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Ethnicity and Party Fragmentation in Zambia

Introduction

Ethnic diversity and its effect upon electoral systems as well as democracy in general has been a very popular topic in political science. The belief that ethnic identity is primordial and fixed, and, from that, ethnic conflict is rooted in centuries of animosity has largely become antiquated in academia¹. A constructivist approach to ethnicity and politics has become more popular². The now more widely held belief is that political, social and economic factors influence ethnic identity as opposed to a relatively fixed primordial ethnic identity. However, I believe in a lot of ways, especially outside of certain parts of academia, the primordial belief regarding ethnicity is applied to Africa. Due to the rather tumultuous history of democracy in Africa and the highly, ethnically diverse states that make it up, the belief that colonial borders and historically antagonistic ethnic groups are the cause of political conflict and failed democratization efforts is quite commonplace. While this is somewhat beyond the scope of my paper, I do think it is important to mention how colonial rule fabricated many of the ethnic identities today and politicized ethnicity paving the way for the ethnic chauvinism, patronage democracy, and ethnic marginalization that plague many African states. However, from the constructivist viewpoint it is clear that these politicized identities are not fixed. I believe democracy is not fundamentally contrary to African states, as some primordialist or colonial period centric perspectives would suggest. And that is why I think Zambia is a good case to analysis as it is an ethnically heterogeneous, stable, firmly, albeit not perfectly, democratic, African state. And while it would again be beyond my investigation to give a full answer to why Zambia is relatively successful, finding the relationship of ethnic heterogeneity and effective number of parties certainly adds to this.

Party Fragmentation, that is what determines the number of political parties in an electoral system, has been a very popular topic in political science. This is for good reason as knowing what determines party fragmentation gives insights into electoral system and institutional design for states as well as simply providing a better understanding of how electoral systems function and change. The idea of measuring effective number of parties (ENoP) was to determine the number of competitive hypothetical parties an electoral system could have. Finding ENoP is much more effective than setting subjective thresholds, for example $> 5\%$ of national votes, to determine the parties that actually play a role in electoral politics. Laakso, M., & Taagepera in "The "Effective" Number of Parties: "A Measure with Application to West Europe" laid out and popularized the statistical methods for solving for ENoP, and while there has been other methods (Golosov), Laakso and Taagepera's methodology is still used in similar cross-national analyses.

Background on Zambia

¹ Mozaffar, Shaheen, James R. Scarritt, and Glen Galaich. "Electoral Institutions, Ethnopolitical Cleavages, and Party Systems in Africa's Emerging Democracies." *The American Political Science Review* 97

² Ibid.

Zambia is a large, somewhat sparsely populated, ~12.7 million people, nation in southern central Africa. Zambia's economy is centered around mining, especially copper, which has in turn lead to historically volatile economic conditions. The country is very ethnically diverse with 73 recognized ethnic groups, none of which have a majority in the population overall. Zambia is divided up into ten provinces for administration. Provinces are ununiform in terms of constituencies, size, and population. The legislature is called the National Assembly, which has 158 seats, 150 are voted via single member constituency via first past the post voting. The extremely powerful office of president is the head of state and government and is elected

The region experienced colonial rule under the United Kingdom from the late 19th century until independence in 1964. Unlike neighboring Zimbabwe (then South Rhodesia) and Namibia (then Southwest Africa), there was never a significant settler population established in Zambia during the colonial period. The United National Independence Party, UNIP, ruled the country following independence. The 1968 and 1972 elections of the First Republic were considered competitive and democratic³ with the UNIP winning over the opposition headed by the African National Congress, ANC. However, following the 1972 elections, Kenneth Kaunda of the UNIP instituted a one-party, personalist state, the Second Republic, that halted democratization in Zambia until the pressures of the Third Wave of Democratization forced Kaunda to reinstitute multiparty democracy and usher in the Third Republic in 1990. The movement for multiparty Democracy, MMC, defeated Kaunda and the UNIP in the 1991 elections and proceeded to dominate electoral politics under President Frederick Chiluba until the 2011 elections. During this period, the MMC was criticized for slowing the democratization process because of their use of state resources to outcompete and repress opposition parties. Burnell in "The Party System and Party Politics in Zambia: Continuities Past, Present and Future" argues this is an unfortunate reality of the Zambian electoral system that tends to produce a single very powerful dominant party, because of a winner takes all mentality that dissuades fragmentation⁴. Despite this, in 2011 the Patriotic Front (PF), originally a split offparty from the MMC, won, becoming the first peaceful transition of power from elected party to elected party in Zambia: often considered a positive sign for democratization. The PF also won the 2016 election with 89 of 166 seats. Edgar Lungu of the PF is the current president.

What I want the reader to take from this background is that Zambia is ethnically diverse and has a somewhat established and stabile democratic tradition with little to instances of ethnicity-based conflict. This makes the case of Zambia particularly interesting as it goes against the conception that ethnic heterogeneity has a negative relationship with democracy. Additionally, we see a small amount of large, nationally competitive parties competing to dominate political systems as opposed to coalitions of small, provincial parties that would might expect in this case.

Literature Review

³ Burnell, Peter. "The Party System and Party Politics in Zambia: Continuities Past, Present and Future", *African Affairs*, Volume 100, Issue 399, 1 April 2001

⁴ Ibid.

Geys in “District Magnitude, Social Heterogeneity and Local Party System Fragmentation.” as well as Grofman and Selb in “Turnout and the (Effective) Number of Parties at the National and District Levels: A Puzzle-Solving Approach.” recognized the increase in accuracy and meaningfulness when calculating number of effective parties at the subnational level. And while both noticed interesting trends with district magnitude and party fragmentation, their studies were in multimember districts, in the case of Belgium (Geys) and Spain and Switzerland (Grofman and Selb). This can potentially lead to higher party fragmentation as parties that could not win a single member district or do not represent a majority of the constituency could still compete for seats. Despite district magnitude always equaling one in the case of Zambia, we can consider the increased meaningfulness in taking a constituency-based approach to calculating effective number of parties. Ultimately, this is where my research is unique, as there has been no effort to calculate ENoP for Zambia at the constituency level to my knowledge.

Potter in “Demographic Diversity and District-Level Party Systems.” also advocates for a constituency level approach but is concerned with the limitations of viewing constituencies as completely independent from one another. Potter argues cross-district diversity should be considered because party platforms are often little, if at all, modified for individual constituencies, rather we see platforms seeking support for demographic groups across constituencies. For example, there might be a constituency that is very ethnically diverse relative to the rest of the country, but because across constituencies only a few ethnic groups are significantly large to support a party, we may see parties only pandering to those few groups and therefore party fragmentation would be low. In a way, I might be showing this in my results because I use ethnic data on the provincial level, but I would need to obtain constituency level ethnic data to attempt something similar to Potter.

Lublin in “Electoral Systems, Ethnic Heterogeneity and Party System Fragmentation” looks at the effect of ethnic diversity on ENoP at the national level. Distance between legislative and presidential is a control Lublin considered. In the case of Zambia this will not be an issue because presidential elections happen at same date as the National Assembly elections. Lublin also considers electoral permissiveness in determining ENoP, but ultimately doesn’t find a strong relationship. Most importantly, Lublin’s analysis finds a relationship between ethnicity diversity and party proliferation. Mozzafar et al. in “Electoral Institutions, Ethnopolitical Cleavages, and Party Systems in Africa's Emerging Democracies” uses a different methodology from Lublin but observes a significant correlation between ethnic heterogeneity and ENoP for a selection of African states as well. Mozzafar et al. also challenge the notion that heterogeneity negatively effects democratization, observing the opposite in many cases. Both these analyses influenced my hypothesis as I feel Zambia will not be an outlier in the relationship observed between ENoP and ethnic heterogeneity.

When we consider the high ethnic diversity, the initial impression would be that there is a high level of party fragmentation. This theory is further supported by their not being a single majority ethnic group. While one sees many ethnic groups likely too small to play a role in the political landscape, groups like the Bemba, Tonga, Chewa, Lozi, and Nsenga all have large enough populations to be influential on the national level. And that is not to say that some of the smaller ethnic groups could contest specific seats. As geographic distribution plays a huge role, for example the Ushi make up over 17% of the Launda district, while being less than 2% of the national population. When one considers how that could be magnified on

the constituency level, especially in rural, ethnically homogenous regions, it is clear how even very small ethnic groups can play a role in electoral politics and therefore party fragmentation. However, as mentioned before due to Zambia's single member districts and therefore does not use a proportional representation system, Lublin points out that single member districts tend to lead to two party systems. I think also if we consider aspects of Zambia's democracy such as first past the polls voting, a powerful presidency, needing to recontest one's seat if they change parties (discourages conglomeration and defection⁵)

Hypotheses:

H₁ There is a relationship between ethnicity and effective number of parties at the district level in Zambia

H₂ Despite a very ethnically diverse population, I expect ENoP to be relatively low, generally between 2 – 3 parties, due to institutional aspects of Zambian electoral systems.

Data

The data used for calculating effective number of parties came from Constituency Level Electoral Archive (CLEA), the data set being the Lower Chamber Election Archive which has constituency electoral data for 163 countries. CLEA obtained the data specifically for Zambia from the Electoral Commission of Zambia. I used the following elections: 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016. Elections for the presidency, who is head of state and government, are held simultaneously with the National Assembly elections. There are 150 seats that are up for election. While there are 44 parties listed in the CLEA codebook, generally five or less parties per election that have legitimately competed for seats in the National Assembly since 1991.

Zambian census data is available through 1980 from the National Statistic Office: However, ethnicity by province was not tallied until the 2010 census. I will discuss how this impacted my results later on. The 2010 census lists the proportion of certain ethnic identities to the total population of the province for all ten provinces. The 2010 census measured 26 specific ethnic identities with categories for "Other" and "Major Racial Groups" which constitutes mainly the small European and Asian population in the country. I choose to not include those two categories, because "Other" and "Major Racial Group" are not specific. Both groups are very small parts of the general population especially "Major Racial Groups" (>2%). Of the 26 ethnic groups Lunda is divided into Luapula and Northwestern. From my understanding these two regions that the groups are categorized by are geographically separated by a large salient that belongs to the DRC, in which there are many Lunda, but likely due to geographical separation the National Statistic Office felt they warranted separate categories.

⁵ Burnell, Peter. "The Party System and Party Politics in Zambia: Continuities Past, Present and Future", *African Affairs*, Volume 100, Issue 399, 1 April 2001

Model

One of the main flaws with my using of constituency data is the generalization that the ethnic diversity of a constituency will match that of the province it is in. While this is somewhat better than matching constituencies to national ethnic diversity, it is still a significant generalization. Many constituencies could be easily 90% or more of a specific ethnic group, whereas that would never be the case for an entire province. And I think in the electoral data that may explain the success of independent candidates. While impossible to measure in this case, I predict that independents mobilize political support along ethnic lines more than established parties. Additionally, I could only use the 2010 census of population and housing because it is the only census to date that collected ethnic identity by province. This becomes very problematic when we apply this data to elections in 1991, 1996, and to an extent 2001. There were likely some significant demographic changes between those elections and when the 2010 census was measured. And while in many cases we might expect the not a large change in the statistical value for ethnic diversity, the accuracy of these measurements pre-2006 election is somewhat questionable.

Lublin in his national level analysis found certain cases were outliers because of socio-political developments. South Africa and Namibia significant skewed his measurement of number of parties because of the high amounts of legitimacy the ANC and SWAPO received by overthrowing Apartheid. As a result, there were less parties observed than one would expect. While Zambia does not have such a politically impactful decolonization struggle, the first multiparty elections since 1968 in 1991 were, as explained before, much different than later elections due to the consolidation of opposition parties in the MMC. We later see the fragmentation of the PF out the MMC as support for my argument that the 1991 election was rather unique in comparison to later elections. Therefore 1991 may be an outlier.

Results:

EREG

EREG	Region
1 12.101556	Zambia
2 9.087026	Central
3 6.570561	Copperbelt
4 4.031608	Eastern
5 4.216456	Luapula
6 11.258726	Lusaka
7 5.998476	Muchinga
8 3.102642	North
9 4.510722	Northwestern
10 1.786196	Southern
11 3.555151	Western

Zambia EREG(Lublin): 3.46

The values were much larger than Lublin's EREG measurement for Zambia. Lublin's ethnic demographic data came from a variety of sources, some gathered specifically for the study, so I likely view the difference due to different data collection methods and my focus on the provincial level. From a provincial approach we can see that ethnic heterogeneity is much higher than previously believed for Zambia. I would somewhat discount the national statistic for the same reason I feel a constituency-based approach may be more effective, we don't know the geographic concentration of ethnic groups and so EREG at the national level isn't a very accurate measurement in very ethnically heterogeneous states. While the values for EREG were much higher than I predicted, they are not that surprising. Lusaka is the capitol territory and, the city itself is the largest urban center in Zambia. One would expect to find a very diverse population not particularly weighted towards a single ethnic identity, and therefore EREG would be much higher. Copperbelt and Central are where much of the mining industry takes place and therefore one might expect a more diverse ethnic distribution due to labor migrations. Southern Province is relatively homogenous, 74.4% Tonga, which explains its very low EREG.

Effective Number of Parties

Interpretation:

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