

POLITICAL PARENTAGE OF THE AFROBAROMETER:  
THE ZAMBIA DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE PROJECT

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**Abstract:**

*The Afrobarometer is the preeminent source of public opinion data in Africa. This organization has conducted 9 rounds of survey research in over 30 countries since its creation in 1999. Hundreds of research papers, policy briefs, and books have been written using the data collected. Despite its obvious importance, there has been little critical scholarship on the origins of the Afrobarometer itself.*

*This paper examines the Zambia Democratic Governance Project political attitudes survey, one of three survey research projects that combined in 1999 to create the Afrobarometer. Michael Bratton, co-founder and former executive director of the Afrobarometer, headed the attitudes survey and played a major role in designing the larger project. In this paper, I argue that the Zambia Democratic Governance Project itself was essentially a U.S. backed intervention into Zambian politics in the early 1990s, with the express goal of liberalizing the Zambian economy and political system.*

*In concert with the works of Frederic Schaffer, John Law, Begum Adalet and Pierre Bourdieu, I argue that public opinion surveys not only reflect reality, but also enact reality. This analysis suggests that the Zambia survey was far from a neutral, scientific enterprise, but was instead intended to enact a political and economic reality in Zambia that favored U.S. interests. This finding has important implications for the neutrality with which the Afrobarometer is regarded by social scientists and policymakers today.*

## INTRODUCTION:

The Afrobarometer is the preeminent source of data on public opinion in Africa. This organization conducts surveys in over 30 countries, asking questions about governance, the market, and society. The information collected is publicly available, making it an attractive source of data for scholars and public officials. Indeed, the information and analyses provided by the Afrobarometer are widely cited as authoritative sources on some of the most important governance questions on the continent. Hundreds of research papers, policy briefs, and multiple books have been written using the data provided by the Afrobarometer. In 2021 alone, there were 497 survey fieldworkers trained by the Afrobarometer, 92 papers published, and 68,051 website downloads from the Afrobarometer network.<sup>1</sup> Yet despite its obvious importance there is little critical scholarship examining the Afrobarometer *itself*.

The Afrobarometer was founded in 1999 by three social scientists: Michael Bratton, Robert Mattes, and E. Gyimah-Boadi. The first round of Afrobarometer survey data was created from the combination of three previously existing projects, each headed by one of the co-founders. These were the Zambia Democratic Governance Project political attitudes survey (Bratton), public opinion research at the Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa (IDASA) (Mattes), and research from the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD) (Gyimah-Boadi).<sup>2</sup>

In this paper, I examine one part of the Afrobarometer's early history: the Zambia Democratic Governance Project (ZDGP) political attitudes survey. The ZDGP was a USAID project that took place from 1993 to 1996 in Zambia. The political attitudes survey was a component of the project that was administered in 1993 and again in 1996. Michael Bratton, co-founder and former executive director of the Afrobarometer, played a major role in designing the ZDGP and headed the attitudes survey. Due to its foundational importance, I refer to the ZDGP Attitudes Survey as a "parent" project of the Afrobarometer.

There is a robust body of literature that argues that public opinion research is not – and cannot be – purely neutral. Per scholars such as Frederic Schaffer, John Law, Begum Adalet and Pierre Bourdieu, public opinion surveys not only reflect reality, but also *enact* reality. Given this ability, it is important that scholars carefully examine political influences on survey research, as well as the realities these surveys help to create.

In this paper, I examine the political context of the ZDGP political attitudes survey. I suggest that the survey was far from – and was never intended to be – a neutral, scientific enterprise. I see the Zambia Democratic Governance Project as a politically and economically motivated United States intervention into Zambian politics. In my view, the project explicitly recommended and actively pursued activities aimed at liberalizing both the Zambian political and economic system. The associated survey was instrumental in achieving these goals.

Survey research cannot be insulated from the broader political context in which it operates; thus, I submit that the survey research conducted via the attitudes survey works to enact a reality that favored U.S. interests in Zambia. As a foundational part of the Afrobarometer's history, this research has important implications for the neutrality with which the Afrobarometer is regarded by social scientists and policymakers today. No such critical scholarship yet exists regarding the Afrobarometer. This paper is therefore a first effort at making its origins and the political context surrounding its early history explicit.

## KNOWLEDGE AS POLITICAL

“There are two great views of method in science and social science. On the one hand it is usual to say that methods are techniques for describing reality. Alternatively, it is possible to say that they are practices that do not simply describe realities but also tend to *enact these into being*.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Impact." Afrobarometer.org. Last modified 2022.

<sup>2</sup> "Our history." Afrobarometer. Also from interviews with Bratton (2021) and Mattes (2022)

<sup>3</sup> Law, J. (2009). Seeing Like a Survey. *Cultural Sociology*, 3(2). pp. 239

The phrase “knowledge is power” is so often used that it has almost lost its punch; its redundancy however, I think is a testimony to its common sense. Knowing things allows us to order our actions strategically, to predict and to *effect*. Political scientists have defined power various ways, but most definitions share the centrality of agency; knowing things allows us to *do* things, thus shaping reality to better suit our interests.

As common sense (although not common in any other regard) is the phrase: “knowledge is *political*.”<sup>4</sup> Power is an inherently political concept, after all. Yet, in mainstream political science, it seems as though we have isolated these three terms from each other, assuming that knowledge can be produced without the influence of the political world.

If our discipline has missed this, certainly the arena we study has not. From USAID rewriting civics textbooks in Zambia, or the main U.S. propaganda agency “training” Zambian journalists, political actors seem quite savvy as to the political potential of controlling and determining what constitutes “knowledge.” Why else would the main propaganda arm of the United States government from 1953 to 1999 call itself the United States *Information Agency*?<sup>5</sup>

This premise – that knowledge is political – is of central importance to this paper. I examine a public opinion survey, the Zambia Democratic Governance Project political attitudes survey, within the political context where it originated. My goal is to illustrate how the “knowledge” that the survey produced cannot be – and was never intended to be – neutral or objective. This has important implications for the Afrobarometer, which was founded in 1999 from the combination of the Zambia survey plus two other survey research projects in Africa. The Afrobarometer is widely cited as the most authoritative source of data on African public opinion, yet it lacks any critical examination of its political origins or their potential effect on its purported objectivity. This paper is a first attempt to examine the political “parentage” of the Afrobarometer.

I leverage two complementary critiques of surveys in this paper. The first focuses on how surveys of public opinion are rarely done in isolation – instead, they are inextricably linked to the broader political projects they originate from. Because of this, one cannot make sense of any survey without also knowing about the broader project it was designed to advance.

My second critique focuses on the surveys themselves; rather than simply measuring and observing reality, surveys *enact* particular realities. In other words, surveys can influence reality by the way they are designed, conducted and interpreted.<sup>6</sup>

I address these critiques sequentially. In the first section of this paper, I examine the political and historical context surrounding the Zambia Democratic Governance Project (ZDGP) and detail the project itself. In the second section, I examine the project’s associated attitudes survey, which became a foundational piece of the Afrobarometer.

## THE ZAMBIA DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE PROJECT AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

### ***Recent Zambian History:***

To understand the political nature of the Zambian Democratic Governance Project and the associated survey, a brief overview of recent Zambian history is in order. I choose to highlight several aspects of Zambian recent history. These are Zambian economics, political system, foreign policy (particularly regarding the cold war superpowers), and African Humanism.

I’ve chosen to highlight these because of their relevance to the USAID/Zambia projects that took place in Zambia during the 1980s and 1990s as many USAID project documents make clear. For instance, the 1993 USAID project assessment for Zambia cites the removal of the state from the provision of “what

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<sup>4</sup> Ravecca, Paulo. *The Politics of Political Science* 2019. Pp. 16

<sup>5</sup> Snyder, A. (1995). *Warriors of Disinformation*. Arcade Publishing.

<sup>6</sup> See Adalet, Law and Schaffer

should be private markets” as the first strategic objective of USAID in Zambia.<sup>7</sup> In another illustrative example, Bratton and several co-authors submitted a report to USAID entitled: “Democracy and Governance in Zambia: An Assessment and Proposed Strategy.” In it, they recommend to USAID that all Zambian schoolbooks be rewritten by U.S. contractors to eliminate mention of African socialism and positive reviews of the previous Zambian government.<sup>8</sup>

Zambia gained independence from British rule in 1964; the first elections established the United National Independence Party (UNIP) as the majority party. Kenneth Kaunda of UNIP was the first elected president of Zambia. Under Kaunda, Zambia adopted African Humanism as its national philosophy. African humanism, more widely known as “African socialism,” emphasized the communal nature of “traditional” African societies, upon which the state-provision of welfare was based.<sup>9</sup>

Kaunda and the UNIP initiated numerous economic reforms, many focusing on nationalizing private companies and mining companies. By 1991, state-owned companies controlled 80% of the country's economic activity, with the central and regional governments controlling the remaining 20%. Less than 1% of the country's total enterprises were privately owned.<sup>10</sup> In 1968 Kaunda was reelected, and in 1972, all political parties besides the UNIP were constitutionally banned.<sup>11</sup>

Although Zambia was a one-party state, several scholars suggest that the governing regime is best understood as a participatory one-party democracy rather than a dictatorship, as there was widespread community political participation in political decision-making at the local level.<sup>12</sup> According to Madimutsa et al, the move toward a one-party system was intended to “eliminate political conflicts and promote communal decision making.”<sup>13</sup> Effectively, political competition was shifted from interparty competition to intraparty competition, which was intense at times. According to Rasmussen, political competition within the UNIP party itself was lively, with politicians competing along ethnic, economic and regional lines -- all under the UNIP banner.<sup>14</sup>

According to Sen, non-alignment was the guiding principle of Zambia’s foreign policy, although there was Western speculation that Kaunda was courting an alliance with China during a three-day visit to Beijing in 1974.<sup>15</sup> There was also Western speculation about the closeness of the relationship between Zambia and the Soviet Union. Although Zambia did receive up to six million dollars in aid from the USSR between 1965-1979, this figure pales in comparison to the \$3,011 million Russia provided Angola during the same period, indicating that Zambia was not a high priority of the USSR.<sup>16</sup>

According to DeRoche, during the Cold War, the CIA identified nationalist groups - most of which were from South Africa, Namibia, Angola and Mozambique - harbored in Zambia.<sup>17</sup><sup>18</sup> The CIA believed that most of these groups were receiving some form of communist support. There was both a

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<sup>7</sup> USAID *Assessment of Program Impact: Zambia*. PD-ABP-578. Washington D.C. 1993. Pp. 5

<sup>8</sup> Wunsch, James, Michael Bratton, and Peter Kareithi. 1992. “DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE IN ZAMBIA AN ASSESSMENT AND PROPOSED STRATEGY Prepared for USAID/Zambia.”

<sup>9</sup> Sun, Jodie Yuzhou. 2019. “Historicizing African Socialisms: Kenyan African Socialism, Zambian Humanism, and Communist China’s Entanglements: Two Dimensions of Socialism.” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 52 (3): 349.

<sup>10</sup> Madimutsa, C., Malisase, R., Daka, E., & Chewe, M. (2021). Public Sector Reform and the Introduction of Neoliberal Capitalism in African Socialist States: The Case of Zambia. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 2021(3), pp. 465

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> ibid

<sup>13</sup> Madimutsa et al (2021). Public Sector Reform and the Introduction of Neoliberal Capitalism in African Socialist States. pp 465

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Sun, Jodie Yuzhou. 2019. “Historicizing African Socialisms: Kenyan African Socialism, Zambian Humanism, and Communist China’s Entanglements. pp 349.

<sup>16</sup> Guan-Fu, Gu. 1983. “Soviet Aid to the Third World an Analysis of Its Strategy.” *Studies* 35 (1): 71–89.

<sup>17</sup> DeRoche, Andy. 2007. “Cold War History.” *Cold War History* 7 (2): 227–50.

<sup>18</sup> Per DeRoche, the country actively supported movements that opposed colonial or white-dominated rule, providing aid to groups such as the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU), the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, and the South-West Africa’s People’s Organization (SWAPO) in Namibia.

Russian and Chinese embassy in Zambia's capital, Lusaka, but according to DeRoche, the Soviets' policies toward Zambia "did not seem to be a problem for the USA."<sup>19</sup> Rather, it was the relationship between Zambia and China that seemed most problematic to the United States - a pragmatic relationship that was centered around aid for a railway project funded by Beijing.<sup>20</sup> Even so, Zambia's foreign policy is best characterized by non-alignment throughout the cold war period, and Zambia never developed close ties with Beijing.<sup>21</sup> Zambia was also a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which it actively supported. Kenneth Kaunda served as the organization's chairman for three years.<sup>22</sup>

The Zambian economy was highly successful following independence; during the 1960's, it was debatably the second wealthiest nation in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>23</sup> However, several factors contributed to economic decline from the 1970s on. First, as a landlocked country, Zambia was reliant on rail lines through neighboring countries to reach seaports. The 1970s political climate in neighboring states such as Angola and Mozambique disrupted access to these railways, and Zambia incurred heavy costs in order to maintain what lines remained accessible. Zambia also spent heavily on the creation of a new route, the TAZARA railway, to Tanzania. Sanctions against Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) also impacted the Zambian economy, as the goods that were usually traded across the border now had to be purchased elsewhere at higher cost.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the Zambian economy was severely disrupted by the global drop in the price of copper, Zambia's main export. Global prices dropped from well above \$7,000 per metric ton to below \$3,000 by the mid-80s. Thus, between 1970 and 1990, Zambia lost 30% of its real per capita growth, inflation rose, and government services were cut.<sup>25</sup> By 1991, the poverty level in Zambia was 69.7%.<sup>26</sup>

In order to address the economic crisis, Kaunda turned to the IMF and World Bank for aid. This was only forthcoming on the condition that Zambia implement a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). The program included: "liberalization of the economy, reform of the public sector, downsizing the civil service, and privatization of parastatals."<sup>27</sup> These conditions were accepted, and the SAP reforms began in 1983.<sup>28</sup>

According to Madimutsa et al, the implementation of SAP had negative effects on ordinary citizens in Zambia; these included "increases in the prices of goods and services, depreciation of the local currency, and high inflation."<sup>29</sup> Trade unions were strongly opposed to the SAP reform program, and organized strikes across the country. There were also numerous riots against the program in major urban areas. Due to the public backlash against the program, UNIP abandoned SAP in 1987, and consequently lost the financial support of international donors. The damage to UNIP had already been done, and public support for the party began to wane as the economic situation continued to worsen. Demands for political reform eventually culminated into the promise of a public referendum on multiparty democracy, which was later cancelled, and direct multiparty elections were held instead. The Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) party quickly formed, led by Frederick Chiluba, a union leader and won the 1991 elections. Chiluba was elected president.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> DeRoche, Andy. 2007. "Cold War History." *Cold War History* 7 (2): 229

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> "History: Zambia." USAID.

<sup>24</sup> Duncan, Forest, Newberg, Richard and Bratton, Michael. *Negotiating and Programming Food Aid: A Review of Successes*. PL 480 Title I Case Study Zambia. Washington D.C. Bureau for Food for Peace and Voluntary Assistance. Agency for International Development, 1986. Pg 12

<sup>25</sup> Madimutsa, C., Malisase, R., Daka, E., & Chewe, M. (2021). Public Sector Reform and the Introduction of Neoliberal Capitalism in African Socialist States: The Case of Zambia. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 2021(3), pp. 466

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Madimutsa et al (2021). Public Sector Reform and the Introduction of Neoliberal Capitalism in African Socialist States. pp. 466

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

With the renewed support of the World Bank and the IMF, Chiluba quickly liberalized the economy, re-privatized state-owned enterprises – most notably the copper mining industry – and removed subsidies on commodities.<sup>31</sup> The abolition of the one-party system and introduction of multiparty elections was heralded by the West as a victory for democracy. However, the resulting political situation was a far cry from a stable democracy. Following the MMD victory, there was a significant increase in the number of political detentions, a series of questionable amendments made to the constitution, and increased media restriction.<sup>32</sup> The economic situation did not improve either. According to the Trade Union Country Report, Zambia's economy remained depressed for the better part of the next decade, and unemployment skyrocketed.<sup>33</sup>

These circumstances set the stage for USAID's Zambia Democratic Government Project, which began in 1993 - two years after the election of Chiluba and the establishment of a multiparty system. The project was informed by a strategic assessment, co-authored for USAID the year before by Michael Bratton, who would go on to play a major role in the project itself and become a co-founder and executive director of the Afrobarometer. In these next two sections, I provide a brief overview USAID's involvement in Zambia, as well as an examination of Michael Bratton's career, given his centrality to both survey projects.

### ***USAID in Zambia***

USAID has a long history of advancing U.S. interests in Zambia.

The first USAID interventions in Zambia occurred in the 1970s, during the initial period of economic crisis. These programs consisted of PL 480 Title I and II programs that were focused on agricultural programming. They were designed to “promote the foreign policy of the United States by enhancing the food security of developing countries.”<sup>34</sup> According to a report by Allan Mendelowitz, the managing director of International Trade, Finance and Competitiveness General Government Division, a major foreign policy goal of these programs was the expansion of markets for U.S. agricultural commodities.<sup>35</sup> Per a 1986 report on the success of these programs, (co-authored by Michael Bratton), the underlying *political* justification for these programs was “Zambia's constructive, moderating role in promoting a peaceful transition to majority rule in neighboring states.”<sup>36,37</sup> Thus, from the beginning of USAID involvement in Zambia, U.S. strategic economic and political interests should be seen as central to USAID's provisions of “aid.”

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<sup>31</sup> Madimutsa, C., Malisase, R., Daka, E., & Chewe, M. (2021). Public Sector Reform and the Introduction of Neoliberal Capitalism in African Socialist States: The Case of Zambia. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 2021(3), pp. 466

<sup>32</sup> Mphaisha, Chisepo. "The state of democratisation in Zambia." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 38, no. 3 (March 25, 2000): 131-46.

<sup>33</sup> "Trade Union Country Report: Zambia." Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Lusaka. Last modified December, 2003.

<sup>34</sup> Duncan, Forest, Newberg, Richard and Bratton, Michael. *Negotiating and Programming Food Aid: A Review of Successes*. PL 480 Title I Case Study Zambia. Washington D.C. Bureau for Food for Peace and Voluntary Assistance. Agency for International Development, 1986.

<sup>35</sup> *Economic and Market Development Objectives Not Met: Statement of Allan I. Mendelowitz, Managing Director International Trade, Finance, and Competitiveness General Government Division*. Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Economic Policy, Trade and Environment, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives. August 3, 1994.

<sup>36</sup> Duncan. *Negotiating and Programming Food Aid* 1986. Pg 13

<sup>37</sup> The focus of these programs was not simply agricultural reform. In the 1986 report on the PL Title I program, Bratton and his co-authors note that the program was specifically designed to complement market liberalization measures that had been negotiated under a \$25 million U.S. commodity aid program. To this end, the programs focused on influencing Zambian economic policy inasmuch as they focused on improving agricultural systems. The report notes that:

“The U.S. assistance program has focused heavily on the development *policy* theme, particularly on policies affecting agriculture and food. Policies receiving major emphasis included consumer, producer and input prices and their relationships to producer incentives and production; imports and the balance of trade; subsidy costs; and internal economic stability.”

During the 1980s, USAID/Zambia initiated two Zambia Agricultural Training, Planning and Institutional Developmental Projects (ZATPID I and II). These largely continued the same economic liberalization via agricultural policy reform themes of the prior decade.

Privatization of the market in Zambia was a – if not the – top priority for USAID in Zambia during the 1990s. A 1993 USAID assessment of program impact described the overall USAID/Zambia goal as the creation of “a socially stable, economically productive, and politically active population.”<sup>38</sup> The focus, being primarily on the liberalization of the Zambian economy. This is evident by the four strategic objectives and two targets of opportunity listed in the report. Although the last two strategic objectives focused on increasing the use of contraceptives and fighting HIV/AIDS, the first two focused almost exclusively on liberalization.

The first strategic objective was “the state removed from the provision of private goods and services” in Zambia.<sup>39</sup> The second strategic objective was “appropriate policies, laws and regulations promulgated and enforced for increased agricultural production.”<sup>40</sup> This second objective was closely tied with the first, including the privatization of state-owned farms, the establishment of a competitive market, and further efforts to support liberalization in Zambia.<sup>41</sup>

It is within this context that the Zambia Democratic Governance Project took place from 1992-1996. Like the broader USAID strategy in Zambia, the ZDGP was intended to achieve U.S. interests in Zambia, particularly regarding market liberalization.

### ***Michael Bratton***

I examine the career of Michael Bratton at some length here due to his centrality to both the ZDGP and the Afrobarometer. Bratton not only co-authored a strategy report in 1992 that largely designed the ZDGP, but he also headed the measurement and evaluation component of the project under a \$1,026,000 Cooperative Agreement via USAID. Only two years after the end of the Zambia project, Bratton co-founded the Afrobarometer. The first round was created from the combination of the Zambia Democratic Governance Project political attitudes survey, public opinion data from the IDASA and the CDD. Like the ZDGP, the Afrobarometer has been consistently funded by USAID.<sup>42</sup>

Bratton served as co-director of the Afrobarometer from 1999 until 2005, when he took over as executive director. He became senior advisor in 2008, a position he still holds today. Bratton is also University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Political Science and African Studies at Michigan State University, from which he recently retired after a long, prolific academic career. He has written 5 books and published over 60 articles and book chapters. He served as a professor of Political Science and African Studies at Michigan state from 1977-1991.<sup>43</sup>

Bratton has a long history of association with organizations with a well-documented history of building American hegemony abroad. These include USAID, the Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation, from each of which he has received substantial support.<sup>44</sup> These organizations have actively

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<sup>38</sup> USAID *Assessment of Program Impact: Zambia*. PD-ABP-578. Washington D.C. 1993. pp 2

<sup>39</sup> USAID *Assessment of Program Impact: Zambia*. PD-ABP-578. Washington D.C. 1993 pp.5

<sup>40</sup> USAID *Assessment of Program Impact: Zambia*. 1993. pp 7

<sup>41</sup> The two targets of opportunity, per the 1993 report, were improving democratic governance and child survival. The first target included constitutional reform, increasing citizen awareness of rights and responsibilities, enabling independent journalism, and increasing civic education. It was listed first in the report, indicating its centrality to the overall USAID strategy.

<sup>42</sup> "About." Afrobarometer. Last modified , 2022. Also interviews with Bratton and Mattes (2021)

<sup>43</sup> All from Bratton's CV

<sup>44</sup> Bratton has a long association with the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, through which he has won a number of grants and project assignments. He has received several research grants from Michigan State University, USAID, NSF, and the World Bank. Bratton has also served as a consultant for the World Bank (2009), USAID (2008) and as a member of the expert committee on Cultural Diversity and Development for the United Nations Development Program (2007). He was an advisor to Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project (2007) and is a member of USAID's expert panel on the Impact of U.S. Assistance on Democracy Building (2005-present). He has been an evaluator for USAID's Democracy Center, a consultant for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and the International Foundation for Election Systems.

Bratton has also served as a Fellow for the Agricultural and Social Science Division of the Rockefeller Foundation, and from 1986 to 1988, he was the Program Officer of Developing Country Programs for the Ford Foundation.

worked to manage economic and political change in the global south, often at the expense of these countries.<sup>45</sup>

Some of Bratton's earliest involvement with USAID was in Zambia during the 1980s.<sup>46</sup> In addition to projects with the World Bank, he served as a consultant for the USAID/Zambia PL480 Food Aid Evaluation. In 1992, Bratton's tenure with USAID's Zambia Democratic Governance Project began. Under a \$1,026,000 Cooperative Agreement, Bratton served from 1992-1996 under the Evaluation and Special Studies component of the ZDGP. As previously mentioned, Bratton co-authored a comprehensive strategy report for USAID titled "Democracy and Governance in Zambia: An Assessment and Proposed Strategy." The report detailed the state of Zambian politics as of 1991 and suggested "strategic entry points" for USAID programming and recommended specific activities USAID/Zambia should undertake in order to achieve project goals.<sup>47</sup> The recommendations made in the report were nearly wholesale adopted by the ZDGP itself. Thus, it is important to note that Bratton himself had a significant role in the creation of the Zambia Democratic Governance Project itself.

During his tenure with the project, Bratton conducted the political attitudes survey (discussed at length later) and wrote a number of articles, reports, and baseline study analyses for USAID.<sup>48</sup> He also co-authored the midterm evaluation of the ZDGP. Several of his written pieces were informed by the attitudes survey and were explicitly intended to help USAID officials plan program interventions. For example, in 1997, Bratton co-authored a report for USAID titled "The Impact of Civic Education on the Knowledge, Values and Attitudes of Zambian Citizens"<sup>49</sup> and "Political Participation in Zambia, 1991-1996: Trends, Determinants, and USAID Program Implications."<sup>50</sup>

To summarize, Bratton played a major role in the design of the ZDGP project, and in the collection of preliminary public opinion survey data that was used in the design of the project. Much of his work with the ZDGP can be accurately characterized as focused on assessing popular attitudes with the express intention of using that knowledge to strategically design USAID programs to be most effective at achieving U.S. interests in Zambia. He then co-founded the Afrobarometer in 1999, and still serves as a senior advisor. Bratton has had close connection to furthering U.S. interests via USAID-funded survey projects, and a history of close association with organizations associated with expanding U.S. hegemony; this makes questions about the modern Afrobarometer's independence and objectivity legitimate.

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<sup>45</sup> Parmar, Inderjeet. 2012. *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power*. Columbia University Press.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Bratton's involvement in Zambian politics began roughly the same time as USAID's. From 1973-1986, Bratton was a lecturer in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at the University of Zambia. During that time, he also worked closely with the World Bank in Zambia. In 1980, he served as a member of the Project Preparation Team for the World Bank's Zambia National Agricultural Research and Extension Project. Also in 1980, he published a book titled *The Local Politics of Rural Development: Peasant and Party State in Zambia*. In 1985 he served as a consultant for the USAID/Zambia PL480 Food Aid Evaluation. In 1991, during the Zambian elections, Bratton served as an advisor for the Zambia Voting Observation Team via the Carter Center.

<sup>47</sup> Wunsch, James, Michael Bratton, and Peter Kareithi. 1992. "DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE IN ZAMBIA AN ASSESSMENT AND PROPOSED STRATEGY Prepared for USAID/Zambia."

<sup>48</sup> In 1993, Bratton wrote the analyses of two baseline studies for USAID/Zambia. The first was a report on the status of several institutions in Zambia: The Cabinet Office, the National Assembly, the Zambia Institute of Mass Communications (ZAMCOM) and the Foundation for Democratic Process (FODEP), an election monitoring group that had "coordinated" and monitored the multiparty elections in 1991. The report was titled: "Baseline Study: Institutional Profile."

The second report was focused on the political attitudes of Zambian citizens. In October, he submitted a report on a national survey of political attitudes in Zambia, titled "Baseline Study: Beneficiary Profile."

<sup>49</sup> Pfeiffer, Dale, Neo Simutanyi, and John Holm. ZAMBIA DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE PROJECT:FINAL EVALUATION. 1997.

This report is referenced in the final evaluation of the ZDGP, but I have thus far been unable to locate the report itself.

<sup>50</sup> Bratton, M, P Alderfer, and N Simutanyi. *Political Participation in Zambia, 1991-1996: Trends, Determinants, and USAID Program Implications*. N.p.: Zambia Democratic Governance Project, 1997.



## THE ZAMBIA DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE PROJECT

The Zambia Democratic Governance Project was a \$15,000,000, politically motivated USAID incursion into Zambian political, economic and social systems that lasted from 1993 to 1996. The explicit project goals were to promote U.S. interests in Zambia, particularly those related to free-markets and privatization. The associated ZDGP political attitudes survey served as a political instrument with which to assess Zambians' receptivity to the imposition of policy reforms that benefitted the United States. Neither the project, nor the attitudes survey, were neutral or objective; nor were they intended to be.

The ZDGP was comprised of five mutually reinforcing components: constitutional reform, civic education, media independence, legislative performance, and policy coordination. These included project activities such as re-writing the Zambian constitution, carrying out a nationwide civic education campaign to instill pro-U.S. values in the population, and a rewrite of the entire civic education curriculums for Zambian 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades to erase positive evaluations of the previous socialist state.<sup>51</sup>

The ZDGP also included a \$1,026,000 monitoring and evaluation component via a cooperative agreement (CA) with Michigan State University, headed by Michael Bratton. Elements included evaluation studies, including a baseline, midterm and final evaluation, as well as special studies on topics related to democratic consolidation in Zambia. Many of these were based on the political attitudes survey, carried out in 1993 and again in 1996. The M&E component also included the training of both Zambian and U.S. graduate students on democratic governance monitoring and evaluation methods.<sup>52</sup>

The monitoring and evaluation component of the project was of central importance to USAID; the reasoning behind the massive expenditure for the project itself was explained in the final project evaluation this way: USAID felt that "as one of the first countries in Africa to "democratize" after the cold war, "Zambia could be an example for the rest of Africa."<sup>53</sup> The final evaluation report stated that:

"In order to insure that the progress of the project could become a learning component for USAID and other African countries, a significant part of the project funds were committed to a very extensive *monitoring and evaluation program* which was conducted by the MSU Political Science Department under a CA. (Cooperative Agreement)."<sup>54</sup>

This monitoring and evaluation program included the ZDGP political attitudes survey and is the "parent survey" of the modern Afrobarometer.

### ***Political Purpose of the ZDGP***

Like the broader USAID/Zambia mission, the ZDGP had a similar political purpose: to promote "market-oriented, sustainable, broad-based economic growth" through liberalization.<sup>55</sup> According to the 1992 comprehensive strategy report for USAID, Bratton and his co-authors wrote that this goal would be accomplished in part by "encouraging economic and political pluralism" via the ZDGP. They went on to explain that:

"Economic growth and democratization are mutually reinforcing processes: growth enables the social mobility and educational opportunity that underpin democratic citizenship; democratization in turn releases private initiative and helps to restrain governments from making unwise policy interventions. Thus a D/G (democratic governance) program would directly contribute to achieving the broader goals of USAID/Z's ongoing assistance program."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Zambia Democratic Governance Project Monitoring and Election Studies: Mid-Term Review. 1995. pp.10

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Pfeiffer, Dale, Neo Simutanyi, and John Holm. ZAMBIA DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE PROJECT:FINAL EVALUATION. 1997. Pp 4

<sup>54</sup> Pfeiffer. FINAL EVALUATION. 1997. Pp 7

<sup>55</sup> Wunsch, James, Michael Bratton, and Peter Kareithi. 1992. "DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE IN ZAMBIA AN ASSESSMENT AND PROPOSED STRATEGY Prepared for USAID/Zambia." pp. ii

<sup>56</sup> Wunsch et al. 1992. pp 2

This link between political pluralism and economic growth is debatable; however, for the ZDGP, the explicit focus on market reform was clear. Regardless of the title, the Zambia Democratic Governance Project was as focused on the free-market as it was on democratic governance.

Throughout the 1992 strategy report, Bratton repeatedly identified the promotion of political *and* economic pluralism as a major goal of the future project, and advised an aid strategy that would target specific institutions or areas of society where USAID might make the most impact in the achievement of both of these goals.<sup>57</sup>

Both critics and supporters alike understand the ZDGP to have been both a political intervention as well as an aid project. Dr. Folu Ogundimu, a Michigan State scholar of journalism, acknowledged the ideological dimension of the Zambia Democratic Governance Project in a highly complementary article. According to Ogundimu, the impetus for the project "arose out of a desire to consolidate democracy... and saw the transition from Kaunda to Chiluba as a 'target of opportunity' for democratic consolidation in ways that could serve as a model for democratization in Africa."<sup>58</sup> He notes the political dimensions of the project by acknowledging that, "whereas recipients want aid from donor countries, they are not unaware of the associated costs of aid taking..."<sup>59</sup> Ogundimu further notes that

"The costs to aid recipients are usually political, economic and administrative. Amongst the most problematic are ties in the form of procurement rules and donor oversight which frequently run into conflict with the political and economic preferences of decision-making elites in recipient countries."<sup>60</sup>

This acknowledgment of the political dimensions of the project is particularly noteworthy coming from Ogundimu, given that he served as a consultant to USAID/Zambia in 1995, as well as a research associate for the Afrobarometer.<sup>61</sup>

### ***Public Opinion and the ZDGP***

The ZDGP was a massive undertaking; the project was nothing short than an overhaul of the Zambian economic, political, educational, and media system. Highlighting even the most notable instances of politically motivated intervention in each of these categories would be impossible in a paper of this length, so I focus on public opinion alone.

The importance of public opinion to the ZDGP cannot be understated; a major focus of the project was the manipulation of Zambian public opinion, in tandem with the *measurement* of public opinion. In fact, the measurement and evaluation component of the ZDGP – led by Bratton – seemed to serve the purpose of measuring and evaluating Zambian public opinion with the intended purpose of determining *how best to manipulate it*.

The following paragraph from the 1993 assessment of USAID/Zambia strategy illustrates the way USAID utilized public opinion survey data to identify areas of Zambian public opinion to target:

*“Supportive public opinion is critical if privatization is not to be derailed. Research and press show that there is suspicion of foreign investors and of some domestic minority groups buying SOEs (state-owned enterprises); in fact, only 39.4 percent of survey respondents said they*

<sup>57</sup> Wunsch, James, Michael Bratton, and Peter Kareithi. 1992. "DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE IN ZAMBIA AN ASSESSMENT AND PROPOSED STRATEGY Prepared for USAID/Zambia."

<sup>58</sup> Ogundimu, Folu Folarin. 1997. "Donor-Driven Initiatives and Media Training in Africa." *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*. Pp. 60

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Ogundimu also served as a research associate for the Center for Democracy and Development in Ghana (CDD). The CDD was directed by one of the other co-founders of the Afrobarometer – Dr. Gyimah-Boadi. The CDD also produced one of the other two "parent" survey projects of the Afrobarometer, which combined with the ZDGP political attitudes survey in 1999 to form the first round of Afrobarometer data.

supported privatization. USAID is financing technical assistance to *educate the public on the privatization process* and the expected benefits of economic restructuring.”<sup>62</sup>

Clearly, the public opinion data gathered for this 1993 report was instrumental in identifying a problematic opinion Zambians seemed to express; the solution for USAID was to contract someone to fix the problem.

This was one of the primary goals of the ZDGP. In the ZDGP midterm evaluation, Bratton and his co-authors illustrated the importance of manipulating public opinion in the following articulation of the three foci of the ZDGP:

- (a) The liberalization of the overall legal rules for democratic governance (through constitutional reform)
- (b) The strengthening of *demand* for accessible democratic government through citizen participation and free expression (emphasis mine)
- (c) the supply of effective governance within governmental institutions (via the policy coordination and legislative performance components)<sup>63</sup>

It is important to note that these goals are explicitly intended to manipulate both the governing structure of Zambia as well as *Zambian public opinion*. The project was intended to change the Zambian constitution in order to achieve liberalization of the political system. Of particular interest here is the emphasis on strengthening citizen “demand” for democratic government through citizen participation. The ZDGP involved a massive effort to re-educate the population on how to think about democracy, which included – among many other initiatives - re-writing the entire country’s 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade civics curriculum.

The manipulation of Zambian public opinion on a variety of topics was a major goal of the ZDGP. In the following sections, I note several project activities that were undertaken by ZDGP that illustrate this reality.

One of the five components of the ZDGP project was “civic education.” The bulk of the civic education portion of the program consisted of three activities: (1.) educating ordinary citizens on their civic rights, (2) providing grants for civic action education at the community level, and (3) rewriting the civics curriculum for 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students.<sup>64</sup> The final evaluation records that a sizeable portion of donor aid was directed toward educating Zambians on their “new rights.”<sup>65</sup>

This included a series of program activities that ranged from re-writing Zambian civics textbooks to funding “democracy plays.”<sup>66</sup> It is worth noting that while the civic education component of the project was predicated on the need for Zambians to learn about “democracy” and their “rights as citizens,” Zambians had been participating in democratic elections – albeit in a one-party state – since independence in 1964. Thus, the civic education pursued by USAID was not about teaching Zambians the value of democracy, but rather about teaching them *how to think* about their political and economic world differently – preferably in ways that benefited U.S. interests.

There were several specific activities that were undertaken/recommended that clearly demonstrate this goal: the national civic education campaign, the rewriting of civic education textbooks, and the use of

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<sup>62</sup> USAID *Assessment of Program Impact: Zambia*. PD-ABP-578. Washington D.C. 1993

Unfortunately, the report does not give any information about the survey data used to arrive at this statistic. Given the dearth of public opinion surveys in Zambia at the time, I suspect the report is citing Bratton’s 1993 political attitudes survey, but I cannot verify this.

<sup>63</sup> Zambia Democratic Governance Project Monitoring and Election Studies: Mid-Term Review. 1995. pp. 3

<sup>64</sup> Pfeiffer, Dale, Neo Simutanyi, and John Holm. ZAMBIA DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE PROJECT:FINAL EVALUATION. 1997. pp.10

<sup>65</sup> Pfeiffer et al. FINAL EVALUATION. 1997.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

the main propaganda arm of the U.S. government to oversee the training of the newly “independent” Zambian media. I discuss each briefly below.

### ***Nationwide Civic Education Campaign: FODEP and the Drama of Democracy***

The first major endeavor of the civic education component of the ZDGP was educating the general populace about their roles as citizens in a democracy. In the 1992 proposed strategy, Bratton and his co-authors recommended a nationwide civic education campaign to “teach” Zambians about their roles as citizens in a democracy.<sup>67</sup> They ruled out political parties and the public school system as useful vehicles for this task, due to their partisanship or aforementioned history of teaching “socialism”, (although USAID would ultimately disregard this caution and rewrite Zambian textbooks instead.) Bratton identified civic associations, interest groups and the media as the most promising vehicles for proper civic education in Zambia. The civic group they recommended was the Foundation for Democratic Process (FODEP).

FODEP is the successor organization to the Zambia Election Monitoring Coordinating Committee (ZEMCC), which was formed in 1991 to monitor Zambia’s multiparty elections. ZEMCC was comprised of civil society organizations, notably churches.<sup>68</sup> It seems that USAID had worked closely with ZEMCC during the elections themselves, thus, FODEP was recommended to spearhead the challenge of “educating” the general populace about their rights.

One part of FODEP’s new role was training “democracy trainers.” These people were charged with teaching ordinary citizens at the community level about their rights as citizens. The democracy trainers were paid \$8 a day to attend FODEP democracy training where they were instructed on how to, in turn, train their community on principles of democracy.<sup>69</sup>

The Civic Education component of the project also provided for a “civic action fund,” which was intended to “find alternative ways to provide grassroots civic education with project funds.”<sup>70</sup> This consisted of the provision of grant money to fund church and election monitoring group workshops and performances at the community level. Around \$700,000 was awarded over the course of the project. There were some workshops funded by this grant money that focused on voting and citizen rights. However, the vast majority were “theater performances in which one or more themes were developed with regard to democracy.”<sup>71</sup> After these performances, there were formal discussions of the message by the audience. Per the final evaluation, the theater productions tended to be touring companies that gave as many as 40-60 performances, and the number of people reached was considerable. The Tilipo Theater Company, for instance, claimed to reach 44,814 people total. Reports from the grantees provided “considerable anecdotal evidence that spirited discussions were generated in village centers and churches about the meaning of democracy.”<sup>72</sup>

### ***Rewriting History: Zambian 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Civics Textbooks***

One of the more obvious cases of USAID deliberately manipulating public opinion via education was the rewriting of all of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade civics textbooks by an American university. In the 1992 strategy document Bratton coauthored, he and his co-authors recommended the complete revision of the junior secondary school civics curriculum, including new textbooks and teacher retraining.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Wunsch, James, Michael Bratton, and Peter Kareithi. 1992. “DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE IN ZAMBIA AN ASSESSMENT AND PROPOSED STRATEGY Prepared for USAID/Zambia.”

<sup>68</sup> Foundation for Democratic Progress. Last modified, 2011..

<sup>69</sup> Pfeiffer, Dale, Neo Simutanyi, and John Holm. *ZAMBIA DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE PROJECT: FINAL EVALUATION*. 1997. Pp. 11

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> Pfeiffer et al. *FINAL EVALUATION*. 1997. Pp. 12

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> Wunsch et al. 1992. “DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE IN ZAMBIA.”

According to Bratton and his co-authors, the 1992 Zambian school system was problematic because it was “still tainted by association with earlier experiments at ‘political education’, including efforts by radical elements in the UNIP to introduce instruction in scientific socialism into the school curriculum.”<sup>74</sup> Scientific socialism, of course, was at odds with the market liberalization agenda of USAID.

The civics curriculum was indeed, rewritten; the project final evaluation praised the rewrite. I include a quote from the evaluation at length here, because it not only illustrates the emphasis on liberalization, but also the emphasis placed on manipulating how Zambians would be taught to think about economics.

“...The need for the new text was beyond question. Not only had most of the old texts been largely destroyed from two decades of use, but their contents glorified the one-party regime. The new texts contain *forceful statement* of liberal democratic principles. Included are such topics as, the reintroduction of multi-partyism in Zambia, democratic governance, political parties, UN conventions on human rights, gender issues, and non-governmental organizations. The one reservation we have about the texts is that their content seems very advanced for eighth and ninth graders. For instance, the texts discuss a series of economic topics including labor markets, functions of money, types of inflation, and insurance. Hopefully, the trial use of the texts in Central and Lusaka provinces during 1996 established that teachers can be trained to deal with such materials.”<sup>75</sup>

Clearly, the justification for rewriting the entire civics education curriculum by a foreign government was predicated largely on the fact that the original textbooks did not support values that aided liberalization in Zambia.

### ***The United States Information Services and "Media Independence"***

Although the “media independence” component of the project was not categorized under civic education, it certainly was intended to “educate” the population. The final evaluation describes this component of the project as designed to assist the newly state-independent media professionalize, provide technical assistance and equipment for a permanent training program.<sup>76</sup> However, the intention that the Zambian media would communicate messages specifically designed by the United States government was obvious given the involvement of United States Information Services (USIS) in this component of the project.

The USIS was the main propaganda arm of the U.S. government until 1999.<sup>77</sup> The USIS was described by one of its former directors of TV and Film as “a full-service public relations organization, the largest in the world, about the size of the twenty biggest U.S. commercial PR firms combined. Its full-time professional staff of more than 10,000, spread out among some 150 countries, burnished America’s image and trashed the Soviet Union 2,500 hours a week with a ‘tower of babble’ comprised of more than 70 languages, to the tune of over \$2 billion per year.”<sup>78</sup>

While the final evaluation fails to provide detail about who specifically trained Zambian reporters in the permanent program, the midterm evaluation specifically notes that USIS ran an ethics workshop in 1994, assisted in the start-up of some aspects of the media independence component of the project, and was consulted in the creation of a Training Advisory Committee to prepare the media courses. The final evaluation also notes that nearly half of the professional journalists in the country had attended the

<sup>74</sup> Wunsch, James, Michael Bratton, and Peter Kareithi. 1992. “DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE IN ZAMBIA AN ASSESSMENT AND PROPOSED STRATEGY Prepared for USAID/Zambia.” pp 9

<sup>75</sup> Pfeiffer, Dale, Neo Simutanyi, and John Holm. *ZAMBIA DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE PROJECT: FINAL EVALUATION*. 1997. Pp 10

<sup>76</sup> Pfeiffer et al. *FINAL EVALUATION*. 1997. pp. 14

<sup>77</sup> Snyder, A. (1995). *Warriors of Disinformation*. Arcade Publishing.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid

program, and that the media training center would likely become a regional center for journalism training.<sup>79</sup>

The USIS Public Affairs Officer was also listed by the midterm evaluation as a provider of “policy guidance.”<sup>80</sup> Indeed, the midterm evaluation notes that “the activities of the ZDGP are coordinated with other US activities through the Project Advisory Committee, chaired by the Ambassador and including the USIS Public Affairs Officer and the USAID Director.”<sup>81</sup>

The USIS already had a significant presence in Zambia before the time of the project. One USIS project focused on the Zambian legislature; the program involved Zambian national assembly staff members in study tours and seminars. The USIS also had an annual exchange program in which Zambian journalists and civic activists were taken to the U.S. There was also a USIS initiative focused on the rule of law which “worked effectively with the court system by bringing in judicial experts from the US.”<sup>82</sup>

Obviously, the close involvement of the United States’ main propaganda arm in the “media independence” component of the ZDGP is indicative of what media independence did *not* mean. While the media was intended to become independent of the Zambian state, it was not intended to become independent of the interests of the United States.

Zambia Democratic Governance Project was far from an impartial, neutral aid endeavor. Rather, the project’s funders had explicitly defined political and economic goals that were strategically and actively pursued. This amounted to an “aid” project that manipulated public opinion, changed Zambian policies and government structure, and helped to impose economic and political liberalization. Favorable public opinion was paramount to these goals, as indicated by the massive effort expended to “educate” Zambians via democracy plays, rewritten textbooks and media propaganda.

The project largely failed to incorporate Zambian involvement in high levels of a project that restructured the entire country. The final evaluation notes that “there was very little Zambian involvement in high level project decision-making.”<sup>83</sup> Most organizations contracted under the project were American, making what Zambians should know about their own country determined by foreigners.

It is within this context that the ZDGP political attitudes survey was conducted in 1993 and 1996 as a component of the larger project. Despite the survey’s position within a large, political and market-reform project in Zambia, the survey itself has been presented as though it is a neutral, data-gathering instrument. It is not.

#### THE POLITICAL ATTITUDES SURVEY: THE AFROBAROMETER’S “PARENT SURVEY”

In order to successfully manipulate Zambian public opinion to reflect the free-market values, Zambian public opinion had to be measured and evaluated to identify what attitudes needed to be targeted by the civic education campaigns. This is where this one of the Afrobarometer’s “parent survey” originates.

Under the Cooperative Agreement, Bratton was in charge of the Measurement and Evaluation function of the ZDGP. The CA included the following products to be delivered:

1. an MIS (management information system) to enable staff to monitor inputs and outputs.
2. a series of evaluation studies (baseline, mid-term, and final).
3. a series of special studies to provide analysis to USAID and others on “issues of democratic consolidation in an African country.”<sup>84</sup>

All of these were conducted under the leadership of Bratton. The special studies examined “general political attitudes, political culture and democracy, democratization and economic reform, and

<sup>79</sup> Pfeiffer et al. *FINAL EVALUATION*. 1997. pp. 14

<sup>80</sup> Zambia Democratic Governance Project Monitoring and Election Studies: Mid-Term Review. 1995. pp.101

<sup>81</sup> Mid-Term Review. 1995. pp. 132

<sup>82</sup> Mid-Term Review. 1995. Pp. 132

<sup>83</sup> Pfeiffer et al. *FINAL EVALUATION*. 1997.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

gender issues in democratization.”<sup>85</sup> The ZDGP final evaluation noted that the four special studies that were conducted via the M&E program “provide a description of the political context in which the Zambia DG Project was operating and the barriers which USAID and its local partners needed to confront...”<sup>86</sup>

One study the final evaluation highlighted as particularly useful was titled “The Impact of Civic Education on the Knowledge, Values and Actions of Zambian Citizens.” Regarding this report, the evaluation writes that “the results are encouraging in that they suggest that civic education sponsored by USAID has made a difference with respect to political knowledge, values and behavior at the mass level.”<sup>87</sup>

Thus, the measurement and evaluation portion of the ZDGP was intended to provide political context to the project, identify the barriers the project faced, and assess the impact that civic education had on Zambian knowledge, values and actions. These studies thus helped USAID strategically pursue its political objectives.

The political attitudes survey was part of the M&E component of the project. It was conducted in 1993 and 1996 under the leadership of Bratton. According to the codebook, the purpose was to “examine the determinants of political participation in a developing democracy.”<sup>88</sup> The survey topics included political attitudes, political knowledge, crime, the state of the economy, and whether respondents had attended training sessions on citizen rights. Most of these topics are similar to those covered by the modern Afrobarometer today.

The results of the 1993 and 1996 surveys were reported in a number of documents for USAID including “Political Culture in Zambia: A Pilot Survey,” by Bratton and Beatrice Liatto-Katunda and “Political Participation in Zambia, 1991-1996: Trends, Determinants, and USAID Program Implications,” by Bratton, Phillip Alderfer and Neo Simutanyi.

Noteworthy about these papers are their explicitly political purposes: the first was additionally published via Michigan State as a working paper on *political reform* in Africa.<sup>89</sup> The second was essentially a strategy paper for USAID program officials in Zambia. It was titled “Political Participation in Zambia, 1991-1996: Trends, Determinants and USAID Program Implications.” As the title clearly indicates, the survey data was utilized to inform USAID programming for the ZDGP. In a section of the report titled “program recommendations,” Bratton and his co-authors note that “if USAID/Zambia so chooses, this report can be used as a guide on how to promote political participation in Zambia...”<sup>90</sup>

Thus, the political attitudes survey was designed to assess Zambian public opinion *in order to* inform ZDGP programming and achieve the goals of USAID in Zambia. As explained above, these were clearly political and economic goals. The attitudes survey, and the documents it informed, were not apolitical, nor were they intended to be. The authors did not attempt to conceal the political nature of their work. Rather, the attitudes survey was born from a highly political context characterized as a political intervention at best and a modern colonial project at worst.

These surveys would become a foundational piece for the modern Afrobarometer.

### ***Enacting Reality***

Clearly, the ZDGP and the associated survey projects were designed and carried out to serve a political purpose. However, it is reasonable to ask whether or not the individual survey questions themselves fulfilled this purpose as well. Does a survey’s political origins undermine the possibility of

<sup>85</sup> Pfeiffer et al. FINAL EVALUATION. 1997. pp.17

<sup>86</sup> Pfeiffer, Dale, Neo Simutanyi, and John Holm. ZAMBIA DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE PROJECT:FINAL EVALUATION. 1997. pp.18

<sup>87</sup> Pfeiffer et al. FINAL EVALUATION. 1997. pp. 19

<sup>88</sup> Bratton, Michael. 1996. “CODEBOOK: ZAMBIA DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE PROJECT.”

<sup>89</sup> Bratton, Michael, and Beatrice Liatto-Katunda. *Political culture in Zambia : a pilot survey*: MSU working papers on political reform in Africa working paper no. 7. 1994

<sup>90</sup> Bratton, M, P Alderfer, and N Simutanyi. *Political Participation in Zambia, 1991-1996: Trends, Determinants, and USAID Program Implications*. N.p.: Zambia Democratic Governance Project, 1997. page 6

collecting objective scientific data from the survey itself? There is a robust body of literature that suggests that it does.<sup>91</sup>

Begum Adalet examines a series of public opinion surveys conducted by U.S. academics in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Turkey. She writes that surveys can in fact “produce the phenomena they seek to explain.”<sup>92</sup> Surveys do this a number of ways. Adalet notes that surveys can serve a “disciplinary” function, whereby respondents are offered limited, pre-determined response options, which can flatten the differences or nuances between potential answers.

Furthermore, the way response options are *presented* makes clear what the normal, or acceptable range of answers is.<sup>93</sup> For example, Adalet describes a survey which asked respondents to report where they lived; options included responses such as “with my spouse,” “with my parents,” or “with roommates.” One respondent selected none of the pre-determined options, and instead wrote into the survey margin: “under the bridge.”<sup>94</sup> This example illustrates how surveys communicate what is – or ought to be – considered normal behavior; living with parents, a spouse, or roommates was considered “normal,” while there was no provision for responses who did not fit the idealized modern world envisioned by the survey writers.

Rather than simply see this as an example of a badly conceptualized survey question, Adalet points out that the public opinion research in Turkey was part of a modernization agenda on the part of the U.S. government. Thus, like the ZDGP, public opinion surveys in Turkey played a role in the pursuit of U.S. foreign interests. She writes that public opinion survey research agendas were,

“...set by private foundations and governmental centers... aligned with U.S. initiatives to promote “development” through the extension of technical aid and know-how abroad...Such initiatives were means to consolidate a “brave new world—a liberal internationalist era” with the help of academic research centers that were to contribute to the production of area-specific knowledge and developmental projects alike.”<sup>95</sup>

Thus, many of the surveys Adalet examined were intentionally served to communicate to respondents what was *modern*. Respondents thus learned from surveys what a modern version of their society “ought” to look like, and what development “ought” to look like in Turkey. “Surveys,” wrote Adalet, “were to aid the conscious, at times covert efforts to uplift and modernize the non-West. The prowess of the methodology, as one researcher put it, stemmed from its utility in not merely capturing and measuring processes of change but of *inducing* it.”<sup>96</sup>

This same concept is described by John Law in his article, “Seeing like a Survey.” Law’s work is particularly important for this research, as the survey he examines is the Eurobarometer, an elder cousin of the Afrobarometer. Law focuses specifically on the reality the Eurobarometer in the 1970s seeks to enact regarding how people in Europe think of themselves. Rather than identifying according to their nation of origin, the Eurobarometer seeks to enact a reality where people think of themselves as “European,” rather than French or German. This is because the Eurobarometer’s researchers and funding was connected to the political goal of unifying Europe, thus, the survey works to “enact” this reality by communicating to people how they ought to think of themselves. The Eurobarometer articulates this connection to its political goal in the following 1974 statement:

“Just as a barometer can be used to measure the atmospheric pressure and thus to give a short-range weather forecast, this Euro-barometer can be used to observe, and to some extent forecast, public attitudes towards the most important current events connected directly or indirectly with the *development of the European Community and the unification of Europe.*”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> See Adalet, Law and Schaffer

<sup>92</sup> Adalet, B. (2015). Questions of Modernization: Coding Speech, Regulating Attitude in Survey Research. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 57(4), 914

<sup>93</sup> Ibid

<sup>94</sup> Ibid

<sup>95</sup> Adalet. Questions of Modernization. pp. 917

<sup>96</sup> Adalet. Questions of Modernization. pp 918

<sup>97</sup> Law. Seeing Like a Survey. pp. 245



In the political context of the Eurobarometer, then, there is a particular reality – unified Europe – that the Eurobarometer seeks to enact beyond simply reporting “public opinion.”

The *stated* goal of Eurobarometer survey Law examines, however, was farm animal welfare. Law notes the enactment of unified Europe in the way the more recent 2005 and 2007 Eurobarometer results were reported: “Animal welfare’, says this second report (reporting on the views of 29,000 interviewees), ‘is seen as a matter of great importance *across the EU* (Eurobarometer, 2007: 4).”<sup>98</sup> The way the report is worded implies that there is some level of uniformity among attitudes, however, there were actually wide *national* variations between how people thought about animal welfare. Law notes that:

“...Interviewees from new EU member states were more worried about (animal welfare) information than others. Even so, the report added that ‘this issue labeling is particularly important’ across the *EU as a whole*. (emphasis mine) (2007: 49)<sup>99</sup>”

Thus, the way results were reported by the Eurobarometer *enacted the EU as a whole*, rather than enacting individual countries, among whom there were notable differences in attitudes. Law notes numerous other realities that the Eurobarometer enacts, all of them originating from the underlying ideological bent of the organization, the way the survey is constructed, the phrasing of questions, interpretation of results, etc. Thus, the Eurobarometer report of public opinion is not – and does not seek to be – neutral.

I specifically note the examples above because of their relevance to the way several questions are worded in the Zambia political attitudes survey and the Afrobarometer. Consider the following wording in the 1993 and 1996 political attitudes survey regarding the former ruling party (UNIP) and the MMD government that succeeded it in 1991:

*“As you know, Zambia changed from a one-party state to a multi-party democracy in 1991. In your opinion was this change good or bad for the country?”*

Responses include ‘bad’ or ‘good,’ with a follow-up question probing more detail. It’s worth noting the inclusion of the word “democracy” in the case of the multiparty system, but not the one-party system. Any savvy respondent who knew they were being interviewed by the *Zambia Democratic Governance Project* knew the correct answer. Furthermore, the wording of this question excludes the possibility that Zambians considered their country to be a democracy prior to 1991, or that Zambians might evaluate the current multi-party system as “undemocratic.” Given the increase of political detentions, media restriction and questionable constitutional amendments that followed “democratization” in 1991, such an evaluation would certainly have been credible. However, this question instead imposes assumptions about the definition of democracy and the quality of the MMD regime onto survey respondents, who have only two initial response choices, and a clear “correct” answer. More importantly, perhaps, just like the Turkish survey respondents analyzed by Adalet, this question serves to communicate to Zambians how reality ought to be. These types of questions serve to subtly “manufacture” reality that aligns more closely to the views of the designers.

This is only one small example of the way that the assumptions underlying the ZDGP and the larger USAID strategy in Zambia were translated into the survey questions themselves, making a “neutral” or “objective” survey impossible. As a “parent” survey of the Afrobarometer, it is likely that similar assumptions were passed on. In fact, an examination of the first round of Afrobarometer data, conducted in 1999, reveals very similar wording.

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<sup>98</sup> Law. *Seeing Like a Survey*. pp. 243

<sup>99</sup> Law. *Seeing Like a Survey*. pp. 244

## In the Afrobarometer R 1: Zambia

Question Number: 51A Question: We are now going to discuss how you rate different forms of government. I would like you to give marks out of 10. The best form of governing a country gets 10 out of 10 and the worst form of governing a country gets no marks at all. What grade would you give to: A. The way the country was governed under the one-party regime of Kaunda.

Question Number: 51B Question: We are now going to discuss how you rate different forms of government. I would like you to give marks out of 10. The best form of governing a country gets 10 out of 10 and the worst form of governing a country gets no marks at all. What grade would you give to: B. Our current system of government with regular elections where everyone can vote and there are at least two political parties.<sup>100</sup>

Like the political attitudes survey, the Afrobarometer uses the characterization of a “one party regime/state” versus a country with “regular elections where everyone can vote” and multiple parties. What the survey’s authors consider the correct answer, again, is clear. The wording of these questions also further reinforces a Western, minimal definition of democracy in which its essence consists of multiple parties, and regular elections.

My point here is not to argue with the characterization of Zambia’s various historical governments, but rather to point out that the same wording schema is used in both the ZDGP attitudes survey and the Afrobarometer’s first survey round. There are clear signals given to respondents about which form of government ought to be considered *better*.

My goal here is not to nitpick, either. Survey questions cannot be worded perfectly. Rather, what I want to highlight is that observed in isolation, these survey questions may seem unremarkable. However, when the full political context of the ZDGP is considered, the wording of these questions illustrates instances where the political intent of the project appears in the survey as well. Just as rewriting Zambian textbooks was intended to enact a reality where Zambians adopt liberal values and reject positive evaluations of the former socialist government, the attitudes survey works to enact this same reality in the way questions are worded. Furthermore, enacting liberalism seems to have been translated into the Afrobarometer as well.

This is only one small example; the broader point I wish to make here is that survey research is not disconnected from the greater political context in which it exists, or from the goals it is intended to further. For the ZDGP political attitudes survey, it was explicitly designed as a component of a political project with political aims to enact a particular reality in Zambia. The extent to which these same political goals have informed the Afrobarometer surveys is unclear, but as a foundational piece of the Afrobarometer’s history, I expect the USAID goals of economic and political liberalization may permeate the Afrobarometer surveys as well.

### ***What Was Enacted? The Result of Liberalization in Zambia***

A final point that ought to be made before the conclusion of this paper is that liberalization did not benefit ordinary Zambians.<sup>101</sup> I leverage the two critiques of surveys in this paper - not because they are theoretically and historically interesting - but because I think they have very real-world implications for ordinary people. For Zambians in the 1990s, the political attitudes survey was designed to help USAID programmers design and execute an overhaul of their political, economic, and educational

<sup>100</sup> Zambia Round 1 data (1999) (1999, April 16). *Afrobarometer*.

<sup>101</sup> Silungwe, Atangambuyu, and Wilson Silungwe. "Implications of the Structural Adjustment Program on Human Security in Zambia." *International Journal of Management and Commerce Innovations* 7, no. 1 (April 2019): 828  
also see:

Afronet: Inter-African Network for Human Rights & Development, *Zambia: Deregulation and the Denial of Human Rights: Submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Full Report*. Lusaka. 2000.

systems. The result of that overhaul – what was *enacted* – did not improve the lives of ordinary Zambians and was detrimental to many.<sup>102</sup>

Consider mining in Zambia. The drop in global copper prices was largely to blame for the Zambian economic downturn, forcing the country to borrow heavily from international institutions such as the World Bank and IMF. This, ultimately, forced the government to accept SAPs under the enormous debt burden that was incurred.<sup>103</sup> The 1991 multiparty elections – supported by Western donors – resulted in the election of a pro-Western president, Chiluba, who consequently initiated economic liberalization in Zambia, aided by the ZDGP. While Chiluba’s human rights and democracy record left much to be desired, the MMD party allowed the privatization of Zambia’s economy, opening the country’s natural wealth to western business ventures. The formerly state-owned copper mines, which had funded much of Zambia’s social services and situated Zambia as the second wealthiest African nation at independence were privatized.<sup>104</sup> A brief overview of the owners of Zambian mines for the last 30 years reveals a host of western companies, and very few Zambians.<sup>105</sup>

Not only did privatization result in the unequal transfer of wealth from Zambia to the West, but it was accompanied by deregulation which had numerous negative effects on Zambians. As a direct result of both privatization and deregulation, Zambians lost mining jobs, trade union rights were violated, employment conditions degraded, environmental protections were diminished, and Zambians were even subject to forced evictions.<sup>106</sup>

For over thirty years, Zambia’s copper wealth was stripped by Western companies; only in 2021 did the Zambian government reclaim the ZCCM copper mining.<sup>107</sup> Even so, during privatization, many of the mines were acquired under “Development Agreements” that legally prevented their contradiction by future legislation. These “Stability Periods” legally ensured that the policies regarding the mines could not be changed for between 15-20 years. According to a 2006 report by Fraser and Lungu in 2006, “in some cases, by the end of these periods, all of the copper ore remaining in the mines will have been removed.”<sup>108</sup> Thus, it is possible that much of the copper wealth of Zambia is already gone.

By imposing political and economic liberalization in Zambia, projects such as the ZDGP helped to open Zambian politics and markets to powerful foreigners who have exploited the country since its “democratization” in 1991. The surveys that accompanied the ZDGP were instrumental in this goal. These surveys were not only designed to assess Zambian public opinion thus that USAID knew how and where to focus their civic education efforts, but also communicated to Zambians what reality ought to be. These same surveys are the direct “parentage” of the Afrobarometer today, just as USAID has been a consistent funder of the Afrobarometer. Today, this child survey of the Zambia political attitudes survey claims to speak on behalf of ordinary Africans across the continent, yet there has been no scholarly interrogation of what type of reality it might be designed to enact, despite its hegemony across the continent. I submit that scholars of African public opinion should seriously consider its political parentage when selecting data sources.

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<sup>102</sup> Silungwe, Atangambuyu, and Wilson Silungwe. "Implications of the Structural Adjustment Program on Human Security in Zambia."

<sup>103</sup> Madimutsa, C., Malisase, R., Daka, E., & Chewe, M. (2021). Public Sector Reform and the Introduction of Neoliberal Capitalism in African Socialist States: The Case of Zambia. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 2021(3), pp. 466

<sup>104</sup> Silungwe, Atangambuyu, and Wilson Silungwe. "Implications of the Structural Adjustment Program on Human Security in Zambia." *International Journal of Management and Commerce Innovations* 7, no. 1 (April 2019): 828

<sup>105</sup> Guldbrandsen, Christoffer. *Why Poverty? Stealing Africa*. Denmark: Guldbrandsen Film, 2012. HD, 58 min.

<sup>106</sup> Afronet: Inter-African Network for Human Rights & Development, *Zambia: Deregulation and the Denial of Human Rights* pp 192

also see Guldbranson

<sup>107</sup> Zulu, Bernadette. "ZCCM-IH 100% acquisition of Mopani Copper Mines"

<sup>108</sup> Fraser, Alistair and Lungu, John, *For Whom the Windfalls? Winners and Losers in the Privatization of Zambia’s Copper Mines*. Pp 2

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have endeavored to make explicit the political dimensions of the Zambia Democratic Governance Project, one of the three “parent” projects that combined to create the Afrobarometer. I have illustrated that the Zambia Democratic Governance Project was indeed politically motivated, and that this political reality makes the pure objectivity of the attitudes survey impossible. This finding has important implications for the neutrality with which the Afrobarometer is regarded by social scientists and policymakers today: if the parent survey was created to serve U.S. interests, then this is likely to be true of its child survey, as well.

To be clear, I am *not* suggesting that the data produced by the Afrobarometer ought to be rejected by social scientists. I offer no suggestions for improving the quality of the Afrobarometer data, nor do I recommend alternative data sources for scholars wishing to study public opinion in Africa. My goal here is to caution researchers against using survey data as though it originates in a political vacuum. It certainly does not.

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