

State of Politics in Tanzania

INTRODUCTION

THERE is a broad consensus that the process of consolidating the transition towards participatory political system in Tanzania over the past seventeen years has achieved remarkable success. Whereas once predominantly under a single party hegemony, Tanzania today is characterized by a plurality of political parties. Though slow; the growth of the independent civil society has gained momentum.

The country has also witnessed a dramatic transformation of the press. State-owned media outfits that had a virtual monopoly for decades have now changed their accent and become outlets for different voices, not just the ruling party - a major step towards promoting democratic practice. This paradigm shift has also helped engender a critical relationship between an unencumbered media and government, which is a vital health element of a growing democracy.

But even then the road to a democratic culture is still very fragile and tortuous. Many caveats remain. Seventeen years after the end of single party rule the road is riddled with a web of legacy, contextual, constitutional and operating challenges. In short, there remain serious obstacles on the way to liberal politics.

This brief report provides a critical assessment of recent political development trends and practice in the country. Given that the current situation is a product of the past, it is easy to predict the future knowing that Tanzanians will go to their fourth multiparty general elections next year.

The assessment dwells on the political, economic and social situation as well on the major actors namely: the ruling and opposition political parties, civil society and the media, the rise of fundamentalism factor together with the influence of the external factor in shaping the political process.

THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Ranked 159th out of 175 countries on the Human Development Index [HDI] by the United Nations, Tanzania is one of the poorest countries in the world. And although the economy is growing, it is still very much externally oriented with almost 100 percent of development expenditure externally financed basically by donors. Internal revenue collection has not met the objective of collecting at least 18.5 per cent of the GDP growth rate. This means Tanzania falls behind neighboring countries like Kenya and Mozambique whose collection exceeds 20 percent of the GDP growth rate.

The performance of agriculture, which is the backbone of the country's economy, is below annual economic growth rate of 7.3%. To make matters worse, tourism - another leading foreign exchange earner - together with non-traditional crops notably flowers and minerals have been hit by the global economic melt down. And with 13 per cent of the labor force unemployed the country's commitment to create one million jobs by 2011 is a dream in the wilderness.

Improved economic management and progress with reforms have improved the resilience of the country's economy. GDP has been over 5 per cent since the turn of millennium. Despite this, economic growth has not yet fully translated into poverty reduc-

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tion at the household level and over one third of the population still lives below the basic needs poverty line, with almost one fifth unable to meet their basic food requirements.

Illiteracy is growing - with 28.6 per cent of the population unable to read or write in any language. About 53 percent of the rural population still does not have access to clean water while 90 per cent of Tanzanians have no access to electricity or gas.

Tanzania is one the countries in sub Saharan Africa contributing to more than half of the global maternal and new born deaths. Every year 8,000 or 24 women die per day while giving birth or due to complications related to pregnancy. Part of the problem is that less than half of all births take place in a health facility. The health infrastructure has almost collapsed and life expectancy fallen down.

About 1.8m people were estimated to be living with HIV at the end of 2008; thus making the epidemic a major factor impacting the health and opportunities of the general population. AIDS is also a serious threat to the country's socio-economic development.

STATE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Seventeen years after the dawn of liberal democracy Tanzania is still suffering from the hangover of a single party rule. Indicators are many. Tanzania is still largely a one party-state within a multiparty political system. Politics is still dominated by the one party generation most of them in their late sixties and above. Political leadership in both the ruling and opposition political parties is still in grip of the old guards with the 'dot.com generation' waiting in the periphery.

The transition to multiparty democracy in Tanzania continues to be frustrated by several factors including institutional weaknesses in practically all political parties as manifested by the lack of party philosophy or ideology, the functioning of party structures and processes, lack of participatory

internal democracy due to deficit of communication between party leaders, followers and the population,

Lack of resources and the dominance of personality cult together with the infiltration in politics by wealth individuals [*wafadhili wa vyama*] funding political parties with sole aim to maintain the status quo are other factors holding political development in Tanzania.

The other often ignored factor is lack of grassroots demands for political reforms on the parties considering that all political parties started from above and mostly in urban centers and have done very little to reach the grassroots especially in the rural areas where 87 per cent of the population live.

Furthermore, the electoral system [winner takes all], which not only leaves out smaller parties but also disproportionately rewards the ruling party with seats in Parliament and hence more funding; and the refusal to allow private candidates is equally levying a cruel tax on democracy.

There are so many impediments holding back a smooth transition towards a competitive political culture; and if the five by-elections held since 2000 are anything to go by, it is easy to predict that next year's general election results are likely to remain the same in favor of the ruling party.

Even then however, recent studies by Afrobarometer indicate positive trends. While the Nyalali Commission had 77 per cent of the respondents wanting to cling to the outdated single party rule, by 2003 that position had swung in favor of liberal democracy with 68 per cent of the respondents now saying multiparty was useful. Equally important, while only 29 per cent of respondents say they were far away from political parties 72 per cent say they are very close to political parties - an indicator that parties have a huge following in the country.

Political parties constitute the mechanism *par excellence* of democratic transition. However, to be effective political parties must meet four criteria. These are continuity, that

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is, a life span exceeding the dominance of party's founders, a nationwide organization, the desire to exercise power [*kushika hatamu or dola*], and consistent efforts to garner significant popular support.

If these four variables were used to measure the growth of political parties in Tanzania, it is clear not more than four can qualify to be called political parties. Already political parties like Popular National Party [PONA] and Tanzania Peoples Party [TPP] collapsed with the death of the founding chairman in the case of PONA; and departure of its founder in the case of TPP. Even the deregistration from the Registrar of political parties book was a mere routine job.

Similarly, there are parties that are basically political platforms for single individuals, built on structures whose rules can readily be changed to suit its founder; whose money and charisma are its main engine. This is the case with United Democratic Party [UDP] of John Cheyo; National Democratic League [NLD] of Emmanuel Makaidi; Democratic Party [DP] of Christopher Mtikila; Tanzania Labour Party [TLP] led by Augustine Mrema and Tanzania Democratic Alliance [TADEA] led by Lifa Chipaka.

Most of the political parties in Tanzania also fall short of the mark on the second count. A nationwide organization. UDP is very much tied to Magu the home district of its chairman while DP, NLD and TADEA operate from the founders' homes.

THE RULING PARTY

Since the advent of multipartyism, the ruling *Chama cha Mapinduzi* [CCM] party has not only declined to de-link the civil service from the party, but has continued to enjoy, with impunity, exceptional support from state machinery. *Chama cha Mapinduzi* continues to deploy the services of regional and district administration, police and state security [*Usalama wa Taifa*] to organize, manage and utilize state funds for what are purely party events, including elections.

Most significantly, CCM uses these state structures to relay party messages and di-

rectives including the hosting of top party leadership as most of them double as party and state leaders - the case of Regional and District Commissioners and Cabinet Ministers. What this means is that the cost of performing many of the expensive party tasks is borne by state on behalf of the party. The common argument is that "*Hii ni Serikali ya CCM*" [this is CCM government] or "*Hiki ni Chama chenye Dola*" [it is the party in power].

Likewise, the ruling party and its government have refused to provide civic education as recommended by the Nyalali Commission because an informed population works to its disadvantage.

Little wonder in all but one of the five by-elections held since 2000 have been won by the ruling party. Even in the Tarime constituency where it lost, the seat was already in the hands of the opposition, *Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo* [CHADEMA].

Notwithstanding these advantages, the ruling party is on the verge of disintegration or split mostly because of political corruption especially in the electoral process both within the party and its affiliates and also in the national elections. Unlike in the past when election funding was met by the party itself - as those wielding economic power were isolated from the party - the dawn of liberalism has opened the floodgate to private mobilization of election funds. Apparently this is done without any policy regulation in place. Those hitherto labeled as economic saboteur [*wahujumu*] have now been brought back into the fold as party donors [*wafadhili*].

With the rise of an extremely rich class of people, shrewd politicians have been quick to embrace these tycoons who are ready to bankroll party elections to advance their business interests. The end result is that only those with money to bribe voters are likely to be nominated and elected. Those who fail will have to defect to the opposition or else split the giant party into CCM-A and CCM-B. If this were to happen political analysts are in agreement that it will be a blessing in

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disguise as it will tilt the balance of power in favor of the opposition.

The failure of the government to put in place a policy regulation on election funding is already levying a cruel tax on government coffers as an alliance of business tycoons and politicians is corrupting the bureaucracy leading to looting of public funds.

Another notable feature in the ruling party is the struggle between the old guards [represented by Yusuf Makamba – the current Party Secretary General] and younger generation [represented by Nape Nnauye]. The struggle is so strong to the extent that it may break up the party. The old guards - some of whom have been in power since independence - want to hang on while the younger generation wants to push them out.

THE TROUBLED OPPOSITION

One common feature of the leadership in the opposition political camp is that it is not markedly different from the ruling party. The opposition is also being led by the same social stratum born and nurtured by mono political system. This is why it has borrowed the same single party categories, instruments, structures and terminologies in the struggle against the ruling party hegemony. There is very little that deviates the opposition political parties from the dominant party so much so that average, ordinary people do not see the difference.

This also explains why almost all the opposition political parties have been riddled with internal leadership struggles and defections back to the ruling party something that has contributed to eroding voter confidence in the emerging parties.

In terms of popularity of the opposition political parties the graph has not remained constant. Some parties have gained while others have lost. During the first multiparty general elections in 1995, NCCR-Mageuzi under the leadership of Augustine Mrema was the most popular opposition party after the ruling *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* followed by Civic United Front under Professor Ibrahim

Lipumba and United Democratic Party [UDP] under John Cheyo.

However, by 2005 the pendulum had swung in favor of CUF which came second after CCM followed by *Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo* [CHADEMA] under Freeman Mbowe with Mrema's Tanzania Labour Party [TLP] trailing very far behind. While the popularity of CUF has continued to increase, that of NCCR-Mageuzi, UDP and TLP has continued to decline. The only exception is CHADEMA which has recently become very popular.

The thrust of CHADEMA on graft and corruption in the corridors of power has proved to be an effective stick from which to beat the ruling party and around which it has been able to mobilize huge following. This is the only political party which is expected to offer a stiff challenge to the ruling party on the Mainland in next year's general elections.

Other opposition political parties exist only in name some without even offices, leadership,

There are various reasons to explain the impotence of the opposition political parties in Tanzania. These include the selective affinity of the State towards the ruling party - hence the unfair competition and unlevelled play ground. The opposition still faces many hurdles in their effort to penetrate the politics in the country, major among them being their leadership qualities.

The internal factors holding back the growth of the opposition in Tanzania range from intra-party conflicts, lack of financial resources, organizational weaknesses, lack of administrative capacity and leadership.

It is quite proper that every party leader has the ambition to become the country's next president. This kind of ambition provides a strong

motivation for party leaders to utilize their best skills and resources to project a good image of the party - and its capacity. The problem, however, arises when organiza-

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tional standards are sacrificed at the altar of personal ambition. It is a culture that promotes the attitude of indispensability of party leaders that holds their followers to ransom and threatens the party with collapse if those leaders are replaced.

The leadership crisis in both TLP and UDP emanates from this single factor. Much as internal elections have been held with the same leaders retaining their seats, the fact of the matter is that the parties have become weaker and unpopular. The same story applies to NCCR-Mageuzi and to some extent CUF.

Autocratic leadership boosted by efforts to revolve personality cult as the central basis for political authority has taken firm grip of nearly all the opposition political parties in the country.

Hence replacement of party leadership is not only resisted but often it is never contemplated. If serious efforts are made to replace party leadership, the result is a split of the party. TLP for example is riddled with leadership wrangling mostly involving attempts to replace Mrema through the ballot box.

This kind of approach to political organization creates a monumental problem for any bids for the institutionalization of democracy, in that, able and better skilled leaders cannot emerge to take up the party leadership mantle.

The decline of the opposition in Tanzania is basically due to the following factors: intra party conflicts, lack of party organization skills, lack of resources, and intrusion by agents from the ruling party [*mamluki*], together with lack of internal democracy. A combination of these factors together with a suffocating legal framework characterized by the domineering of the state administrators in rural areas have made it very difficult for them to penetrate into the rural areas and elicit grassroots support.

THE STATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The role of civil society in any political setting cannot be underestimated. These are training grounds for democratic citizenship and development of political skills of their members. They recruit new political leaders, stimulate political participation and educate the broader public on a wide variety of public interest issues. In their watchdog role, they serve, along with the press, as checks on the relentless tendency of the state to centralize its power and to evade civic accountability and control.

Tanzania is yet to benefit from a vibrant civil society because of passivity, self-interest and poor state of the economy, lack of organizational capacity and lack of public awareness. Much as Tanzania enjoys a plethora of civil organizations in all areas many of them are weak, elite-oriented, urban-based and survive through external donations. The danger of this kind of dependency is that, they will vanish from existence the moment foreign donation ceases and more importantly they are dancing to the tune of bank rollers.

The civil society in Tanzania is further weakened by the law, which prohibits them from politicking, because that is the sole work of political parties. Interestingly even leaders of the political parties who stand to gain a lot from civil societies have not gained the courage to challenge the bad law. Tanzania has a long history of excluding trade unions, cooperative societies, students' groups, women organizations and professionals from politics - since their absence make it much easier to cut deals across party line. A typical example is how members of Parliament are able to increase their salaries and other allowances almost at will.

STATE OF THE UNION

Even with over twenty commissions being formed during the past two decades to deal with Union crisis, the problem lingers on. In fact there are more complaints now than ever before. While in the past it was on the

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structure of the Union it is now on resources.

Zanzibar is complaining that the Union Government was allocating to itself all foreign aid. It is also complaining that revenue generated from minerals was not being apportioned to the isles. This latter issue recently triggered a huge debate both inside and outside the House of Representatives. The common position is that since Zanzibar does not benefit from revenues generated from the minerals sector then oil and gas discovered in the Isles must belong to Zanzibar alone. That is to say oil and gas business is not a Union matter.

Another lingering problem relates to the position of Zanzibar President in the Union pecking. While under the 1964 Articles of the Union the President of Zanzibar is automatically the Vice President of the Union Government, changes made to accommodate multiparty system in which union presidential candidates must have running mates relegates him/her to the post of mere Cabinet Minister in the Union Government. This has infuriated those in Zanzibar arguing that it was unconstitutional.

They are equally very vocal when it comes to the question of Constitutional Court, which has not been institutionalized since 1964. Their line of argument is that had this institution been in place most of the past and current problems could have been solved.

Another area that has attracted complaints from Zanzibar relates to the position of Zanzibar in the East African Community [EAC]. Those in the isles think they were being unrepresented and that most decisions were being made in Dar es Salaam without consultations as if Zanzibar was not a state in its own right.

Mainlanders on their part have always complained against the inclusion of Zanzibar Ministers in the non-union ministries saying this was wrong as there was no Mainlander in the Zanzibar Cabinet.

It is clear unless the 1964 Articles of Union remain the grundnorm or unless there is a referendum with free voting on what type of the Union Tanzanians want, the Union question will one day become a political crisis as was the case with the G55 in 1992.

Apparently both the Union Government and Zanzibar leadership have decided to remain silent in order to buy time

THE FUNDAMENTALISM FACTOR

Tanzania is currently witnessing a surge of fundamentalism from all walks of life in the form of Islamic militants, evangelical revivalism and even witchcraft. All these developments are indicators of a societal crisis that can be explain from two perspectives.

On one part the rise of both Islamic fundamentalism and evangelical revivalism [religious militants] is a result of freedoms that have accompanied the dawn of liberalism. It will be recalled that under single party hegemony all potential organizations were either co-opted or suppressed and regulated by the sole ruling party. In the case of religious bodies, these were regulated through CCT and BAKWATA. But with the dawn of liberalism, they are now free to associate [rebel or revolt against the established order]

On the other hand, revivalism is an outcome of failure of state to manage the production and distribution of resources to all social groupings equally. As the economic crisis intensifies and competition for resources becomes more acute, people have revived old and traditional structures to give them support in crisis situations. This explains why religious revival, witchcraft and ethnicity or tribalism is gaining ground. Increasingly religious revival has begun to penetrate politics and political alignments. Furthermore witchcraft and witch-hunting have become important especially in the lake zone regions where old women are killed as witches while albino are being killed for business and political motives.

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Equally important ethnic symbols, language and alliances are assuming a more political significance and becoming a source of ethnic solidarity; as it is through such structures that the amenities of modernity can be secured at the expense of other ethnic groups.

The growth of tribalism and religious militants is an indication of the failure of political actors to respond and act effectively to peoples' needs especially in the provision of social services. As a result, politics and social relations are increasingly mediated through these structures which offer people some sort of support, access to scarce resources and security.

Under these circumstances, the role of the state as protector, the legitimacy of the state and the concept of the common good are threatened. The state and all that it stands for becomes the victim of these processes, and developments.

It is now very clear the threat to political stability in Tanzania is emerging as society becomes more stratified through interest groups. Youth groups with nothing to lose are ready to sell their labor to whoever can pay them regardless of the outcome. This is how the spread of terrorism should be approached. The danger posed by fundamentalism to the country's stability are enormous. Ahmed Gaillan, a young man from Zanzibar who masterminded the bombing of American embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi in 1998 is now being tried in the US after his capture in Pakistan.

INFLUENCE OF FOREIGN POWERS

With an almost 100 per cent dependency on external funding for her development budget Tanzania has completely lost her independence. This explains the country's why President is always abroad [seven trips to the US within two years] soliciting for more aid. The influence of foreign powers in Tanzania's political system is so huge to the extent that the country has completely lost not only its ability to make decisions but also direction. The external factor is not only directed at the state but also to the

emerging civil society many of which are out there to meet the interests of funding partners.

External social engineering means that the country's future will not be determined by internal dynamics but rather the external factors. This has led to what is referred as management by crisis. Apparently Tanzania switched to liberal politics with pressure from external powers. If this is the case it goes without saying that the country is prone to political crisis [due resistance], and therefore requires carefully externally directed political intervention in order to consolidate and expand the level of freedom and stability.

THE FUTURE

Tanzanians will next year go for their fifth multiparty general elections. Given the foregoing it is clear the ruling party will retain power not because of its popularity in terms of policy programs but rather through its muscle power [the power of the purse] and intrigues. However, given the recent upsurge of CHADEMA, the ruling party will retain power with a reduced number of MPs and Councilors.

With CCM retaining power, Tanzania will continue to be externally engineered. This is because the CCM government lacks capacity to manage state affairs combined with a weak economic base. Internal democracy within CCM will continue to be dominated by more intrigues due to political corruption which has penetrated the party at all levels with the party and its government lacking the capacity to uproot it among its ranks.

As society becomes more stratified and interest groups emerge which do no longer find satisfaction within the current arrangement, one may also predict instability thus killing the myth that Tanzania is a peaceful and stable country. The emergence of Islamic militants and evangelical revivalism, witchcraft, armed robbery, corruption and the looting of public funds by public servants are clear indicators of what is to come - lawlessness and hence survival of the fittest.

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The Union question is another thorny issue which will continue to steer political instability especially from Zanzibar. Part of the problem is that the current leadership has no interest in finding a lasting solution; unless it is coerced by external donors.



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Konrad Adenauer Stiftung e.V.
Hauptabteilung
Internationale Zusammenarbeit

Verbindungsbüro Tanzania
Isimani Road / Upanga
P.O. Box 6992
Dar es Salaam / Tanzania

Phone +255 22 2153174