Limitations and Challenges of Building Democracy in the Conditions of Multiethnic Society in Zambia[1]

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ABSTRACT

Some politicians in Europe ever more frequently claim that multiculturalism has failed. Others assert that it is primarily the current model of democracy which is in crisis. On the other hand Africa is generally perceived as a continent without experience with either democratic tradition or even liberal concept of multiculturalism. But is that really the case? What do we know about the diversity of the African continent in Central Europe? A potential positive example of successful democratisation and multiculturalism forming processes in Africa could be presented by Zambia. Where are then the limitations and challenges in the process of building a democratic system within the framework of African multiculturalism?

KEY WORDS: ethnic group, Zambia, democratisation, identity, multiculturalism, multiethnic society

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Colours and effervescence are the typical attributes closely attached to Africa. By contrast to many a time "senescent" gray Europe priding in its tradition of civilisation Africa is rich in her own traditions and to an extensive degree in a specific kaleidoscope of colours. Africa is rich in many ways which is both blessing and curse for it. It is a continent where the cradle of humanity and of the most ancient civilisations can be found. Though, its most precious heritage lies in the continuous tradition of existence and development of multiethnic and multireligious communities instilling an inimitable character into the "black" continent. Thousand years of mutual social interaction of various communities, intertwining of various cultures, friendly and hostile ethnic groups and religions brought about often extreme situations causing the inimitable African diversity to face truly critical challenges. On the one hand there was the merciless colonialism – a race after the treasures of the unknown world – with the accompanying, often forced westernisation and on the other hand decolonisation full of hopes nourished by the enthusiasm of modern ideologies of the 19th and 20th century - nationalism, socialism and other hate ideologies; they both equally endangered the viability of the original African colourfulness. The solution or rather the search for remedy for the illnesses of decolonialisation should have been or (possibly) could lie in liberal democracy (HUNTINGTON 2008). But in many countries it was not given even a chance to take a deep breath. For that reason the benefits of liberal democracy viewed from the perspective of a success story of modern multicultural states remain mostly unfulfilled theoretical model, apart from a few exceptions (LEON 2010).

South-African Zambia could be named as a successful example of democratisation in a post-colonial country; an exception or a searched for effective model of twinning an African multicultural society with modern liberal democracy. A model which got over many difficulties and still has to fight unceasingly for its survival. The story of Zambia's creation is in many aspects different from other African countries though, we may find visible similarities as well. The British colonisation of North Rhodesia (Zambia) took place within the frames of similar processes; especially concerning the government of the regions in the southern parts of Africa belonging under the British rule (HULEC – OLŠA 2008). Colonisation and formation of present Zambian territory was connected with two personalities whose mark can be identified until today.

First of all it is indeed David Livingstone (1813-1873) who strived in the second half of the 19th century to work as a missionary and simultaneously to discover unexplored niches of Africa and – by means of Christianisation, trade and civilisation – to fight actively the still surviving slavery in the region. His endeavours resulted in discovering extensive areas of contemporary Zambia and above all in opening them to new opportunities for

decisive changes in both religious and political structures of the local society (SIMON 1985).

Another equally important British was Cecil Rhodes (1853-1902) who due to his political and economic influence not only bestowed the region with his name; moreover he distinctively determined its post-colonial direction. The impact of Rhodes as a politician on Africa and British imperialism is pointed out by a historian Richard A. McFarlane who states that ´*as an integral part of South-African and British imperial history he was an equally important personality as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in their own time in the United States. Most historical events of South Africa in the last decade of the 19th century presented a historical contribution of Cecil Rhodes'* (McFARLANE 2007:439). Rhodes, a British tycoon and politician, who grew rich on the diamond mines in South Africa, was the key agent in bringing the British into Zambia and once for all changed its further development. He was a typical representative of British imperialism searching for new areas to mine precious metals, which was the case in Zambia as well. At the same time he was a man who lived for the idea of a continuous southnorthern belt of territories between the Nile delta and the Cape of Good Hope which would be under the rule of the British Empire (SIMON 1985). The results of his endeavours left their mark in the Zambian society as well as in the Zambian political system. Their direct impact is doubly accentuated. Primarily, at the level of ethno-social relations in the Zambian society which unlike other African societies was not sprinkled with blood of a civil war or genocide, the British concept of colonial rule acted positively by means of the English language and freedom of missionary work of various denominations offering space for both preservation and development of multiculturalism. Secondarily, the British control influenced the process of decolonisation in North Rhodesia (1964), creation of political institutions (until 1991), and last but not least the transformation of the country into plural democracy (after 1991) (CILLIERS 1995, JOSEPH, 2008). Nowadays is Zambia a country of a relatively success story where the slogan: ´One Zambia, One Nation' does not mean eradication of diversity. The development story of Zambian democracy has got over a half century while moving from post-colonial authoritarian rule (1964 – 1991) through so called ambiguous regime (1991 – 2009) to a functioning democracy (DIAMOND 2002). Let us take a look at the achievements of the country, what limitations of development and stabilisation of democracy there exist under the conditions of African multiculturalism and the challenges the country faces.

Theoretical Definition of Ethnic Group and Ethnicity in the Conditions of Zambia

Each society shares certain characteristics. For that reason, the first communities were created based on a shared conception of identity and tendencies within their community. Such communities defined their boundaries and even constructed various forms of hierarchical systems within their structures possibly including institutionalised relations similar to modern democracies. So under certain favourable conditions some form of democracy appears much earlier than the first written evidence of its existence (ARISTOTELES 2006). A natural tendency towards democracy is observable in that ˈ*people form a distinctly delimited group – on one hand "us", my people, my tribe and on the other "them", their people, their tribe, other people. A particular group – tribe – is considerably independent from its surroundings, so that tribesmen are more or less capable of making decisions about their issues on their own, without any interference from people who do not belong to them'* (DAHL 2001:15). A group of people defined in that manner, following their own norms of behaviour, respecting their own organisation is generally impassive towards its surroundings and therefore it can be considered an autonomous ethnic group.

Ethnic group is derived from the word *ethos.* Since the mid-19th century its interpretation has been markedly changed and has become rather related to racial, cultural and also religious characteristics. There are of course many definitions of ethnic group but the overwhelming majority of them concur in that a fundamental characteristic of an ethnic group is its identification in contrast to other groups. Anthony D. Smith and John Hutchinson define ethnic groups as a group of people sharing myths about common ancestors and mutual traditions while accepting a shared culture. Any such grouping can be considered an ethnic group aspiring to earn its place within a society (HUTCHINSON-SMITH 1996). Max Weber combines two categories of ethnic groups in his definition. ˈ*Ethnic group is a group sharing a subjective belief in common origin (based on shared traditions, physical similarity etc...) while consanguinity or blood relation is not important. An ethnic group differs from a kinship group precisely in that its members subjectively believe in ethnic membership, though at the same time the belief in ethnic membership alone is insufficient for the creation of an ethnic group; it only facilitates the process of its creation or preservation of its continuity mostly in the sphere of politics'* (WEBER 1999:36). Conversely, Barth does not consider a distinctly defined cultural content to be a determinant of an ethnic group. He divides the cultural content into two groups. The first one includes shared visible features: clothes, language, rituals, lifestyle etc. He includes hidden values, basic social norms and moral standards that are the determining criteria of

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behaviour for both an individual and a community into the second one. This kind of definition is based on a "subjective" approach, i.e. one's own identification and simultaneously an extraneous identification by members of another ethnic group. Thus we are returning to the dichotomy of "us" and/vs. "them" (BARTH 1998). A social group becomes such an ethnic group only based on a dual perception; only after a member of an ethnic group identifies him/herself as part of that ethnic group. He/she identifies with and accepts the ethnicity while simultaneously, being identified in the same manner by members of other ethnic groups. Distinctness is very important for identification of an ethnic group. Consequently, it can be stated that an ethnic group cannot exist on its own but only in contrast with another ethnic group (SARTORI 2005).

In contrast with ethnic groups, ethnicity is established preferentially by means of "objective" elements. It is an attribute of a specific social group and presents its firm core, which remains stable regardless of the society, and this attribute is a basic and defining one for the society. But ethnicity is significantly influenced by the political and economic environment in which it is situated. For the members of an ethnic group identification with one's ethnicity is very important equally as the question whether this identification is accepted by other members of the community and also the majority society. The political and economic environment defines the intensity of potential conflicts between ethnic groups[2]. Ethnicity is often used for acquisition of political power or as a means for enforcement of one's own interests. Thus it exists in the constructs of people and their activities. It becomes fully evident in conflicts whether political, territorial or in ones where

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[2]   It is worth mentioning that the number of ethnic conflicts has increased since the end of the Cold war. Between years 1990-1991 ethnic conflicts flared up chiefly in multiethnic and multireligious countries undergoing a transformation process towards democracy (Soviet Union, Yugoslavia etc.). They involved mostly Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Chechens, Georgians etc. Simultaneously, ethnic conflicts flared up again in Africa (Angola, Rwanda, Somalia) and in Latin America (Salvador, Nicaragua). Ethnic conflicts did not bypassed Asia either, particularly Kashmir, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, etc. (SADOWSKI 1998). Interesting about Zambia is that despite 73 indigenous ethnic groups living in the country and several groups of immigrants from Europe and Asia Zambia has not been inflicted since gaining its independence by major ethnic conflicts. Not even in a critical period of political transformation in the 90s of the previous century. There exists though a kind of a traditional ethnic tension between the western part of the country (Barotseland) and the central government concerning predominantly efforts of that province for greater political and economic independence. Zambian ethnic groups view with certain contempt the members of the Bemba ethnic group who are perceived as usurpers of power in the country but even such "envy" has not turned into a fatal ethnic conflict. A new phenomenon appears in the form of a growing tension turned against "Chinese expansion" in the country becoming also part of the political struggle (POSNER 2005, SMITH-HÖHN, 2009).

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ethnic groups attack each other with the aim of enforcing their own interests. In such case ethnicity replaces political parties and becomes a specific party and ideological affiliation. A party member, like a member of an ethnic group believes in the political aims of the institutionalised community. What identifies an ethnic group is the belief in shared ethnicity leading understandably to sense of superiority.

Ethnicity is closely connected and defined by ethnic identity. Weber believes that ethnicity is used by an ethnic group for a specific purpose, mostly in the context of political power attainment. *'Ethnic identity consists of several factors such as: shared political memory of the ethnic group, experience, continuity, link to an ancient cult, or strengthening of relational and other ties'* (WEBER 1996:39). As long as the members of an ethnic group appreciate their own ethnic identity and identify with it, they can use ethnicity for achievement of explicit common goals.

A society based on identical traits of culture, language, religion, lifestyle, and moral and ethical behaviour is in most theoretical definitions a determining factor for an ethnic group. Members of such an ethnic group are aware of their own ethnicity, identify with it and accept it. At the same time they use it for delimitation of other ethnic groups or individuals who do not belong to their group. Important for the continuity of an ethnic group are bonds, identification and sustainability because the very continuity, possibly labelled as social heritage maintains the ethnic group. Some of the theoretical signs of ethnicity cannot be unambiguously identified in the Zambian society. There are several reasons for that. The reasons are clearly visible especially in large cities in which no visible borders between ethnic groups and cultures are visible. This situation is mostly caused by major migration within Zambia – primarily for employment reasons and the urbanisation of Zambia attracting people from all corners of the country into large cities.

Therefore the Zambian society faced during the process of decolonisation a complex problem of creating its own national or state ethnic identity which would save the country from the natural threat of defragmentation. It was not only due to the existence of a quasi-sovereign kingdom of Barotseland within North Rhodesia. And it was definitely not due to the necessity of proving one's identity in a political confrontation with two other British colonies constituting from 1953 when the process of gaining independence in British South-African colonies began the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Those presented only a marginal threat to a potential disintegration of the territory into a number of mutually competing units. Much more poignant was the threat of ethnic and language fragmentation in the Zambian society. The newly nascent society, or nation, consisted of seventy three ethnic groups and several language groups (SMITH-HÖHN 2009). Despite the fact that

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most of them belong to the same language family – Bantu there exist often abysmal differences between particular language groups. Coping with the ethnic-tribal fragmentation of the country was an equally difficult task for the founders of the state.[3] As with the linguistic division, the fact that 90% of the population of the newly created state belonged to nine ethnic groups Nyanja-Chewa, Bemba, Tonga, Tumbuka, Lunda, Luvale, Kaonda, Nkoya and Lozi did not ease the complexity of the problems (POSER 2005).

Still it was a much differentiated community. This fact probably played an important role in the creation of the Zambian political system. In his effort to pre-empt the acute problems connected with defragmentation of the society and to minimise the negative impact of internal political crises which could take shape based on ethnic, social and potentially religious conflicts between various Christian denominations, Kenneth Kaunda decided to rather follow the path of a single-party system supported by the ideology of "African socialism". To abandon ethnicity and religiosity and even any direct political and ideological "clinch" of the post-colonial British rule. An artificial nationalism and paradoxically the enforcement of English as a unifying state language became the uniting factors in the country. The slogan "One Zambia, One Nation" became the fundamental idea protecting the existence of the state.

Hand in hand with that effort went the establishment of a central, „national" religious organisation in the context of the gradual unification of the nation. A development of a political and religious concept of Zambian humanism and creation of a specific form of national religion - the United Church of Zambia[4] was the outcome of Kenneth Kaunda's

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[3] The ethnic composition of the Zambian society was at the time of its modern state creation the same as presently. The society is created by several tens of ethnic groups. The most numerous communities are represented in nine groups mostly tracing the linguistically different communities or regions. Out of those 41% of population belongs to the Bemba language group, 23.3 % to Nyanja, 14.5 % to Tonga, 6.6% to North-Western one and 6.3% to Barotse. English native population represents only 1.7 % of the Zambian inhabitants. Ethnically, the state is divided into: 21 % Bemba, 13.6 % Tonga, 7.4 % Chewa, 5.7 % Lozi, 5.3 % Nsenga, 4.4 % Tumbuka, 4.0 % Ngoni, 3.1 % Lala, 2.8 % Kaonde and further down to 0.5% representation of population. Altogether there are about thirty ethnic groups. Non-indigenous population with European, Afrikaans or Asian origin presents approximately 1% of the population. The remaining communities (about 40 ethnic groups) create together 5.4% of the Zambian population. See *Central Statistical Office* (2012).

[4] United Church of Zambia – in the context of president Kaunda's efforts for unification of the country the Church was created as a union of four traditional protestant missions in Zambia (the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, The French Calvinists, The London Missionary Society and The Church of Scotland). The foundation of UCZ goes back to 1965. Currently, the church is

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endeavours[5] (NJOVU 2002). Despite the central position of the president in the country's political system in the period between 1964 and 1991 the aim to achieve a centralised social and political ideology and Church organisation failed. Though the Zambian humanism has been accepted becoming part of the constitution, the United Church remains just one out of many Churches and denominations represented in the religious structure of Zambia. Though centralisation and efforts to minimise ethnic and religious conflicts protected the society from major destabilisation it still did not significantly erode the multiethnicity and multireligiosity of the Zambian society.

Multiethnicity and Multireligiosity in the Zambian Society

The ethnic groups in Zambia live and coexist with the society and state in great diversity. The society there clearly does not form a homogenous unit, rather the opposite is the case. Therefore, to ensure the survival and preservation of uniqueness of both ethnic groups and the state the system of relations must be based on many compromises. Creation of such a society is therefore a very complex process. As the society consists of many ethnic groups trying to earn power and social status, and they try to find their adequate place in the society it is necessary to revise their ambitions and subordinate them to common interests. A society drafted in that manner where various communities coexist on the same territory influencing each other and cooperating is a true picture of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism is an idea but for many also a political ideology based on the fact that in a democratic political system heterogeneous communities with different cultural tradition can (and even for the benefit of survival) must coexist. Diversity is exactly what

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active all around Zambia and has a membership of about 2 million followers out of which 60% are women. See http://uczsynod.org/about/ucz-history (3. 2. 2015).

[5] Zambian humanism An ideological movement used by Kenneth Kaunda in his effort to minimise the negative impacts of social and religious fragmentation in the Zambian society in the period of modern Zambian statehood creation. He tried to entwine by its means the universalism of western values of humanism with the best of the traditional African tribalism. At its very centre lay the equality of all people together with the unity of citizens (nation) and state. At the same time he did not try to suppress the religiosity of the society or the presence of Christian Churches in the country. His goal was to minimise the clashes among ethnic groups and denominations and ensure unity in multiculturalism present in the Zambian society. The idea of Zambian humanism was accepted by various Christian Churches so that those principles were transferred during the presidency of Frederick Chiluba (d. 2011) into the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation which became part of the Zambian constitution (since 1996). See NJOVU 2002.

characterises such a society. Multiculturalism exists in states where people belong to various ethnic groups, cultures and those cooperate to a degree that multiculturalism becomes the key policy of the state. Multiculturalism suggests the coexistence of several cultures. It requires also cooperation of cultures. It is impossible if isolated ghettos are created and any interaction is absent. Respect for a specific status of each culture and every ethnic group in cooperation determines the unique character of multiculturalism (SARTORI 2005).

The aim of multiculturalism is to emancipate all the individuals in a society and simultaneously preserve cultural diversity. Encounters and openness of cultures contribute to mutual enrichment. The whole concept may seem at first sight utopian but there exist some historical as well as current positive proofs of its successful implementation (MALFATTI 2009). An idealised image is especially discussed because multiculturalism counts with a friendly form of interaction between cultures with a positive impact on the society. *'Cultural groups and their individual members are in a relationship of tolerance and openness. Multiculturalism is above all connected with the policy of identity and acknowledgement'* (BARŠA 1999:7).

Multiculturalism is therefore based on the multiethnicity and multireligiosity of a specific society. Coexistence of people of various ethnic backgrounds appears as far back as in antiquity, in the big cities of the Roman Empire where tides of immigrants – barbarians – were flowing in from all the corners of the known and unknown world. Even those early centres approached diversity by segmentation of population according to their culture and religion searching at the same time for means of minimising conflicts among them (MALFATTI 2009). Though it is generally held that any extremely heterogeneous society is in many ways drawn apart. Each of the ethnic groups yearns to hold an equal status and its aim is to ensure for its members equal opportunities to participate in power or social benefits offered by that particular society. The founders of modern Zambia had to come to terms with the same dilemma facing the challenges of multiculturalism much earlier than the same problem appeared in Europe (GEWALD-HINFELAAR-MACOLA 2005).

The issue of coexistence is an extremely sensitive matter. Efforts to satisfy the demands of mutual tolerance presuppose that their members are able to communicate at least. *'The fact that the society does not share the same culture with the associated traditions, religion and overall ideology does not require complete assimilation of all units into one integral whole on the other hand mutual civic acknowledgement and command of the official language is expected'* (BAUKJE 2005:22-23). Experience shows that too weak

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integration of a minority with the society or its fragmentation together with the absence of means of communication through a shared language leads to development of ghettoes thus increasing the number of potential conflicts in the society. In Zambia the search of possible options led to the enforcement of a shared language which belonged to none of the local language groups but as a necessary consensus the language of the colonisers was chosen.

Multiculturalism was applied in theory and practice for the first time in Switzerland as a manifestation of a nation striving for unity despite cultural and religious heterogeneity. The case of Zambia was quite similar. The ideology of multiculturalism originates from Canada from the 60s of the past century. The development of diverse cultures was by the end of the 20th century transplanted also to Europe. Its primary reason was the economic and political migration with Europe as target destination causing changes in the social structures. The European states tried to assimilate the waves of migrants imitating the USA and its assimilation project "melting pot". Eventually, that model was not implemented and therefore various solutions were searched for within the multicultural policies of individual states. In France, The Netherlands and Scandinavia the assimilation model was initially introduced while Switzerland, Germany and Austria chose to use discrimination models (ŠTEFANČÍK-LENČ 2011).

Multiculturalism is primarily associated with highly developed, economically stabile countries where the concept was accepted as a reaction to the arrival of migrants. But as the case of Zambia proves there are more countries in the world in which multiculturalism is more than just a topic of political discussions or cause of political conflicts. Many countries – especially the ones with colonial past that were often created artificially – had to cope with the phenomenon much earlier than it was theoretically identified and defined. It concerned mostly those countries where the problems of coexistence among citizens, members of various ethnic groups belonging to the nation's communities had to be coped with. Those countries, Zambia included, had to find unconventional solutions for the problems concerning political, cultural and social issues. Zambia in the case of multiculturalism chose the path of centralised authoritarian regime of single political party, which was later under the pressure of the third wave of democratisation quite successfully transformed under the conditions of plural democracy. Though, it did not fully avoid problems and conflicts; the challenges determining the current form of Zambia's story of multiculturalism.

Transformation Marked with Conflicts

Transformation of Zambian political system appeared unavoidable. The democratisation process of Eastern Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain resounded even in the countries of the third world though Samuel Huntington himself did not count with the possible spread of the third wave of democratisation into countries such as Zambia. He speculated about possibilities of accepting democratic systems in post-authoritarian countries mostly with the states of Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Far East (HUNTINGTON 2008). The fact that a decade later only fourteen African states were enlisted as democratic states proves as well that political analysts did not count with any successful processes of democratisation on the African continent. Zambia was despite a decade of transformation processes, adoption of a constitution which formally guaranteed the promotion of democratic values, protection of human and civil rights, transparency and pluralistic party system still included in the list of hybrid (ambiguous) regimes together with Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Djibouti and Tanzania (DIAMOND 2002). Reasons of that persisting status originated in the unsolved problems and smouldering conflicts of the past. They were primarily connected with the still unresolved political status of Barotseland and constantly reappearing threats of potential reversion of democratisation processes.[6]

The democratisation process of the African continent at the beginning of the 90s of the past century was not a big success story. While majority of countries remained under the rule of undemocratic governments, the regimes in the process of transformation could not avoid the centrifugal forces throwing them back into the old tracks. This was happening not only within the changing political institutions where often the old dictators or governments of single political parties were replaced by new dictators and new parties. Similar "two steps back" took place also in the process of economic reforms where the socialist state ownership (often in the hands of the dictator's family) was replaced by privatisation for the benefit of the newly arising oligarchies. ˈ*Following the political openings of the 1990s, newly elected executives moved quickly to shift power away from the people and the other arms of government, and soon began to emulate the recently departed*

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[6]   Factors threatening the democratisation processes were at the beginning of the 90s classified by S. P. Huntington who summarised them into seven points. Economic stagnation, decay of legality and public order caused by separatism, avalanche effect of collapsing democracies in surrounding countries and social and political polarisation were some of those present in Zambia. See also HUNTINGTON 2008, SMITH-HÖHN 2009.

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authoritarians when it came to the avid appropriation of public resources. According to the Afrobarometer surveys, sub-Saharan Africa is a place where demand for democracy exceeds supply' (JOSEPH 2008:99). The most serious problem of the new African democracies was the fact that they were not able to solve the conflict between the traditionally high status of social leaders in the society (tribal chieftains) and the principles of a legal state and civic society which are the pillars of western liberal democracies. Similarly, they had great difficulties in accepting the fundamental democratic principle of a majority government with guaranteed protection of minority rights and freedoms.

Therefore observance of rules ensuring stability during the changes in the political system became an important factor eliminating potential failure of democratic transformation. In a situation where no one could estimate anyone's chances it meant keeping hope of achieving one's goals alive and an opportunity to solve longstanding problems. The Zambian process of transformation had to face these challenges as well. Majority of conflicts in the Zambian society were reflections of either individual (dominant political party[7]) or collective selfishness (linguistically and ethnically related communities) as people have the tendency to put their own or their group's benefit above any others.

The mechanism of ethnic conflicts in Zambia was connected with either competitiveness or cooperation. To engage in a conflict situation it was enough that one of the groups managed to usurp a larger share of power or at least pretend to do so, or based on a "cartel agreement" cooperate with other communities and strongly define itself in an antagonistic manner against other groups. In the case of Zambia, such cooperation or defining oneself against other ethnic groups was connected primarily with the effort of the central government to constantly block the attempts of Lozies and the western provinces of

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[7] United National Independent Party (UNIP) – a political party in Zambia founded by the end of the 50s in the past century. Ideologically it belonged to nationalism and (African) socialism. Its founder and long-term chairman was Kenneth Kaunda. UNIP was the basic pillar of the centralised authoritarian regime of a single political party and was closely connected with the office term of the first president of Zambia Kaunda in the period of 1964 and 1991. By the end of 1990 president Kaunda under the public pressure and threat of a coup accepted the end of the monopolist position of UNIP in the political system of Zambia. Currently, the party has no representation in the parliament. See also GEWALD-HINFELAAR-MACOLA 2005, POSNER 2005.

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the country to gain more government autonomy and strengthen the political and economic self-government of Barotseland.[8]

The theory of conflicts holds that any preferential treatment of one group basically affecting the equilibrium places individuals from various groups into a mutual conflict. As a consequence, the living space, the social and economic prosperity and security of a specific community are destabilised. Ethnic conflicts include an important aspect, namely that it is a group conflict with an imbedded aversion against a particular ethnic, religious or racial group (SADOWSKI 1998). Hitherto, several theories have been created defining the reasons for outbursts of conflicts. These mostly originate from the American functionalist sociology of the 50s and 60s of the past century and they consider an ethnic community the smallest unit of social structure and simultaneously the foundation of ethnic and religious sentiments.

The social status of an individual usually overlaps with his/her ethnic membership. Thus a situation appears where one group is subordinated to another or due to loss of previous advantages a community does not and cannot identify with the existing situation. That is the case of the population of Barotseland not just the elites who lost their previous prestige but also the wide population who perceive their unequal position in the society. There is injustice in power distribution and in the utilisation of public resources. The

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[8] Barotseland region in the western part of Zambia lying between Angola, Democratic republic of Congo and Namibia. In the past, it reached into their territories and covered part of the Zambian province Copperbelt. The name of the province is connected with the dominant ethnic group – the language group residing on the territory - Lozi (Barotse). The name of the province means in translation "country of Lozi people". In Zambia the community of Barotse/Lozi represents about 6% of the population. 20 different tribes live in Barotseland. They established some 500 years before the arrival of the British their own kingdom based on the tradition of matriarchy and it de facto exists until today. At the end of the 19th century they managed to sign a contract with the British South Africa Company (BSAC) and earned so a guarantee of relative autonomy within Rhodesia. After Zambia earned its independence they attempted to preserve their status of a sovereign province with their own government. This resulted in signing the Barotseland agreement (1964) but it was not exercised in practice as the political elites of Zambia tried to enforce a centralised government of the state and minimise any democratic self-government. In the following years – in fact until today – the governments in Lusaka try to abridge any attempts to fulfil the agreement from 1964. Barotseland is therefore a province with the lowest rate of governmental or foreign investments and on a long-term basis belongs among the poorest regions in the country. The efforts for autonomy of the population and the consequent counteractions of government are the major sources of conflicts and a tension is constantly present in the province. The latest unrests in the province with the central demand of fulfilment of the agreement from 1964 took place in January 2011, had two casualties and several hundred demonstrators were imprisoned. See also POSNER 2005, SMITH-HÖHN 2009, BBC 2012.

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overall stability of such a system depends primarily on the ability of the dominant ethnic group (the state) to distribute the access to resources equally. Inequality and social conflict are practically omnipresent and keep weakening the whole system. An open conflict is rarer in a hierarchical system compared to a non-hierarchical one but if the conflict eventually erupts its consequences are more serious because the ruling political elite/ethnic group believes in their own superiority. A potentially easy growth of a socio-political conflict into a civil war presents a fatally dangerous threat. Subsequently, various groups would try to usurp the power on the same territory, mostly within the borders of the particular state. Kenneth Kaunda tried to postpone that threat by creating a centralised political system. He was successful for three decades. But it was much more difficult for his successors. Frederick Chiluba, Levy Mwanasawa and Rupiah Banda had to face a situation when solutions of conflicts were found following the principles of a democratic constitution and based on mutual consensuses and compromises rather than as a result of a decision made by an autocratic president. Such relations among various groups in an emergent democratic system resemble the models known from multiethnic, highly developed democracies in the period of building their system of ethnic coexistence. Experience shows that the model of consociation democracy – based on compromises of all political players (ethnic groups and religions) which practiced in Switzerland, Belgium or The Netherlands is the only path to be taken by the transforming democracies of the African continent (SARTORI 1993). Especially if the primary aim is the preservation of the state and creation of a suitable environment for coexistence.

During the process of transformation in the Zambian society and political system a number of objective problems appeared going hand in hand with the social conflicts:

(1) First conflicts appeared by the creation of the new constitution which aimed at disempowerment of the leading political party and creation of a viable and stable multi-party system. At the same time it was necessary to define the character of the state and the human and civil rights applicable for Zambia. That process took almost two decades and was completed only in 2009.

(2) Equally difficult was the development of the election system, election rules and patterns of behaviour during the elections as that is usually a period of growing inner social tensions; especially the presidential elections. Conflicts keep appearing regularly not just at the level of competing political parties but also among ethnic groups and regions who feel being cast aside by the government.

(3) Neopatrimonialism and corruption are part of the transformation process. Consolidation of the relationship between a patron and client has never weakened even with

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the introduction of democracy. Clientelism is deeply rooted in the Zambian society and plays a key role especially during the presidential elections. Efforts to sever those ties and create a functioning system of competition for political power and to make the checks and balances more effective clash with the resistance of the well-settled elites and create space for potential conflicts.

(4) Such environment is naturally inhospitable to the development of a functioning civic society. Attempts of its establishment clash with the resistance of both political parties and interest groups who currently participate and to a degree parasitize on the system.

(5) Last but not least the political security is full of conflicts. The army has difficulties with getting rid of the influences persisting since the period of independence movement. Corruption and police brutality are still visible relics of the authoritarian regime. The entire above mentioned problem area has unambiguously negative impact on the social and ethnic relations in the transforming environment of Zambia (SMITH-HÖHN 2009, WIGNARAJA 2010). Though the Zambian story of democracy belongs among the more successful ones it is a rare one on the continent. ˈ*It is to be expected that there will be advances and setbacks. With regard to few countries can we say that the institutions of law-based democratic governance are firmly consolidated? If pro-democratic forces are adept—as they have shown themselves to be in Ghana, Nigeria, and Zambia—there are many battles that they will be able to win. Yet the continent's entrenched rulers are hardly lonely outliers: They include not only Afwerki of Eritrea, Zenawi of Ethiopia, Kagame of Rwanda, Wade of Senegal, al-Bashir of Sudan, Museveni of Uganda, and Mugabe of Zimbabwe, but also José Eduardo Dos Santos of Angola, Paul Biya of Cameroon, Denis Sassou-Nguesso of Congo (Brazzaville), Omar Bongo of Gabon, Yahya Jammeh of the Gambia, and Lansana Conté of Guinea. We should not expect that personal rule will be retired any day soon*ˈ (JOSEPH 2008:102).

The modern Zambian society is naturally multiethnic. It turned to one primarily as a consequence of the policy of British colonialism which parcelled Africa without any concern for cultural or ethnic diversity of the subjugated territories. Colonies were formed based on British political and economic interests resulting in newly formed states with no respect for the traditional tribal system. But the ethnic diversity in Zambia survived even the hectic period of creating the state and fight for national and state suzerainty. It managed to adapt to the conditions of an authoritarian regime and avoided potential conflicts which often follow after the chains of illiberality created by the absence of democratic institutions were broken. The problems which this model faces nowadays are full of limitations and challenges. On the one hand they are limited by the desire of the traditional regions for

more participation in power and independent government of public matters and on the other hand by gradual penetration of new ethnic groups (Chinese community) and religions (Islam) into the country. The experience of the recent years suggests that the Zambian society should still cope with. The success or failure is in their hands.

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