What Went Wrong in Tanzania: How Does Religious Tension is threatening National Unity and Cohesion.

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Abstract

For decades now Tanzania has maintained a record of been a peaceful nation. The political unity and cohesion that we pride ourselves in did not come by accident. The primary source of today's unity and cohesion is a product of political culture which is a product of deliberate actions and visions of national founders. Since independence national founders recognized the potential dangers of religious discord. Therefore from the beginning there was a strong emphasize of equal access to education among Christians and Muslims and equal opportunities in matters of employment and participation in national affairs for both Muslim and Christian. These views went long towards promoting and projecting the larger cause of national unity, cohesion and social harmony for more than fifty years. Contrarily to nation expectations today elements of dissatisfaction, blames, and attacks are recurring among Christiana and Muslims implying that we went wrong somewhere. This paper is therefore an attempt to show where did we went wrong and recommend accordingly. In this paper terms "Christian" and "Muslim" are used in a name sense and not the way people practice their belief. This paper is divided into six sections that are; Tanzania overview, Tanzania national unity, religious tension in Tanzania, what went wrong, Religious tension as a threat to national unity and cohesion and recommendations.

Key words: Religious tension, national unity and cohesion

1.1 Tanzania Overview

The United Republic of Tanzania is a unitary Republic formed by the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1964. Tanzania is located in East Africa between latitudes 10 – 120 south of the Equator and longitudes 290 - 410 east of Greenwich (URT, 2009). It shares the borders with eight countries: Kenya, and Uganda to the North, Rwanda, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo

to the West, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique to the South and to the East Indian Ocean. The total land area of Tanzania is 945,000 km which includes a land area of 881,000 km of Mainland, 2,000 km for Zanzibar, 62,000 km inland water and 3350 km of forest and woodlands (URT, ibid). According to URT (2013) the population of Tanzania has more than tripled from 12.3 million in 1967 to 44.9 million in 2012. The 2012 Population and Housing Census results show that, Tanzania has a population of 44,928,923 of which 43,625,354 is on Tanzania Mainland and 1,303,569 is in Zanzibar (URT, ibid).

Most Tanzanians are religious people and religion plays an important role in the everyday life for many Tanzanians. 99 percent of the population on the island of Zanzibar is Muslim and Tanzania's mainland is mostly populated by Christians, traditional African religions and Muslim communities found in coastal areas (Tanner 2002). Although most of Muslims are Sunni there are many denominations found in Christian Religion such as Roman Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, Seventh-day Adventist, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and members of Jehovah's Witnesses. As the religious surveys were eliminated from the government census after 1967 there are no current statistics on religious demography (Tripp, 1999). Tanzanians adhere to different religions which have a particular history of their own and Tanzania's constitution promotes no state religion but rather provides religious freedom for all its citizens (Tanner 2002).

1.2 Tanzania National Unity

This paper will perhaps begin by defining national unity as the sense of awareness for all people that are belonging to the land on which they live (Sadek, 1980). Throughout his life time Nyerere the founder of Tanzania advocated national unity. He cherished a strong belief that only in unity can strength be found to tackle other challenges of life (Chacha, 2003). The cherishment was perpetuated by set of norms and values which fostered widespread acceptance of national identity, unity and rejection of political violence (Kessler, 2006). Several ideologies were advocated in Tanzania to emphasize national unity. Among them include use of words such as "*ndugu*" commonly translated as "comrade", "*Ujamaa*" *translated as "family-hood", "Mwananchi"* the word for "child of the land,". Under this rhetoric, each member of society easily recognized his or her proper role in supporting the overall good of the nation-family (Kessler, 2006).

The introduction of civic education, furthermore; strengthened national unity. The goal of civics education was to mold the masses into good citizens. In the *ujamaa (family-hood)* years, good citizens were people who loved their country and were willing to work hard and sacrifice for it, with only a basic knowledge of how the government functioned (Meienberg, 1966). It should be remembered that when Tanzania gained its independence the country had a wide variety of languages. As language has capacity of bonding people together Nyerere introduced Swahili language to foster national unity. According to Chacha, (2003) without everyone speaking Swahili, the introduction of a unified culture would have been almost impossible.

Again, the nation had undertaken several initiatives ensure that religion and ethnicity could not jeopardize national unity. It is from these efforts during "ujamaa" (family-hood) topics related to religion segregation or ethnicities were considered as a taboo. Also groups formed on the basis of ethnic or tribal affiliation were banned. The University of Dar es Salaam discouraged research about ethnicity. After 1967, the census no longer included ethnic or religious categories (Tripp, 1999). Civil servants were posted outside their home regions and moved frequently to avoid the appearance of support (Tripp 1999).

One of the ways the leadership attempted to prevent divisions was by creating equal opportunities for all groups in schools. The government instituted school quotas that specified that equal percentages of different groups to be admitted to schools. It also nationalized all schools because under colonialism, more than half the schools were run by churches (Okema, 1996). These factors and many other have recorded to what today we proclaim Tanzania to be a peaceful country. However, the long celebrated national peace has witness a political and religious tensions. The following section traces origin of religious tensions in Tanzania.

1.3 Religious Tensions in Tanzania
It is crucial to briefly trace the origin of religion in Tanzania before tracing religious tension. Under this logical flow according to Lodhi (1994) Islamic faith was perhaps introduced in AD 1007 in Zanzibar and was common in the Indian Ocean by AD 13000. Although Islam had arrived quite early it certainly did not spread through conquest or settlement, but remained an urban and coastal phenomenon for quite long. Later it spread to the interior after 1729 when the Portuguese were pushed beyond the Ruvuma River that forms the present Tanzania-Mozambique border (Lodhi, 1994).

Regarding Christianity records by Bishop Kilaini shows that the first Catholic evangelization was by the Portuguese Augustinian missionaries who arrived with Vasco Da Gama in 1499 at Zanzibar. They did not last long due to Arab Moslem opposition. Their mission ended in 1698 due to the Oman-Arab conquest. The second and successful evangelization was in the 19th century pioneered by three religious congregations, the Holy Ghost Fathers, the White Fathers and the Benedictine Monks. The Holy Ghost Fathers, under the leadership of Fr. Antoine Horner, were the first to arrive in Zanzibar in 1863 and crossed to Tanzania mainland, Bagamoyo in 1868 where they opened freed slaves' villages (http://www.apostleshipofprayer.net/docs/The-Church-in-Africa-and-Tz-EN.pdf accessed 13/06/2014).

Although there are no reliable estimates regarding the proportions of Muslims and Christians in the country both groups are commonly considered fairly equal in terms of strength and number, their relationship remained good and both were often found in the same family (Heilman & Kaiser, 2002; Taylor and Francis, 2002). For a family or members of a household "the important thing is not the historically divisive nature of the religions, but the unifying nature of the social unit". One expression of social unity occurs during religious holidays, when all participate and cooperate fully

regardless of their religion (Omari 1984). This could be among the factors for long documented unity and cohesion. It should be noted that although in Tanzania there is fair proportion between Muslims and Christians each religion have actively sought to influence religion issues of their concern (Heilman and Kaiser, 2002). As the result this had eventually caused Muslims and Christians to be in conflict as intensified and became more public from the mid 1980s throughout the 1990s, which raised concerns about the future state of religious relations in the country (e.g. Heilman & Kaiser 2002; Mbogoni 2005; Mesaki 2011; Tambila 2006).

According to Taylor and Francis (2002) grassroots tension between Christian and Muslims were inflamed in the 1980s after fundamentalist born "again" Christian preachers began holding large crusades thought the country, prompting as respond in the form of Muslim leaders engage in public preaching, where the Bible was used to criticize Christians form a Muslim perceptive. For example in the late 1980s, Tanzania was invaded by Moslem fundamentalism propagated by young people suspected to be trained outside the country. They preached publicly against the bible, Christian beliefs and call upon the Moslems to liberate from the Christian domination. This reached its climax in 1991 when the situation became explosive. Even the Christians became restless. In early 1993, the Catholic bishops issued a public statement against these provocations. In reaction to it the Moslem fundamentalists on Good Friday 1993 destroyed the pork shops in the city. http://www.apostleshipofprayer.net/docs/The-Church-in-Africa-and-Tz-EN.pdf accessed 13/06/2014

Additionally number of incidents has occurred over the past 10 years that has resulted into tension between Muslims and Christians such as confrontation over the destruction of pork butcheries in the Mwembechi area of Dar es Salaam in 1993, a conflict whether Zanzibar could belong to OIC in 1994, the incidence of police entering a mosque to make arrest in Mwembechai 1998, clashes over the use of graveyard in the Manzese neighborhood in Dar es Salaam between Muslims and Christians in 2000 and the arrest of Muslim preacher by insulting Christian religion in 2001 (Mahenge, 2002; Taylor and Francis 2002; Forster, 1997).

Other conflicts are issues of slaughtering and selling meat among Muslims and Christian which led into conflict in 2013 whereby Church leaders are particularly liable to suffer violence. In 2013, one leader was beheaded, another shot dead, and a youth leader hacked to death, and there were machete attacks on pastors in their homes. Acid was thrown at another leader in Zanzibar. Some pastors have had to flee because of the threat to their lives. There has also been an increase in the number of attacks on churches and their buildings; for example, five people were killed and around 60wounded when a new church building in Arusha was bombed during its inaugural service in May 2013. Violent clashes erupted in Dar es Salaam's Mbagala suburb October 12, 2012 when scores of Muslim youth stormed a police station and demanded that a 14-year-old boy accused of urinating on the Quran be handed over to them. In the aftermath of the confrontation, at least five churches were attacked, several car windows smashed and passersby injured as the angry mob moved from street to street at Mbagala Kizuiani protesting the desecration of the holy book. Another incidence was the incidence of killing priests in Zanziabar (Fr. Evarist Mushi) and the incident echoes a similar attack

in December, when attackers shot and seriously wounded another Catholic priest in the Tomondo area to the south of Stone Town.

1.4 What Went Wrong

Tanzania has failed to maintain good relationship existed between Muslims and Christians in a variety of respects, and that this failure has caused tension between Muslims and Christians in many ways. To begin according to Komba (2013) the founders of Tanzania nation had taken deliberate effort towards brining equitable and just society. The nationalist agenda was solidarity of the oppressed and the creation of national consciousness which transcends parochial divisions of religion, ethnicity, race and color (Komba 2013). This solidarity started been weakened by peoples' dissatisfaction from government performance due to higher living costs poor social services delivery, poor human rights which led the use of religious and ethnic diversity for ideological and political goals (Mushi and Mukandala et al., 2006). Although there are these diversities no identity has become an all-encompassing category that takes precedence over other forms. In short, the concept of nation remains intact, despite the diversity of identity groups. Additionally religious relations in Tanzania have largely been friendly, even if tensions between Muslims and Christians have featured in Tanzanian politics ever since colonial times (Mbogoni, 2005). This is not to say that political, religious and ethnic conflict do not exist in Tanzania and perhaps that is what went wrong (Taylor and Francis, 2002).

National unity, in order to be successful and act as a core for society and its advancement and progress, must be built on the basis of clear and solid foundations that give no room to any misinterpretation. National unity is an idea staunchly proposed within communities, and the goal overall, is due to the sense of those adopting it that communities need to be stable and follow the pace of development leading to progress, prosperity and stability (Bhattacharjee, 2012). However, the nation had failed to work on the misperception existing that there is socioeconomic and demographic differences between the two religious groups (Dharmalingam and Morgan 2004).

Moreover the nation had failed to contain some religious movements. Part of the Islamic revival in Tanzania is an activist political movement which challenges the ruling party and secularist principles of the state (Bakari & Ndumbao 2001). This movement is based on an Islamic-centric interpretation of history that maintains Muslims have been discriminated against by a Christian-dominated state since the colonial period. While some Muslims may agree with some of the arguments made by political activists, they may nonetheless differ regarding goals and tactics. For example, more moderate Muslims who support change encourage Muslims to act politically on behalf of their Religious to ensure their equal treatment with Christians and to advance Islamic interests in accordance with the Tanzanian constitution and existing laws. Finally, as Bakari and Ndumbaro (2001) note, many Muslims are suspicious of the government and BAKWATA and the state has been involved in direct confrontations with these activists.

Another issue is a feeling of inferiority and that the other religious group enjoys advantages in different areas is often not pronounced, but they carry a potential for conflict (Ogunsade 2004). This has led to many public religious rallies. Within a short period of time these public religious rallies degenerated into impassioned contests to win converts based on verbal attacks against the 'other' Religious (Tambila & Rubanza, 2001: 5-6). Forster et al (2000: 135) note that in Tanzania there have been numerous problems rising from religious pluralism, and these have been more overt than ethnic issues.

1.5 Religious Tension in Tanzania as a Threat to National Unity and Cohesion

According to Komba (2013) on a review of current politics in Tanzania had identified religious and ethnic diversity for ideological and political goal as among core four factors with high potential to threatening national unity and national consciousness. A comprehensive study on Justice, Rights and Worship, Religion and Politics in Tanzania conducted by REDET (Mukandala et al., 2006) has revealed that the phenomenon is manifested as a conflict between religious groups and the State but it is actually rooted in resource disparity by region and social groups, inequitable allocation of benefits, poverty (due to low productivity and inadequate support to the productive sector), weak or undemocratic institutions (poor governance), myopic and selfish leaders, and absence of an integrative ideology (Mushi and Mukandala et al., 2006) in Komba (2006).

Fawole and Bello (2011) on the impact of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria identified that religious conflict can lead to the transfer of violence from one grievance to innocent people. Therefore, creating hatred among people as well as demeaning the sense of belonging as well as serving as a tenterhook to national unity. Fawole and Bello (ibid) added that religious conflict likely to weaken national loyalty, commitment to national deals and true nationhood, giving rise to parochialism, ethnicity and other cleavages which exploit for their interest and more the crisis can lead to enormous negative consequences on the economy. Worse if the conflict increases to unprecedented levels hundreds will be killed with much more wounded or displaced from their homes on account of their religious identification. Schooling for children will be disrupted and interrupted; business will lost billions of money and properties worth much will be destroyed (Fawole and Bello, 2011). Polarization of religious groups, called religious conflicts is an important social factor in the explanation of growth, and that this can be an important explanation for the tragedy of African growth Reynal-Querol and Montalvo (2000).

1.6 Recommendations

In order to stop and avoid future religious conflict religious leaders have big role to play as they can be ambassador for peace by having health dialogue with other forms of religion by discussing the way they can bring peace. Since the most problem is between Muslims and Christians both can identify values they can be share values which cannot be shared and set proper mechanism on how unshared values will not affect either part. Moreover Islam and Christianity should be committed to work for justice and peace, and have well-established structures and processes for doing so.

Religious beliefs in Islam and Christianity should encourage adherents to look beyond self-interest to a greater good, a tendency that can encourage conflicting parties to seek common. Finally government should discuss together with religious leaders on how they can all cooperate.

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