

TANZANIA

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Tanzania – Ahead of Elections

I. INTRODUCTION

Tanzania will later this year conduct its fourth multiparty general elections. But if the current socioeconomic and political trends remain unchanged the country is unlikely to make any headway in the political transition for the foreseeable future.

Although formal multiparty politics was allowed in 1992 after three decades of single party political hegemony, the major structural blockage to effective growth and flourish of multipartyism in Tanzania is the conflation of the ruling party, state and the consequential crowding out of other actors.

In continuation of its hegemonic days, the ruling *Chama cha Mapinduzi [CCM]* operates a highly centralized and disciplined structure dominated by the Chairperson whose powers are fused with those of Head of State that includes among others appointment of almost all sensitive posts in the state apparatus and its organs.

In addition to dominating the Parliament, the ruling party through appointment powers of its Chairperson ensures party loyalists dominate security, defence and intelligence services. Equally important, ruling party supporters, particularly at the executive level populate the bureaucratic state apparatus at all levels. Similarly all public utilities and regulators are all manned by party loyalists. In a country where the public sector is the largest and most secure employer this arrangement has very serious implications to the country's political trends.

It is against such a background that one can report on the country's political trends ahead of the forthcoming general elections and thereafter.

II. OLD HABITS DIE HARD

Apart from few cosmetic changes of political culture that have taken place, Tanzania continues to be shaped by hangovers of monolithic politics under the tutelage of a seemingly authoritarian incumbent party in manipulating the political environment to retain power.

After 17 years of multiparty politics, Tanzanians are still suffering from the hangovers of single party rule that lasted for over 30 of the post-colonial period. Indicators of political hangovers are reflected from many angles including:

- Continuation of politics of exclusion as opposed to popular participation of people in power sharing and public policy-making.
- Marginalization of majority of the people from lucrative business and profitable economic ventures and by ignoring poor people in marginal areas with very little investment support, even the so-called *Kilimo Kwanza* program [Agriculture First] is a mere empty political slogan geared to hoodwink peasants.
- Failure to hasten democratic reforms by putting in place a level playing field through positive changes of regulatory and institutional frameworks of governance. Seventeen years after the dawn of multipartyism the state institutions of governance still do not fully adhere to democratic norms and practices.
- There is disillusionment with the nature of power arrangement under which the ruling party, *Chama Cha Mapinduzi [CCM]* still monopolizes and deliberately works very hard to marginalize

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and divide the already fragile opposition.

- Civil Society Organizations - NGOs, FBOs, CBOs, trade unions and other interest and pressure groups - are numerous but very weak in influencing political decisions, including election results.
- The administration of elections is still considered very weak and until now the government has failed to introduce courses in managing elections. The current election management body is still considered by the opposition as "partial" due to its composition, manner of appointment and lack of independent resources and personnel.
- Still there is no clear demarcation between government functions and functions of the incumbent as demonstrated by various fusions, which among others include the fusion between presidency and the chairperson of the ruling party, District and Regional Commissioners, Ministers and MPs and also those sitting in the Boards of Public Enterprises.
- Because of such deliberate fusions and confusion in public governance, the incumbent party continues to enjoy access to public resources allocations apart from the monthly subsidy of Tsh. 2.9 billion, which she enjoys by virtue of her dominance in the Parliament and local council bodies.
- The pace for legal reforms; especially constitutional reforms are slow and confusing. The Constitution still stipulates that Tanzania is governed by the ideology of socialism and self-reliance while in practice the country is under economic and political liberalization with strong inclination to privatization.
- Multiparty culture and the opposition are yet to be institutionalized mostly because the level of civic education is still low.

A combination of the above features means that Tanzania is still affected by the dismal performance of political and economic competition, poor governance, grand corruption,

inability to attain democracy and sustainable development together with dependency on foreign hand outs.

III. STATE OF MULTIPARTY POLITICS

A culture of multipartyism is still very far from ideal. There are numerous indicators. A vivid example is the repeated refusal by the Executive branch of government to implement a Court ruling in favour of private candidates at all levels of electoral process.

Most recently the Court of Appeal ruled in favour of private candidates and directed the government to put in place mechanism that would enable individuals to participate in the forthcoming general elections as private candidates. The reaction from the government was swift and defiant; "mission impossible". And that was the end of the matter.

On the other hand however, after relentless pressure from multilateral donor agencies to curb political corruption, for the first time since the advent of multiparty politics, on March 17 this year, President Jakaya Kikwete accented a Bill on Election Expenses Act, which among other things; prescribes on the limits on election expenses.

Already Tsh. 5 billions has been set as the limit for presidential election expenses while Tsh. 50 millions is for parliamentary elections.

Following the incorporation of stake holders' inputs in the Act, the Registrar of Political Parties is now framing guidelines and regulations to govern the forthcoming general elections.

Even then political pundits still worry about enforcement of that law because of many loopholes such as confidential disclosure of sources of election funds by candidates and political parties. In a situation where both the civil society and the opposition are still weak to ensure checks and balances against the incumbent party the practicability of the new law remains very doubtful.

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IV. THE STUNTED OPPOSITION

The practices of any political party depend to large extent on its internal organization. That is its leadership qualities, its resource endowments, its cohesiveness and capacity to resolve internal conflicts and, above all its internal democracy necessary for legitimacy building.

Seventeen years since they were allowed to operate, the opposition political parties remain stunted from a combination of factors that range from the political system, which is unsuitable to the local conditions and imperative to the hegemonic nature of the incumbent party and their own weaklings.

The weakling of the opposition political parties emanates from the very fact that the incumbent party still uses state machinery to divide the opposition by planting agents in the budding oppositions with the sole aim of weakening them and discrediting them in the public eyes. The never ending leadership wrangling and defections back to the ruling party is one reason that has led to political disenchantment in the country. The other obvious reason is that almost all the opposition political parties suffer from lack of the material, financial and human resources to function effectively under the prevailing political environment. Equally important is the fact that most of these parties have been created from the top by leaders without a base at the grassroots and normally their life span cannot exceed the dominant party founders and especially the leader/chairperson.

CCM has so far refused all calls to surrender public assets inherited from single party era such as football stadiums, public buildings, land, office buildings and companies. With most of the rules of the political game working in favour of the incumbent, the conduct of multiparty politics is still lopsided.

Notwithstanding their increasing numbers, both the opposition and civil society are restrained by immaturity of multiparty culture and incomplete process of democratic reforms.

Currently there are 19 fully registered political parties. More are clamoring for registration.

The latest new comer is *Chama Cha Jamii (CCJ)*, a welfare oriented political party which is advocating for return to the socialist welfare days of founding father Mwalimu Julius Nyerere.

The latest political party appears to be more focused and has to some extent captured public attention with the defection of one MP from the ruling party even though it is yet to get full registration.

On the other hand, with the exception of CHADEMA and CUF opposition political parties, other registered parties have always remained couched in their cocoons until election periods when they would raise their heads, make few noises and go back to slumber.

Without alternative policy programs to challenge the incumbent, opposition leaders only react to political events. A classic example is Augustine Mrema – controversial leader of TLP [Tanzania Labour Party] – whose leadership is riddled with internal wrangling right, left and centre. With his political popularity having plummeted to its lowest ebb, Mrema has already declared that he will be campaigning for the incumbent President Kikwete. Mrema has equally confessed in public that he belongs to the state intelligence service. Such pronouncements do not augur well for the growth and flourish of the opposition political parties and thereafter multiparty democracy.

Apart from the power of the purse and state organs, other political tricks and gimmicks used by incumbent to kill the opposition include physiological terror and intimidation through witchcraft, witch hunting and superstition.

Already, a leading local astrologer with strong connection to the ruling party has issued an ultimatum warning to those wishing to oppose President Kikwete. His message is loud and clear. Who ever attempts to oppose the sitting President in the forth-

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coming elections will succumb to sudden death.

In a country with strong belief in witchcraft and superstition including brutal killing of albinos for political ends, such pronouncements have a terrifying influence in a country where 36 per cent of its population is illiterate. [Tanzania's illiteracy rate is just above that of Southern Sudan which has never known peace since 1956].

The influence of superstition in politics is also a reflection of weak civic education together with primitive political practice. In Tanzania almost all opposition political parties lack grassroots support mostly because they are built from the top instead of bottom as is the case with CCM whose grassroots linkage is traceable to the anticolonial struggle. As such they lack linkages with interest/ pressure groups from which most of the election agenda should emanate.

V. HIGH NOON IN ZANZIBAR

For the first time since the introduction of multipartyism in Zanzibar there is much to watch on the political development. With the signing of political accord between the ruling party and the main opposition Civic United Front [CUF], the political stalemate that had left the country divided right at the middle has come to the end.

The recognition of incumbent President Amani Karume by CUF Secretary General Seif Shariff Hamad has brought to the end a political stalemate that had lasted since 1995.

While the powerful CUF Secretary General has already declared in public that he was going to contest for Zanzibar presidency, the incumbent President is ending his second term of office tenure.

On the part of CCM, the signing of the political accord "Muafaka" in Zanzibar has created uncertainty in the process of fielding presidential candidate. It is clear that there will be many contestants in the Zanzibar presidential race now that the incumbent

President is ending his second and final term in office.

Many names are being paraded. These include Karume's young brother Ali Karume currently Tanzania's Ambassador to Italy, Defence Minister in the Union Government, Dr Hussein Mwinyi [Dr. Mwinyi is son of former Union President Ali Hassan Mwinyi]. There is also current Union Vice President Dr Ali Mohamed Shein, former Zanzibar Chief Minister Dr. Mohammed Ghalib Bilal and his successor Vuai Nahodha and a horde of other political hawks.

Given that Zanzibar has strong political competition with great influence of CUF, there is a possibility that for the first time since 1964 Zanzibar may get a President from Pemba. Another area of interest that needs special attention revolves around the possibility of forming a government of national unit. Already two CUF members have been picked by President Karume to the House of Representatives.

VI. POSSIBLE AGENDA FOR THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS

Although the economy is the major issue that should determine the election outcome, it is personality of party leaders and money that will determine who wins. In this regard much as there is dissatisfaction everywhere given the high degree of poverty and the fact that after 49 years in power the ruling party is exhausted, still voters will go for its candidates because they have the money to bribe.

Like in all past elections political parties will produce election manifestos, policies and programmes, but these are rarely used. They are just empty promises to passive voters. Part of the problem is high degree of ignorance of voters combined with poverty. To many of them, voting time is not an opportunity to sack nonperforming government or incompetent individual leaders but rather to "profit" from tokens that range from second hand clothes, free local beer to few cents and salt.

And with the emergency of 'gangs of white collar criminals' masquerading as political philanthropists in the incumbent party's uniforms, voters especially women and rural dwellers have been taken hostage of "political business". This explains why political corruption will continue not only to flourish but also to determine who assumes political power.

Given, the global economic crisis affecting national economy and poor performance of the Kikwete regime in economic management, the opposition could have capitalized on that to wrestle power. But with fragile and non-visionary leadership, the opposition will never come to power in the near future. What is expected however is an increased number of MPs from the opposition due to possible crossovers from CCM.

Equally predictable is voter apathy given people's disillusionment with the political management of the country by the current leadership. Already issues pertaining to people's welfare are being sidelined. People complain of abandoned public offices as aspiring big wigs are busy combing rural areas bribing poor people and/or intimidating potential opponents. Interestingly to the common man in the streets and rural settings, it is a year of "harvests" and empty promises from politicians.

In the coming budget about 30 per cent is foreign aid, and development expenditure is about 31 per cent of the budget. When development becomes the business of the UN and bilateral agencies while local revenue is directed only for allowances and salaries there is something terribly wrong somewhere.

Instead of ensuring that accelerating economic growth trickles down more to millions of the poor to help bolster the party's vote base, the incumbent regime is reputed for its wasteful expenditure and luxury that include endless trips abroad and lavish allowances paid to executives in the bloated bureaucracy.

Part of the problem is the passive nature of voters. They are treated as inert creatures

who cannot think and who are easily cheated with "alms" and token bribes from aspiring candidates and their supporters. That explains why many of frustrated but powerless social groups look back to socialism and the days of Arusha Declaration of Mwalimu Nyerere.

With regard to election itself, the National Electoral Commission [NEC] is projecting to register 21 million voters compared to 15 million who registered in 2005. By last year some 18 million had already registered in the voter's registry. According to Rajab Kiravu, Director of Elections some Tsh. 109 billion is required to foot the election bill. Out of the amount 21 percent will be contributed by donors.

Interestingly, notwithstanding the number of registered voters, the fact of the matter is that many are getting registered not necessarily to participate in the election as such but rather for other reasons given that the voter's card has a multipurpose usage like an ID.

An equally interesting point to note is the fact that the election results will only change faces in the saddle of power but not the direction of politics simply because everybody else wants to ascend to power in order to "eat." For now and in the near future politics – the belly politics - will continue to shape politics in Tanzania.

It will also be interesting to follow a stiff competition especially in the nomination of parliamentary candidates because of a new procedure. Unlike in the past where aspiring candidates were voted by CCM branch representatives, this time around all party members will participate in the nomination process. This has implication in increased resource allocations and subsequent level of bribery in the CCM nomination process.