



Promoting Credible Elections and
Democratic Governance in Africa

**Realising effective and sustainable
democratic governance in Southern
Africa and beyond.**

**Towards an Understanding of
Contemporary Conflict in
Zanzibar**

**By
Shumbana Karume**

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Introduction

*Zanzibar has weathered many storms in the past, and I have no doubt that she will meet all difficulties that may assail her in the future. Long may she flourish and long may the happy relations which exists between the various communities continue.*¹

Claude Hollis, a British representative in Zanzibar during the 1920s wrote these words in an attempt to demonstrate that the African slaves in Zanzibar, very different from other slave colonies, lived in comfortable conditions provided for by their masters; so much so that they had no reason to be hostile to those more privileged, presumably their slave masters, or even challenge the inequalities that the slave trade had created.² Needless to say, this is a rather misguided and warped view held by many colonial officials of that time – a view that this author is glad to say, has been adequately disputed by various historical and political analysts of our time. Mbwiliza, for one, asserts that it is wrong to suppose that because the conditions of many slaves in Zanzibar were more tolerable than they had been during their journey to the coast – a journey that had entailed suffering and misery for the slaves – and, because after their emancipation in the late 1800s³, there

¹ C Hollis, Zanzibar: Present conditions and interests, *Journal of the African Society*, XXVII, 1928-29. Quoted in J Mbwiliza, The birth of a political dilemma and the challenges of the quest for new politics in Zanzibar, in T L Maliyamkono (ed), *The Political Plight of Zanzibar*, Eastern and Southern African Universities Research Programme, (ESAURP), TEMA Publishers Company Limited, 2000.

² Mbwiliza, op cit.

³ Formal decrees prohibiting the sale, exchange and purchases of slaves were established by the

had been a low number of applications for emancipation submitted to the Zanzibar courts, that slaves were in fact happy with their servile status.⁴ While Claude Hollis's words were meant to contextualise the inter-ethnic relations existing in Zanzibar in the post-slave emancipation years, what is of relevance here is his suggestion that Zanzibar will weather many of the difficulties it may experience in the future. Indeed, these are charitable words and with the recent political events in the isles they have come to mean much more than they were originally intended.

Since the inception of political pluralism in Tanzania, Zanzibar – made up of the Unguja and Pemba islands situated on the east coast of Tanzania – has experienced a number of political conflicts. These have mostly been inter-party conflicts between the ruling Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) and the main opposition party, the Civic United Front (CUF). This conflict has continued to engulf the political arena in Tanzania and has become more violent than originally anticipated or even imagined. The conflict has been characterised by sporadic acts of violence. The shocking deaths of demonstrators in January 2001 were among the acts which compelled the two warring parties to seek a resolution of the conflict. Other acts prior to this included sporadic bomb blasts in public places and indiscriminate detentions.

There have been several attempts, some more convincing than others, to understand the causes of such conflicts. Many of these have generated varied assessments; they fall between 'proximate and long term' arguments (to borrow Mmuya's phrase). With regard to proximate causes, power struggles, personality differences and clashes of party ideologies have been identified as the contributing causes of the intransigent conflict between the CCM and

CUF.⁵ Ineffective governance and election administration institutions also stand as significant proximate causes of political conflicts and the complexities surrounding these conflicts. On the other hand, other analysts have gone further and proclaimed the view that the recent political tensions are rooted into long-term factors. In this case, their assessments usually link these conflicts to the ethnic divisions that resulted from a number of historical factors: from the slave trade of which Zanzibar was at the centre, to intermarriages between the different ethnic groups.⁶ Additionally, some analyses have further linked political conflicts to the political identities that came about as a result of the British colonials' exploitation of these ethnic divisions in the 19th and 20th centuries.⁷ Those studies that have endeavoured to explain the political tensions in Zanzibar by understanding the political identities and dynamics that the British had fostered during the colonial period, have provided an opening for a different explanation of political conflict. The tendency had been to overlook the political legacy of colonialism. Mahmood Mamdani in *When Victims Become Killers*⁸ affirmed that the tendency for political historians to explain political conflict in the period following African independence was to focus on political identities that had been framed during the colonial period from cultural and market-based identities. But no one "historicised the political legacy of colonialism – the colonial state as an institutional complex framed and set in motion particular political identities. No one tried to historicise race and ethnicity as

⁵ Inter-party conflict: CCM and CUF, in Maliyamkono & Kanyongolo (eds), *When Political Parties Clash*, op cit.

⁶ A Talbot, Nyerere's legacy of poverty and repression in Zanzibar, World Socialist website, <www.wsws.org>, 15 November 2000.

⁷ See A Ramadhan, D Mukangara & J.Mbwiliza in Maliyamkono (ed), T L. 2000. *The Political Plight of Zanzibar*, Eastern and Southern African Universities Research Programme (ESAURP), TEMA Publishers Ltd, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

⁸ M Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda*, Princeton University Press, 2001.

British on 1 August 1890. These decrees were not enforced until 1896, and they abolished the legal institution of slavery but not slavery itself. Slavery was eventually abolished in 1909.

⁴ Mbwiliza, op cit.

political identities undergirded and reproduced by institutions of colonial vintage”.⁹

Political conflicts can and have been looked at either sparingly or liberally with analyses that have produced detailed descriptions and explanations addressing mainly the causes of these conflicts. This paper will take on the latter route and in doing so it will establish the underlying factors that led to the stand-off politics in Zanzibar. Firstly the paper will address the question of whether the elections in Zanzibar accentuated the existing conflicts among the belligerent parties. This is not a surprising hypothesis, for elections themselves are by their very nature conflict ridden; given that they present a contest over state power.¹⁰ As such, did the electoral contestation in Zanzibar open old wounds, and feed temptation for excessive politicised behaviour that resulted into more intense inter-party conflicts? The paper indeed recognises that the destabilising and conflictual effects of elections are made even more acute with the absence of legitimate election procedures and systems which had been, to some extent, the case in Zanzibar. However it argues that evidence now abounds suggesting the same- in fact the election processes even when fair and responsive, can similarly be victimised, abused, and manipulated with the potential to politically resurrect and harden long-term conflicts.

The paper will in addition, as a proximate cause argue that in Zanzibar’s case, political party relations since the introduction of multiparty politics had produced a variety of adversarial dimensions that intensified the conflicts. Political parties are by their very nature institutions that are meant to espouse

alternative development and political agendas, but when these agendas are adversarial and contradictory, when relations between parties turn sour then inter-party tensions can in and of themselves, contribute to the conflicts. The paper will discuss and analyse in full all these conditions and their impact on the prevailing political tensions in Zanzibar. The bulk of this paper, however, will consider/focus on race and ethnicity and how this affected Zanzibari politics, but more importantly how British imperialism and Arab colonialism, through exploitation of the supposed ethnic divisions and political formations, constructed divisive political identities which have survived to this day and are locked in a continued political struggle.

The Turning point: The Unforgettable January 2001 Demonstrations

Zanzibar’s seven-year political instability, which began immediately after the 1995 multiparty elections, reached its peak on 27 January 2001. On this day the CUF had organised demonstrations which culminated in the loss of lives and, some would argue, grave human rights violations. The numbers of those killed and injured provided by the government and the opposition differ a great deal; so do the accounts of the events of that day. International reports such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International¹¹ have tended to take a cautious position using figures in between those of the government and opposition. These reports claim that such figures are an approximation based on government and press figures and cross-checked by witnesses. With so many variations of the events and numbers of deaths that occurred from the demonstrations, it is difficult to ignore the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See K. Matlosa & A Mushonga, “Healing Old Wounds: Elections and Conflict in Southern Africa”, Paper prepared for a workshop on “Sharing Lessons: Elections and Conflict Management”, hosted by the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes”, Lilongwe, Malawi 21-22 January 2004.

¹¹ Amnesty International Report, Tanzania human rights concerns relating to demonstrations in Zanzibar, 2002; The bullets were raining, *Human Rights Watch Report* 14(3) (A), April 2002; and Legal and Human Rights Centre/International Federation for Human Rights (FIDHI), Zanzibar wave of violence, 2001.

biased undertones of the various investigative reports produced, whether by international human rights groups, the opposition or the Zanzibari government itself. That said, this account will provide as much an impartial outlook and analysis of that day's events as possible, taking into consideration the different perspectives documented to date.

As already indicated, the exact numbers of those killed and injured varied according to who discharged the information, so much so that it has been easier to conclude that the real numbers remain unknown. On the one hand, the two international human rights reports, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, both published conspicuously distinct figures. One maintained that at least 35 died and more than 600 were injured, with claims that they had verified these numbers; the other stated that 22 had died.¹² The government, on the other hand, claimed that 21 people were killed, 82 injured and 352 arrested,¹³ while the CUF alleged that 67 people were killed with hundreds injured and hundreds more mistreated and tortured.

Fortunately many of the reports commissioned to investigate these events do not have contradictory accounts and analyses of the reasons behind the demonstrations. Simply put, the CUF called for the protests to take place in opposition to the 2000 election results and also in resistance to the government's refusal to hold new elections in Zanzibar. The opposition had wanted the election exercise repeated after it had vehemently declared, with the support of various international observers, that the elections had been flawed. Besides the call for a re-run of the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ A Joint Presidential Supervisory Commission and an Independent Commission of Inquiry were formed on 16 January 2002 to investigate the January 2001 violence in Zanzibar. This commission was chaired by retired Brigadier General Hashim Mbita, a former executive secretary of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Liberation Committee. The commission, made up of an eight-person team, released their report to the government on November 2002.

elections, the demonstrators demanded a new and independent electoral commission, which had been the subject of major complaints after the elections.¹⁴ The CUF had also demanded constitutional reform which it believed would facilitate all the demands it was making.

Again, the accounts of the abuses vary depending on the source of the information. International Human Rights assessments emphatically reported that demonstrators, which were in crowds of thousands,¹⁵ were mostly unarmed and walked peacefully towards designated meeting grounds. It is the police that were accused of grave misconduct for letting loose a "barrage of teargas, beatings, and shootings, sometimes even firing without warning".¹⁶ The abuse of the demonstrators did not end there: following the assaults, the reports maintain that security forces "rounded up hundreds in house sweeps characterised by looting, and terrorising. Hundreds of demonstrators spent days in jail, often held without charge and physically abused while in custody".¹⁷

Many of these international reports maintain that there was no evidence that demonstrators planned any violent action, and yet the official government reviews report differently,¹⁸ as do several reports by local political analysts.¹⁹ Tanzanian officials say that the demonstrators tried to take over police stations and mount an armed rebellion. The police had, in fact, endured a number of physical abuses involving stone throwing, teargas and even beatings. In retaliation they at first fired several warning shots into the air, which the crowds disregarded. In addition, some of the local analysts' interpretations of these events corroborate the government's claims. For

¹⁴ Tanzania Human Rights Report, 2002 issued by the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC).

¹⁵ The exact number of demonstrators was never recorded. All that has been said in relation to the number is that demonstrations were widely supported with thousands turning out to protest.

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch Report, op cit.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid; and Amnesty International Report, op cit.

¹⁹ Mmuya, op cit, p 32.

example, Max Mmuya, a political analyst at the University of Dar es Salaam who was himself a witness to the events in Zanzibar Town on 26 and 27 January, argues that given the CUF action against the police during the demonstrations – with demonstrators throwing stones to provoke them, blocking the police on the roads with boulders, and deploying other such provocative measures – “it was not surprising to hear that marchers in Pemba had weapons ready to assault the police with the possible intention of wresting fire weapons from the police armoury at police stations”.²⁰

As shown above, the specificity and scale of the abuses reported in the international human rights reports, the CUF and the government’s versions, contradict each other. There is indeed evidence that some demonstrators had planned to carry out violent actions and there is also evidence that the security forces reacted and cracked down on the demonstrators in abusive ways. Needless to say, this was an ugly affair that left both sides (the CUF and the Zanzibar government) embarrassed and apologetic, forcing them to make several attempts soon after to provide redress with the aim of ensuring no such atrocities ever occur again.

Proximate Causes of Political Conflict

Contested Elections of 1995 and 2000

Elections are currently perceived as the most crucial process for the alternation of power. Given the importance they occupy in a competitive political system and that there are the only process responsible for distributing political power within society, it is easy to see why election contestation, even if well managed, can be a highly competitive and risky endeavour. As such, elections are susceptible to fears of “political marginalisation; party retaliation or even a counter-democratic backlash”²¹; even more

²⁰ Mmuya, op cit.

²¹ Dirk Kotze, “South Africa: Conflict Management in a divided society”, Department of Political Sciences, University of South Africa, Pretoria. Paper presented at the EISA/KAF

when legitimate election procedures and rules are absent. Elections can become even more precarious, as the Zanzibar experience shows, when they are deliberately victimised by contending parties, and when they are judged and interpreted differently, especially elections that do not result in regime transition or leadership alternation. For such elections, Bratton and Posner maintain that “various audiences; winning and losing, domestic and international tend to apply different standards of judgment and interpretations of what constitutes ‘a free and fair’ verdict”.²² As a result, as is often the case with such diverse interpretations, the verdict of elections and thereby the meaning of elections is “a resource manipulated by contending parties to promote their own interests”.²³ For example, Bratton and Posner continue to assert that under such circumstances the “winner will deploy the informational and coercive instruments of the state to reinforce their claim that they have received a mandate, while losers try to undermine this assertion by arguing that results were rigged or that the electoral process was flawed”.²⁴ As for the international community – depending on for whom they are rooting among the contenders and because continued project aid or balance of payments support is often contingent on a free and fair verdict – they further complicate the meaning of elections or interpretations of what constitutes a free and fair election.

The debate on the status of elections has also concerned itself with the trend among opposition parties to see elections as an illegitimate instrument for seeking power if the incumbent party wins. Experience has shown that outcomes of elections are not always accepted by opposition parties; losing parties do not always concede defeat.

Roundtable on “Consensus on the Rules of Elections”, Luanda Angola 30-31 October 2002

²² M Bratton & D N Posner, A first look at second elections in Africa, with illustrations from Zambia, in R Joseph (ed) *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa*, Lynne Rienner, 1999.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

There is therefore a belief among opposition parties, taking into consideration the processes and outcomes of some of the national elections conducted to date, that because elections do not always offer the possibility of winning political office for opposition parties, they must not be regarded as the only instrument for seeking power.²⁵ As a result, whether or not elections have been conducted under 'free and fair' conditions, losing opposition parties tend to resort to dubious tactics with the aim of undermining the election outcome to serve their own purpose. This indeed has been the case in countries like Lesotho and Mozambique.

Much of the above scenario rings true for Zanzibar. Elections in Zanzibar have been manipulated by both warring parties to the point where they have become the main source of political conflict that is now plaguing the isles. Both the 1995 and, to a lesser extent, the 2000 elections contributed to the violence that erupted in January 2001. A closer look at each of the elections revealing the various dynamics that existed will show how both the 1995 and 2000 elections played their part in instigating the tensions that followed.

The 1995 general elections saw the CCM and CUF accusing each other of rigging the elections – each had different reasons for accusing the other. The elections, which were the first multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections, saw the re-election of Dr Salmin Amour of the CCM as president of Zanzibar. The re-election, however, was won only by a small margin and thus resulted in a close win over the CUF in the Zanzibar House of Representatives: Dr Salmin Amour won with 50.2% to 49.8% for the CUF's Secretary General, Seif Shariff Hamad. Table 1 shows two sets of election results: the official and the unofficial. For the CUF the difference between those results given by the Zanzibar Electoral Commission

²⁵ E Gyimah-Boadi, Ghana: The challenges of consolidating democracy, in R Joseph (ed), op cit.

(ZEC) and those given by non official sources proved that the elections were rigged.²⁶ For the CCM, because it was not very clear how they had won the elections, it made formal complaints of irregularities and administrative errors to the ZEC. The CCM leaders in fact wrote a letter of protest to the ZEC showing their "dissatisfaction on the conduct of the elections".²⁷ This section is not rejecting or confirming the claims but only considering the issues and analysing how they led to the political crisis in Zanzibar.

Table 1: 1995 October presidential election results: Official and unofficial results

Conflicting election results for the presidency	Official	Unofficial ²⁸	Difference
Salmin Amour	165,271 (50.2%)	157,351 (48.6%)	-7,920
(CUF)	163,706 (49.8%)	166,522 (51.4%)	+2,816
Majority	1,565 (CCM)	9,171 (CUF)	10,736
Total valid votes	328,977	323,873	-5,104

Source: M Mmuya 2003, adopted from D G Anglin, Zanzibar Impasse and Commonwealth Mediation, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 2000.

The CUF declared the CCM victory fraudulent and that the elections overall were flawed and thus lacked credibility. The CUF's rejection of the results was made on the grounds that, first, the CCM had impeded its organisational and campaigning efforts through harassments and other forms of political coercion and oppression.²⁹ Second, the CUF criticised the ZEC's conduct of elections arguing that it had administered the elections somewhat

²⁶ The international community also concluded, given the narrow margin between the presidential candidates, that the results may have been inaccurate.

²⁷ Chama Cha Mapidunzi letter, quoted in P J Kaiser, op cit.

²⁸ Local and international observer groups represent the non-official sources.

²⁹ R Sankore, Zanzibar: Democracy on shaky foundations, *Journal of Democracy*, April 2000.

chaotically. In the end the CUF, despite the contradictory views expressed by international observer teams, not only rejected the election results and demanded a re-run within six months, but also boycotted the House of Representatives (parliament).

A pertinent issue to note here is that the election process was plagued from the beginning by CUF complaints and its general belief that a free and fair election was not possible. To add to the confusion and thereby to the unacceptability of the election results, the international community believed that the CUF would gain victory in both islands. When the results proved them wrong, their refusal to endorse the election results only managed to complicate further the contentious post-election discourse. Furthermore, this indirectly encouraged the opposition party – which knew full well that Zanzibar’s continued support for international aid was contingent on a free and fair verdict – to persist with its assertion that the elections were fraudulent. The international community’s rejection of the elections in the end led to many donors, mainly the European Union (EU), cutting aid to Zanzibar. This not only exacerbated the political impasse as their palpable biases further divided the two parties and pushed them to extreme adversarial levels; it also led to the general deterioration of economic and social conditions in Zanzibar during that period.

As anticipated, the 1995 elections – which had polarised even further political life in Zanzibar – affected the October 2000 elections. It created an atmosphere which ensured that both parties experienced a further stalemate in the 2000 elections, irrespective of the conduct or results of the elections. In recognition of this, local analysts, prior to the elections confidently predicted “that [the] CUF would refuse to recognise any elections which they would judge not free and fair”,³⁰ which was indeed, the case. Again, as in the 1995 elections, the CCM was accused of ‘unlevelling’ the pre-election field, in ways not very different

from the 1995 elections. According to Ahluwalia and Zegeye, the CCM “intimidated the opposition through the use of police supervising the rallies. In addition it denied the opposition access to the dominant government media and manipulated the campaign funding to their advantage”.³¹

The CCM’s victory in Zanzibar was again declared fraudulent by the CUF, even though the ruling party gained a clear majority in the House of Representatives and in the presidential elections. In fact, the new CCM candidate, Amani Abeid Karume, won with 67% as opposed to Seif Shariff Hamad’s 33% of the votes, and CCM won 34 of the 50 seats in the House of Representatives in Zanzibar, giving the CCM a two-thirds majority. The CUF nonetheless rejected the results with claims of electoral fraud. This time, the ZEC received much of the brunt of the CUF’s accusations, leading to its admittance that there had been mistakes. As a result the CCM was forced to order fresh elections in 16 of the 50 constituencies in Zanzibar, which the CUF rejected as being inadequate since it had demanded that new elections be held in all the constituencies. The CUF again ended up not only boycotting the by-elections but also the parliamentary proceedings that took place after the elections.

The case of the 1995 and 2000 elections in Zanzibar demonstrates that elections were indeed used as a battle ground by the CCM and CUF. In essence, these two elections were manipulated by all parties in pursuit of their self interests, not just the two warring parties but by the international community as well. As such the adversarial and confrontational approach applied by the contending parties only succeeded in precipitating the conflicts. Consequently the inter-party rivalry which began in modest forms before the elections was transformed into more overt political turmoil during these elections; or, in the words of Marina Ottaway, “the process of democratisation

³⁰ Mmuya, op cit.

³¹ Ahluwalia & Zegeye, op cit.

has made political tensions more acute in many countries by destroying the mechanisms that ha[d] regulated and kept conflict in check in the past”.³² Clearly this raises a broader concern regarding the longer-term impact of elections: that elections can in fact delay or, as the Zanzibar case demonstrates, even reverse democratic progress.

Inter-party Conflicts

The political scene in Zanzibar in recent years has been marked by a number of intense inter-party stand-offs. Consequently many coherent perspectives and analyses have been offered as an attempt to explain the origins of these conflicts and their effects on the democratisation process.³³ Maliyamkono, for example, recognises that “political party conflicts are an integral part of politics and that they feature in both single party and multiparty systems”.³⁴ In a survey conducted by Maliyamkono to gather the views of the public to ascertain their understanding of the dynamics and implications of inter-party conflicts in Zanzibar, many of the respondents agreed with this perspective: that conflict between political parties is indeed natural. At least 63% of the respondents were of the view that conflicts are “a normal phenomenon in politics”.³⁵ Maliyamkono was nonetheless quick to add that conflicts between political parties can only be “normal” provided that the rules that govern the interplay between contentious parties are fairly drawn and fairly administered. If this is not the case, the antagonistic relations will set back the democratisation process, because of the interplay between political parties and democratisation. Kanyongolo maintains that political parties, “ever since their genesis, have had a critical impact on the progress of

the democratic process”.³⁶ Additionally, he maintains that in order to ascertain whether or not the impact of political parties has been positive or negative on the democratisation process, one would need to examine the “nature of the inter-relations of the various parties”.³⁷ More often than not, given the reality of the multiparty dispensation, inter-party relations tend to be contentious. As witnessed most recently, conflicts have in fact characterised the various aspects of inter-party relations in Tanzania.

Factors that explain the occurrence of such conflict are numerous. Many scholars listed the following as the main sources of conflict between the CCM and CUF: arbitrary arrests based on political grounds; detentions without trial; ideological differences; power struggles; and personality clashes.³⁸ These were also confirmed by the public as the main sources of inter-party conflicts in Tanzania. Maliyamkono’s survey results indicated that a substantial majority of the respondents perceived power struggles as the most important cause of party conflicts in Tanzania. The explanation given by the interviewees for choosing this category was their belief “that most African politicians make politics a career and view it as an avenue for personal gain”, suggesting that the struggle for power is therefore “likely to result in conflict, if contenders view public office as the only source of personal gain”.³⁹

Ideological or policy differences were also seen as an important factor contributing to the existing tensions between the CCM and CUF, although many of the respondents, according to Maliyamkono, could not clearly show how ideological differences have led to political conflicts on the isles. The reason for this, Maliyamkono argues, is

³² M Ottaway, *Ethnic politics in Africa: Change and continuity*, in R Joseph (ed), op cit.

³³ Maliyamkono & Kanyongolo, op cit; S S Mushi, R S Mukandala and M L Baregu, *Tanzania’s Political Culture; A Baseline Survey*, 2001.

³⁴ T L Maliyamkono, *Inter-party conflict: CCM and CUF*, in Maliyamkono & Kanyongolo (eds), op cit.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ E Kanyongolo, *Inter-party conflict in Malawi*, in Maliyamkono & Kanyongolo (eds), op cit.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ ESAURP book, *The Road to Democracy*, 1998 as quoted in Maliyamkono, *The two in one state*, in Maliyamkono & Kanyongolo (eds), op cit.

³⁹ T L Maliyamkono, *Inter-party conflict: CCM and CUF*, L Maliyamkono & Kanyongolo (eds), op cit.

because he believes there are no sharp ideological differences between the CCM and CUF. Other scholars, however, have indicated that policy differences and disparities in party directives do indeed exist and are widely recognised as contributing significantly to the current standoff between the parties' leadership.⁴⁰ The CUF's manifesto, for example, has continually advocated for the denationalisation of land on the Zanzibar isles. It is basically advocating for a dismissal of the three-acre nationalisation programme that President Abeid Karume implemented, from which many Zanzibaris benefited.⁴¹ In addition there have been other less popular policy positions that the CUF has maintained throughout. Its denunciation of the 1964 revolution is by far the least popular of its party stance. The CUF firmly condemns the revolution on the grounds that it did not stand for the people of Pemba Island who mostly consider themselves Arabs, and accordingly believe that the revolution deprived them of their historical right as Arabs to rule Zanzibar.⁴² The CUF has also over the years proclaimed its dissatisfaction with the structure of the union, and has made repeated calls for a referendum to decide on the future of the union.⁴³ Its main

⁴⁰ T L Maliyamkono, *Tanzania on the Move*, TEMA Publishers Company Ltd, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 1997.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Maliyamkono, The two in one state, in Maliyamkono & Kanyongolo (eds), op cit.

⁴³ The CUF is also protesting that the union as it stands is not equal; it is not a union between two states but rather a union for Tanganyika because it is the United Republic of Tanzania that deals with all union matters together with non union matters for Mainland Tanzania, whereas the government of Zanzibar deals with non union matters relating to Zanzibar isles only. This has created a situation which according to the CUF quite clearly benefits Tanzania Mainland more than Zanzibar, specifically over issues such as foreign affairs, defence, communications, foreign exchange, and higher education, which the union government has control of. Consequently, they are calling for a three-tier government which would create separate governments for Tanganyika and Zanzibar, including a federal government for the union.

frustration with the union revolves around their belief that it has not been politically, economically or socially beneficial to the people of Zanzibar. This platform of ideologies quite clearly is against everything that the CCM stands for, politically and historically.⁴⁴ No sooner was the CUF manifesto made public, it was met with a retaliatory response by the CCM which stated in its 1995 manifesto that the

*CCM's position on 1964 Revolution will be to develop, guard, strengthen and honour the Revolution and to Recognise the 12th of January 1964 as the day when Zanzibar was liberated from colonial and Sultanate administration and the day the legacy of those rules was wiped out. Land will continue to be Government Property and the nationalised assets (plantation and houses) will never be returned to the former owners before the Revolution.*⁴⁵

Such opposing views and perceptions on several of the islands' monumental historical affairs – the Zanzibar-Mainland Tanzania Union, the 1964 Revolution, and the land nationalisation programme – make the possibility of reconciliation between the two parties even more difficult. The extreme adversarial positions over these issues,

⁴⁴ President Abeid Karume after the revolution of Zanzibar in 1964 redistributed land from the Arabs (pre-revolution owners) to the indigenous Africans. Before the revolution there were about 72 Arab land owners with 743 plantations. Between 1964 after the revolution and 1974 land was expropriated and distributed on the basis of three acres per person. The majority of those who received three-acre plots in Unguja and Pemba Island were mainly indigenous Africans and Shirazis. Most recently, however, there have been calls made by the CUF to return the land to those who had it before it was distributed, who were mostly Arab landowners. The calls for reversing land expropriation, however, are not something that will ever be politically entertained by the CCM. Land to date has been the most visible and palpable fruit of the revolution, hence the CCM's hard-line position on this issue.

⁴⁵ The CCM Elections Manifesto 1995 issued by the National Executive Committee of the CCM, Dodoma, 22 August 1995, item 40, pp 70-71. Quoted in Mmuya, op cit.

according to Mmuya, “imply complete loss or gain of what either side seeks ... rather than just a transfer of power from one regime to another”.⁴⁶ In the case of the 1964 Revolution, the ruling party’s position is poles apart from that of the CUF, such that Mmuya observes they “will cling to power for fear of possible return to the pre Revolution situation and retribution”.⁴⁷ The CCM in fact, views the revolution as an “economic, social and political reform that wrestled power from an Arab oligarchy and their British Colonial supporters”.⁴⁸ This is unmistakably very different from the CUF, which sees the revolution as a political mistake. Besides the revolution, the union matter is another contentious issue that represents loss or gain for either contending party. It is no secret that the CUF upon gaining power will break away from the union as it sees it as a politically and economically unfair arrangement; a view scorned by many CCM supporters, in particular those ideologically in the same camp as Karume and Nyerere – the masterminds of the union.

Long-term Causes of Political Conflict

Following Africa’s independence from colonialism, identity politics and ethnic divisions seemingly became a thing of the past for many newly independent countries. African leaders saw ethnic nationalism as a threat to the state, among other things, and considering the havoc that tribal and religious rivalries had caused before, their rejection of ethnic identities was an understandable political choice. To say the least, the conditions of many of the newly independent countries at that time made such a rejection seem prudent. African states were weak and fragile and inhabited by citizens that identified more comfortably with tribal groups than with the new nationalism discourse their leaders were advocating.⁴⁹ Marina Ottaway, however,

⁴⁶ Mmuya, op cit, p 27.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Marina Ottaway, Ethnic politics in Africa: Change and continuity, in R Joseph (ed), op cit.

reminds us that African leaders of that time may have been overly optimistic in thinking that ethnic divisions could easily be subverted. Ethnic divisions, according to her, were more than a

*passing phenomenon ... and the increase in the number and violence of open conflicts revolving around ethnic or religious identities during the 1990s provide a strong reminder that communal identities are not a residue of the past, but a live force in today’s politics.*⁵⁰

There is indeed considerable empirical evidence suggesting that ethnic identities are gaining strength; the re-emergence of Zanzibar’s political identities based on pre-revolution ethnic divisions is but one of many cases providing such evidence. What is more, Ottaway argues that the political change under way in Africa – a change hailed as the process of democratisation – has re-awakened the long dormant ethnic tensions. She establishes that:

*ethnicity is now more central than ever to the political process of many African countries, as political openings and multiparty elections have led to the formation of innumerable or covertly ethnic political parties.*⁵¹

In the past African leaders had only just succeeded in managing ethnic relations under the authoritarian institutions that guarded or organised their ‘civic nationalism’ ideologies. In a sense, an authoritarian system, according to Ottaway, made it possible for ethnic identities to subsist and for some ethnic minorities to dominate the authoritarian governments. The transitions to multiparty politics, however, disrupted these arrangements as the ability to elect representatives during elections, which were more often than not, contested by ethnic parties, meant that political co-optation of ethnic leaders was no longer as easy or necessary as before.⁵²

This section will, therefore, seek to analyse the changing nature of ethnic politics in Zanzibar. It will go as far back as the pre-

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid

revolution years to provide a descriptive analysis of the various ethnic formations and groups, looking in particular at the political identities that emerged from the early ethnic formations which the British helped to crystallise. More importantly, the effects of these political identities on voting patterns of the 1995 and 2000 elections will be examined, arguing specifically that Zanzibar's transition to democracy legitimised, or more precisely resurrected, the contentious political identities that existed earlier. With manipulation by some political authorities these identities became more acute and played an influential role in the violent conflicts of 2001, which will sadly continue to threaten Zanzibar's political stability for many years to come.

Origins of Ethnic and Racial Formations

The early settlers of Zanzibar are said to have migrated from the mainland probably during the third and fourth centuries AD.⁵³ These were mostly Bantu who began to shape the indigenous communities in Zanzibar. They established village settlements along the western shores of both Zanzibar and Pemba, including the island of Tumbatu, creating three quasi ethnic groups now known as the Wahadimu of southern and eastern Unguja, the Watumbatu of Tumbatu Island in northern Unguja and the Wapemba of Pemba Island. Their origin may have been Bantu, but centuries of intermarrying with Persian immigrants and visitors produced ethnically mixed communities in these settlements, known as the Shirazis because of their Persian identity and culture.⁵⁴

Over the years, between the 8th and 18th centuries, other racial groups immigrated to Zanzibar. The early visitors included Hindus, Portuguese, Arabs and Persians. With the arrival of each of these racial groups, including the introduction of the slave trade, patterns of differentiation within

communities began to emerge which culminated in distinct ethnic divisions.

It must be noted that before the populations of the islands became ethnically mixed and divided and while the islands were inhabited largely by the Shirazis, the term Shirazi did not connote an ethnic identity: it was a term that suggested status more than anything. Michael Lofchie, a researcher in the 1960s, noted that the Shirazi's

*tended to look upon themselves as the heirs of a rich cultural tradition concretely symbolised in ancient ruins and monuments. They know that generations of their forebears in Zanzibar had adopted the Islamic faith and led an independent political life centuries before the arrival of the Omani Arabs.*⁵⁵

These memories which formed a group identity were continually used by the Shirazis to set themselves apart from the mainland African community of Zanzibar who settled as slaves on the islands. Due to the introduction of a plantation economy in the second half of the 19th century, Zanzibar began to indent slaves and as result became a vibrant market for the slave trade. Many of the slaves originated from Malawi, Mozambique and eastern Congo, ethnically known as the Wanyasa, Wanyamwezi, Wamakonde and Wayao.⁵⁶ It was not only the slave trade that established early patterns of community divisions. The Arab colonisation of the Zanzibar islands in the early 1800s, which redefined the roles of the Arabs and Africans (the latter already divided among the Shirazis and descendants of African slaves), had also facilitated these community differentiations. Such then was the racial historical base upon which group and community attitudes and differences were built (see Table 2 below for the 1948 proportions of Arabs, Shirazis and Africans in Zanzibar).

⁵³ H S Newman cited in Mbwiliza, The birth of a political dilemma and the challenges of the quest for new politics in Zanzibar, in Maliyamkono (ed), *The Political Plight of Zanzibar*, op cit.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Cited in K I Tambila, Aspects of the political economy of Unguja and Pemba, in T L Maliyamkono (ed), op cit.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Table 2: 1948 Proportions of Shirazis, Africans and Arabs

	Unguja	Pemba	Protectorate
Community	No. %	No. %	No. %
Shirazi	81,150 61.2	67,330 60.2	148,480 60.8
African	37,502 28.3	13,878 12.4	51,380 21.0
Arab	13,977 10.5	30,583 27.4	44,560 18.2
Total	132,629 100	111,791 100	244,420 100

Source: *Journal of Modern African Studies*, cited by Tambila⁵⁷

Like Mamdani and Ottaway, Mbwiliza⁵⁸ also maintains that other factors “contributed to the continuous reproduction of community attitudes” and thus entrenched and accentuated the racial, ethnic and community differences. What then followed was the evolution of a political culture. The clove plantations, for example, created two different segments of Zanzibari Shirazis: the one evolved into a community group located in Unguja that resented the Arab domination; and the other evolved into one of tolerance and accommodation. The difference in attitude between Unguja and Pemba Shirazis towards the Arabs, argues Mbwiliza, can be explained “in terms of the differences the impact of that domination was felt in the two islands”.⁵⁹ According to Mbwiliza, the impact of the clove plantations was felt more sharply in Unguja than in Pemba. In Unguja, the Arab plantation owners were oppressive and preferred to impose their authority over the local communities, whereas in Pemba the Arabs were less authoritative, largely because colonial administrative structures were weak in Pemba but most importantly because there was more high-quality arable

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ M Mamdani, op cit; M Ottaway, Ethnic politics in Africa: Change and continuity, in R Joseph (ed), op cit; Mbwiliza, The birth of a political dilemma and the challenges of the quest for new politics in Zanzibar, in Maliyamkono (ed), *The Political Plight of Zanzibar*, op cit.

⁵⁹ Mbwiliza, The birth of a political dilemma and the challenges of the quest for new politics in Zanzibar, in Maliyamkono (ed), *The Political Plight of Zanzibar*, op cit.

land which made Arab plantation owners economically secure.⁶⁰ In addition the Arabs in Pemba acted more like settlers than colonialists and were basically peasants like the Shirazi hosts, with similar rudimentary agricultural practices.⁶¹ In Zanzibar, however, because Omani occupation was administered wholly via Zanzibar Town it produced very different patterns of social and economic relations between the Arab minorities and Africans. The Omani Arabs, unlike their counterparts in Pemba, settled in Zanzibar from the start as colonists and administrators, forcefully occupying most of Zanzibar’s limited fertile land and ruling over the island as colonial administrators.⁶²

Turning again to Ottaway, she substantiates this by asserting that it was possible for colonial powers to help shape these identities because ethnic identities are not natural or primordial. Most often, according to Ottaway, “ethnic identities are artificial and not fixed and as a result can change a great deal over time”.⁶³ This can help to explain why, as a result of manipulation by the British colonials and the Arabs, the Shirazis disintegrated, ending up with one section in Pemba seeing themselves as part of a particular group “that was not previously a part of their own or anybody else’s consciousness”,⁶⁴ and another section in Unguja with completely different political aspirations and more eager to use their grievances against the Arabs.

The British colonials on the other hand, through their exploitation of the supposed ethnic divisions to control Zanzibar, accentuated these divisions further. They deployed a number of politically unfavourable policies that privileged the Arabs over all the other ethnic groupings,

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ D Mukangara, Race, ethnicity, religion, and politics in Zanzibar, in Maliyamkono (ed), *The Political Plight of Zanzibar*, op cit.

⁶² M Lofchie, Party conflict in Zanzibar, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 1(2), June 1963, pp 185-207.

⁶³ Marina Ottaway, Ethnic politics in Africa: Change and continuity, in R Joseph (ed), op cit.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

which among the Shirazis and Africans included Indians, Comorians and Goans⁶⁵. The most widely cited policy by historians involves the British handling of the food shortages during the First World War,⁶⁶ which led to further disfigurements of Africans into Shirazis and other ethnic groupings “in order to qualify for a better share than that offered to Africans”,⁶⁷ who were at the bottom of the food distribution list. Since Arabs got more and better food rations, as well as other political favours, it was beneficial for Shirazis to identify themselves as Arabs. The British continued to entrench the various divisions and to alienate Arabs further from Africans by granting them more privileges, such as offering Arabs the bulk of arable land. These identities, however, remained rather porous and flexible throughout the better part of the 20th century; they had begun to shape the political identities from which many associations, first cultural and later political, were subsequently born.

The Emergence of Political Identities

Associations based on racial lines had started forming as early as the 1930s. These were the Arab, Indian, African and Shirazi associations. The Arab and Indian associations formed primarily to defend their commercial, financial, land ownership and political domination interests, the latter task being more relevant to the Arab

⁶⁵ Zanzibar became a British Protectorate in the late 19th century. The British hence established political administrative centres beginning with offices of the High Commissioner, and a Zanzibar Protectorate Council (ZPC). The main function of the ZPC was to act as an advisory board. Other councils were also later on established. These included the 1926 Executive Council (Exco) and Legislative Council (Legco). The Exco consisted of the sultan as the president and the British resident as vice-president with the chief secretary.

⁶⁶ See Tambila, and Mbwiliza, in Maliyamkono (ed), T L. 2000. *The Political Plight of Zanzibar*, Eastern and Southern African Universities Research Programme (ESAURP), TEMA Publishers Ltd, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

⁶⁷ Mbwiliza, *The birth of a political dilemma and the challenges of the quest for new politics in Zanzibar*, in Maliyamkono (ed), op cit.

association. The African and Shirazi associations, both established in the 1930s, were for protecting the interests of groups on the extreme opposite of the economic ladder, mainly squatters and labourers. As with other associations elsewhere, many became the foundation of political parties in Zanzibar. The first to move into politics, encouraged by British promises of independence, was the Arab Association which transformed into a political party known as the Zanzibar National Party (ZNP) in 1957. Before any of these social associations moved into politics, it must be noted that the racial differences between the African and Shirazi associations had begun to form a complex web of power struggles, which later became more volatile and disruptive. Lofchie observed in the 1960s how “throughout the post-war period these associations contested bitterly over the allocation of the seats in the Legislative Council”⁶⁸ which managed to deepen the split between these two communities.⁶⁹

The movement of these associations into racially based political parties was brought about by the changes the British pledged to introduce in the political system. As a result many of the associations were no longer satisfied with the quest of protecting specific socio-economic interests but, encouraged by British promises of self-government and independence, felt it necessary to transform into sovereign political identities. No time was wasted. Following the constitutional amendments aimed at turning the Zanzibar isles into a sovereignty, all parties moved towards self-governing and independent entities. Lofchie and Campbell say that, at first, parties encouraged by this new political development moved into politics with multiracial promises and nationalist ideas and aspirations, but this “nationalistic

⁶⁸ Lofchie, op cit.

⁶⁹ The Legislative Council (LEGCO) was a government body established in 1926 to replace the Protectorate Council. It was led by the British resident and consisted of 11 British official members and six unofficial members appointed by the sultan; three Arabs, two Indians and a European.

consensus did not serve to forge bonds of solidarity between the Zanzibaris".⁷⁰ Sooner than expected, the racial and communal frictions that had remained dormant rose to the surface and each political party began to identify itself distinctively with a particular segment in society.

The ZNP, for example, which was a coalition of the Arab association and the Nationalist Party of the Subjects of the Sultan (in Arabic *Hizbul Watan Li Raiat Sultan*)⁷¹ was a party chiefly formed to protect Arab aspirations. Although the party did for a brief period campaign on the platform of Africa for Africans and claimed that it was non-racial and nationalistic, this was purely a political gimmick. The ZNP was an Arab organisation and was supported by most members of the Arab community. The Arab members within the party membership ranks distinguished themselves from the Africans by calling themselves *Hizbu* and referring to Africans as *Hizbu Matope* (muddy *Hizbu*).⁷² In fact, according to Campbell, the Arabs in Zanzibar had a real fear of being "swamped by illiterate Africans"⁷³ and had no desire to let African associations govern Zanzibar. Campbell, in an attempt to substantiate this assertion, draws attention to a letter from the leader of the Arab association to Sir Hilary Blood who was preparing a list of recommendations for a new constitution. The secretary of the Arab association wrote:

... the principle that Zanzibar citizenship should be safe-guarded receives full support. We in this country

⁷⁰ Lofchie, op cit, p 188.

⁷¹ The Nationalist Party of the Subjects of His Highness the Sultan of Zanzibar was formed in 1955 by a small group of peasants in the village of Kiembe Samaki. This party was at first isolated from the mainstream of Zanzibar political life but managed to gain some public support and awareness after it formed a cooperation with the Arab association and changed the party's name to Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) in 1956

⁷² Maliyamkono & Kanyongolo, op cit, p 134.

⁷³ J Campbell, Multiracialism and politics in Zanzibar, *Political Science Quarterly* 77(1), March 1962, pp 72-87

*have our tradition that we cherish. Our loyalty to the throne (Sultan) is very great, and we have many other traditions which have been handed to us from generation to generation. To give a chance to half-baked immigrants (Africans) to have any say in our political life is only to disrupt our heritage.*⁷⁴

The African and Shirazi associations formed into the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) at the insistence of Julius Nyerere who during his visit to Zanzibar in 1957, succeeded in effecting an understanding between the two parties. Following the cooperation, Abeid Amani Karume, who was president of the African Association, was chosen as president of the ASP and Thabit Kombo was chosen as secretary of the new union. Only a small group of the Shirazis joined the union, however. Always mindful of their identity and the deep mistrust they had of Africans, Shirazis remained distant and not wholly supportive of the ASP. What followed then was party politics that reflected these suspicions and historical patterns of racial divisions with "regional variations in character and intensity, particularly between Pemba and Zanzibar".⁷⁵ The birth of the Zanzibar and Pemba People's Party (ZPPP), for example, arose as a result of the tenuous relations between the Africans and Shirazis within the ASP. The ZPPP was specifically designed for Shirazis who wished to avoid involvement with the African-led ASP and had its base mainly among the Shirazi's in Pemba. During the elections of 1957, 1961 and 1963, party loyalty and voting behaviour was expressed mostly through these three main political parties: the ZNP, ASP and ZPPP.

One can clearly see that Zanzibari politics from the beginning, survived on alliances of racially disparate groups, which unfortunately – in Lofchie's words – "lent the party system in Zanzibar an

⁷⁴ Ibid, p 73, cited from Sir Hilary Blood's Report of the Constitutional Commissioner, Zanzibar 1961, p 37.

⁷⁵ Lofchie, op cit, p 196.

impermanent and unsettled quality”.⁷⁶ The ASP, for example, drew its support principally from the mainland and Shirazi communities (the Zanzibar segment); the ZNP relied heavily for its support from the Arabs and Asians; and the ZPPP, a faction that had split from the ASP, was designed in particular to provide a voice for the Pemba Shirazis. Each party’s political solidarities were founded largely on ethnic fears. Both the ASP and ZNP appealed strongly to each of its communities’ fears of the other party’s domination. While the ASP manipulated African fears of Arab domination, for example, the ZNP did the same by provoking Arab fears with threats of African domination. The campaign period of 1957 was therefore characterised by “widespread communal prejudices” and highly autonomous ethnic loyalties which “engendered hatred and animosities that persisted long afterwards as an ineradicable feature of competitive party politics in Zanzibar”:⁷⁷ an assertion that other scholars unreservedly support. Mukangara notes that elections in Zanzibar will always be contested along racial and ethnic blocs, after all “it is a fact that divisions based on racial and ethnic identification are the most enduring, and that they produce the most hardened perceptions and positions when they are fused with politics”.⁷⁸

Aspects of British Exploitation

The British, in all honesty, should bear some responsibility for Zanzibar’s political polarisation. Throughout the period under which Zanzibar remained a British protectorate, its administration went to great lengths to ensure that power stayed solely with the sultan. It did so by giving political precedence to Arabs through instituting, among others, government bodies that excluded African representation and constitutionally preserving the institution of the sultan.⁷⁹ The representative legislative

bodies that the British had established to act as government advisory councils, for example, had representation from all the major ethnic communities save the Africans. The Zanzibar Protectorate Council together with the executive and legislative councils had members representing simply the Arab, Indian and European communities. It was only in 1946, 20 years after the councils were created, that a decision was made to reserve one seat for an African representative.⁸⁰ The sultan, however, appointed a Shirazi who at that time was still classified as an Asian by the British administration.

British favouritism of the Arabs was at its most glaringly obvious in the 1961 and 1963 elections. Following the ASP victory in the 1957 election, with a sweeping win of five of the six contested seats, the British administration continued to openly favour the Arabs by manipulating electoral constituencies in all the subsequent elections. This tactic ensured Arab electoral victories, which without question helped to widen the rift between the parties. In 1960, in response to the constitutional recommendations Sir Hilary Blood made in his report,⁸¹ the Legislative Council was expanded to 21 seats but the local administration authorities added an extra seat in the Stone Town area: a constituency which was predominantly Arab and thereby a ZNP stronghold. This was clearly an act of gerrymandering as the additional seat produced constituencies which each had 1,393 and 1,077 voters, considerably less than the average of 4,472 voters in other constituencies.⁸² Again in the June 1961 elections the government created a twenty third constituency in the south of Pemba, which happened to be a ZPPP stronghold. As a result, in the June 1961 elections as well as the July 1963 elections, and despite the ASP receiving more popular votes than

⁷⁶ Ibid, p 200.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p 207.

⁷⁸ D Mukangara, Race, ethnicity, religion, and politics in Zanzibar, in Maliyamkono (ed), *The Political Plight of Zanzibar*, op cit, p 43.

⁷⁹ See A Ramadhan in Maliyamkono (ed), T L. 2000. *The Political Plight of Zanzibar*, Eastern

and Southern African Universities Research Programme (ESAURP), TEMA Publishers Ltd, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

⁸⁰ Maliyamkono & Kanyongolo, op cit.

⁸¹ Sir Hilary Blood was the second constitutional commissioner.

⁸² Maliyamkono & Kanyongolo, op cit.

the ZNP and ZPPP combined, the ZNP/ZPPP coalition managed to form a government with more constituency seats (see tables 3 and 4).

Table 3: 1961 June election results

Party	Votes	%	Seats
ASP	45,172	49.9	10
ZNP	31,681	35.0	10
ZPPP	12,411	13.7	3

Source: Maliyamkono and Kanyongolo, *op cit*, 2003.

Table 4: 1963 July election results

Party	Votes	%	Seats
ASP	87,402	53.4	13
ZNP	47,943	29.3	12
ZPPP	25,610	15.6	3

Source: Maliyamkono and Kanyongolo, *op cit*, 2003.

Effects of Racial Divisions on Current Politics

In 1971, President Abeid Karume had predicted that the racial differences plaguing the politics of the isles would not disappear for another 50 to 60 years after the revolution. Not only have the racial differences become more salient since the introduction of multiparty politics, the current CUF–CCM divide seems to parallel the racial divide of the pre-revolution period, confirming Karume’s predictions.⁸³ In the 1957, 1961 and 1963 elections the ZNP/ZPPP had dominated Pemba with a few strongholds of significant support in Zanzibar, most notably in Stone Town, while the ASP dominated Unguja Island and, like its opponent, had significant support in the South Pemba constituency. This electoral landscape seems to have replicated itself in the 1995 and 2000 elections, where the CCM – a product of the 1977 ASP/TANU merger – dominated Unguja, with the CUF – arguably an association of the ZNP/ZPPP coalition – performing outstandingly in Pemba and only barely gaining a foothold in Zanzibar through the ZNP’s traditional strongholds of the Stone Town constituencies (Malindi and Mkunazini).⁸⁴ Another way of demonstrating that party loyalties have not changed much since the revolution is by examining electoral performance among

⁸³ D Mukangara, Race, ethnicity, religion, and politics in Zanzibar, in Maliyamkono (ed), *The Political Plight of Zanzibar*, *op cit*.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*.

racial groups. Mukangara notes that “where the Arabic or semi Arabic population is higher”, as in Pemba and in the few constituencies where it gained the majority in Zanzibar, “the votes for CUF tend to be proportionally higher” and the reverse is true for the CCM. In Pemba, for example, the CCM won in predominantly African constituencies.⁸⁵ The above discussion highlights that Zanzibari politics is determined largely by racial loyalties that are certain to affect it for a long time to come.

Dealing with Conflict

Zanzibar’s political crisis, it is important to note in this paper, has however, been successfully managed. The first attempts were in June 1999 through a Commonwealth-mediated agreement, popularly known as Muafaka I⁸⁶. This agreement contained all in all 15 articles covering mostly contentious issues such:

- review of the constitution and electoral laws;
- reform of the Zanzibar Electoral Commission (ZEC) and the judiciary;
- compilation of a credible voters’ register;
- equal access to the media;
- free political activity;
- independent assessment of CUF compensation claims;
- ending the CUF parliamentary boycott; and
- giving the CUF two more parliamentary seats.

Little attention however, was given to this accord until the January 2001 demonstrations, which forced political parties to initiate the second round of negotiations that resulted in the signing of Muafaka II in October 2001. The agreement itself did not differ significantly from the first one; the content concentrated largely on reforms aimed at reasserting the rule of law in Zanzibar. In any event, both peace

⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

⁸⁶ Swahili word literally meaning consensus

accords (Muafaka I and II) addressed the two most powerful elements that combined to form political conflicts in Zanzibar: racial identity and the political system. The former, as it was soon discovered, was much more difficult to address as it is a persistent and intractable issue that is much less amenable to negotiation. The latter offered a more effective solution as the political conflict in Zanzibar needed at best to be addressed from a governance standpoint. Together with the long-term multiculturalism that must be confronted in one way or another, the manner in which the violence of 2001 transpired suggests that Zanzibar's transitional democratic institutions need to undergo a major transformation. It is widely acknowledged that appropriate democratic institutions such as the electoral system, legislative bodies, election administration and judicial structures, to name a few, are vital elements in forging an enduring settlement to political conflicts; provided of course that these institutions and structures are developed and designed through fair and honest negotiation processes.⁸⁷

There is no doubt that Muafaka II has been an important step towards stability; its successful implementation by some accounts ensures fair elections in 2005 and that because of it, political violence is now much less likely. What reasons explain its success? After all, despite experiencing some minor hiccups, the accord has received much local and international praise on both its contents and the commitment shown by Tanzania's political leadership. Even opposition leaders who were at first sceptical, have yielded to the powers of Muafaka II and recognise the milestones that have occurred as a result of its implementation.

First, the context under which the agreement was signed was very different from that of

⁸⁷ D Bloomfield and B Reilly, The changing nature of conflict and conflict management, in Harris & Reilly (eds) *Democracy and Deep-rooted Conflict: Options for Negotiations*, IDEA, Handbook Series, 1998.

1999. Given the extent of the violence that occurred and the severe tensions that prevailed thereafter, the political leadership was in disbelief and feared that if the conflicts were not resolved they would deteriorate to unmanageable levels. As such this aversion to continued conflict forced both parties to seek redress. Other reasons include farsighted leadership, the bilateral approach employed, the agreement's flexibility and the trust it evoked. It turned out that the face-to-face negotiation approach was a far better mechanism for Zanzibar's political conflicts as it not only reduced the possibility of distortion but ensured more local ownership. Political leaders also helped to make the accord a success. Conflicts require far-sighted leadership and constructive management. Just as many conflicts are exacerbated by leaders who inflame the tensions, conflicts can be brought to an end with leaders who can put aside their differences and sentiments and who also have the authority to do the same with their supporters. Additionally, the mutual trust and high degree of flexibility that parties exercised during the negotiation processes helped to produce the results it did. The importance of trust cannot be overstated: negotiations demand a minimum of cooperative effort. Although it is issues that tend to be the focus of such negotiations, ultimately the success depends on the actors and their trust in one another.⁸⁸ Similarly, the greater the flexibility exercised by the actors; the greater the chance of success. In sum, all these factors without reservation helped to increase the accord's chances of success and progress – an initiative that has enhanced Zanzibar's multiparty democracy in more ways than originally imagined.

Conclusion

The paper has investigated the association between Zanzibar's political conflicts and decisive elements such as the colonially framed political identities; the adversarial party relations and politically incompatible

⁸⁸ D Bloomfield, C Nupen & P Harris, in Harris & Reilly (eds), op cit.

views/policies of parties; and lastly but not least, elections themselves. Arguably there are other additionally prominent factors, both proximate and long-term that can explain the current political stand off in Zanzibar. This author however, chose to focus on the above arguments as each element has uniquely helped to resurrect and accentuate age old political conflicts in their own way. At the centre of the paper lies the supposition that the open conflicts in Zanzibar revolve around ethnic and political identities framed by colonial establishments. The paper serves as a strong reminder that these identities are indisputably not a residue of the past but a live force in today's politics of the isles. To this end, there is an implicit suggestion that together with reforming the transitional democratic institutions of the isles to which appreciable progress has been made under the Muafaka II agreement, the post-conflict Zanzibar in addition, needs to confront the ethnic conflicts which are so evidently rooted in the present.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shumbana Karume is a Researcher at EISA

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