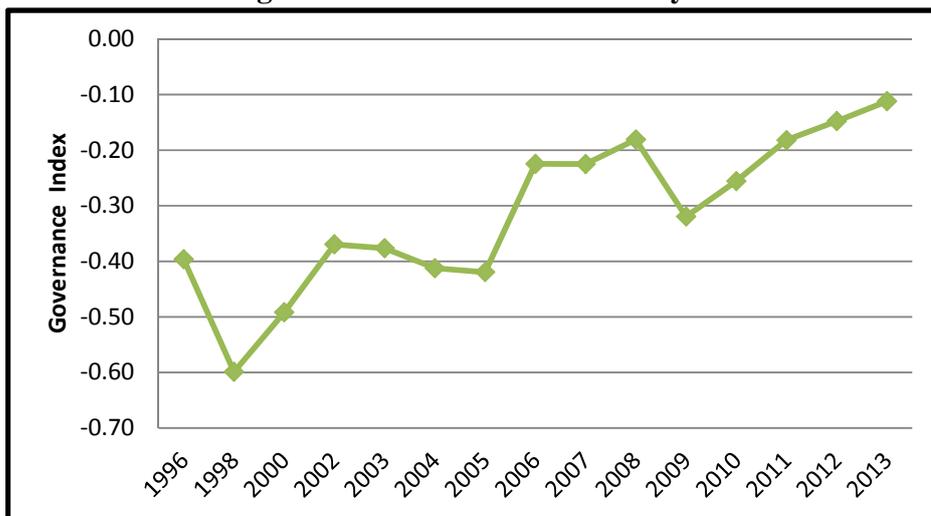
Figure 2. Government effectiveness indicators



Source: World Bank (WGI)

The perceptions of the extent to which Zambians are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media has been improving over time despite being weak as shown in Figure 3 below. The voice and accountability reduced after 2008 which was an election year, but this can be explained to have been caused by political intimidation by the ruling MMD to weaken the opposition and not allow them to freely associate, and use the media freely by threatening media agencies. The improvements in 2010 onwards can be attributed to the upcoming 2011 elections, with MMD trying to impress the electorate. After 2011, voice and accountability continued to improve under the PF government compared to the MMD regime.

Figure 3. Voice and accountability indicators

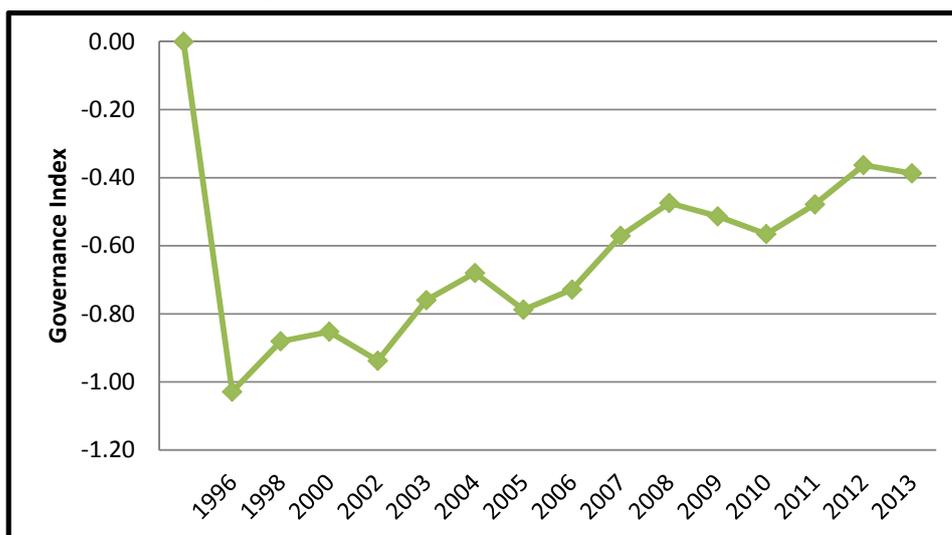


Source: World Bank (WGI)

Government control of corruption has been generally improving over time under the MMD regime even if remains weak at a below zero estimate as shown in figure 4 below. However, after 2012, there was a slight decline in the fight of corruption by the PF government. The PF campaigned to fight corruption once elected, but it seems they only did so in the first few months after assuming power and later directed their focus elsewhere, perhaps because they realized that they would still be competitive even without fighting corruption strongly.

Furthermore, the presence of a competitive environment seems to have triggered violence as the indicator shows a sharp decline in the political stability observed in figure 5. Although the indicator shows that there has been a stable political environment in Zambia with sharp reductions during election years such as 2001, 2006, and 2008, there has been a sharp decline in stability after 2012. This implies a presence of political violence, and can also be linked to the non-performing PF government who are trying to consolidate power through violence to silence their political opponents. If these are unchecked, the literature shows that there is a potential of an effect on economic growth and efforts aimed at reducing poverty.

Figure 4. Control of corruption indicators



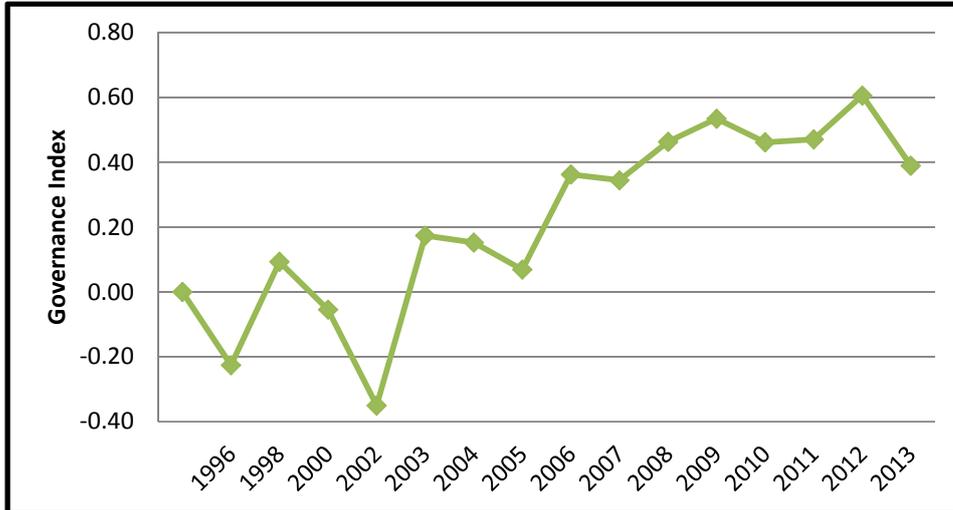
Source: World Bank (WGI)

Fragility indicators

Figure 6 below shows general rise in tension and violence between political groups since 2006. However, the period between 2011 and 2013 saw a sharp rise in political tension and this has remained high ever since. This coincided with the 2011 elections that were tightly contested, while the high tension after 2011 may be due to political consolidation strategies by the PF government, appointing opposition MPs to serve in its cabinet may have increased the tension with the opposition parties. It can be considered that the ruling PF has been using violence/tension to impose its power in a competitive political environment, and that it has also

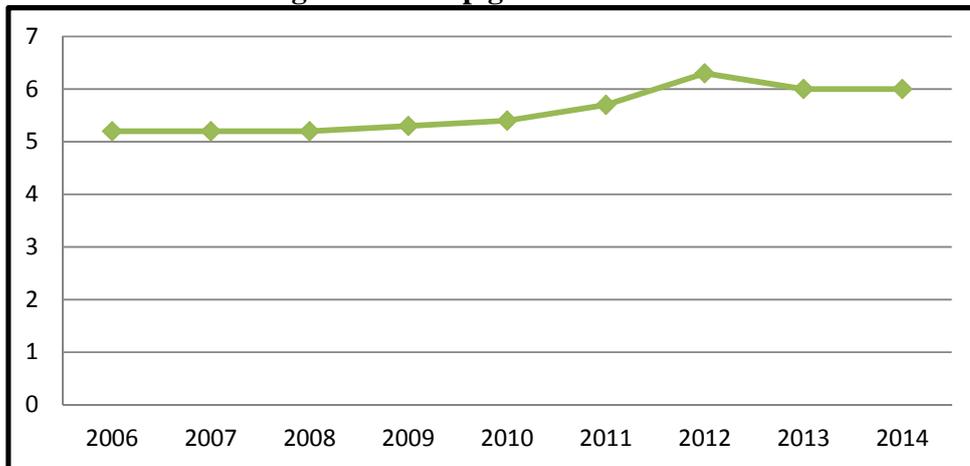
been contending with public grievances about the unfulfilled promises, resulting in demonstrations, strikes or the use of the media to channel their grievances.

Figure 5. Political stability and absence of violence/ terrorism



Source: World Bank (WGI)

Figure 6. Group grievance indicators



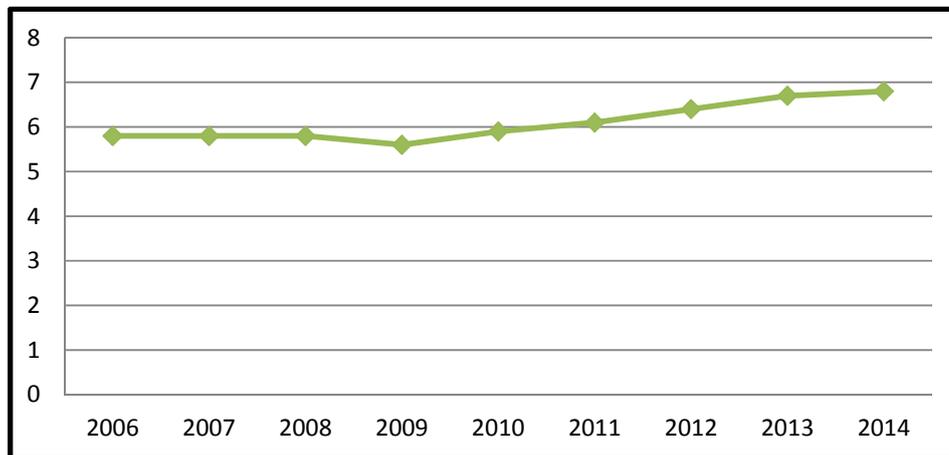
Source: Fund for Peace (FSI)

Moreover, figure 7 shows an increasing score in the PF government’s violation of human rights. Although the score increased since 2010, there was a sharp increase in the score after 2011 and it is at its all-time highest. This implies that press freedom, civil liberties, and political freedom have been violated by the PF government. Political prisoners and persecutions of political opponents seem to be on the rise under the PF government. These violations are likely to have resulted from the rise in political competition, and hence, in order to strengthen their power, the PF government seems to have resorted to intimidating opponents given the

competition, thereby increasing the likelihood of more violence from possible reactions by the opposition and thus further weakening of the political stability of Zambia.

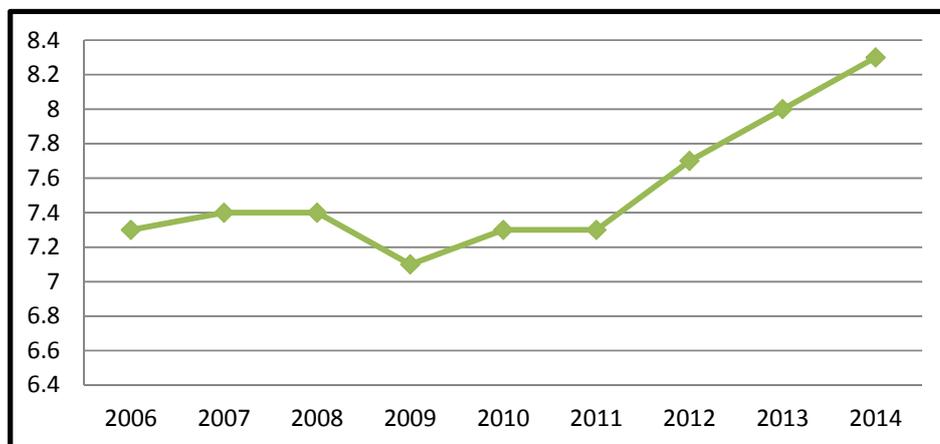
In addition, figure 8 shows that the uneven distribution of resources has been at an all-time high since 2011 when the PF got into office. This can be explained by the rise in political competition coupled with regional/ethnic voting patterns that has forced the PF government to allocate more resources to areas where they received more votes in order to retain the votes in the next election. The GINI coefficient of 57.5 for Zambia and more than 50% of the GDP is shared by 10% of the population (BTI 2014). Moreover, there are large gaps in service delivery between the rural and urban population for Zambia (ZIPAR 2014). Thus, not everyone from the regions where the PF got more votes benefits from their income redistribution strategies, and this may have effects on their performance in the next election.

Figure 7. Human rights and rule of law indicators



Source: Fund for Peace (FSI)

Figure 8. Uneven development indicators

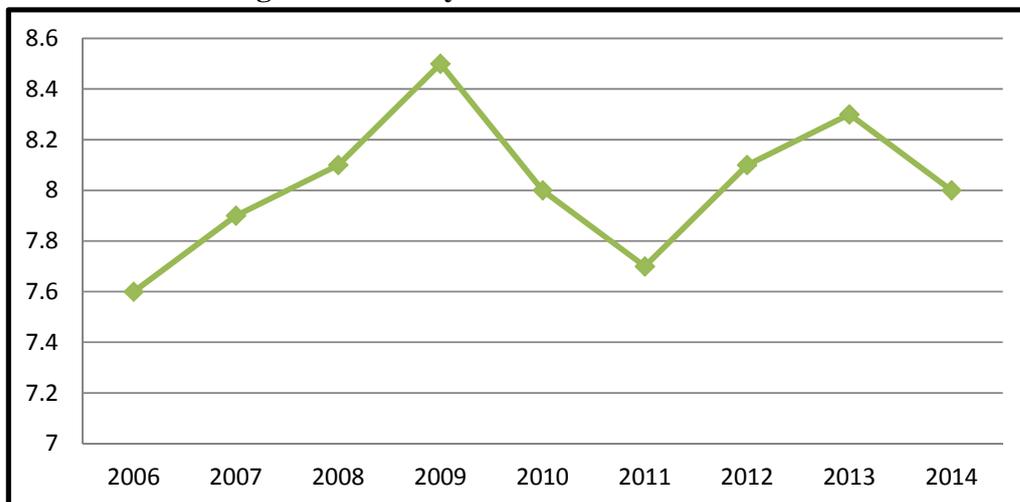


Source: Fund for Peace (FSI)

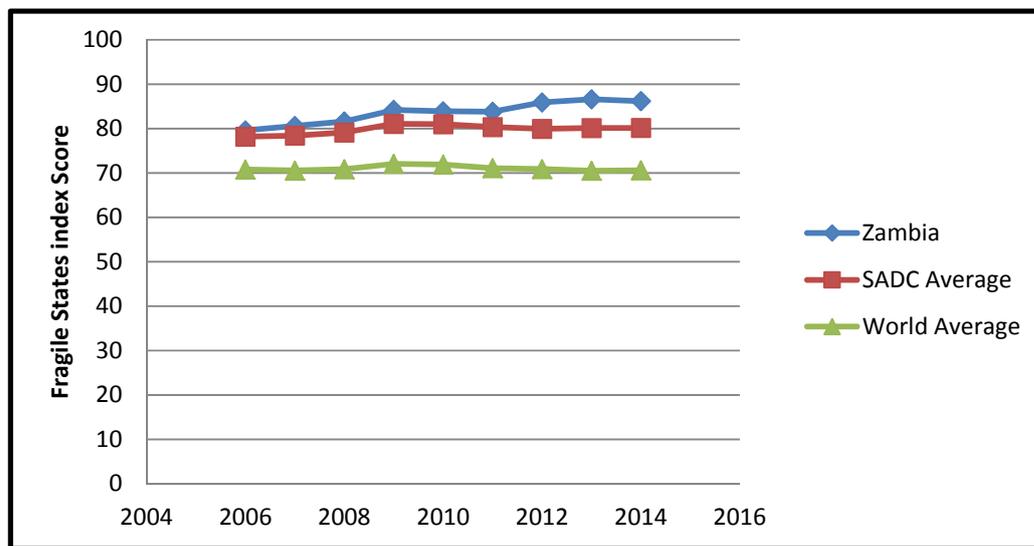
Poverty and economic decline have been relatively on the rise after the PF government came into power. Figure 9 shows a sharp increase in poverty and economic decline, and this can be explained by reductions in purchasing power due to the depreciation of the kwacha and a rise in both domestic and external debt to fund infrastructure and the current account deficit. The high number of unemployed youths can also be connected to this increase in poverty levels. This implies that the PF government struggled to provide for its citizens until after 2013 when they posted marginal improvements in reducing poverty and boosting the economy.

Furthermore, Zambia’s rank of 49 out of 178 countries on the fragile state index shows a relatively high political risk that has negative implications for peace, investment and eventually, economic development. In addition, figure 10 shows that Zambia’s fragility on average has increased at a greater rate than the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) regional average since 2011, which is higher than the world average. This indicates that the PF government is a government with a greater political risk than the previous MMD government. The rise in political competition may have been the reason for the rise in fragility as the PF government tries to weaken its political opponents to consolidate power. Just as literature shows that political competition has a potential to increase political instability, it has been observed that the increase in political competition may have a strong effect on the way the PF government has performed in terms of governance responsiveness and accountability, and curbing political violence.

Figure 9. Poverty and economic decline indicators



Source: Fund for Peace (FSI)

Figure 10 Zambia's overall fragility trend comparisons, 2006-2014

Source: Fund for Peace (FSI)

Conclusion

Governance indicators clearly show that the PF government has performed poorly in terms of its fight against corruption, its public service delivery and credibility of its policies while posting improvements in accountability that can be linked to the ability of the citizens to choose their leaders. Overall, the performance of the PF government has not improved beyond that of the MMD government. Furthermore, the fragility indicators show how the PF struggle to meet the pressures of political competition as most indicators show deterioration of the political environment. Political violence/tension, violation of human rights and the rule of law and uneven distribution of resources are at all-time highs in the period covered. This clearly shows that the PF government strategy to compete politically is not through improvements in policies/providing for its citizens, but through intimidating political opponents and hence, the rise in political instability.

The PF government should continue with its attempts to improve the freedoms of expression and media freedom if political risk is to be reduced, because it has serious effects on economic development and further frustrates the fight for poverty reduction, which is the major disease of Zambia. The current levels of press freedom are not significantly different from those of the previous MMD government, and as such a platform is available for the opposition parties to campaign for further improvements in press freedoms and possibly gain more votes in the next elections.

The PF government's strategy to intimidate political opponents through arrests, persecutions and politically-motivated violence should be revisited if the PF government wants to reduce Zambia's fragility and win the next elections. The electorates would possibly align themselves with a party perceived to be less violent, rendering the PF strategy to consolidate power impotent.

Furthermore, the rate of by-elections won by the PF since 2011 of 59% (13 out of 22) is not good enough to justify their strategy of appointing opposition MPs to ministerial positions expecting them to be expelled from their parties, thereby causing expensive by-elections. The cheaper strategy would be to negotiate with certain opposition party leaders to be included in its government. This would improve political stability although democracy would be undermined, but ultimately it may assist in consolidating power and increasing the likelihood of winning the next general election.

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