

# Paying to party: Candidate resources and party switching in new democracies

Party Politics

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## Abstract

Party switching among legislative candidates has important implications for accountability and representation in democratizing countries. We argue that party switching is influenced by campaign costs tied to the clientelistic politics that persist in many such countries. Candidates who are expected to personally pay for their campaigns, including handouts for voters, will seek to affiliate with parties that can lower those costs through personal inducements and organizational support. Campaign costs also drive candidate selection among party leaders, as they seek to recruit candidates who can finance their own campaigns. We corroborate these expectations with an original survey and embedded choice experiment conducted among parliamentary candidates in Zambia. The conjoint analysis shows that candidates prefer larger parties that offer particularistic benefits. The survey further reveals that parties select for business owners as candidates—the very candidates most likely to defect from one party to another.

## Keywords

campaign costs, candidate selection, defection, party switching

## Introduction

Party switching among legislative candidates is a political dynamic with important implications for democratization. Political parties are expected to undertake functions that make possible the normatively desirable outcomes associated with democracy, including the representation of citizen preferences, the articulation of policy alternatives, and the mobilization of peaceful opposition. However, these essential functions may go unfulfilled if regular inter-party switching by candidates undermines the coordinating role of parties within the legislature or in the broader political system. Frequent party switching is a

worldwide phenomenon (Mershon and Shvetsova, 2013; O'Brien and Shomer, 2013) that appears to particularly affect party system institutionalization in late democratizing countries, whether in Eastern Europe (Klein, 2018), Latin America (Barrow, 2007), Southeast Asia (Hicken, 2009), or Sub-Saharan Africa (Booyesen, 2006).

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Research on party switching has advanced our understanding of how the office-seeking ambitions of individual candidates condition their party affiliation choices. By focusing on the strategic incentives of candidates, scholars have demonstrated that candidates defect between parties if such a move will increase the probability of securing office (Heller and Mershon, 2005). Candidates are especially likely to seek entry into ruling or majority parties (Heller and Mershon, 2008; Thames, 2007). Yet, while the extant literature has advanced our understanding of party switching by studying why legislative candidates move between parties, we continue to lack answers to basic questions about switching dynamics. What are the organizational attributes that matter most to potential switchers when choosing among parties? What are the individual attributes that increase the likelihood that candidates will be recruited by another party?

We pursue these questions with a focus on countries that underwent constitutional transitions as part of the Third Wave of democratization. Emerging patterns of party formation across late democratizers indicate that many new parties have turned out to be weak, short-lived organizations that fail to consistently compete across successive elections (Bielasiak, 2005; Weghorst and Bernhard, 2014). Few of the parties that emerged in Third Wave democratizers have been able to mount programmatic campaigns or cultivate the social linkages required to attract broad voter support. Given the evident weaknesses of such parties, more research is needed to understand how party leaders and potential candidates negotiate affiliation choices (Smyth, 2006; Szakonyi, 2020).

In late democratizing countries with clientelistic politics, we argue that the logic of party switching is driven, in part, by candidacy costs. Candidates in such systems must often pay for their own campaigns because governments do not provide reliable public finance nor can voters afford to serve as individual donors. As a result, candidates will seek to maximize the return on their personal campaign investments by affiliating with parties that offer the organizational support or personal inducements that can effectively lower campaign costs. Additionally, party leaders have an incentive to enhance the competitiveness of their parties by recruiting candidates who can fund as much of their own campaigns as possible. To compensate for their own parties' institutional weaknesses, party leaders will tend to encourage defections among candidates who already possess the financial resources to independently pay the costs associated with mobilizing voters, including vote buying.

To corroborate the microfoundations of this argument, we analyze the party affiliation choices of parliamentary candidates in Zambia. The country has regularly held multiparty elections and undergone two peaceful alternations in power since political liberalization in 1991. The rate of party switching has moved in tandem with the electoral fortunes of parties over time, as candidates have defected

to ascendant or newly empowered ruling parties. As a result, neither of Zambia's former ruling parties, the United National Independence Party (UNIP) or the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), continues to exist as a viable electoral vehicle out of power. The party system has fragmented as new parties have emerged and old ones dissolved with each successive election (Rakner, 2011).

We examine original survey data on Zambian parliamentary candidates' party affiliation choices. We conducted a conjoint analysis that presented candidates with profiles of hypothetical parties to experimentally assess how they weigh different party attributes. The findings show that candidates want a party that offers personal inducements that lower campaign costs, namely, guaranteed adoption as a party candidate and financial support during a campaign. The survey further shows that candidates with greater financial resources are the most likely to be recruited by parties as well as the most likely to defect between them. Being a business owner increases the probability that a candidate will be recruited by a party by about 56% and increases the probability of defection by 45%. We further show that business owners are five times more likely to claim that money must be given to party officials (i.e., bribes) to guarantee themselves a nomination, suggesting that they are more likely to deploy their financial resources accordingly.

The findings presented here contribute to the broader comparative study of party systems in democratizing countries. This study extends the frontiers of existing scholarship by illuminating the role of campaign financing as a material incentive in the party affiliation choices of individual candidates. This insight helps refine and extend prior work demonstrating how the choices of political elites can induce greater electoral volatility and thereby potentially impede party system institutionalization (Smyth, 2006; Tavits, 2008).

We proceed by first discussing how the logic of party switching is underpinned by campaign costs in the clientelistic political systems that persist among late democratizers. We move on to discuss the Zambian context, the research design, and the results from the candidate survey. We conclude with a discussion of our study's implications for party systems research.

## The cost calculus of party switching

Political parties in many late democratizing countries have failed to become institutionalized despite participating in repeated elections since the transition to multiparty competition. This lack of institutionalization is particularly acute where prior authoritarian regimes were unwilling or incapable of establishing durable structures to connect citizens to government (Hicken and Kuhonta, 2011; Riedl, 2014). Few parties in such contexts have subsequently been able to develop the social linkages or programmatic

platforms required to cultivate a stable voter base, resulting in persistently high levels of electoral volatility (Kuenzi et al., 2017). Under these conditions, parties have often defaulted to clientelistic campaigning to win votes (Bleck and van de Walle, 2013).

We argue that the costs associated with clientelistic campaigning generate incentives for party switching. Politicians motivated by a combination of vote- and office-seeking goals need to financially invest in clientelistic voter outreach to maximize their chances of electoral victory. The political interests of party leaders and candidates are aligned in this respect, since spending more money will increase the likelihood of controlling government and accessing the benefits of office. However, the high costs associated with clientelistic campaigning pose a material constraint for party leaders and candidates alike. Both need to contribute to the costs of a campaign in order to increase the likelihood of electoral success, while simultaneously trying to minimize their respective expenditures. As a result, party leaders and candidates find themselves in financial conflict, as each seeks to have the other underwrite as much of those costs as possible. Party switching ensues because candidates seek out parties that can lower their campaign costs, while party leaders aim to recruit candidates who can pay for their own campaigns.

In countries dominated by clientelistic campaigning, party switching can be induced as the affiliation choices of candidates are influenced by the “electoral black market”—a term Szakonyi (2020) originally applied to describe the way Russian parties informally auction nominations among prospective candidates. In such a market, the price of a party’s nomination is effectively determined by supply and demand. As more prospective candidates bid for a given party’s nomination, the higher the price such a party can command. Szakonyi (2020) specifies that a nomination’s price does not solely refer to the payments that candidates make directly to party leaders. Price connotes a broader set of requirements that candidates must fulfill to demonstrate that they have the wherewithal to win a campaign.

Securing a party’s nomination poses considerable costs for would-be candidates in the “electoral black market.” Parties in late democratizing countries typically do not hold open primaries in which members or voters select from among possible nominees. Instead, in most parties, a committee of party members or party leaders themselves will evaluate those seeking to become a nominee behind closed doors. Such opaque selection processes can ramp up the costs for those seeking a party’s nomination, as each potential candidate attempts to outbid the others either through payments to whomever is involved in candidate selection (e.g., bribing committee members) or by visibly demonstrating their capacity to mobilize resources for a campaign. In Ghana, for example, Ichino and Nathan (2016) estimate that candidates spend close to \$75,000 to secure a

party nomination through gifts that range from school fees to motorbikes—all before the actual campaign even begins.

Money affects the party affiliation choices of candidates in the “electoral black market” because clientelistic campaigning is a resource-intensive electoral strategy. Candidates must have the means to pay basic costs for staffing, advertising, canvassing, and staging events. But, more importantly, candidates need to have the funds required to personally engage in the distribution of resources, including vote buying. In Kenya, parliamentary candidates report that giving voters handouts of cash and goods represents their single largest campaign expense. According to a candidate survey conducted during the 2007 elections, the average candidate spent 44% of their campaign budget on handouts given to voters (Coalition for Accountable Political Financing, 2008). Candidates pay for these handouts because they are effective in winning votes. Kramon (2017) estimates that 23% of Kenyan voters have had their vote influenced by a handout.

Campaign costs enter party affiliation choices because candidates pay for most expenses out of pocket. The fundraising channels employed in established democracies are typically unavailable in countries where clientelistic politics prevail. Not only are voters unaccustomed to giving money to candidates running for office, but the private sector is also insufficiently developed to serve as a consistent source of campaign donations (Arriola, 2013). Candidates who affiliate with ruling parties may benefit from public financing regulations that allocate funds based on prior seat or vote shares.<sup>1</sup> Ruling parties are also able to redirect state resources to their candidates so they can outspend competitors (Falguera et al., 2014).<sup>2</sup>

The outsized role of money in clientelistic campaigning ultimately forces candidates to assess the financial and electoral tradeoffs entailed in their party affiliation choices. To understand how these tradeoffs can affect party switching among candidates, we draw on the insights of Smyth (2006) regarding the impact of party resources—reputational and material—on affiliation outcomes. Because parties largely control ballot access, the extent to which a given party possesses both types of resources can be expected to drive candidate demand for its nominations and thereby the party’s leverage vis-à-vis individual candidates.

As Smyth (2006) has shown in the Russian case, the parties that have a strong reputation (e.g., name recognition among voters) as well as considerable resources (e.g., organizational capacity) are likely to attract the largest pool of competitive candidates, namely, those who can pay for their own campaigns. Candidates will seek to affiliate with such parties—even if it means defecting from their current party—because their resource advantages not only increase the likelihood of electoral victory; they also help to defray campaign costs. But precisely because these well-resourced parties attract more candidates than they can place on the ballot, they can afford to reject many candidates who can

mount competitive campaigns, including incumbents. These rejected candidates will continue searching among parties that vary in resource endowments until they find one that will offer a nomination on terms that they can afford along the lines of the informal auction described by Szakonyi (2020). The market for nominations should eventually clear, as candidates with more limited campaign financing end up affiliating with parties that have neither reputation nor capacity but can still offer a spot on the ballot.

The fluidity of the nominations market described here will depend, in part, on the extent to which ideology is a factor in national politics. The market could be ideologically segmented such that “conservative” candidates’ options would be limited to seeking nomination by “conservative” parties. This would make for a less fluid market overall, but, otherwise, the main dynamics described in this framework would hold. Even within the constraints imposed by searching among the ideologically likeminded, party leaders and candidates would aim to minimize their respective campaign costs while maximizing their electoral prospects.

Our depiction of the nominations market generally suggests that candidates have an incentive to switch to another party that possesses more resources as long as the choice does not diminish their likelihood of winning. Other choices are less clear-cut. A candidate might be tempted to join another party that promises greater campaign resources, lessening their personal financial burden, but that party may also have a weaker reputation that hurts a candidate’s electoral prospects. Or a candidate might be willing to spend more of their own money on a campaign if they can defect to a party that increases their chances of winning. We highlight two party attributes—size and inducements—that likely influence the tradeoffs candidates perceive in their affiliation choices in the nominations market.

**Party size:** Candidates are likely to switch to larger parties that can lower costs through their sheer size. This expectation is drawn from the literature’s ambition hypothesis in that candidates have an incentive to join parties that can boost their electoral prospects. In this context, candidates should seek to join larger parties because affiliating with popular parties may be a better way to guarantee electoral success and mobilize voters through the party’s grass-roots structures (Smyth, 2006), all without requiring additional clientelistic expenditure from the candidate. Popular parties can also increase the likelihood of a return on candidates’ initial investment through policy influence and post-election posts (Szakonyi, 2020). Switching should become more pronounced as the electoral fortunes of parties rise and decline. In the Philippines, Aspinall and Hicken (2020) find that party switching intensifies as elections approach because candidates seek to affiliate with the national party tickets of the leading presidential candidates.

**Party inducements:** Candidates are likely to switch to parties that offer personal inducements, both material and non-material. Due to the scale of the financial investment candidates must make in their campaigns, they will seek out recruitment offers from parties that promise to lower or offset their costs. One non-material inducement would be to offer a candidate a guaranteed nomination rather than requiring their participation in an open primary. The candidate thus saves on the costs associated with cultivating support among the party members who select the party’s nominees (i.e., bribing). An additional non-material inducement that could defray costs ex post is if a party promises appointments to offices with rent-seeking opportunities. Alternatively, at the campaign stage, a party can pay specified campaign costs outright (e.g., posters, flyers, t-shirts). In Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra was able to build up his party, Thai Rak Thai (TRT), by using the promise of financial and political inducements to lure local candidates away from other parties (Phongpaichit and Baker, 2005).

Party leaders understand that, if their parties are to remain electorally competitive, they must recruit candidates who have the financial wherewithal to meet the costs of clientelistic campaigns. Parties depend on candidates being able to give out handouts while campaigning because such interactions visibly demonstrate that they intend to continue delivering patronage to voters once in office. This logic suggests that party leaders themselves will specifically encourage party switching among candidates with the financial resources required for clientelistic campaigning. For their part, party leaders are likely to focus on two candidate attributes: resources and linkages.

**Candidate resources:** Party switching can be stimulated by the type of candidate recruited by parties, namely, businesspeople. Businesspeople have a personal stake in politics because government determines the rate at which they accumulate wealth through policies governing regulation and taxation. Where accountability institutions are weak, businesspeople can leverage their personal connections to secure rents that increase their wealth, whether legally or illegally (Markus and Charnysh, 2017; Pitcher, 2012). Further, they can increase their control over those rents by entering politics as candidates. Gelbach et al. (2010) demonstrate in the case of Russia that businesspeople are more likely to run for office when permissive institutional conditions enable them to pursue their special interests through government. Szakonyi (2020) further shows in the Russian case that businesspeople have an incentive to become candidates when parties are too weak to consistently represent their economic interests or follow through on their policy promises.

Businesspeople have distinct advantages in meeting the distributive demands of clientelistic campaigns. In Ukraine, Herron and Sjoberg (2016) find that higher levels of vote buying are not only reported in constituencies with business candidates, but those levels also increase when

multiple business candidates compete in the same constituencies. In Benin, Koter (2017) shows that businesspeople have progressively crowded out candidates from other backgrounds because they are more likely to have the resources needed to meet vote buying expectations. In Mongolia, Bonilla and Shagdar (2018) describe how businesspeople can acquire a reputational advantage among voters by distributing gifts.

**Candidate linkages:** Party leaders are also likely to recruit candidates who have the social linkages to mobilize large numbers of voters. Without stable partisan identities or ideological reputations, parties have to rely on intermediaries who have the local connections as well as local knowledge needed to target clientelistic benefits. A candidate who is a member of a civic, social, or professional organization can act as such an intermediary, particularly when such organizations have mobilizing structures linked to communities outside a party's electoral base.

Parties depend on candidates' personal linkages with other intermediaries to magnify the credibility of distributive promises during campaigns. In African countries, intermediaries such as traditional chiefs, urban slum leaders, and religious leaders routinely endorse party candidates with the expectation that, once elected, they will channel benefits back to their constituents (Koter, 2016; Paller, 2014). Voters, in turn, know that they can rely on their intermediaries to lobby the candidates and parties to ensure that they fulfill their distributive promises.

The framework presented here suggests that party switching emerges dynamically as candidates and parties attempt to match electoral ambitions to financial resources. As long as clientelistic campaigning means that greater spending can increase vote share, party leaders have an incentive to recruit the candidates who can spend the most in their respective constituencies. This logic may even induce parties to replace incumbent parliamentarians with new candidates because they are known to have more personal resources at their disposal. By the same token, as the wealthiest candidates seek to join stronger or larger parties that can lower their costs, they can also leverage their personal resources to negotiate the terms of affiliation, possibly extracting promises of pre-election subsidies (e.g., guaranteed nomination, defrayed campaign costs, access to grassroots networks) or post-election appointments such as ministerial portfolios. Party switching ensues as both party leaders and candidates seek, with each successive election, to maximize their electoral prospects while minimizing their costs.

## Party switching in Zambia

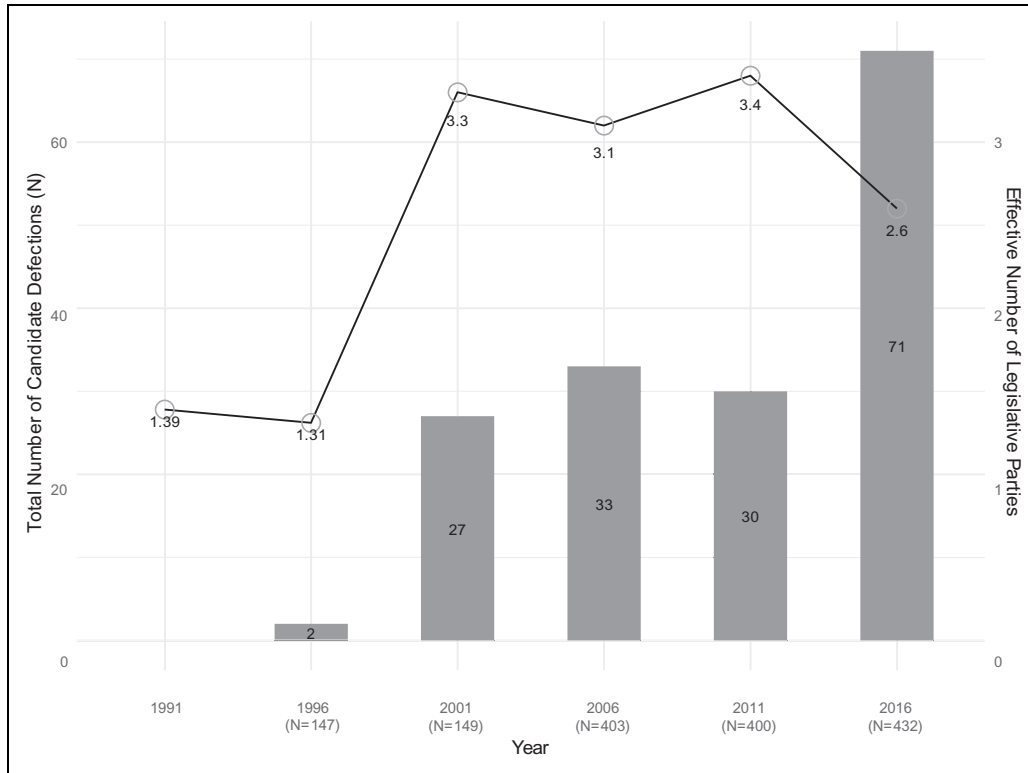
We focus on Zambia to examine how campaign costs influence party switching among candidates. Zambia has a first-past-the-post electoral system with single-member districts, which interacts with regionally concentrated ethnic diversity to shape national party dynamics. Zambian

parties tend to campaign on the basis of valence appeals rather than staking out distinct ideological positions (Bleck and van de Walle, 2013). Analyses of party manifestos reveal no clearly identified issue ownership among parties (Rakner and Svasand, 2004). Over time, the party system has been characterized by the entry and exit of several parties in each electoral cycle (Opalo, 2019). Between the 1991 and 2016 elections, an average of 8 new parties appeared each election to compete for parliamentary seats; an average of 10 other parties that ran in the previous election failed to re-appear on the ballot.

Figure 1 illustrates how the number of effective parties in parliament (the solid line) has evolved over time in tandem with party switching (the vertical bars). Initially, there was little party switching after UNIP was replaced as the ruling party by MMD in 1991. The trend in defections beginning with the 2001 election underscores how party switching increased with shifting perceptions of parties' electoral fortunes. As MMD's electoral dominance came into question, the number of party switches increased from 2 (out of 147) in the 1996 election to 27 (out of 149) in the 2001 election. Defections continued in the following elections as the Patriotic Front (PF) and the United Party for National Development (UPND) emerged as competitive parties. There were 33 defections among the 403 candidates who ran on MMD, PF, or UPND tickets in the 2006 election. The number of party switches more than doubled by the 2016 election to 71 out of 432 MMD, PF, or UPND candidates. The jump in 2016 defections was driven, in part, by MMD's implosion after it lost the presidency to PF in 2011.

Party affiliation dynamics in Zambia approximate the "electoral black market" described by Szakonyi (2020). The country's main parties all maintain formal rules for candidate selection. Prospective candidates are typically interviewed by committees of party members at different levels of party organization; each level makes a recommendation and passes it on to the next level until final selection is confirmed by a national committee (Momba, 2005; Wang and Muriaas, 2019). However, nearly all candidates interviewed for this study indicate that, in practice, the selection process often deviates from the formal rules. Beyond confirming their ability to personally pay for a campaign, candidates are often expected to offer "gifts" or bribes to members of selection committees.

Many of the interviewed candidates describe having to participate in informal negotiations with selection committee members in order to secure a nomination. James Maimba, a PF member who campaigned for a parliamentary candidate at the local level, explained: "You can pass at the constituency level and fail at the secretariat level. There can be corruption at that level... Corruption does happen."<sup>3</sup> Bradford Machila, an MMD MP, acknowledged that candidates attempt to secure themselves a party nomination by offering bribes to members of the party's selection committees. He noted that members of those



**Figure 1.** Party switching and the effective number of parties in Zambia.

Notes: The solid line shows the effective number of parties per election, while the vertical bars reflect the number of inter-party defections. The defections coded in 1996 and 2001 occurred among candidates who contested under MMD; the defections coded in subsequent elections occurred under MMD, PF, and UPND.

committees often expect to be paid: “There’s quite a bit of money that changes hands. The worst part of it is you’ll have a situation where people who are involved in the adoption process will tell you that you are by far the best candidate, but they still want something from you for you to be sure that you will get the position . . . They needed help with school fees, funerals, this, that.”<sup>4</sup>

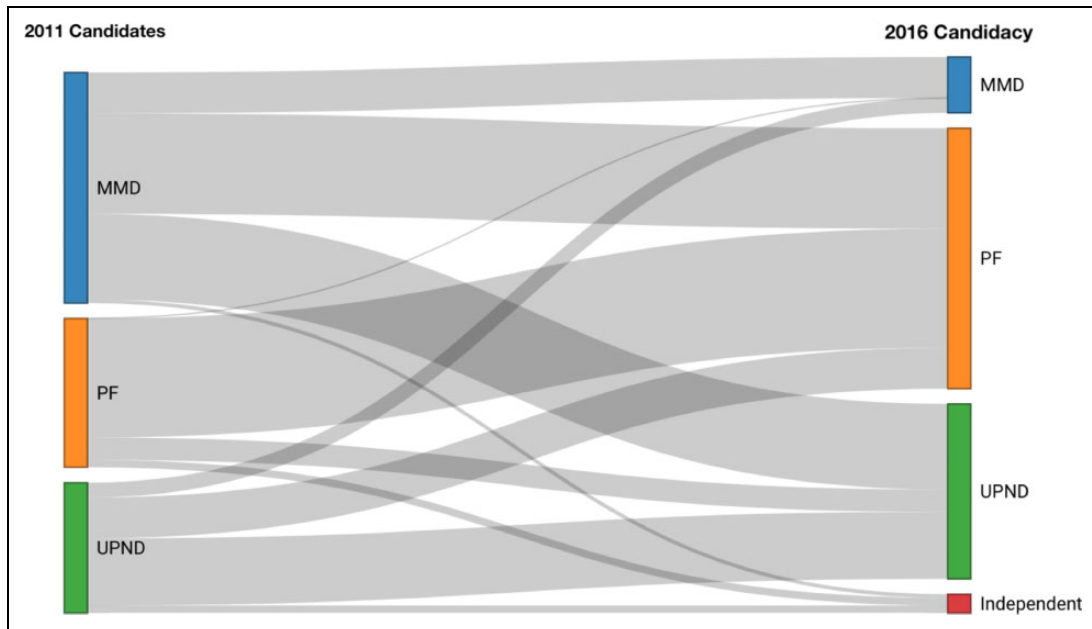
Candidates appear to confront nomination costs regardless of a constituency’s competitiveness. Some candidates suggest that negotiating a party nomination becomes more expensive in noncompetitive party strongholds because the likelihood of being elected is virtually assured. Incumbency, however, does not guarantee selection or lower costs, since party members can opt to nominate whichever candidate is willing to offer them bribes. In this respect, the candidate who can extract a guaranteed party ticket from party leaders is able to sidestep the expensive bidding surrounding nominations in a crowded field. Gary Nkombo, a UPND MP, points to his guaranteed nomination in a party stronghold as one of the most important concessions given to him by the party’s president, Hakainde Hichilema.<sup>5</sup>

Given the costs associated with candidacy, interviewed candidates indicate that their party affiliation choices are influenced by the fact that they expect to pay for their campaigns almost entirely on their own. Most do not receive

direct financial support from parties. Likando Mufalali, a businessman and UPND MP, was explicit in this regard: “The campaigns here are based on your individual effort. The party does not give money. If you wait for them to give you money, you might not find it. I was using my own resources and a few connections.”<sup>6</sup> A former MMD parliamentarian, Reuben Mtolo, tells a similar story: “The party had nothing to offer, so I had to fund the entire campaign.”<sup>7</sup>

In Zambia, vote- and office-seeking motivations create strong incentives to affiliate with the largest parties, but especially the ruling party because it can offer reputational and material resources during a campaign as well as hold out the promise of access to resources after the election. Josephine Limata, a businesswoman and former MMD MP explained that she felt obliged to seek office through the former president’s party because her constituents “are used to being part of the ruling party,” suggesting that, post-election, she would have access to the state resources needed for clientelistic distribution.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 2 provides intuition for how party size can shape party switching. It presents cross-party defections among candidates who competed in both the 2011 and 2016 elections for one of the three largest parties (MMD, PF, and UPND). While there were multiple parties listed on the 2016 ballot, inter-party movements are concentrated



**Figure 2.** Party switching across Zambian parties, 2011–2016.

Notes: The data are drawn from the entire list of party candidates for MMD, PF, and UPND as well as independent candidates.

among these three parties. Defectors from the large parties systematically chose to move to another large party. Almost none of the other 10 minor parties listed on the 2016 ballot received defectors. If candidates did not join another large party, they were more likely to run as independents rather than join a minor party.<sup>9</sup> Notably, despite the potential constraints posed by ethnic or regional identities associated with specific parties, we find that candidates move into other parties across these cleavages.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the party-switching patterns suggest that there are no ideological or programmatic constraints impeding candidates from moving between parties, a finding consistent with studies showing that Zambian parties do not campaign on the basis of ideology (Hern, 2020).

Interviewed candidates acknowledge that parties promise cabinet and other appointments to induce party switching. Such appointment promises are more credible when made by the larger parties because they have a greater likelihood of controlling government after an election. In Zambia, appointed positions are associated with rent-seeking opportunities that allow candidates to recoup their campaign expenditures and more. Reuben Mtolo explained how a former MMD president routinely appointed members of the opposition as deputy ministers. Lamenting the fact that floor crossing continued to be incentivized by the successor PF government, he noted that two MPs from his party had been appointed as ministers and seven others as deputy ministers.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Josephine Limata referenced the conditions that make ministerial offers difficult to resist. In her own case, she was fighting an election petition in court when she was contacted by the former president,

Michael Sata. Limata explains: “When you are in court you need money. Money was coming from who? I am saying thank you for giving me this job as a minister, to support me during trials in court . . . When the president says I’ll support you, when you are supported by him, you are safe.”<sup>12</sup>

### Candidate survey research design

We conducted a face-to-face survey of candidates who competed in the 2011 Zambian parliamentary elections to gain insight on candidate affiliation dynamics with former and current parties. The survey included two principal components. The first presented a choice-based conjoint framework designed to assess candidate preferences over parties. The second included a battery of regular survey items asking about candidate experiences in joining parties.

The sample for the candidate survey includes 116 winners (sitting MPs) and first losers from the 2011 parliamentary elections. Given 150 single-member parliamentary constituencies, there were 300 potential respondents for our study.<sup>13</sup> We included first losers in the sample to ensure that we were not biasing our results in favor of electorally successful candidates. The decision to focus on the top two candidates was based on our analysis of Zambian electoral data showing that most parliamentary races are two-person contests. Across constituencies, the first- and second-place candidates win over 80% of the vote between them. Third-place candidates and beyond typically receive a tiny fraction of the vote. Such candidates are unlikely to be politically relevant actors.<sup>14</sup>

We caution that the limited size of our sample obliges us to interpret the survey results conservatively. Some

candidates could not be tracked down and others were not accessible. The sample from which we draw the findings are therefore not necessarily completely representative of the population of legislative candidates. Yet, for both the conjoint experiment and the candidate survey, the findings we present are meaningful and substantively large despite the small sample size posing a challenge in detecting significant effects.

## Analysis of party affiliation preferences

### Conjoint analysis design

We employ a conjoint experimental framework (Hainmueller et al., 2014) to assess the causal effect of different party attributes on candidates' affiliation choices. Following common practice, each survey respondent was presented with five pairs of party profiles that were generated using a completely independent randomization process. Each attribute level was assigned with equal probability within each of the eight party attributes we selected. The attributes and attribute levels are presented in the appendix. The candidates participating in the survey evaluated a total of 940 party profiles (or 470 party profile pairs).

Survey respondents were presented with two party profiles listing their attributes side-by-side. Respondents were then asked to identify the party they preferred. To minimize the possibility of privileging the first attribute encountered (i.e., primacy effects), we randomized the order of attribute presentation across respondents. Pooling across respondents for the analysis further mitigates concerns over primacy effects.

We follow the method proposed by Hainmueller et al. (2014) to estimate average marginal component effects (AMCEs), which can be interpreted as the average difference in the probability of being the preferred party when comparing different attribute levels, where the average is taken over all possible combination of the other party attributes. To obtain correct variance estimates, we cluster the standard errors at the respondent level.

### Conjoint analysis results

The conjoint experiment helps to identify party attributes that influence candidate preferences over parties. The results summarized in Figure 3 present the point estimates and 95 percent confidence intervals for the unconditional AMCEs with standard errors clustered at the respondent level. The rows in the plot that are missing the point estimate and confidence interval denote the reference category for each attribute.

We generally find that candidates appear to prefer parties that will decrease their campaign costs while increasing their electoral prospects. Consistent with Smyth (2006), we find that candidates exhibit a strong preference for larger parties with higher levels of national political support, as shown under Attribute 2 in Figure 3. Compared to a party

that enjoys 5% support, parties with 25% support and 51% support are preferred by 13 percentage points and 18 percentage points, respectively. Our related null results are substantively important in this context. We find no systematic support for candidates preferring to join the incumbent president's party, as shown under Attribute 1. The null result may reflect the possibility that candidates interpreted the attribute to specifically refer to the PF of President Edgar Lungu. Candidates might express no such preference if becoming a PF candidate would confer no immediate electoral advantage within UPND or MMD constituencies.

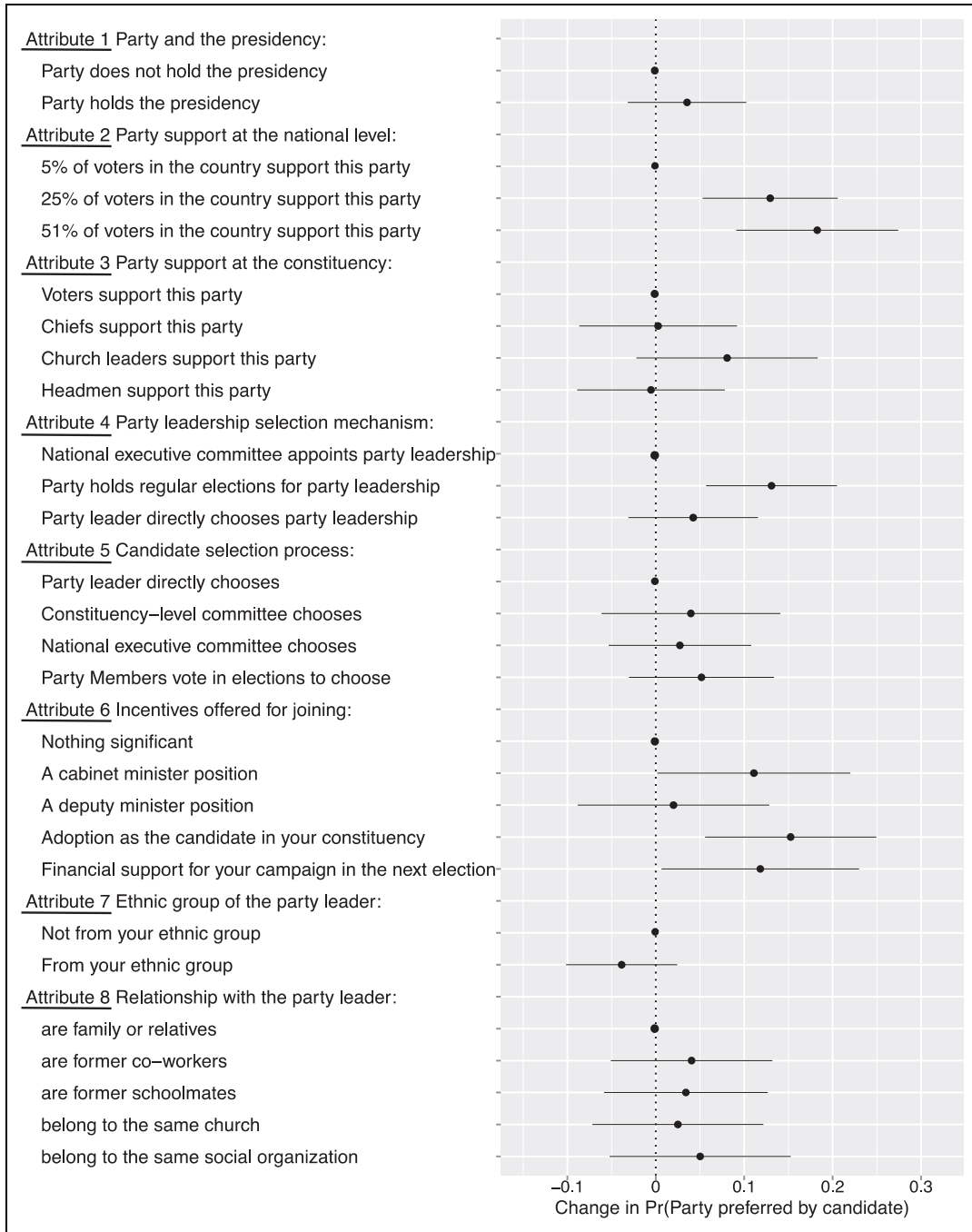
The organizational characteristics of parties also influence candidates' party preferences. We find that candidates prefer a party with institutionalized mechanisms for bottom-up leadership selection by 13 percentage points in comparison over a party in which the national executive committee appoints leadership. This finding aligns with Chhibber et al. (2014), who use Indian data to show that parties with greater levels of organization are more attractive to politicians. We nuance the finding in linking this candidate preference to the fact that bottom-up leadership selection also confers candidates with greater bargaining power. Since the individuals seeking party leadership must build a winning coalition among its members, candidates could use their leverage as voting party members to extract concessions that offset their campaign costs.

Party inducements, in particular, play a crucial role in influencing candidate preferences. Compared to the baseline in which a party leader offers no inducement, candidates prefer parties that offer financial support during campaigns (by nearly 12 percentage points) as well as guarantee them adoption as the party's candidate (by over 15 percentage points), as shown for Attribute 6 in Figure 3. The candidate preference for guaranteed adoption is likely driven by the interaction between the burden of campaign financing and electoral geography. In Zambia, parties have developed partisan strongholds in which much of the competition for office occurs at the adoption or nomination stage (Choi, 2018). Adoption by the party becomes especially valuable in these party strongholds, since candidates who receive the guarantee are largely freed from the cost of having to pay members of the selection committee to secure the nomination.

We further find that candidates strongly prefer parties that offer promises of cabinet appointments (11 percentage points), as shown for Attribute 6 in Figure 3. This finding is consistent with the expectation that candidates will seek out opportunities to recoup their campaign costs through rent-seeking in office. Such appointments also enable candidates to deliver clientelistic benefits to their constituents. More generally, it should be noted that this set of inducements (campaign finance, guaranteed nomination, and cabinet appointments) can be offered by party leaders to recruit defectors as well as to hold onto candidates recruited by others.

The conjoint experiment fails to uncover any causal effects for a specific method of candidate adoption.





**Figure 3.** Effect of party attributes on candidate preferences over parties.

Notes: Figure 3 plots the effects of the party attribute values on the probability that the party is preferred by parliamentary candidates. The dots represent point estimates for the AMCEs; the bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Rows without estimates represent the reference categories within each attribute.

Compared to parties in which the party leader can unilaterally appoint candidates, parties that use more open forms of candidate selection, such as committee-based systems or primary elections, are statistically no more likely to be preferred. We cannot make definitive claims about why this is the case, given that candidates do have a preference for guaranteed adoption as the party candidate

(“the party leader promised you”). One possibility is that the preferred selection method varies by candidate type. While candidates with strong support may prefer primary elections, candidates with weak support may prefer direct appointment by party leaders because more open methods would limit their ability to secure the nomination.

**Table 1.** Candidate experiences with recruitment and defections.

	Recruitment		Defection		Bribery	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Business owner	1.711** (0.666)	2.237*** (0.825)	1.186** (0.519)	1.296** (0.604)	1.493*** (0.553)	1.651*** (0.636)
Civic leader	0.410* (0.243)	0.657** (0.277)	0.097 (0.238)	0.135 (0.270)	0.697** (0.286)	0.517* (0.308)
Prior election experience		-0.016 (0.294)		0.789** (0.390)		-0.824** (0.481)
Ruling party member		0.682 (0.486)		1.311*** (0.493)		-0.505 (0.481)
Losing candidate		-0.308 (0.480)		-0.900* (0.490)		-1.047** (0.504)
Woman		1.273** (0.625)		0.109 (0.581)		0.061 (0.598)
Age		0.062** (0.027)		0.007 (0.025)		0.000 (0.026)
University degree		-0.721 (0.467)		0.632 (0.476)		0.388 (0.484)
Constant	-1.987*** (0.651)	-5.927*** (1.971)	-0.673 (0.488)	-1.916 (1.657)	-1.270** (0.534)	-0.223 (1.732)
Observations	108	106	109	108	109	107

Note: Logit estimation. Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.10$ .

## Survey of candidate affiliation experiences

While the conjoint experiment provides insight on candidate preferences over party attributes, the candidate survey allows us to further analyze candidates' lived experiences with party switching. The majority of candidates in our sample (57%) have experience with party switching, that is, joining their current party after leaving another. We next present analysis of the factors influencing their affiliation and switching choices.

### Dependent variables

There are two dependent variables focused on how candidates have joined parties: recruitment and defection. *Recruitment* is a dichotomous variable indicating whether candidates were asked to join their current party by its leaders or members. *Defection* is a dichotomous variable indicating whether candidates left another party to join their current party. Recruitment and defection are not mutually exclusive. The recruitment variable represents the demand side among party leaders: Who are they trying to attract to the party? The defection variable approximates the supply side among candidates: Who actually moves between parties?

### Independent variables

To capture a candidate's financial resources, we include a dichotomous measure that indicates whether a candidate owns a business. Owning a business is the most direct route to the accumulation of wealth in many developing

countries, so we expect businesspeople-turned-candidates to be especially attractive recruits for parties. This expectation is consistent with prior research showing that businesspeople enjoy financial advantages when competing for office (Herron and Sjoberg, 2016; Kotler, 2017; Szakonyi, 2020). Additionally, to gauge a candidate's social linkages, we include a count of a candidate's civic leadership positions in volunteer associations, whether professional, business, labor, or religious.

Control variables are included to reflect a range of political experiences. We code for prior election experience through a count of the number of times a candidate has previously run for office before 2011. We include a dichotomous indicator of whether the candidate is a member of the current ruling PF. A third dichotomous variable reflects whether the candidate lost in the 2011 general elections. Demographic variables include gender, age, and education (i.e., the candidate holds a university degree). Descriptive statistics for the sample are presented in the appendix.

### Candidate survey results

The main findings from the candidate survey are presented in Table 1. The results, shown in log-odds units, are based on binomial logistic regression. The *recruitment* results suggest that the most sought-after candidates have a specific profile: business owners with multiple social linkages. As shown in Models 1 and 2, the log odds reported for being a business owner are positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level in two-tailed tests. Based on Model 2,

the predicted probability of a business owner being invited to join a party are approximately 0.5, all else equal; the predicted probability drops to 0.1 when a candidate does not own a business.

The advantages of being a business owner in candidate recruitment are quite likely shaped by their financial resources rather than being stand-ins for modernity in a poor country. In supplementary analyses presented in the appendix, we find no evidence that candidates from other modern or lucrative professions enjoy similar advantages. Candidates with backgrounds in these professions (accountants, engineers, executives, lawyers, professors, and teachers) are simply not preferred in the same way as business owners.

A candidate's linkages are an important predictor of candidate recruitment. In Model 2, the log odds for civic leadership positions are positive and statistically significant at conventional levels in two-tailed tests. For example, the predicted probability of being invited to join a party rises from 0.46 for a candidate with one leadership position in a civic organization to 0.62 for a candidate with two such positions, *ceteris paribus*.

The *recruitment* results in Table 1 show no systematic differences for ruling party versus opposition party members or for winning versus losing candidates. Prior election experience and whether the candidate lost their election also have no significant effect on recruitment. These null results are possibly driven by the fact that, given relatively low renomination rates, party leaders do not infer much information from candidates' political histories (Choi, 2018). Indeed, these null results are broadly consistent with the expectation that party leaders will privilege financial over political qualifications when identifying the candidates likely to succeed in clientelistic campaigning.

Demographic factors do play a role in recruitment. Women candidates are significantly more likely to be invited to join a party: the predicted probability is 0.66 for women and 0.35 for men. This result is not simply the product of a formal quota or other gender-based electoral requirements; there are none in Zambia. Instead, the few women in national politics may be perceived as highly desirable candidates because—to survive politically as women—they have to be wealthier and better connected than their male counterparts (Phillips, 2021; Wang and Muriaas, 2019). Another demographic factor that influences recruitment is age. Possibly reflecting other correlates of success associated with experience, older candidates are more likely to report being recruited: the predicted probability rises from 0.4 for a 53-year old, the mean age in the sample, to 0.53 for a 62-year old, a one-standard deviation increase in age.

Supplementary analyses reported in the appendix show no systematic impact for ethnicity on whether a candidate is invited to join a party.<sup>15</sup> This ethnicity null result is consistent with the data illustrated in Figure 2, which

highlights the extent to which cross-party defections occur in all regions and across all cleavages.

The *defection* results in Table 1 indicate that business owners are among the most likely candidates to switch parties. Transforming the log-odds for this variable in Model 4 suggests that business owners are approximately 3.7 times more likely to defect. Candidate linkages are less of a factor, as those with a larger number of civic leadership positions are no more or less likely to defect.

Candidates with prior election experience are more likely to defect. The log odds in Model 4 indicate that each prior election raises the odds by about 20%. Similarly, defection is relatively more common among members of the ruling party: a PF member is 3.7 times more likely to have switched parties when compared to opposition candidates, as indicated by the log odds in Model 4. Losing candidates are somewhat less likely to have switched parties. No demographic factors systematically distinguish candidates that are prone to defection.

We also investigated whether recruitment by party leaders and members might affect a candidate's likelihood of defection. Though not reported in Model (4) of Table 1, we find no significant effect for recruitment as an independent variable. And its inclusion does not substantively affect the results in Model (4). While the defection decisions of candidates are not appreciably swayed by outreach from other parties, this null result is consistent with this study's broader theoretical framework. It suggests that, regardless of party outreach, candidates are looking to switch affiliation to maximize the electoral payoff for their financial investment. And, in the Zambian case, the candidates most likely to defect—business owners—also happen to have the greatest access to personal resources.

We further extend the analysis by examining an additional dependent variable to provide insight on how the recruitment of business owners may influence party nomination processes. Models (5) and (6) of Table 1 presents logit analyses of *bribery*, a dichotomous variable indicating whether a candidate believes that individuals seeking nomination must provide money or resources to party members on the candidate adoption committee to guarantee themselves the nomination. To avoid desirability bias, the survey did not ask candidates if they themselves paid a bribe during the nomination process; they were instead asked if they thought this is common practice among candidates.

The *bribery* results indicate that securing party nomination may be a critical campaign cost affecting whether and when candidates consider party switching. Business owners, in particular, may be distinct political actors who pursue nominations in ways that might give them an advantage over less wealthy candidates. Based on the log odds reported in Model 6, business owners are 5.2 times more likely to claim that money must be given to party officials to guarantee themselves a nomination. Candidates with multiple civic leadership positions are also significantly

more likely to believe that paying for nominations is frequent. The estimated coefficient in Model 6 indicates that each additional civic leadership position increases the odds of an affirmative response by 68%.

Candidates with prior electoral experience are less likely to claim that paying for nominations is frequent, suggesting that they may have different non-monetary strategies for seeking a party's nomination. The predicted probability for answering the bribery question affirmatively drops from 0.7 for a candidate who has never run for office before to 0.51 for a candidate who has run at least once before. Losing candidates are also less likely to believe that candidates regularly bribe party officials to guarantee themselves a nomination. Demographic factors such as gender and age have no impact in this regard.

## Conclusion

Drawing on original evidence from parliamentary candidates in Zambia, we advance the research on party switching by examining what candidates want in a party and what types of candidates are most likely to be recruited by party leaders. Understanding the individual-level calculations of party leaders and candidates may enable us to better explain the divergence in party institutionalization that is increasingly evident among democratizing countries. For example, party leaders may seek to purposely induce party switching among business owners as a means of enriching themselves rather than building up their parties. For their part, business owners may accelerate party switching if they become candidates to pursue other ends, namely, increasing rents for their firms. That would make them especially sensitive to the relative position of parties in policymaking or the control of specific portfolios. Future research should aim to disentangle to what extent such choices are made in pursuit of party interests (electoral competitiveness) versus personal interests (self-enrichment).

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## Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

## Notes

1. Public finance regulation data are available at <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/political-finance-database>.
2. The International IDEA handbook, *Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns*, documents how ruling parties around the world abuse state resources to finance campaigns.
3. Author interview, Lusaka, Zambia, January 14, 2016.
4. Author interview, Lusaka, Zambia, January 13, 2016.
5. Author interview, Lusaka, Zambia, January 12, 2016.
6. Author interview, Lusaka, Zambia, January 15, 2016.
7. Author interview, Lusaka, Zambia, January 14, 2016.
8. Author interview, Lusaka, Zambia, January 15, 2016.
9. Supplementary analyses in the appendix show that candidates competing for large parties receive a significant electoral boost.
10. A provincial breakdown of party switching is presented in the appendix.
11. Author interview, Lusaka, Zambia, January 14, 2016.
12. Author interview, Lusaka, Zambia, January 15, 2016.
13. In the 2011–2016 electoral period, the Zambian parliament had 150 elected members and 8 additional members appointed by the president.
14. Details about the sampling technique and sample descriptive statistics are reported in the appendix.
15. Almost all ethnicity specifications are statistically indistinguishable from zero.

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