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1. Introduction

In 1990, Zambia was a country in crisis. After seventeen years of one party rule under Kenneth Kaunda and the United National Independence Party (UNIP), the country was becoming increasingly authoritarian. All opposition parties were banned and suppressed, and legislative power had been concentrated in the office of the president, with parliament merely acting as a rubber-stamping process. Over the same period, the Zambian economy had experienced steep decline, particularly following the nationalisation of the country's copper mines in the early 1970s, just before the price of copper dropped. Over this nearly two-decade period, poverty deepened, and Kaunda's ambitious plans for developing a strong welfare state were stalled. These two dynamics of growing authoritarianism and economic decline came to a head in 1990 when the government could no longer maintain the costly expense of subsidising the country's dietary staple, maize. Overnight the price of maize doubled, leading to days of rioting in Lusaka and surrounding districts.¹ This catalysed the opposition movement against the regime, as calls for an end to one party rule grew.² This opposition coalesced around a coalition of different civil society groups called the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD).

¹ B. J. Phiri, *A Political History of Zambia: From the Colonial Period to the 3rd Republic* (Africa World Press, Trenton NJ, 2006), pp. 165-166; M. Bratton, 'Zambia Starts Over', 3(2) *Journal of Democracy*. (1992) 81-94, p. 85.

² L. Rakner, *Political and Economic Liberalisation in Zambia 1991-2001* (The Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, 2003), p. 63.

These riots were a turning point for Kaunda. He was faced with two choices – either clamp down further by resorting to force in order to maintain his hold on power, or compromise. Since independence in 1963 and particularly since the advent of one party rule in 1973, Kaunda had become adept at building power around him, and repelling any challenges to it. His hold on power in Zambia in 1990 was as strong as that of Mugabe in neighbouring Zimbabwe – he had the means to maintain his hold on the regime, should he choose to do that. The option of compromise would involve introducing reforms that would risk this hold on power.³

Kaunda chose the latter. He lifted the ban on opposition parties, which then saw the MMD move from being an opposition movement to becoming a registered political party. Kaunda then authorised the first multiparty elections in nearly twenty years, which were held in October 1991. The broad base of support that buoyed the MMD into existence then materialised into a landslide victory and the country's first change of regime since its inception as an independent state. Kaunda accepted the results and ceded power peacefully, heralding the beginning of Zambia's Third Republic and its return to multiparty democracy.⁴ How and why did this point of crisis in Zambia's history lead to peaceful change?

The purpose of this article is to investigate the way that the growing resistance to authoritarianism in Zambia resulted in a peaceful democratic transition rather than violent repression and a consolidation of Kaunda's authoritarian rule. To do this, I adopt an atrocity prevention lens. An atrocity prevention lens is useful in providing an understanding of why opposition to, and transition from, authoritarian rule unfold in the absence of mass violence.

³ S. McLoughlin and M. Weerdesteijn, 'Eliminating Rivals, Managing Rivalries: A Comparison of Robert Mugabe and Kenneth Kaunda', 9(3) *Genocide Studies and Prevention*. (2016) 116-136, p. 116.

⁴ *Ibid.*

In this article, I develop a three-tiered atrocity prevention lens. The first tier explores the long-term structural conditions that make a country more vulnerable to identity-based violence, usually characterised by atrocity crimes (genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity). The second tier questions how and why such structural risk associated with mass atrocities does not always escalate into violence. Particularly important here is the character of leaders and regimes, especially the ways that leaders dampen identity-based division. Leaders who aggravate identity-based division are at far greater risk of provoking violence, indeed, leaders with exclusionary ideologies are regarded as increasing the risk of mass atrocities.⁵ By the same token, it is the vision and choices of individual leaders themselves that has the capacity to deescalate risk and steer countries and communities away from violence. The third tier questions how and why the existence of atrocity-related risk is operationalised or dampened during resistance to and transitions away from authoritarian rule. Understanding the nature of identity-based division in societies provides clues as to how political competition may materialise during transition away from authoritarian rule. I argue that the growing resistance to authoritarian rule in Zambia in the late 1980s and early 1990s remained ostensibly peaceful due to the inclusive conditions that the Kaunda's regime had forged during the formative years of statehood in the 1960s. These conditions dampened the trend towards ethnic-based political competition, and – despite democratic rollback and growing poverty – no ethnic group was favoured at the expense of others. This mitigated against ethnic-based grievances and allowed for a broad-based opposition movement that was inclusive in character.

⁵ See for example, B. Harff, 'No Lessons Learnt from the Holocaust? Assessing the Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955', 97(1) *The American Political Science Review*. (2003) 57-73.

The article unfolds in three parts. First I develop the idea of a three-tiered atrocity prevention lens as the key analytical device which sheds light on how popular resistance to Zambia's growing authoritarianism materialised in a largely nonviolent way, and heralded a peaceful transition to multiparty democracy. Second, I apply this atrocity prevention lens to Zambia, examining its long term risk of mass atrocities, how it has avoided such violence, focusing on Kaunda's 27-year rule, and the character of the opposition movement that developed in the 1970s and 1980s. Finally, I provide reflections on some of the key factors that helped steer Zambia away from authoritarian rule without violence. I argue that both the nature of Kaunda's rule, and the inclusive character of the MMD were instrumental in navigating this period of crisis with minimal levels of violence.

2. An Atrocity Prevention Lens – what can it teach us about popular resistance in the face of authoritarianism?

An atrocity prevention lens is a way of highlighting and focussing on the social faultlines in states and communities, as well as understanding the different paths that states and communities can take – both toward and away from violence – while navigating such risk. These faultlines, if neglected, or if deliberately aggravated by political elites for the purposes of gaining or consolidating power, can become the sources of identity-based violence that form the raw ingredients of atrocity crimes. According to Bellamy, an atrocity prevention lens can be defined as casting an understanding of the causes and paths of escalation over country situations in order to understand the nature of mass atrocity risk in any given situation.⁶ To better understand how resistance to authoritarianism and transitions away from

⁶ A. J. Bellamy, 'Mass Atrocities and Armed Conflict: Links, Distinctions and Implications for the Responsibility to Protect', *Policy Analysis Brief* (The Stanley Foundation, February 2011), p. 8.

such regimes do not inevitably lead to mass violence, I build on this definition and develop a three-tiered atrocity prevention lens: structural risk, atrocity avoidance, and how and why transitions away from authoritarianism avoid dangerous risk escalation.

The first tier identifies the existence of the structural preconditions to mass atrocities.

Atrocities crimes are never perpetrated in a vacuum – they inevitably arise out of social, political and economic factors that provoke tensions, inequality and exclusion between identity groups. Synthesising the findings of scholars of comparative genocide studies and mass violence, the last fifteen years have seen the emergence of risk and early warning frameworks in relation to mass atrocities. These frameworks often provide a combination of long-term structural preconditions (risk) and escalatory factors that precede imminent violence (early warning).⁷ In this analysis, I focus on the long-term structural factors that constitute an understanding of the risk landscape. Key social structural preconditions include state-based discrimination and identity-based division.⁸ Politically, a lack or absence of democracy, particularly the presence of an authoritarian regime with an exclusionary ideology,⁹ is a salient risk factor. As Harff's work demonstrates, most atrocities are committed by authoritarian leaders and regimes that display an exclusionary ideology – 'a belief system that identifies some overriding purpose or principle that justifies efforts to restrict, persecute, or eliminate certain categories of people.'¹⁰ Economic factors include

⁷ See, for example, United Nations, *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention*, 2014, Available at: [Doc.1 Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes EN.pdf \(un.org\)](#); A. J. Bellamy and S. McLoughlin, *Preventing Genocide and Mass Atrocities: Causes and Paths of Escalation*, 2009, Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Early Warning Project*, 2024, available at: [earlywarningproject.ushmm.org](#).

⁸ G. Stanton, 'Could the Rwandan Genocide have been Prevented?' 6(2) *Journal of Genocide Research*. (2004) 211-228; Early Warning Project, 'Risk Factors', 2024, available at: [earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/risk-factors](#).

⁹ See Harff, *supra* note 3; M. Krain, 'Democracy, Internal War, and State-Sponsored Mass Murder', 1(3) *Human Rights Review*. (2000) 1-24; R.J. Rummel, *Death By Government* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994).

¹⁰ Harff, *supra* note 3, p. 63.

horizontal inequality and economic decline.¹¹ While the existence of these factors do not inevitably lead to mass atrocities, such violence rarely – if ever – occurs in their absence. Knowledge of these risk factors is important because it helps us understand the social faultiness which perpetrators of mass atrocities often exploit during times of crisis and upheaval.

Because the presence of long-term risk does not make atrocities inevitable, the second tier explores the question of why such violence does not happen, or why risk does not escalate to dangerous levels. It is not uncommon for risk to plateau or to decrease, raising the question of why it is that some countries are able to manage the conditions associated with such risk.¹² More often than not such violent outcomes do not occur in the face of risk.¹³ Inquiring why it is that risk is managed or mitigated provides insights into the agency of local and national actors in managing challenges associated with mass atrocity risk. Yet the question of ‘why not’ was rarely addressed until relatively recently. Over the last decade we have begun to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that prohibit risk escalation,¹⁴ or build resilience within countries and communities, which dampen the prospects of violence.¹⁵ At a structural level, policies and actions that promote social cohesion and inclusion amongst identity groups is central. Central to this is the construction of a national identity that

¹¹ F. Stewart, ‘Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: An Introduction and Some Hypotheses’ in F. Stewart (ed.), *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 2.

¹² D. Mayersen, ‘Predicting Genocide and Mass Killing’, 23(1) *Journal of Genocide Research*. (2021) 81-104, p. 100.

¹³ S. McLoughlin, *The Structural Prevention of Mass Atrocities: Understanding Risk and Resilience* (Routledge, Oxon, 2014), p. 25; Genocide Prevention Advisory Network, ‘Genocides, Politicides, and Other Mass Murder since 1945 with Stages in 2008’. (2009) Available at: www.gpanet.org/content/genocides-politicides-and-other-mass-murder-1945-stages-2008; D. Chiro and C. McCauley, *Why Not Kill Them All? The Logic and Prevention of Political Mass Murder* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 95.

¹⁴ See S. Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); M. McGovern, *A Socialist Peace? Explaining the Absence of War in an African Country* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

¹⁵ See McLoughlin, *supra* note 11; J. Krause, *Resilient Communities: Nonviolence and Civilian Agency in Communal War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

transcends divisions amongst religious, ethnic and other groups.¹⁶ An inclusive political vision, of course, needs to be backed up by policies and an institutional culture that sees an equitable distribution of resources and participation.¹⁷

Crucial to the fostering of an inclusive vision of a country are its leaders. Asking the question of why some countries at risk choose paths away from violence helps us understand what kinds of leaders and regimes are more prone to resorting to the perpetration of atrocities when challenged. As regime type is a strong indicator of the level of risk associated with mass atrocities, when leaders of such regimes find themselves under threat, political instability often unfolds.¹⁸ For example, as the Ottoman Empire weakened in the late nineteenth century, Sultan Abdul Hamid established Kurdish militias that massacred approximately 100,000 Armenians. Armenians were regarded as a threat again, during the First World War, leading to their mass deportation and elimination¹⁹. It was perceived threat that motivated Stalin's purges during the 1930s, which led to the deaths of up to 20 million Soviet citizens.²⁰ In Zimbabwe in 1982, it was Mugabe's desire to neutralise what he perceived to be a challenge to his power from Ndebele speakers that lay behind his military operation that led to the massacre of approximately 20,000 from this community.²¹ The risk of an authoritarian leader resorting to violence in order to confront challenges to their hold on power is much higher in cases where patterns of discrimination and persecution are already evident in the character of their rule. For example, in Rwanda following independence in 1960, a pro-Hutu regime institutionalised a number of policies that distinguished,

¹⁶ See Straus, *supra* note 12, pp. 50-51; McLoughlin *supra* Note 11, pp. 157-159; McGovern, *supra* note 12, p. 7.

¹⁷ Straus, *supra* note 12, p. 50; McLoughlin *supra* note 11, p. 158.

¹⁸ See, for example, B. Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the 20th Century* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2005).

¹⁹ D. Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005), p. 14.

²⁰ A. Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives* (Glasgow: Fontana Press, 1998).

²¹ McLoughlin and Weerdesteijn, *supra* note 3.

discriminated against, and demonised Tutsis. After a protracted civil war – partly a reaction against this persecution – Hutu militias initiated a genocide that killed up to one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus.²² Yet this cuts both ways; leaders can also steer countries away from instability and violence, and dampen the possibility of identity-based conflict.²³ Straus, for example, argues that it was the promotion of a ‘founding narrative’ of inclusivity by inaugural leader Félix Houphouët-Boigny that contributed to restraint in Côte d’Ivoire, even during periods of upheaval.²⁴ In his study of Guinea, McGovern finds that the socialist vision of the state in early independence forged a script of common struggle that encouraged citizens to look beyond their ethnic, regional and religious differences in order to service a future in a ‘unitary, revolutionary, modernising nation.’²⁵ The stories leaders tell, and the policies that emanate from those stories clearly matter when it comes to how states navigate paths towards or away from violence.

The third tier concerns the dynamics of political competition in transitions away from authoritarian rule. Questions around risk and the question of why some countries are able to avoid mass atrocities help inform the third tier, particularly as the risk of mass atrocities are considerably heightened during periods of transitions, especially in countries that contain social fault lines. In cases where countries embark on transitions away from authoritarian rule, democratic competition is often defined by the nature of persecution against identity groups that preceded such phases, making transition particularly prone to mass atrocities.²⁶ Often if particular identity groups have been marginalised under authoritarian regimes,

²² Stanton, *supra* note 6.

²³ See S. McLoughlin, ‘The Role of Political Leaders in Mitigating the Risk of Mass Atrocities: An Analysis of Khama, Kaunda and Nyerere’, 96(6) *International Affairs*. (2020) 1547-1564; D. L. Byman and K. M. Pollack, ‘Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In’, 25(4) *International Security*. (2001) 107–46, p. 108.

²⁴ Straus, *supra* note 12, pp. 123-124.

²⁵ McGovern *supra* note 12, p. 7.

²⁶ See, for example, M. Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005).

political competition arising during transition towards multi-party politics runs the risk of manifesting along the same identity-based lines, which exacerbates the risk of identity-based violence.²⁷ For example, widespread atrocities were committed in Burundi following a failed democratic transition that saw political competition defined by ethnicity.²⁸ When some countries are able to resist authoritarian rule and embark on processes of democratisation without experiencing mass violence, the reasons for this often lie in how social fault lines and identity-based difference were managed prior to transition.

3. Casting an Atrocity Prevention Lens over Zambia

Applying an atrocity prevention lens in the case of Zambia would illuminate the extent to which the decisions and actions of an authoritarian leader – Kenneth Kaunda – aggravated identity-based fault-lines in his efforts to maintain a hold on power. Such a lens is informative in Zambia as it provides greater clarity on why it is that challenges to Kaunda's hold on power, and the subsequent democratic transition was absent of mass violence, despite the existence of a number of risk factors associated with such violence. Zambia is a country that has been characterised by widespread poverty and inequality, as well as ethnolinguistic divisions which, in its first decade, formed the basis of growing factional divisions within the ruling United Independence Party (UNIP), and between parties. Yet towards the end of its period of entrenched authoritarian rule under Kaunda, political resistance, and the subsequent political competition during democratic transition were largely absent of these identity-based divisions. Moreover, Kaunda's response to growing resistance to his rule was to cede to demands and introduce reforms that steered the country back towards a multiparty

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 4; J. Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (Norton, New York, 2000), pp. 28-29.

²⁸ J. Snyder, *supra* note 27, pp. 296-301.

democratic system. The subsequent sections in this article will use an atrocity prevention lens to argue that this absence of mass atrocities (and indeed most forms of violence) was a product of the country's first leader, Kaunda, who, despite his growing authoritarianism, maintained an ideology that was absent of the exclusionary traits that often instrumentalise social fault lines in the lead-up to the perpetration of atrocities.

3.1 Structural Risk factors in Zambia

Between Zambia's independence in 1964 and the early 1990s, Zambia exhibited three major risk factors associated with mass atrocities. The first is political competition characterised by ethnolinguistic difference. Ethno-linguistic tensions had a major impact on the dynamics amongst political elites in Zambia's First Republic. Following independence, Zambia was established as a multi-party democracy, although the political landscape was dominated by the development of factions on the basis of the country's four major ethno-linguistic groups: Bemba, Lyanga, Tonga and Lozi.²⁹ Under Kaunda, the ruling UNIP party contained a broad cross section of these groups, but as the decade unfolded, allegiances within the party were forming along ethnic lines.³⁰ This led to tensions between groups, and attempts to entrench different government departments with members akin to these groups.

Related to this was the repeated calls for secession by traditional leaders in the Western Province – predominantly Lozi speakers. Formerly known as Barotseland during British colonial rule, upon independence the Western Province agreed to a number of provisions

²⁹ P. Burnell, 'From Low Conflict Polity to Democratic Civil Peace: Explaining Zambian Exceptionalism, 64(2) *African Studies*. (2005) 107-133, p. 9.

³⁰ R. Molteno, 'Cleavage and Conflict in Zambian Politics: A Study in Sectionalism', in William Tordoff (ed.), *Politics in Zambia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974), p. 69; D. N. Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 56-69.

including greater autonomy on a range of local governance matters. Most of these were abandoned by Kaunda in the first year of independence, owing to his preference for uniform governance structures across the country.³¹ Since then, calls for secession have grown.

The third major risk factor was Zambia's growing authoritarianism. Between 1973 and 1990, President Kaunda banned opposition parties and established a 'one party participatory democracy'.³² Over time his hold on power became increasingly entrenched, as he sacked politicians who opposed him, and he centralised power in the office of the president, reducing parliament to a rubber-stamping exercise. Those who disagreed with Kaunda and his methods were excluded from politics, and were denied positions in the public sector.³³ As the country's economy went into profound and prolonged decline throughout the 1970s and 1980s, opposition slowly arose through various civil society organisations, from churches to unions and student groups, among others.

The combination of ethno-linguistic divisions and growing authoritarianism had the potential to exacerbate the risk of mass atrocities, and to entrench fault-lines that were emerging during the first decade of independence. Such a combination of risk factors has led to mass violence in other countries, both in the region and beyond. Zimbabwe, Zaire (now DRC), Burundi and Rwanda provide stark illustrations of the ways that identity-based marginalisation and authoritarianism can result in violent outcomes at the behest of leaders aiming to consolidate their power. Yet as Kaunda banned opposition political parties and centralised power in the office of the president, he avoided aggravating ethnic differences.

³¹ S. Lindemann, *Inclusive Elite Bargains and Civil War Avoidance: The Case of Zambia* (London: Crisis Research Centre, 2010), pp. 12, 15.

³² Phiri, *supra* note 1, p. 164.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 164; M. Larmer, 'Zambia Since 1990: Paradoxes of Democratic Transition', in A. R. Mustapha and L. Whitfield (Eds.), *Turning Points in African Democracy* (Martlesham: James Currey, 2009), pp. 116-118.

3.2 Risk Mitigation and Kaunda's Impact

These risk factors made Zambia volatile to identity-based tensions that could have escalated into violence, particularly in the formative years of independence in the 1960s. They characterised the crisis within the government that emerged in the late 1960s, where competition between different ethno-linguistic factions within the government UNIP, all of whom were vying to claim ministries and control of government departments. There was an increasing tendency towards faction-building along the lines of these four groups, which initially materialised within the ruling UNIP party, but then extended to newly formed opposition parties, many of which were based around support bases of specific groups.³⁴ The risk of this factionalism was the possibility that members of different groups would secure ministerial posts, then recruit ethnic allies into government departments, in the context of a fast-growing public sector, which would become the largest employer within the country.³⁵ This led to a political crisis in the late 1960s when various members of UNIP – unhappy with their allotment of power and position – broke away and formed opposition parties using ethnic kinship as bases for support. Political competition in the new multi-party democratic state was hardening along ethnic lines. However, there were countervailing forces, principle of which was Kaunda. He was instrumental in managing these identity-based tensions among the elite, as well as dampening the calls for independence in Western Province. To understand how he managed this, and the ideology that motivated his actions, a brief background of Kaunda's life is warranted.

³⁴ Posner, *supra* note 38, p. 57.

³⁵ Molteno *supra* note 38, p. 63; M. M. Burdette, *Zambia: Between Two Worlds* (Boulder CO: Westview, 1988), pp. 69-70.

As a leader of the independence struggle against the British, and as Zambia's inaugural president, Kenneth Kaunda's legacy set a precedent for Zambian statehood. His own background provides some insights into the principles that defined his leadership. Kaunda was born in 1924 in a district called Chinsali, which is located in modern day Malawi. Initially qualifying as a teacher, Kaunda became politically active in the 1950s after being thrown out of a British-owned bookshop for walking through the front door instead of the back, as was expected of Africans at the time. It was this event, along with others that motivated Kaunda to join the pro-civil rights organisation Northern Rhodesia African National Congress.³⁶ Initially focussed on addressing forms of discrimination and exclusion by white-owned businesses and the British colonial administration, the ANC developed into a movement that advocated for independence. Kaunda eventually left the ANC, and, after a brief period in prison, joined the UNIP, eventually becoming the party's leader.³⁷ Like the ANC in Northern Rhodesia, UNIP advocated independence through nonviolent means. Kaunda's activism was inspired by his Christian beliefs, which he believed underpinned the need to treat everyone equally, and with dignity.³⁸ It was this firm belief that not only steered his activism away from violent confrontation with British colonial rulers, but it was also influential in his construction of a Zambian national identity that cautioned against any particular ethnic group from gaining advantage over others. Kaunda's goal was to move toward an independent Zambia that avoided discrimination against the British and between different ethno-linguistic groups within the territory.

Kaunda – not a member of any of these four major groups – saw the risk of whole government departments developing entrenched ethnic identities, and worked to offset that

³⁶ K. Kaunda, *Zambia Shall be Free* (London: Heinemann Education, 1962), p. 52.

³⁷ Burdette, *supra* note 43, pp. 30-33.

³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 69-70; R. Hall, *The High Price of Principles: Kaunda and the White South* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp. 48-50.

possibility. His approach was to constantly reshuffle ministerial portfolios and high-level personnel. This led to growing tensions in parliament, as various factions became frustrated at ministerial position shifting between them. Despite this, Kaunda was effective in preventing any one factional group from maintaining holds on any particular portfolios.³⁹ At the same time, Kaunda rewarded unity-leaning Western Province political representatives (both nationally and at the municipal level) by giving them lucrative positions in government, hence empowering those from the region who were in favour of national unity, and marginalising some traditional leaders who were agitating for secession.⁴⁰ Despite his actions, these tensions escalated, and from 1967 different factions started forming breakaway parties – each party representing the interests of individual ethno-linguistic groups. Between 1967 and 1973, Kaunda began a period of banning political parties on the basis of mitigating these identity-based tensions.⁴¹ While part of Kaunda’s motivation for banning opposition parties was to weaken ethno-linguistic tensions played out within parliament, the shift towards a greater centralisation of power, and growing intolerance of any opposition, brought its own risks.

The period of from 1973 to 1990, known as Zambia’s ‘Second Republic’, was characterised by authoritarianism. With UNIP the only party in parliament, Kaunda referred to this system as a ‘one party participatory democracy’. This period also saw growing centralisation of power, with all legislative decisions coming out of the Office of the President, and parliament merely rubber-stamping decisions that Kaunda himself was making. Among these was the decision to nationalise the country’s mining sector, with copper mining being the country’s greatest revenue earner. However, in 1974, the price of copper fell on the international

³⁹ Burdette, *supra* note 43, pp. 69-70.

⁴⁰ Lindemann, *supra* note 39, p. 36.

⁴¹ J. Pettman, *Zambia: Security and Conflict* (Davison Publishing Ltd, Blandford, 1974), p. 237.

market, and over the next nearly two decades, Zambia's economy went through a prolonged decline.⁴² Both poverty and malnutrition increased during this period, and the country struggled to fund a public sector that was the principal source of employment. In addition to economic challenges, Kaunda also put the judiciary under pressure, replacing any judge who made rulings against the government, or contrary to government wishes.⁴³ He also dealt harshly with opposition. Any politician who dissented from Kaunda's wishes were sacked from the government and excluded from working in the public sector.⁴⁴

Zambia successfully navigated the threat of ethnic division during its first decade of independence, and this was largely a result of the inclusive national narrative that Kaunda crafted. This inclusive narrative underpinned his efforts to counter the divisions between factional groups within UNIP, and to offset calls for secession from Western Province. However, in pushing against ethnic divisions in parliament, he fomented a different kind of risk. As he banned all political parties – ostensibly on the basis of maintaining unity – Kaunda established a one party authoritarian regime that not only prohibited dissent on the basis of ethnicity, it prohibited all dissent. After a protracted period of economic decline in the 1970s and 1980s, opposition to Kaunda gathered momentum, and without any opposition voices within parliament, threatened a new kind of instability beyond formal politics.

3.3 Resisting Kaunda and Transition away from Authoritarian Rule

⁴² N. McCulloch, B. Baulch and M. Cherel-Robson, *Poverty, Inequality and Growth in Zambia during the 1990s* (World Institute for Development Economic Research, 2000), p. 3.

⁴³ Burdette, *supra* note 43, p. 332.

⁴⁴ M. Larmer, 'Enemies Within? Opposition to the Zambia One-Party State 1972-1980', in J. Gewald, M. Hinfelaar and G. Macola (eds.), *One Zambia, Many Histories: Towards a History of a Post-colonial State* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 112-115.

In this section I analyse the character of opposition that emerged over the 1980s, reaching its apogee at the end of the decade. What coalesced as a movement to challenge Kaunda's increasing hold on power and intolerance of dissent, was broad, inclusive, and transcended ethnic difference, making political opposition in the 1980s very different from political opposition in the 1960s. Indeed, the opposition movement, and the democratic transition that followed mirrored the kind of Zambia that Kaunda himself had envisioned and advocated.

With dissenting voices completely excluded from parliament, sources of dissent remained scattered during the 1970s and much of the 1980s. Resistance to government policies found voices in various civil society organisations throughout the country.⁴⁵ Student organisations were some of the loudest, but churches and unions also became increasingly vocal as economic hardship grew during the 1980s.⁴⁶ Many former politicians who had been excluded became prominent in the union movement. Frederick Chiluba became president of the Zambian Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) in 1974; Chiluba had steered the ZCTU as a vehicle for opposition since this time.⁴⁷ Throughout the 1980s, protests against the government grew in number and frequency, yet Kaunda remained unmoved by their demands. At the same time, the inefficiencies of a public sector prone to constant changes in personnel were being felt acutely. In 1985, for example, the country enjoyed a bumper harvest of its staple crop, maize, but much of it was left rotting in the ground due to conflicting government departments issuing contradictory and prohibitively expensive logistical demands that made it impossible for farmers to harvest, store and sell the maize without falling into debt.⁴⁸ Kaunda's frequent changes of personnel to offset the risk of

⁴⁵ D. M. C. Bartlett, 'Civil Society and Democracy: A Zambian Case Study', 26(3) *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (2000) 429-446, p. 434.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 235-236.

⁴⁷ Larmer, *supra* note 54, pp. 110-111, 124.

⁴⁸ See K. Good, 'Systemic Agricultural Mismanagement: The 1985 "Bumper" Harvest in Zambia', 24(1) *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. (1986) 257-284.

government departments becoming bastions of distinct ethno-linguistic groups, led to poor institutional memory, and a public sector unable to function. This, alongside protracted economic decline, compounded the frustrations that ordinary Zambians felt, and emboldened different civil society actors to speak out against the regime.

By the late 1980s, Zambia was in crisis. Economic decline and democratic rollback provoked growing discontent with Kaunda and the UNIP regime. While the banning of opposition parties in 1973 was motivated – at least in part – by Kaunda’s calls for national unity in an increasingly fragmented political environment, Zambia’s Second Republic became increasingly authoritarian in the 1970s and 1980s. Kaunda’s declaration of a ‘one party participatory democracy’ followed an increase in opposition parties that had been formed on the basis of ethnic identity, risking a deepening of ethnic-based difference in parliament, and threatening to divide the spoils of government along ethnic lines.⁴⁹ However, the intolerance of opposition voices also extended to within the ranks of the UNIP government. Politicians within UNIP who dissented from the will of Kaunda were sacked from the party and exiled from the public sector.⁵⁰ While some members of banned parties continued to voice their dissent through secretive informal meetings often held at weddings, funerals and church gatherings, others, like Simon Kapwepwe, chose to rejoin UNIP in order to press from within.⁵¹ Throughout the 1970s, Kapwepwe became increasingly vocal about Zambia’s economic policies, particularly Kaunda’s widespread nationalisation drive. As his criticisms gained influence amongst the public, UNIP sought to sideline him, eventually preventing him from being on the ballot of candidates for the presidency in 1978. Security forces also banned Kapwepwe and his supporters from attending UNIP’s conference that year. Following this,

⁴⁹ Phiri, *supra* note 1, p. 163.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

⁵¹ Larmer, *supra* note 31, pp. 107-108.

he abandoned politics altogether. Kapwepwe's fate was the fate of many who tried to challenge Kaunda's hold on power from within UNIP.⁵² Thus, opportunities for dissenting voices were closing, further weakening Zambia's democracy.

As Kaunda's hold on power grew, Zambia's economic fortunes endured a prolonged decline. Kaunda's decision to nationalise the banking and mining sectors in 1974 shortly preceded a steep decline in world copper prices, which was the country's chief source of export revenue. Amidst a rapidly expanding public sector, government revenue diminished. This trend continued into the 1980s amidst a phase of rapid urbanisation.⁵³ Both poverty and unemployment grew, and with more people living in cities, the country's urban poor became increasingly dependent on the state.⁵⁴ The government was no longer able to maintain the levels of food subsidies it had initiated in the 1960s, which led to greater discontent, with food riots becoming a common occurrence from the mid-1980s onwards.⁵⁵ The combination of urban unemployment – particularly amongst the youth – growing social problems and anti-government sentiment, became a growing challenge for Kaunda's grip on power. At the same time, the changing international politics in the later 1980s and early 1990s, particularly with the fall of the Eastern Bloc and Soviet Union led to less tolerance in the West of autocratic states.⁵⁶ This resulted in a decline in international aid for Zambia, which further compounded the political pressure on Kaunda to change track.

Opposition to Kaunda's hold on power gradually took shape over the 1980s, culminating in a broad coalition of civil society groups called the Movement for Multiparty Democracy

⁵² *Ibid*, pp. 112-115,

⁵³ Phiri, *supra* note 54, pp. 165-166; M. Bratton, 'Zambia Starts Over', 3(2) *Journal of Democracy*. (1992) 81-94, pp. 84-85.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 85.

⁵⁵ Lindemann, *supra* note 39, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Bartlett, *supra* note 59, p. 429)

(MMD) by the closing of the decade. While popular dissatisfaction with the Kaunda regime increased after 1974 with the advent of Zambia's protracted economic decline, with formal political opposition prohibited, this growing dissent found its expression in civil society. Students, particularly at the University of Zambia in Lusaka maintained anti-government protests throughout the 1980s, protesting against the government's economic policies.⁵⁷ The business community also became a site of opposition, with growing numbers of former civil servants that found themselves out of work during frequent personnel reshuffles finding refuge in private enterprise.⁵⁸ The churches' opposition to UNIP had been growing through the 1970s and became overt in 1980 after the government moved to embed Marxism-Leninism in the school curriculum.⁵⁹ From then, churches in Zambia became open places of dissent, providing cover for numerous meetings and gatherings for people to discuss politics. The legal fraternity was also focal point for opposition, with the judiciary – although gradually weakened – still able to issue rulings against government policy. Perhaps the strongest source of opposition during the 1970s and the 1980s was the union movement, particularly through the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). It was the ZCTU that was at the forefront of confronting government policies, particularly those that further entrenched Kaunda's hold on power.⁶⁰ Representing about 80 per cent of the total workforce (mostly public sector workers), ZCTU's leader, Frederik Chiluba, spearheaded resistance against government moves to force workers into UNIP membership. Around this time, membership of the ZCTU was twice that of UNIP.⁶¹ In 1981, the union organised resistance against government moves to reduce popular representation at local elections.⁶² These and other struggles morphed into the beginnings of a ZCTU-led campaign in 1989 to bring back

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 436.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 434-435.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 436; Bratton, *supra* note 67, pp. 84-85.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 85.

⁶¹ Bartlett, *supra* note 59, p. 437.

⁶² Bratton, *supra* note 67, p. 84.

multiparty politics. All of these civil society-led sources of opposition coalesced into a coherent movement following the removal of food subsidies in 1990.

The turning point for the resistance against Kaunda's regime came in June 1990 with the doubling of the price of maize, the nation's staple. As a product of the country's continued economic decline, the UNIP government was no longer able to maintain food subsidies, and on June 25 lifted these on ground maize, which led to the overnight doubling of price. This triggered a student protest at the University of Zambia, which was both a response to the price rise and also a call for a return to democracy. After the police attempted to halt the protest, it degenerated into three days of rioting and looting, which extended to other parts of Lusaka and the surrounding districts, as well as towns in the Copperbelt.⁶³ Although the rioting stopped, the rallies continued, and the reaction to the doubling of the price of maize catalysed the various parts of the opposition movement into another gear. These rallies attracted support from broad sections of society, all calling for an end to one party rule, with some protesters publicly destroying their UNIP party membership cards. From July 1990, church leaders became more outspoken, and made direct calls for political reform to herald the end of the prohibition of opposition parties. In that month, the Catholic Secretariat wrote a piece advocating for a return to multiparty politics, which was published in the *Times of Zambia* as a full-page advertisement.⁶⁴

The reaction to the doubling of the price of maize also escalated formal moves of various opponents of Zambia's regime began to coalesce and unite against Kaunda's regime. In the early months of 1990s, prominent leaders and groups made moves to set up a meeting in

⁶³ Bartlett, *supra* note 32, p. 432.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 432.

order to coordinate their activism, though it was not until after July that this materialised. Leading figures of opposition to Kaunda finally set up a meeting in Garden House Hotel in Lusaka on July 20 and 21. It was here they established the National Interim Committee for Multiparty Democracy (NICMPD). Lead by prominent figures such as Levy Mwanawasa, Frederick Chiluba and Arthur Wina, the NICMPD was principally comprised of four main groups – the trade unions, the churches, businessmen and academics.⁶⁵ Representing a broad collection of interests, the Committee was united in its public calls for the restoration of multiparty democracy. As the Committee comprised a broad collection of interests that had wide appeal throughout the country, it was able to exercise strong pressure on Kaunda's regime to relent on the question of political reform.

The growing pressure from outside the government (chiefly from the NICMPD) was effective in changing Kaunda's moves from considering a referendum to moving directly to legislate for constitutional reform.⁶⁶ Now this pressure prompted Kaunda to introduce the legislation that would allow for the formation of other political parties. In December 1990, Kaunda introduced and signed off on the Constitutional Amendment Act, which brought an end to the Second Republic of one-party rule, and heralded the beginning of the Third Republic, and the resumption of multiparty politics. The very day after the signing of this Act, the NICMPD changed into a political party and registered itself as the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD).⁶⁷ Other parties also emerged – over the next six months, thirteen more political parties registered themselves, including the National Democratic Alliance (NADA), the Multi-Racial Party and the Democratic Party (DP). But the most prominent and by far the most popular was the MMD. Over the next year, the MMD's

⁶⁵ Bartlett, *supra* note 45, p. 433.

⁶⁶ Bratton, *supra* note 67, p. 86.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

membership expanded, welcoming a number of UNIP MPs who had been agitating for change from within, but had either been thwarted or sacked. This included future president Michael Sata, who had been Minister for Decentralisation.⁶⁸

While popular pressure was successful in pushing Kaunda to lift the ban on opposition parties, the challenge of unseating a government entrenched in power since independence was daunting. Kaunda's regime had the advantage of incumbency, and influence which extended from high office to grassroots level in every district of the country. The government delayed the release of electoral rules for the September 1991 elections, and the MMD challenged the government on a number of issues. First, it took issue with the fact that the last time voter registration rolls were updated was in 1987, at a time when the one party system seemed immune to challenge.⁶⁹ It also accused the government of gerrymandering, arguing that the 150-seat National Assembly was biased in favour of rural locations, where UNIP was more likely to pick up support, while the focal point for opposition was in urban areas. In addition to this, they called for the Electoral Commission to count the votes at the polling sites, rather than transporting the ballot boxes to district centres, which they believed would open up opportunities for UNIP to tamper with the votes.⁷⁰ This led to the government agreeing in part to changing some of its practices – it promised to allow independent observers at polling stations, it allowed for more flexible rules in relation to voting registration, but it did not concede to the demand to conduct the count at polling stations.⁷¹ Aside from these practical issues, the key challenge for the MMD and other opposition parties was to convince Zambians – particularly the rural population – that there was a clear distinction between UNIP and the government, which was not an easy task given how

⁶⁸ Bartlett, *supra* note 59, p. 436.

⁶⁹ Bratton, *supra* note 67, p. 88.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 88.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 88.

ubiquitous UNIP had been for twenty-seven years, including seventeen years of one party rule.

In the lead up to the October 1991 election, there was a question of whether or not the identity-based tensions of the First Republic would resurface. In the 1960s divisions had materialised along ethno-linguistic lines both within UNIP and between parties, with many disaffected UNIP MPs forming breakaway parties along the lines of ethnic difference. This had been one of Kaunda's motivations for banning opposition political parties in the first place. However, the 1991 campaign was peaceful, and absent of the divisions that had emerged in the First Republic. One reason for this is that the race for power was clearly going to be between two main parties – UNIP and the MMD, rather than a large number of more fragmented parties, each appealing to a specific ethnic based. UNIP under Kaunda had defined itself as above ethnic difference. Likewise, the MMD had emerged out of a broad coalition of civil society organisations that was diverse and inclusive, and was not dominated by the interests of any single ethnic group. Thus, in order to build political support, MMD maintained its broad messages, rather than capitalising on grievances from any particular region or ethno-linguistic base. The biggest challenge was in the possibility that a change of regime would replace one patrimonial culture with another. Many members of the MMD, including its leader, Frederick Chiluba, had emerged out of UNIP, and were conditioned to the dynamics of autocratic rule, both within the party and in government.⁷² Nonetheless, the old tensions of the First Republic did not surface in any meaningful way in the 1991 campaign.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 93.

Indeed, the October 31 election was notable for its lack of violence. The MMD won a stunning victory, gaining 125 of the 150 available parliamentary seats, and attracting 75 per cent of the overall vote. This put an end to the rule of Kaunda and the incumbent UNIP, with the MMD's Frederick Chiluba winning the presidency. Zambia was the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to overturn an autocratic regime and embark on a transition back to democracy. Despite the difficulties of challenging a regime that had been entrenched in power for 27 years, the campaign was ostensibly peaceful, and the results transparent.⁷³ What was also significant was the manner in which Kaunda responded to the results. He accepted gracefully, and departed the presidential palace without fanfare. In being the first in the region to embark on democratic transition, and doing it in a way that saw the change of regime from one group of elites to another in the absence of violence or rancour, provided a model for other countries in the region. Zambia had set a precedent for democratic reform and peaceful regime change that was absent of the identity-based fault-lines that had marred the first republic. It was also a demonstration that dissent against an authoritarian regime need not be violent, nor be met with violence.

4. Reflections on Zambia's Peaceful Challenge of Authoritarianism

Zambia's growing opposition against the Kaunda/UNIP regime gained momentum throughout the 1980s and grew in intensity as the country's economic conditions deteriorated. In a country as diverse as Zambia, with prior ethno-linguistic divisions prompting a political crisis in the 1960s, the risk of challenging an authoritarian leader – whose hold on power had strengthened over nearly three decades – was high. Indeed, as Mann has argued, during such

⁷³ National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, *The October 31 1991 Elections in Zambia* (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 1992), pp. 68-69.

transitions, the mix of *demos* and *ethnos* are most likely to become entwined.⁷⁴ Lifting bans on opposition parties has led to such violence elsewhere in the region. In neighbouring Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo), for example, growing calls for democratisation were initially suppressed violently; then, after a brief period of power sharing, President Mobutu fomented conflict with the opposition leader's ethnic group, deepened division and fear, and sparked the displacement of more than 100,000 people.⁷⁵ Similarly, in Zimbabwe in 1982, President Mugabe ordered the massacre of Ndebele speakers in Matabeleland, as punishment for supporting his rival, Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwean African People's Union (ZAPU). All three countries had a powerful authoritarian leader, protracted economic decline and a growing frustration and anger with the incumbent regime. However, while these countries experienced identity-based violence and atrocities, Zambia's response to growing dissent, then its transition away from one party politics largely avoided violence. There are three main reasons why the challenge to Zambia's authoritarian regime was ostensibly peaceful.

First, the one-party regime under Kaunda was absent of an exclusionary ideology. While Kaunda banned political parties in the early 1970s, and centralised power in the Office of the President, this consolidation of power occurred, at least in part, in an effort to counter identity-based divisions that were become more salient in the country. The motivation for avoiding such divisions can be found in the character of Kaunda himself. While he clearly had flaws, Kaunda's personal philosophy was motivated by a desire for unity. His own political activism was a reaction against colonial discrimination, which he saw as anti-Christian. His early experience of being excluded from the front entrance of a bookshop during British colonial rule was formative in his own approach to political leadership.

⁷⁴ Mann, *supra* note 23, p. 4.

⁷⁵ See McLoughlin, *supra* note 11, p. 1.

Kaunda pointed out the contradiction between the introduction of Christianity by the British, and the behaviour of colonial settlers who discriminated between white and black. Kaunda's own commitment to Christianity, alongside his advocacy of socialist principles became the cornerstones of his philosophy of humanism, which then underpinned his nation building, particularly in the first decade of independence. This philosophy advocated a national identity that transcended differences between ethnic and tribal groups.⁷⁶ When it comes to mitigating mass violence, and developing the social and political conditions that prohibit such risk, the ideology of leaders matter, particularly in times of crisis, such as the growing discontent that engulfed the country in 1990. Kaunda was far from an ideal leader. He was harsh on anyone who opposed him – those within UNIP who spoke out against him were excluded from the party and from public sector employment opportunities. Yet even those who opposed Kaunda acknowledged that his efforts at balancing competing tribal and ethnic interests did more to avoid violence and maintain stability in the long run.⁷⁷ The absence of an exclusionary ideology was instrumental in the avoidance of violence – the most salient risk factor in relation to political instability and mass political violence is an authoritarian regime with an exclusionary ideology.⁷⁸

Second, as a result of Kaunda's philosophy of humanism, Zambia experienced a period of formative nation building that was absent of identity-based discrimination. The slogan of 'One Zambia One Nation' underpinned action during the first republic to mitigate the risk of identity-based tensions amongst political elites. Within UNIP, factions were formed along ethno-linguistic lines, each faction attempting to lay claims to some of the spoils of government. In response to this, Kaunda frequently engaged in the reshuffling of ministerial

⁷⁶ S. McLoughlin and Weerdesteijn, *supra* note 19, p. 1559.

⁷⁷ Lindemann, *supra* note 39, p. 36.

⁷⁸ See, for example, Harff, *supra* note 3; J. A. Goldstone and J. Ulfelder, 'How to Construct Stable Democracies', 28(1) *The Washington Quarterly*. (2004) 9-20.

portfolios, and the changing of departmental personnel at top levels in order to prevent ministries and departments from being claimed by particular factions.⁷⁹ At the same time, through Kaunda's philosophy of humanism, the construction of a Zambian identity that transcended ethnic difference meant that during both the First and Second Republic of the country's independent history, no one collective group gained advantage at the expense of others, even though there were attempts by elites to do just that. Even during the 17-year period of authoritarian rule during the Second Republic when Kaunda held almost all the levers of power, he ensured that all regions and all sectors of society were treated equally, and received an equal share of government support and welfare.⁸⁰ This was despite the dwindling economic fortunes of the country.

Finally, the opposition movement that emerged during the Second Republic was broad, inclusive and transcended the ethnic differences that had begun to materialise in the first decade of independence. The movement, which coalesced around the MMD, was a coalition of civil society organisations including church groups, the legal fraternity, the private sector, trade unions and student organisations. Absent during this period of dissent and opposition were the ethnolinguistic fault-lines that defined political competition and opposition during the first republic. That such fault-lines did not materialise in the opposition movement that developed over the 1980s has a lot to do with the nature of Kaunda's authoritarian regime. As discussed above, even at its most autocratic, and in the midst of profound and protracted economic decline that deepened poverty throughout the country, Kaunda was careful to ensure that resources were distributed equitably. Often during resistance movements and transitions away from authoritarian rule, the grievances of those who suffered under such

⁷⁹ Burdette, *supra* note 43, pp. 69, 71-72.

⁸⁰ Lindemann, *supra* note 39, p. 38.

regimes tend to materialise in new forms of multiparty democratic competition. Often the politicisation of such grievances can manifest in mass violence during such periods. Following years of marginalisation and exclusion during Belgian colonial rule, Hutus organised in the name of emancipation behind a political party known as *Parmehutu*, winning the vast majority of seats in the new parliament. They quickly turned the tables on marginalisation, persecuting ethnic Tutsis, and driving tens of thousands out of the country.⁸¹ In Burundi, after decades of Tutsi-led minority rule and discrimination against ethnic Hutus, international pressure for open elections led to the election of a Hutu government. This prompted a coup to protect the old status quo, which then led to violent uprisings and inter-ethnic violence that claimed the lives of 200,000 people.⁸² That this did not unfold in Zambia is a testament to the character of Kaunda's regime. Indeed, the broad base that composed both the membership and support of the MMD resembled the diverse character of the kind of Zambia that Kaunda himself had originally envisaged. Kaunda himself mused, 'With any luck, this generation will think of themselves not in tribal terms as Bemba, Lozi or Tonga, but as Zambians. This is the only guarantee of future stability.'⁸³

5. Conclusion

Zambia's peaceful transition away from authoritarian politics in 1991 set a precedent for other sub-Saharan African states to engage in democratic transitions. Some of these transitions (Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, DRC) have been characterised by mass violence

⁸¹ Mann, *supra* note 23, pp. 434-435.

⁸² Snyder, *supra* note 24, pp. 300-301; R. Lemarchand, 'The Burundi Genocide', in William S. Parsons, Israel W. Charny and Samuel Totten (eds.), *Century of Genocide: Eyewitness Accounts and Critical Views* (Garland Publishing, New York and London, 1997), p. 323.

⁸³ K. Kaunda, *A Humanist in Africa* (London: Longman, 1967), p. 91.

and civil war, while others (Tanzania, Ghana) embarked on similarly peaceful paths. An examination of the popular struggle against authoritarian rule in Zambia through an atrocity prevention lens yields insights for how and why the challenge to centralised power can be largely absent of violence. The country contained a number of risk factors related to mass atrocities. Yet, unlike many of its neighbours, Zambia avoided identity-based conflict which is often characterised by mass atrocities. This avoidance of mass atrocities was no accident, as it was the country's inaugural leader who fashioned an inclusive national identity that transcended ethnic difference, and actively resisted political forces that threatened to open up such divisions. It was Kaunda who both planted the seed of inclusivity amongst competing ethnic and tribal factions in the first decade of independence, then took the country into a period of authoritarian rule amidst increasing poverty and deprivation.

Yet Kaunda was so successful in constructing an inclusive national identity that transcended ethnic and tribal difference, that the character of opposition to his rule changed dramatically from the 1960s to the early 1990s. In the 1960s, political divisions coalesced around ethno-linguistic difference. Factions within the UNIP government competing for the spoils of power organised themselves along ethnolinguistic lines. When these factions were dissatisfied with their level of influence, some broke away from the government and formed opposition parties based on ethno-linguistic allegiance. Opposition at this time increasingly drawing lines of contestation along tribal and ethnic differences. However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the opposition movement transcended such differences, and ironically became so influential that Kaunda's government could no longer ignore them. It was a broad-based and multi-ethnic opposition that unseated him – reflecting the inclusive dream that Kaunda himself had for the country. The key to understanding why dissent against authoritarian rule, and the subsequent transition towards a multi-party democracy unfolded within a largely non-violent

context in Zambia is the inclusive foundation that was established by Kaunda. While his seventeen years as authoritarian president in the 1970s and 1980s drove the country into protracted economic decline and deepening poverty, the grievances that found expression in popular dissent remained broad and inclusive. While this article focussed on the motivations and actions of Kaunda, and the impact that his ideas and power had on political dynamics, more research is needed to better understand why opposition leaders moved away from ethnic difference in their efforts to confront power and to offer an alternative. There is evidence throughout the 1990s and beyond that both opposition leaders and governing elites accusing each other of resorting to ‘tribalism’, suggesting two things: that the idea of ‘One Zambia One Nation’ had truly taken hold in the national discourse, and that the old ethno-linguistic power bases are still an issue. In the last fifteen years, there are questions around the initial optimism of Zambia’s peaceful transition, with the broad church of the MMD having fragmented into splinter parties, and democratic consolidation still not complete. As Phiri argues, the opposition movement that coalesced around the MMD was far more united and inclusive when its goals were to remove Kaunda’s regime. In the decades since, this unity has frayed.⁸⁴ This was particularly apparent with the rise of Michael Sata and his Patriotic Front party, which ruled between 2011 and 2021.⁸⁵

Through deploying an atrocity prevention lens, it is clear that what happens in the decades prior to confronting authoritarianism matters. It is important to understand how authoritarian leaders manage or manipulate social fault lines, as well as understanding who they reward and punish, and how such patterns of behaviour will influence the character of opposition that

⁸⁴ B. J. Phiri, ‘From One Party Participatory Democracy to Multiparty Liberal Democracy in Zambia Since 1990: Reality or Illusion?’, 46(2) *Southern Journal for Contemporary History*. (2021) 113-136.

⁸⁵ S. Sishuwa, ‘Roots of Contemporary Political Strategies: Ethno-Populism in Zambia in the Late Colonial Era and Early 2000s’, 47(6), *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (2021) 1061-1081. Sata himself was president from 2011 until his death in 2014.

unfolds in times of crises. Other studies have also shown that national narratives that transcend ethnic difference and urge a more inclusive identity have had a prohibitive effect on the risk of violent conflict and mass atrocities when such violence is imminent.⁸⁶ The case of Zambia contributes to this by demonstrating how risk mitigation when overall risk is moderate and violence is not imminent can have a pacifying effect during times of crisis decades later.

⁸⁶ Straus, *supra* note 14; McGovern, *supra* note 12.

