Abstract

Historically, every time there was an election in Tanzania a fresh voter registration was conducted. This turned to be not only a tedious and expensive exercise but also it was fraudulent. After the re-introduction of multipartyism questions were raised on the fairness of this system of registering voters. Recommendations were made that a permanent voter register be introduced to address some of the problems caused by a less sophisticated and easy to manipulate temporary voter register. Prior to the 2005 General Elections, for both the Union and Zanzibar Governments, a permanent voter register was introduced. The way the exercise was conducted, both in the mainland and Zanzibar, is the subject of this article. Attention is paid to whether or not the voter register creates a foundation for free and fair elections. Our analysis shows that the exercise of registering voters itself, especially in Zanzibar, was in no way free and fair, hence creating a weak foundation on which to build subsequent electoral stages.