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PROMISES, PAINS AND REALITIES OF COALITION POLITICS IN TANZANIA

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Introduction

Coalition politics tends to be one of the necessary practices in political systems that allow multiparty and competitive politics. Depending on the rules on the ground, coalition politics has, from time to time and in some political systems, become the only way for political parties to have the standard requirement of democratic politics for government formation – the majority. In a multiparty system where there are several viable political parties, and the playing field is somewhat level, the chances are, any one political party might need to coalesce with others in order to have the required majority in order to form government, or share power. Those who are seeking to coalesce have always done that in trying to get representation and/or share power in a political system. If they could get these on their own, they would not seek the coalitions. In many of the emerging new democracies in Africa, coalitions have been sought to strengthen the party in power or to create a viable opposition in the respective legislative bodies. There are cases where the formation of coalitions has led to the consolidation of democracy in the sense that either the respective political systems have been more stable, or decades-long domination by some political parties has had to come to an end. There are also case where coalitions have ended in failure.

In Tanzania multiparty system was reinstalled in 1992 after three decades of the single-party state. There are seventeen registered political parties today, while several others

have provisional registration, waiting to join the fray of politics. This, one would want to think, provides a greater chance that coalitions are going to be the order of the day in Tanzanian politics also. But, until now, with the seventeen political parties there are, coalitions have become very elusive. The reasons for this could be historical, political, and even a temporary phenomenon.

The nature of multiparty political system matters when it comes to the necessity of building coalitions. There are such systems where you have one dominant party, two dominant parties, and where there is no one party that is clearly dominant. This situation is again an outcome of history, the policy issues on the ground, and other political developments that can tilt existing balances of power between parties such as the demise of influential party leaders, party break-ups, political scandals and so on. This paper intends to address the status of party coalitions in Tanzania, looking at the attempts, the outcomes and the hurdles that this political phenomenon has faced in the politics of Tanzania.

Coalition Politics and Types of Coalitions

Definition

Karume (2003) citing the Encyclopedia of Democracy of 1995, defines coalition building in a multiparty political system as the process of coordinating parties collectively in pursuit of a common goal. This process would include pooling resources of political parties in order to achieve this common goal – in most cases a share of representation or power; having communication about the goal; forming binding commitments and an

agreement about the distribution arrangements of the benefits that may result from achieving this goal. It is further stated that the ultimate aim of the actors in a coalition arrangement is to control the executive. Political parties have always had a common political goal – that of capturing state power. The difference in cases of coalitions, I would say, is that the parties want to capture state power in concert, rather than doing it as they intended at the time of their formation – singly. When the exercise becomes impossible for an individual political party that is when doing it together becomes the only option.

Pre- and Post Elections Coalitions

Coalitions can be formed before or after elections. The pre-elections coalitions – comprising such arrangements as alliances, merges and cooperative efforts – can simply be termed electoral coalitions. The aim of these coalitions is to win elections so that the partners can form the government. The effect of the coalition would be that of having the supporters and members of the cooperating parties vote for the coalition. The outcome of such arrangement is likely to be cabinet and/or legislative coalition as well. Such is the case of the NARC in Kenya. However, there are cases where the arrangement is for cooperation in elections only and thereafter each party remains on its own. Such cooperative agreements would include cases where coalescing parties target certain electoral constituencies, divide them amongst themselves and urge own supporters to reciprocally vote for candidates of the cooperating parties.

There are two main types of coalitions in the period after an election – cabinet coalitions and legislative coalitions. The former is the case where there is a requirement that a government of national unity be formed after an election, for example. The government (i.e. the cabinet) would consist of members of the parties that would qualify as per the constitution. The main concern in such circumstances would include the need for national unity as well as the healing of wounds inflicted by war, oppression, deprivation and so on. Such was the post-1994 South Africa. One can say that coalitions in such circumstances are used as a nation-building strategy in post-conflict societies or where persistently there is no clear winner in elections resulting in post-elections political imbroglio. In other arrangements where pre-election coalitions lead to multiparty cabinets, there can be cabinet coalitions as well. The aim here would be to make sure those policies emanating from the cabinet are, first 'easily' passed in cabinet and vehemently supported in parliament.

The second type of coalition – legislative coalitions – constitute cases where coalescing parties support 'partner' parties in parliamentary debates and votes. These may not have any shared governmental responsibilities but agree to support each other on reciprocal basis depending on the issue being debated. Coalescing parties' bosses would urge and expect their house members to support their 'friends' although this is not always the case. There can be dissenting views and, therefore, votes against a given issue.

Why Coalitions

- ***Building Electoral Strength***

In multiparty politics one expects that the opposition will play its role of, among others, unseating the incumbent government for better policy outputs and outcomes. This can only come when the opposition is strong enough to unseat the incumbent government through the ballot box. Ruling parties or coalitions are not easily unseated though. This is where the need for those in opposition to form some kind of union comes to the fore front – and this can be done through coalitions.

- ***Policy Orientation***

The theory of political parties will inform us that ideological differences led to the formation of some political parties. This is still the truth in modern day politics. Once a political based on a given ideological stand has been formed, its policies, preferences and electoral manifesto would reflect that particular ideological orientation. In many cases also, these ideologically-based political parties represent minorities in the political system in question. But it has not always been the case that the electorate buys each and every product of all the ideological orientations that may be represented by the different political parties. When this becomes that case, and these parties happen not to have enough strength to have their ideological perspective represented in national and sub-national levels, the need to seek ways to have this effected may lead to coalition building. The coalition can be with the strong party/parties or a diverse coalition of many smaller parties, which may result in making an impact in electoral and policy circles. Like that the interests of former minorities may find their way to the decision-making tables.

- ***Constitutional Provisions***

The constitution of a country may dictate that for a political party to form a government it must have a majority in parliament. When this does not happen, usually the largest party will have to seek the support of some other parties in order to be able to form a government. In so doing, the invited parties will have to put some conditions on the table as to how they (invited partner parties) are going to share power and other political goods that come with the formation of government. As we noted earlier in the introduction, having a majority before forming a government is a democratic imperative in many political systems.

- ***Pre-Election Mobilization Coalitions***

These are coalitions made for the purpose of seeking office. This is a process of canvassing for votes across sections of the voters so that the coalition can have the required majority and access political office. The problem with this type of alliance is that parties with very different policy orientations may find themselves in a coalition – hoping to sort some of these differences at a later date, or cohabit as strange bedfellows simply because of political necessity.

- ***Conflict Resolution Coalitions***

There are cases where parties have to coalesce in order to avert national disasters – whether economic, political, social and so forth. In some cases politicians find that the nation state as a whole is at stake and only coalitions would make a difference. If a

coalition took place in Somalia today, probably the main reason would be to try and salvage something out of the political mess in which that country finds itself today.

Obstacles to Coalitions

Generally, coalitions have a noble purpose. This being the case one would expect these to take place in many political systems – for the benefit of the population. This is not happening as one could imagine. There are reasons for this. These can be grouped into three categories. The first are the ones to do with institutional settings in any one political system. The constitution, the electoral law(s) and other related laws might restrict the formation of coalitions. Where, for example, the constitution and other electoral laws are silent about coalitions there can also be lack of clarity on how the whole process is going to work and the mechanisms that will need to be put in place for a viable coalition to emerge. For the developing countries, and where multiparty politics was reintroduced only in the 1990s, it is likely to find that politicians are not well versed with the processes of coalition building.

The second set of reasons is the one related to party-ideological matters whereby issues like ideological differences, fear of the disappearance of smaller parties, loss of political identity and lack of common objective(s) come to the fore. The third group comprises those related to the personalities involved in the possible coalitions. There are politicians with personal rivalries that would make them not to consider sitting together in a coalition, the saying "everything is possible in politics" notwithstanding! The

personalities issue can lead to lack of trust amongst politicians, unnecessary disagreements on allocation of resources, and so on.

In the final analysis coalition building may be seen as being guided by the game theory. Calculations are made and the possible outcomes are predicted before anyone plunges into some coalition. The zero-sum possibilities are avoided or rejected and as much as possible, the non-zero-sum or win-win situations are sought.

Parties and the State in Tanzania

The nature of the political parties and indeed the multiparty politics in Tanzania is a function of Tanzania's history. All these are also linked to the nature of the state in Tanzania which, among other things, is a product of its experience of the colonial rule, the centralization of power in the period after independence, and the one-party rule that lasted for more than three decades. Before the reintroduction of multiparty politics, the state has been characterized differently as being centralized (Shivji, 1985), authoritarian (Mukandala and Lofchie, 1998) and even a semi-democratic one within the single-party framework (Cliffe, 1967, Potholm, 1970, and Hyden and Leys, 1972). Several characteristics found in the politics during the single-party rule may have been carried over to the multiparty politics era and therefore, affecting the way the state is relating to the new political parties. Such are features like the relegation of the representative organ of the state – the parliament – to a "committee of the party", intolerance of different opinion on political matters, the imbalance between the three arms of the government, and the throttling of civil society organizations mainly by capturing the few that existed

and making it hard for new ones to emerge and grow. All these seem to have had an imprint on what has happened after the 1992 liberalization of politics.

As we noted elsewhere (Mallya, 2004), the state in Tanzania has been more of a hindrance to multiparty politics than a facilitator. Cases are not hard to find in which the state has been seen as objecting to smooth multiparty politics – both before and after 1992. There are actions and omissions, which point directly to this situation. First, the government has most of the time denied that there was need to enact a new constitution, one that would cater for the new political organization brought about by the multiparty politics. The opposition parties and some other activists have insisted that it would serve Tanzania better if a new constitution would be written. This has always fallen on deaf ears.

Second is the house-to-house canvassing during election campaigns. While this is allowed to all parties, those with subvention are likely to exploit this provision better as they are able to hand over "incentives" to potential voters than those who do not have subvention. It is important to note also that incumbent MPs receive their multimillion shillings pensions immediately after the parliament is dissolved and ready for campaigns. This must be a big advantage over those who are seeking to be MPs first time – and who are likely to be from the opposition camp.

Third, the electoral law does not signal anything to look forward to by the opposition parties. Three issues point to that. One, the way subvention is distributed makes it difficult for all political parties to practice politics in a level playing field. Only parties

with MPs are eligible for that money. Two, the First Past the Post electoral system has weaknesses that act against the interests of the opposition parties. The seats in the legislature a party wins do not reflect the votes it receives. For instance, in the 1995 elections, the opposition parties got 40.8% of all valid votes but they only had 19.8% seats in the house. In some cases under this system, there can be 'wrong winners'. There is a possibility of having more votes but not be the ones to form government. This, for example, happened a lot in pre-revolution Zanzibari elections! Large parties would tend to get more than their fair share, while small ones are systematically under-represented. The system also encourages an overly adversarial style of politics, which does not augur well with the Tanzania political culture built over the years. The alternative is, of course, Proportional Representation (PR). This system of election has several strong points when it comes to the relationship between political parties especially during elections. PR provides for a more representative legislature as parties receive seats in proportion to their votes. Also all partisan interests have a very good chance of being represented in the legislature. PR also does not force smaller parties to merge their identities or interests into some larger party.

Having said that, we also need to mention the fact that there are other aspects that the state has been a facilitator. First, Tanzania has seen the number of civil society organizations grow significantly over the years after 1992. These are important players in the politics of any country. They have also played a role in policy advocacy, lobbying and generally influence the policy process. Second, the media has also relatively flourished over the years. The media plays a crucial role in the democratization process.

Third, Tanzania now has a Human Rights Commission and Good Governance which is another important seal in the democratic credentials of a political system.

Parties and Coalitions in Tanzania

The Tanzanian constitution is silent about coalitions and coalition formation in Tanzanian politics. This can be alluded to the way the constitution has been changed to suit the changes in the political system since the reintroduction of multiparty politics. While some of the political parties are demanding that a new constitution be written so that the new realities of Tanzanian politics can be taken on board, the party in government and the government have decided that changes will be made through amendments when need arose. The proponents for a new constitution have always argued that some critical political phenomena may not be addressed by the amendments made to a constitution that was made during the single-party system. Such overlooked realities would include the possibility of coalition government, as well as political parties need to coalesce in order to increase their political fortunes. Of course silence does not mean a ban, but given that Tanzania is now a multiparty politics democracy, coalitions should have been provided for in the constitution and in other related laws. For one, the Constitution under Section 77 (3) (a) stipulates that, only candidates nominated and sponsored by fully-registered political parties will be accepted by the National Electoral Commission. My reading of this provision is that, political parties cannot forward a candidate on a coalition ticket! It has to be sponsorship by only one party. Otherwise coalitions will have to be formed once registered political parties have deregistered themselves and form a different party or parties, and thereby being able to have candidates for elections. This would be a long

process. However, what the parties can do is to have cooperative agreements whereby members of a coalition support each other in specified constituencies as per an agreement. This has happened before, as was the case with Chadema and CUF in the 2000 general election.

The above constitutional and legal barriers apart, there has been a lot of talk by the opposition parties about coalition formation in the form of fielding one candidate for the presidency, and in some cases through constituency targeting. In the latter cases the parties would agree that partner parties would agree on which party is to have a candidate in a given constituency while the supporters and members of the rest support this one candidate. The aim here is winning specific constituencies where the parties know they are strong.

While the national constitution is one institution that can restrict coalition politics, a look at the constitutions of the parliamentary parties in Tanzania show that they do not have a provision for coalescing with other political parties except one party – NCCR-Mageuzi. NCCR-Mageuzi are talking of coalitions and even the possibility of mergers. Tanzania Labour Party talks of cooperation but for peace and friendship and not for a possible coalition. The rest of the parties are not mentioning the concept at all.

Party Mergers versus Party Coalitions

As we noted above, the constitution does not say anything as far as party coalitions are concerned. Coalitions would tend to let the participants remain as individual entities

while they cooperate for a course. But there are cases in Tanzania where the parties involved discussed mergers rather than mere coalitions. These type of talks have happened more often times than coalition talks. And, they remained talks when it comes to the opposition in Tanzania.

Before we look at these talks, let us briefly mention the fact that the single party that was in power when multiparty politics was introduced to Tanzania in 1992 was itself a result of a merger. The party that won Tanganyika's Independence in 1961 was Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and the one which led the Revolution in Zanzibar in 1964 was Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP). The merger resulted in Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM). The merger was kind of a necessary outcome of the politics of the 1964 Union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar. They united to form the United Republic of Tanzania and for the period between 1964 and 1977 when the parties also were "united", there was a distinct party on each part of the Union. After 1977 both parts of the Union were having one and the same party – CCM.

After the re-introduction of multiparty politics in 1992 several political parties were formed and registered as per the law. But they realized also that they were not going to be able to contest with the bigger and well established CCM. Some merger talks were conducted , but as noted earlier they never came to any fruit except one. This was in 1992 when the Chama Cha Wananchi (CCW) led by the outspoken human rights activist James Mapalala merged with a Zanzibar-based political party known as KAMAHURU led by one Hamis Mloo to form the Civic United Front (CUF).

The other attempts at mergers include the following. In 1994, for example, there was a meeting in Zanzibar where leaders of opposition parties met to discuss a possible merger for a stronger opposition party. The plan was to dissolve the existing parties and form this one party. It was agreed, at least in the talks, that Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA) should be the one to change name and register as a new party with the name Umoja wa Demokrasia Tanzania (UDETA) and the rest would be part of it after dissolving own parties. However, permission to dissolve the parties was to be sought individually through internal party mechanisms. This is where the problem arose and the end to the attempted merger. Members and even some participating leaders reneged on their position and started looking at the possible merger as an attempt by some parties to swallow some other (smaller) parties. With disagreements within parties, some leaders went even farther and broke from their parties and registered new parties, Such was the case in NCCR-Mageuai where the Secretary General decided to break away and provisionally registered Mageuzi-Asilia. With these infighting in prospective merging parties, the whole plan collapsed.

Coalitions have been attempted, mostly during election periods. In the 2000 elections, for example, CHADEMA formed a loose coalition – in the form of cooperative agreements – with CUF. The former supported the presidential candidate from the latter as it did not have its own candidate in the race. They also agreed to have reciprocal support for whichever candidate was seen as being stronger in any constituency they fielded candidates for the councillorship or parliamentarianship.

In 2003 there was a serious initiative by the opposition parties under the chairmanship of NCCR-Mageuzi leader to form a strong coalition aimed at defeating the ruling party in the following elections. This was, in part, a reaction to the victory that the Kenyan NARC scored in the Kenyan elections the previous year. Again, in their meetings there were some dissenting parties. In the final day, August 30th 2003, seven political parties formed a loose coalition while four did not sign to that agreement. The seven were United Democratic Party (UDP), Union for Multiparty Democracy (UMD), National Convention for Construction and Reform (NCCR-Mageuzi), National League for Democracy (NLD), Tanzania Democratic Alliance (TADEA) and Progressive Party of Tanzania (PPT-Maendeleo). Those which did not sign were CUF, CHADEMA, Chama Cha Ustawi (CHAUSTA) and Tanzania Labour Party (TLP). Those which signed decided to call their loose coalition UMOJA (meaning unity). The agreement in UMOJA is not legally binding and it has not been successful in putting a structure with the semblance of the NARC of Kenya. It could, perhaps, serve as a starting point when these parties and others decide to form a more coherent coalition.

One latest attempt at coalition was the case of ten political parties intention to nominate one presidential candidate for the 2005 presidential election (*Daily News*, 15.06.05: 1,3). These parties, according to the *Daily News*, include NCCR-Mageuzi, NLD, NRA, UMD and TADEA. In their meeting they could not nominate this one candidate for the presidential race because NCCR_Mageuzi were yet to meet to nominate their candidate. Until now they are yet to meet even though NCCR-Mageuzi have already nominated their candidate for the presidency.

Why Are Coalitions Hard to Come By in Tanzania?

Despite the fact that Tanzania is a multiparty democracy with some 17 political parties, coalitions are yet to be a feature in its politics. There are several reasons to this. Firstly, as discussed above, there are structural characteristics of the political system that make coalitions hard to come by. The electoral system is the one that places the biggest hurdle to coalition formation in Tanzania. If it were the PR system that was in use, more parties would enter parliament and this would raise the possibility that no one party would have a clear majority, thereby seeking to form some kind of coalition. But the stronger reason for the imprint left on the political landscape by the electoral system lies within the history of Tanzania itself – that of being ruled by a single party for so long. The CCM is so strong on comparative terms that the other parties can hardly compete. Being an incumbent, CCM has had all the advantages associated with incumbency (Mmuya, 1999: 179-80).

Secondly, there is the party ideological reasons. While the opposition parties have bundled themselves under the social-democratic rhetoric as far as their economic management is concerned (Mmuya, 1998), CCM has liberalized the economy while claiming to be building socialism. CCM's history as far as economic management is concerned has also made some of its competitors to keep their distance. The economy was a mess for quite a long time before the 1985 when it was liberalized and the population suffered so much so that in a way the new political parties would not want to associate with this recent past. This has therefore, become one of the barriers of the establishment of some forms of cooperation between CCM and the other (opposition)

parties. It would not be a sin for any party to seek cooperation with CCM given its strength in the political system – but this has not genuinely happened. May be it was time for some parties to seek association with this big brother in Tanzanian politics! As for the opposition parties themselves, the similarity in their socio-economic policies has led to, among other things, the focusing on personalities rather than policies when it comes to election campaigns and other political rallies. And, as Mmuya notes (1999, op. cit.,: 183), this has led to a situation that could lapse into a politics hate around the individual and their ethnic, religious or regional affiliations. This point is discussed briefly below.

Thirdly, there is the question of the personalities involved. Some party leaders, for example, have moved from one party to another due to internal conflicts. Personality clashes have occurred and the way out was one of the parties in conflict to march on. Forming a coalition between two or more parties that have had exchange of leaders due to internal conflicts becomes difficult. This is the case, for example, of the TLP forming a coalition with NCCR-Mageuzi while their leaders had a big misunderstanding when both were in the same party NCCR-Mageuzi. There have been accusations and counter accusations of different political party leaders being dictators in their parties, leaders being accused of being CCM cronies, and others have been accused of being anti-(democratic) reforms. It is worse when this happens to be between the leaders of the new parties, and which is in most cases the case in Tanzania.

Concluding Remarks

Coalition politics is a common phenomenon in competitive politics. It creates the opportunity for the cooperating political parties to access power – or part of it, as well as sharing some of the other political goods that come with one winning elections. As such there can be coalitions before and after elections. The pre-election coalitions are meant to give the coalescing parties a greater chance of winning the majority required to form government. It aims at building electoral strength. Post-election coalitions are meant to address a situation whereby no one party managed to get the required majority to form government and therefore the need to look for partners in building this majority. This phenomenon is normally controlled by constitutional provisions of a particular country; and in the case of Tanzania the constitution does not openly provide for this political arrangement. However, some attempts have been made to try and cooperate in some of the electoral processes.

The opposition parties in Tanzania have learnt it the hard way. The ruling party (CCM) has been very dominant in Tanzanian politics and it seems for the opposition to have a chance of forming a government they have to have a different strategy, and this will definitely include a consideration of forming a coalition. As they are now, they are generally weak and divided. This has for the past two general elections been an advantage to CCM. Coalition could be the way out. But, as discussed earlier in this paper, the electoral system has something to do with the slim chances of coalition formation in Tanzania. May be we also need to have some electoral reforms that lead to a house that reflects the votes acquired by each political party. This will increase the chances of

parties needing the support of other parties in order to form government – and therefore, the need for coalitions. That apart, there is also need for political party leaders to iron out some of their unnecessary rivalries that have led to them not thinking of cooperating with some other parties due to personality clashes or other individual-based differences. Politics as it is the world over has seen foes cooperating and there is no reason why that cannot work in Tanzania. But it would look like as our political parties get to mature there is likelihood that coalitions will happen in Tanzania.

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