

Racial Identities, Nationalism and the Politics of Exclusion in Zanzibar

*Mohammed Bakari**

Abstract

This article seeks to explain how competing perspectives on nationalism and citizenship have shaped post-revolution politics in the semi-autonomous islands of Zanzibar. It unravels the patterns of political mobilization and exclusion in the advent of multiparty politics in 1992. The main argument advanced is that the extreme political polarization that has characterized post-revolution Zanzibar is not simply a product of the historical factors based on racial, regional and class differences. The article critiques the conventional perspective which explains Zanzibar's conflict as a contestation between an African majority and Arab minority. It posits that equally significant in sustaining and fostering divisive politics and political exclusion of a significant fraction of the Zanzibar society are the policies and institutional arrangements deliberately designed to safeguard the status quo. Power-sharing arrangements between the two main political camps under a government of national unity is suggested as a stepping stone towards the ultimate resolution of the long standing political conflict on the islands.

Introduction

This paper seeks to identify a specific ethnic minority in Zanzibar for in-depth interrogation at the local and national level to see the extent to which it has been marginalized, discriminated and excluded in the political processes and decision making. This paper is a product of a study which was undertaken with the overall objective and spirit of regional integration aimed at providing research input that could influence the inclusion of ethnic groups and minorities in political decision making in East Africa in order to

*Department of Political Science and Public Administration University of Dares salaam.

strengthen their participation in democratic processes in the region and ultimately contribute to a truly people-centered development.

The paper is organized in two main parts. The first part tries to identify who are considered ethnic and racial minorities in Zanzibar and the way the issue of contending nationalist outlooks has affected the entire political discourse including the issue of nationalism and citizenship. The second part presents a brief review of policies and institutional arrangements shaping the way the identified marginalized political community is mobilized to advance its interests and strategize, participate in and influence democratic institutions. This part also highlights opportunities and challenges encountered. It also documents issues relating to political parties and elections as well as alternative forms of political mobilization through cultural, religious and civil society spheres. Besides, patterns of decentralization of power and local governance as avenues for people participation in the political processes are examined. Finally, is an overall conclusion and general recommendations that can challenge conventional thinking about the role of minorities in political processes.

Identification of ethnic/racial minorities in Zanzibar

Ethnic, racial and class relations in Zanzibar

In terms of ethnic and racial composition and relations, Zanzibar remarkably distinguishes itself from all the other cases in the East African region (i.e., Tanzania Mainland, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi). Whereas ethnicity and ethnic relations are more pronounced in all the other cases, in the case of Zanzibar racial identities and racial relations are more appropriate terms given the peculiar demographic and historical features of Zanzibar. Zanzibar, an offshore island in the Indian Ocean, formally a great empire stretching to some parts of the mainland from Mogadishu, Somalia to Sofala, Mozambique has had contacts with the outside world for centuries (Bennett 1978).

Zanzibar (Unguja and Pemba Islands) is part of the United Republic of Tanzania since 1964 following the Union with Tanganyika. Under the Union arrangement, Zanzibar retained its internal government with a jurisdiction to manage non-Union affairs.¹ The Islands are located about 22 miles (35km) off the coast of the Indian Ocean. Unguja and Pemba jointly have a total land area of 2,232 square kilometers. Unguja, where the seat of government and

the main commercial centre are located, occupies 63%; and Pemba, which is considered as a peripherized region since the colonial days, occupies 37% of the total land area. According to the population projection based on the 2002 census, by 2008², Zanzibar had a population of 1,193,383 inhabitants. Unguja Island has a population of 733,186 inhabitants (61.4%) and Pemba has 459,197 inhabitants (38.5%). As this study focuses on the issue of discrimination and marginalization of ethnic minorities or majorities, the issue of Unguja-Pemba divide will feature prominently. Unfortunately, however, there are no available statistics to determine the actual percentage of the people originating from Pemba and those originating from Unguja. What is indisputable is that due to less economic opportunities available in Pemba, there has been for a long time mass exodus of people from Pemba to Unguja. That is to say, in Unguja, particularly in Urban West Region, there are a large number of people originating from Pemba.

Unlike the other East African countries whose inhabitants are multi-ethnic, the Zanzibar population is first and foremost multi-racial. In the absence of up-to-date statistics of racial/ethnic distribution of the population, the pre-independence census of 1948 could provide a rough indication.³ According to the 1948 census, the main ethnic/racial communities recorded were the Shirazi (who are usually referred to as indigenous, a mixed breed of centuries of blood intermingling between Africans and Arabs) (56.2%); Africans (19.5%) – a category representing recent immigrants from the mainland; and Arabs (16.9%) who represented both those who settled on the islands for several centuries, and the relatively new-comers who came from the early 19th century. The other identities included the Asians (5.8%), Comorians (1.1%) and Goans (0.3%) (Lofchie 1965: 7). In terms of political association and mobilization, however, it was essentially the Africans, Arabs and the Shirazis who extensively mobilized during the struggles for independence and some patterns of their political orientations are to some extent visible to date. Although the Zanzibar population is conspicuously multiracial and multi-ethnic, religiously it is relatively homogenous. Over 96 percent of the population are Muslims and the majority of them (about 90%) belong to the Sunni sect (ibid: 72).

Historically, there was a significant difference between Unguja and Pemba in terms of both demographic composition, racial and class relations during the colonial era. In terms of racial composition, Unguja had more than twice the

number of Africans than Pemba; and Pemba had more than twice the number of Arabs than Unguja; and just one quarter of the Asians lived in Pemba. That is to say, Pemba was socially much more exposed to Arab influence than Unguja; and Unguja had more African influence than Pemba. But what was more significant in terms of the difference was the fact that there were clear patterns of correlation and association between social classes and racial identities (Sheriff 1991, Bakari 2001). Arabs predominantly represented the landed class and the ruling aristocracy. Asians represented the merchant class and occupied the middle position in the social hierarchy; most of the Shirazis were peasants and the few of them who were landlords occupied the ranks of the middle class. Africans constituted the lowest social stratum representing the laborers and tenants. On the whole, however, class differences (and hence antagonism) were sharper in Unguja than in Pemba. In Unguja, a meager five percent of landowners owned more than 56 percent of the clove trees, whereas in Pemba, where about 80 percent of the clove trees existed, the peasantry in that island owned 58 percent of all clove trees and the proportion of the Arab and Shirazi peasants was almost equal with little difference in terms of their economic situation (Sheriff, n.d: 13 in Bakari 2001:51).

Social stratification based on division of labour and cultural differences among the various racial and ethnic groups that existed during the colonial times, to some degree has had an impact on the present social structure as Horowitz (1985:565) observes:

The ethnic division of labour and more general cultural differences imply divergent principles and stratification: these tend to produce different types of elites among various ethnic groups. The leadership of one may be composed predominantly of university-educated professionals, while leadership in another may be confided to traditionally oriented aristocrats. This was the situation in Nigeria, where the Hausa-Fulani aristocracy led Northern parties, whereas the Ibo, lacking an aristocracy, relied on Western-educated professionals.

The situation in Zanzibar before independence and after the revolution was not much different from the above scenario. During the colonial period, Arabs were classified as landlords, Asians as merchants, Shirazi as peasants, and Africans as labourers. The public service was predominantly staffed by

Arabs and Asians with the exception of police force which was almost exclusively manned by Africans of mainland origin (Bakari 2001:54). In post-revolution era, a different pattern of division of labour occurred. Apart from the collapse of the plantation economy and landlordism, a new set of elites rose to power. Among other things, the differences in education that occurred in post-revolution era in Zanzibar could partly explain the current set up of the social structure and division of labour.

The people of Pemba and Arab origin, for example, who were sidelined as they were not part of the “new aristocracy” of the revolutionaries⁴ were compelled to venture into areas where they could not be severely blocked – these included: the pursuit of higher education and engagement in commercial activities particularly during the post-economic liberalization era. A large number people among the politically marginalized sections of the society migrated to the Mainland and overseas. Against this backdrop, there exist now quite different types of elites among the two competing political camps. One camp (i.e., those belonging to the ruling party), controls the government and coercive instruments of the State, while the other camp, (i.e., the opposition, particularly during and in post Jembe era [from 1972 to the late 1980s]), to a considerable degree, dominated the professional cadre of the government before the carrying out of a systematic purge of those who were perceived to be anti-establishment particularly in pre and post 1995 general elections under President Salmin Amour and his successor, Amani Abeid Karume (Bakari 2001).

Racial/ethnic groups and class character

Prior to independence, the relationship between ethnic groups and social class was to a considerable degree quite clear. Although one could not draw a general conclusion that each racial group belonged to a specific social class, it was reasonable to generalize that most members of a particular racial group belonged to a certain class. One could reasonably say, for example, that the upper class was predominantly Arab and Asian. The Arabs constituted a landlord class and the Asians as a merchant class. The middle class consisted of some sections of Arabs, Indians and well-to-do Shirazis. The lower class was predominantly African and poor sections among the Shirazis. In terms of social classes today, class differences to some extent still exist, but to a considerable degree, cut across all racial and ethnic identities.

There are no clear demarcations and correlations between racial categories and social classes as was the case during the colonial era (Bakari 2001:92-95).

One could still observe that quite a significant number of Arabs belong to the middle class or upper classes. This socioeconomic position is not by virtue of being in government service, but by owning and running business ventures some of which with capital assistance from their relatives and friends in the country or from the Middle East. On the whole, however, it may be misleading today to associate a particular racial or ethnic group with a specific social class. The collapse of the plantation economy, the development of the public sector in the 1960s and 1970s and economic and trade liberalization from the mid 1980s jointly created conditions that allow social mobility across racial/ethnic groups. Some social climbers have achieved a higher economic status from public employment or employment in the private sector and others have transformed their live standards through commerce.

Today, Africans and some sections of the Shirazis, particularly those based in Unguja, constitute the new ruling clique/oligarchy with immense political power and a disproportionate share in lower, middle and top government positions (Shivji 2008, Bakari 2001). The private commercial sector is still to a considerable extent dominated by Zanzibaris of Asian and Arab origin. In comparative terms, Zanzibaris of Pemba origin seem to be more conspicuous in the sector, particularly among the middle and small business undertakings than those from Unguja (Mwase 1997). This observation applies to commercial activities based in Zanzibar Town, Dar es Salaam and other parts of the Mainland. On the whole, social classes are so amorphous in Zanzibar today, i.e., the correlations between racial groups and social classes are not self-evident unlike the case during the colonial era.

Conceptualization of race and ethnicity in Zanzibar

Whereas in all the other cases in East Africa, the dominant patterns of relations are clustered under ethnicity, in the case of Zanzibar the relations are saliently racial. When it comes to using an analytical concept, nevertheless, we have to make up our mind which concept is appropriate in explaining the relations. Analytically, we can hardly get extra mileage by using racial relations as distinct from ethnic relations. Whereas it could be conceptually sensible to separate “race” from “ethnicity” whereby race

signifies genealogical differences of colour and excludes other ethnic features such as religion, language, culture or nationality, for analytical purposes and comparison, a broad concept of ethnicity may be more appropriate as it embraces an array of differences based on colour or tribe, language, religion and some other attributes of common origin (Horowitz 1985: 41). As to whether Zanzibaris of Arab and Asian origins are racial categories, this is hard to dispute. The controversy surrounds the other identities, Africans and Shirazis, as to whether they constitute a single racial category (with different ethnic identities) or they are distinct racial groupings. For the purpose of this study, the two concepts of race and ethnicity are used more or less interchangeably.

In the case of Zanzibar, the term 'African' as an ethnic or racial label is not a straightforward concept. Depending on the context and purpose it is used sometimes interchangeably to refer to the Africans of mainland origin and the Shirazis. Sometimes, depending on circumstances, the Shirazis would accept the 'African' identity (*label*) when they differentiate themselves with Arabs and Asians, however, at times they seem to be not too comfortable with the African label, i.e., to be put in the same category with Africans who are considered as recent immigrants from the mainland. Sometimes, a more loosely label is applied to the Shirazis and Africans as "Waswahili"⁵, a cultural identity label which seems to be so inclusive as to include even Arabs and Asians who are part of the Swahili and Islamic culture in East Africa. Apparently, all the racial labels used are exclusive perhaps with the exception of the "Waswahili" (i.e., a cultural identity) which is pliable to accommodate almost all the racial and ethnic categories in the East African coast (Middleton 1992).

According to the official identification by the British administration, initially the 'African' was quite an inclusive ethno-geographical identity and it included, in addition to those originating from the various African tribes of the mainland, Waswahili, Shirazis, Somalis, Ethiopians, Sudanese, Commorians, and the like.⁶ In the 1950 when politics and nationalist struggles were intensifying, the definition of 'African' according to the British colonial authorities became more restrictive. In the new definition, Shirazis, Commorians, Somalis and Ethiopians were considered as non-Africans. In this definition, "Africans' now exclusively denoted people from the mainland tribes.⁷ In spite of the above controversial account of ethnic and

racial identities in Zanzibar, for the purpose of our study, suffice it to say that Zanzibar is a multiracial and multi-ethnic country which is demographically different from all other nations in East Africa.

The fallacy of majority versus minority discourse

The dominant racial discourse among the British colonialists, the revolutionaries in Zanzibar, and policy makers in Tanganyika, and particularly Nyerere, was that what existed in Zanzibar were class and power struggles between an Arab minority and African majority (Al-Barwani 1997: 151). Western and Mainland scholars predominately subscribe to the doctrine of African nationalism against Arab domination (Lofchie 1965, Mbwiliza 2000). Lofchie and Mbwiliza, among many others, for example, their notion of Zanzibar Africans include the Wahadimu, Watumbatu, Wapemba and Mainland Africans, with the assumption that these would be the bearers and champions of African nationalism. According to Mbwiliza, Shirazi identity is simply an unfounded myth of glorifying foreign/non-African origin which can hardly be supported by any substantial genealogical origin, a myth which has been reinforced by overplaying the maritime factor in Zanzibar's history (Mbwiliza 2000:34). A lot has been written by historians and other scholars about the origins and authenticity of the Shirazi identity in Zanzibar and throughout the East African coast. There are those who have stressed the maritime and foreign genealogical and cultural origins and those who have stressed the African genealogical and cultural origins (Chami 2007). In this paper, we do not intend to carry forward that seemingly endless debate. A key point to be considered in this controversy is that:

Analytically, however, in social sciences genealogical authenticity of the Shirazi descent is of less significance. What is more significant is the existence of the perception – be it a reality or a myth that there is a category of people who consider themselves as a distinct ethnic group and identify themselves as such (Bakari 2001:70-71).

To be sure, this doctrine of an African majority and African nationalism versus an Arab minority and Arab nationalism has been proved wrong by history. The fact was that the entire society was split almost along the middle and racial relations and nationalist outlooks were more complicated than it was assumed by those who subscribed to the doctrine of “African majority” rule in the place of an Arab (foreign) aristocracy.

Although there was no consensus among analysts on the degree of society polarization on the eve of the 1964 revolution, the fact that the society was polarized was beyond question. It has been well documented by many scholars that social and racial/ethnic polarization on the eve of the revolution had already dramatically peaked during the era of politics [*zama za siasa*, i.e., from the 1950s to independence] (Othman and Mlimuka 1990, Shivji 2008). Three racial identities, namely Arabs, Africans and Shirazis were highly mobilized and were predominantly associated with specific parties. Indians, on their part, remained largely ambivalent as most of them chose not to participate in active party politics fearing that they could be considered as a non-indigenous racial group and hence could face reprisals by the more locally based racial groups, something which could jeopardize their well-established commercial interests on the islands. A wide range of interrelated factors including social classes, racial/ethnic cleavages and regional differences, and particularly between Unguja and Pemba were at play and had a direct bearing with the degree of society polarization.

Unlike most scholars (e.g., Lofchie 1965, Mrina and Matoke 1980) who view competing nationalist outlooks in Zanzibar as an ethnic or rather racial contest pitting Arabs versus Africans, some scholars (e.g., Shivji 2008), view the contest as one pitting Zanzibari *versus* African [black] nationalism. The latter perspective in essence challenges the conventional wisdom to which most politicians and scholars subscribe, particularly those from the Mainland. Shivji (2008:9) correctly in my view, argues that “if Zanzibari nationalism was rooted in culture, African nationalism was rooted in race.” In this case, therefore, the argument of African majority versus Arab minority is extremely shaky. While the Arabs could be considered as a racial minority, Africans did not constitute an absolute majority in any sense for purposes of political mobilization and affiliation. Hypothetically, if Africans really constituted an absolute majority, as it is claimed in the official discourse, the revolution would most probably produce a truly legitimate government for the “majority” Africans and the Arab minority having been toppled, disposed and forced to flee the country en masse, that could most probably bring once and for all an end to the Arab rule; and Arabs would not be in a position to reorganize themselves against the majority African rule. The main argument, therefore, ought to be structured in terms of political divisions between almost equal two sections of society. Admittedly, racial

and ethnic divisions have had role to play. But the divisions, to a large extent, were cemented by ideological underpinnings particularly relating to the concept of nationalism and citizenship rather than racial identities.

With a review of diverse sources on Zanzibar nationalism one may also come up with an interpretation which views the bitter pre-and post independence conflict as a contest between Afro-centric and Arabocentric outlooks of nationalism (Bennett 1978). There are evidently prejudicial attitudes among Zanzibaris of various ethnic groups on the issue of national identity, citizenship and patriotism. This state of affairs, is among other factors, an outcome of the failure of the Zanzibar intellectuals and politicians during the struggle for independence to forge an all embracing caveat of the notion of citizenship, which was definitely a major challenge in such a divided society. The Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) failed to transcend its perceived inclination of Arabocentric civilization so did the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) which also failed to transcend its openly declared Afrocentric view of the government by the African majority versus Arab minority rule. The other party, the Zanzibar and Pemba Peoples' Party (ZPPP) was also caught in between. Suspicious of both Arabocentric and Afrocentric [black African] view of nationalism, i.e., 'black' African is the son of the soil, ZPPP found itself sandwiched by the two major political currents of the day and ended up being more or less ambivalent. The split that occurred within Afro-Shirazi Party in 1969 leading to the founding of ZPPP by a splinter group was to some extent influenced by the competing notions of nationalism and citizenship. Whereas the African faction was in favour of Afrocentrism [black African nationalism] with considerable influence from the mainland, the Shirazi faction, being proud of their cultural heritage and claimed indigeneity to the land was quite suspicious of the African faction within the party, that the latter would undermine the national cultural and religious identity of the islands due to their strong ties with the predominantly Christian mainland (Bakari 2001:57).

Immediately after independence, the ZNP/ZPPP coalition government adopted a policy of indigenization (or rather Zanzibarization) of the police force. This policy could be interpreted as discriminatory. Some 270 men (90 from Tanganyika, and the rest from other mainland territories) were to be affected. They were relieved of their duties without proper compensation (Sullivan 1964). This was interpreted not as a move to unify the force and make it multi-ethnic or multiracial but rather it was viewed as a form of

discrimination against Zanzibaris of mainland origin. Although it is difficult to prove that the newly elected government was in favour of Zanzibaris of Arab origin at the expense of other ethnic or racial groups, the perception that Zanzibaris of mainland origin were viewed with some suspicion was quite apparent.

Nationalism and citizenship

Whereas there has been no controversy in the other East African countries regarding the ethnic identity of their nations, that has become an issue in Zanzibar during the colonial and post colonial era. In pre-colonial Zanzibar, (before the advent of the Omani Arabs, that is, before the 16th century), the local dynasties were considered as Shirazi dynasties – already an inclusive concept of identity for nationalism. There was no serious contest between members of different ethnic or racial identities – racial and ethnic relations were by and large harmonious. Apparently, there was no serious attempt by any racial or ethnic grouping to superimpose its position or to acquire a hegemonic status over the others (Middleton 1992).

During the colonial era, the notion of citizenship was not yet developed as there were not citizens but subjects. Zanzibar was a British protectorate but the subjects were considered as subjects of the Sultan of Zanzibar. In spite of the fact that they were not citizens as such, in terms being entitled to all rights of citizenship, but there was a form of legal identification to at least identify Zanzibaris from non-Zanzibaris. According to the Nationality Decree of 1911, Zanzibaris were of three categories. The law provided that:

- a) A child born in Zanzibar or otherwise whose father was born in Zanzibar shall be the subject of the Sultan by birth;
- b) A child born in Zanzibar by unknown parents or whose nationality is not known shall be the subject of the Sultan;
- c) A child born in Zanzibar by a father who is a foreign national born in Zanzibar shall be the subject of the Sultan (Clause No. 3 of Nationality Decree, No 12/1911).

According to that law, any person born in Zanzibar could within three years from the end of his childhood demand a nationality status to be considered as a Zanzibari (ibid, clause 4). Besides, the law provided that any person residing in Zanzibar for three consecutive years or a Zanzibari resident for five years could be registered as a Zanzibari by application (ibid, clause 5 (1)). As for women the law stated that a woman who is not a Zanzibari national if

married to a Zanzibari shall be a Zanzibari as well, but a Zanzibari woman married to a foreign national shall lose her Zanzibari nationality (ibid, clause 6).

In 1952, another decree on nationality was enacted. Under this decree, like under the earlier one, Zanzibar's residents were considered as subjects of the Sultan. Again, three categories of nationals were specified, namely: nationality by birth, nationality by inheritance, and nationality by adoption (application). Nationality by birth applied to any person born before or after December 27, 1952 in the Sultan dominion (Clause 3 of Nationality Decree, Chap. 39). Nationality by inheritance applied to any person born before or after December 27, 1952 outside the Sultan's dominion provided that his/her father is a Zanzibari when he/she was born; the provision further stated that if the father of such a person is a Zanzibari by inheritance such a person would not be a Zanzibar until his/her birth had been registered according to the Registration of Births and Deaths Decree within a period of 12 months from the day his/her birth (Clause 4 of Nationality Decree, Chap. 39).

As regards, nationality by application (adoption), the law was explicit that any foreign national was eligible to apply and become a Zanzibari national after meeting the laid down requirements, some of which being residing in Zanzibar for the period of 12 months after the adoption of this decree and be of good conduct and some knowledge of languages especially Swahili, English or Arabic.

The bottom line in both 1911 and 1952 Nationality Decrees was that residence was considered as nationality and for that reason, all Zanzibar residents were not only subjects of his Highness (the Sultan), but were also considered as Zanzibari nationals. In order to effectively implement the Nationality Decree, the Registration of Persons Decree of 1954 was passed which made it mandatory for every Zanzibari who had reached 16 years to be registered and be given a special identity card (Clause 6(3) of Nationality Decree Chap. 42) and failure to register was a criminal offence under the law (Clause 6(4)). Besides, the law provided that a person who would fail to register him/herself in accordance with the law would be considered to have denied his/her Zanzibari nationality and would therefore be order to the leave the country.

Under the 1963 Zanzibar Constitution, the same legal instruments on Zanzibar nationality were in force, with the exception that the Constitution entailed the basic principles of human and citizens' rights which were not provided in the earlier legislation. Following the creation of the Union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1964, Zanzibar and Tanganyika lost their nationality status and citizenship became one of the Union issues.

In 1985, the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar enacted the Zanzibari Act No. 5 of 1985. Basically, this law clarifies the conditions under which a Tanzanian citizen may become a Zanzibari. Under this law (Section 3 of Act No. 5 of 1985), a Zanzibari is defined as:

- a) A person who is a Tanzania national, who has been residing in Zanzibar before January 12, 1964;
- b) A person who from April 26, 1964 has been a Tanzanian national and has been born in Zanzibar will be a Zanzibari if both of his parents, or his father or mother is a Zanzibari;
- c) A person who is a Tanzanian national and who before April 26, 1964 was a Zanzibari shall be a Zanzibari provided that he has not lost his qualifications as a Tanzanian national.

Under this Act, therefore any person with the above stated qualifications shall be a Zanzibari. Besides, Section 4 of the Act provides that any person who is a Tanzanian national who has been residing in Zanzibar for ten years and who intends to continue residing in Zanzibar may be a Zanzibari by application.

In principle, the colonial degrees on nationality and post-revolution legislation are not discriminatory on the basis of one's racial or ethnic origin. The main qualifications for one to enjoy a nationality status (before the revolution) and residential status (after the revolution) have been on the basis of birth and residential requirements of having resided in Zanzibar for a specified period of time. Since 1964 following the union with Tanganyika, there has been a debate in Zanzibar over whether a "Zanzibari" refers to a sub-national (territorial) identity or simply a residential status.⁸

Following the introduction of multipartism in 1992, the issue of Zanzibariness whether as a territorial identity or simply a residential status

has re-emerged with great sensitivity for it is linked with political rights including the right to be registered as a voter for Zanzibar elections. For example, the five years (from 1995 to 2000) and the currently 36 months residential requirement in Zanzibar has led to the disenfranchisement of quite a large fraction of Zanzibaris who are not permanent residents of Zanzibar, including those based on the Mainland. Consequently, there has been a persistent claim by certain sections of Zanzibaris that the existing laws on citizenship in Tanzania and the electoral laws which define who is eligible to vote and be voted for in Zanzibar are exclusionary as they deny quite a substantial number of Zanzibaris including those based on the Mainland their political rights to determine the governance affairs of the Zanzibar Islands.

In East Africa, therefore, the Zanzibar problem relating to national identity and citizenship is unique. There are evidently minority groups in all East African countries but these have not posed any formidable challenge on national identities of those countries. The 'African' identity has not been challenged in Tanzania Mainland, Kenya, Uganda or Rwanda and Burundi. In Zanzibar, however, the 'African' identity, the way it has been perceived has been under constant challenge. Whereas the post-revolution regime has been promoting the 'African' identity, the opposition forces in society have been advocating the 'Zanzibari' identity which is multiracial and multiethnic. The issue an African identity versus a Zanzibari identity has an implication on the nationalism and citizenship rights in Zanzibar and Tanzania as a whole.

One of the issues relating to citizenship and nationalism in Zanzibar is the issue of dual citizenship, a topical issue which is now debated across East Africa and beyond. To most Zanzibaris, the denial of dual citizenship is considered as sheer discrimination for a fraction of Zanzibaris who voluntarily or involuntarily fled the country after the revolution is higher than any of the East African countries. There is evidently no East African country with a stronger *diaspora* than that of Zanzibar given the unique historical experience of Zanzibar in terms of its multiracial population and mass exodus of the people after the 1964 revolution. The significance of this group is not simply in terms of numerical its strength, but essentially terms of its proportion to the total population of the country and in terms of its political articulation, organization and mobilization that have been sustained

from the 1960s to date. To deny this community citizenship rights in the case of Zanzibar could be in effect be interpreted as an act of discrimination not necessarily of a specific minority group but of a substantial fraction of the population. Their continued engagement of such people in the politics of Zanzibar in different forms, including organizing forums, carrying out some advocacy and lobbying outside the country suggests that such groups of people still have strong political affinity to their country of origin irrespective of how long they have lived outside Zanzibar or Tanzania.

Policies and institutional arrangements for discrimination

The electoral process and the politics of exclusion

The legal and institutional framework governing elections including the nature of the electoral system may either promote representation and integration among societal groups or may be one of the systematic mechanisms for political discrimination and political exclusion of certain sections in society. In Tanzania, including Zanzibar, the political transition was a transition from above, whereby basic rules of the game were not negotiated by the contending political actors. Instead, the regime under the ruling party unilaterally prepared the stage for political competition which was strikingly skewed in favour of preserving the status quo under the guise of multiparty politics (Bakari 2001:154-55). The inherited majoritarian electoral system (winner-takes-all electoral system) was left intact, independent candidacy was disallowed, a significant proportion of people were disenfranchised by restrictive legal requirements, an electoral commission was constituted on partisan considerations, and electoral constituencies were drawn arbitrarily in favour of the ruling party.

Among the legal provisions governing elections, there are some which are considered inherently discriminatory and others seem to have discriminatory effects in the course of their implementation. Among the provisions which are considered inherently discriminatory is the controversial residential requirement for one to be registered as a voter. Initially, during the 1995 and 2000 general elections, for one to be eligible to register he/she must have resided in a particular constituency for five years consecutively. Opposition leaders expressed their worries that residency requirements would lead to the disenfranchisement of mainland voters, including Zanzibaris originally from Pemba who are businesspeople scattered all over the country. It was estimated that residency requirements barred approximately 20,000 voters

from voting in the 1995 elections, including Pemban students studying on Unguja Island and on the mainland (*The East African*, 3 August 2000).

In 2001, following the signing of a reconciliation deal between CCM and CUF, the residency period was shortened to three years. In both cases, however, quite a significant proportion of the Zanzibar electorate has been denied their political right to vote. Among those who have been affected include quite a large of Zanzibaris are now based on the Mainland in search of economic opportunities given the deteriorating economic conditions in Zanzibar. There is no compromise among the contending parties on this rule. Whereas the opposition call for the enfranchisement of all Zanzibaris including those based on the mainland, the ruling party is opposed to that idea arguing that allowing Zanzibaris outside Zanzibar to vote has some logistic problems of control as parties, particularly the Civic United Front (CUF) could organize ineligible voters outside Zanzibar to their advantage. At any rate, however, such a provision has had a grave impact denying quite a significant of the otherwise eligible voters to vote in Zanzibar. Worse still, such people have been even denied the right to elect the President of Zanzibar whose constituency is the whole of Zanzibar.

The provision that for a Zanzibari to be eligible to vote he, or she must have resided in Zanzibar for 36 months consecutively sounds discriminatory although may be useful in preventing the possibility of importation of non-Zanzibaris to vote in Zanzibar. Similarly, a condition has been imposed that to get registered as a voter in Zanzibar one must have a birth certificate – this borders an outrageous requirement in the case of Zanzibar where the majority of the middle aged and old people do not have birth certificates and the procedure to get them is highly cumbersome and discriminatory. These requirements, while in one respect seem to have a good intent, in practice they seem to serve a more negative purpose of de-emfranchising and discriminating quite a significant number of the otherwise eligible voters.

Currently, there is a requirement that for one to be able to be registered in the Permanent Voter Register (PVR) he/she should possess a special residential identity card called Zan ID which is issued by the Directorate of Zan ID. However, the whole procedure to get a Zan ID has been tainted with partisan considerations. It has been reported that the provision of Zan IDs has continued to be a problem even after the statement of good will (popularly

known as *Maridhiano*) in November 2009 by President Amani Abeid Karume and the CUF Secretary General, Seif Shariff Hamad. It has been reported that scores of people were denied that right or they found it rather difficult to access such right (*MwanaHalisi*, December 16-22, 2009, TEMCO 2010).

There are other provisions which are seen by observers to have discrimination effects in the electoral system. For example, section 12 (6) (iii) of the Zanzibar Election Act No. 11 of 1984 states that government employees, employees of public institutions and international institutions have the right to register as voters and vote in the areas where they have been transferred to. By contrast, self-employed and employees in private companies or people who have shifted to other areas for residence cannot be registered as voters in their new areas of domicile. On the whole, it can hardly be disputed that either by intent and spirit or by their effects some of the provisions relating to elections are in conflict with the Constitution of Zanzibar (Article 21(1-4) as well as, among others, Article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) guarantees everyone, without distinction or discrimination, “political rights, in particular the rights to participate in elections – to vote and stand for election...”).

In the case of Zanzibar, the electoral processes and outcomes before and after independence instead of creating a firm foundation for democracy and social integration seem to have further polarized the society. Discrimination conduct and human rights violations usually reach their peak during election times and in the aftermath of almost every general election. In essence there is no environment for freedom of choice and freedom of association. There have been many victims of the electoral process ranging from those who lose their jobs or demoted to those who have been incapacitated by life injuries, those who have been forced to flee the country and those who have lost their lives. The worst incident was that of January 26/27, 2001. In the aftermath of the 2000 general elections, CUF planned to stage nationwide demonstrations on January 27th to demand a new constitution, an independent electoral commission and a rerun of the Zanzibar election. In an effort to suppress the demonstrations, on Thursday January 25th, the police arrested CUF Chair, Professor Ibrahim Lipumba, and over fifty supporters at Mbagala in Dar es Salaam. During the arrest and in police custody, the detained CUF members were beaten. The following day in Zanzibar Stonetown the police opened fire

at a Mosque at Mtendeni after Friday prayers and killed two people. On the day of demonstrations, the police violently suppressed marches in Dar es Salaam, Pemba and Unguja and the government initially reported that 23 people including one policeman were killed during the demonstrations, mainly on Pemba. A few days later, the government reported that those who had been killed were 27. In 2002, a Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Zanzibar Killings popularly known as Mbita's Commission (named after its Chair, Brigadier General Hashim Mbita), reported that 31 people were killed and 294 injured.⁹

In the aftermath of the demonstrations, over 2000 people including CUF legislators, fled Pemba for Kenya where they sought political asylum. This was the first time in Tanzania's history to produce political refugees. Scores of people were arrested. The government alleged that demonstrators attacked police posts and the security forces responded accordingly. CUF and human rights organizations claimed that security forces used excessive force to repress the demonstrations, which started out peacefully until provoked by police.

Furthermore, in the past there were other means through which the policy of discrimination was executed. For example, in the aftermath of the 1995 general elections, there was a systematic initiative by the authorities to harass perceived opponents of the regime, particularly those originating from Pemba. Some have had their houses unlawfully demolished by the authorities in an attempt to force them to return to Pemba (Bakari 2001: 261). This kind of harassment has also been reported in the aftermath of the 2005 general elections where some houses have been demolished in Tomondo in the outskirts of Zanzibar Town, the area which is predominantly inhabited by people originating from Pemba.

To be precise, the outcomes of all the previous elections have been highly contested by the opposition; and observers' reports have categorically in the case of 1995 and 2000 general elections stated that the elections did not reflect the will of the people. Even in the 2005 general election which was not blatantly disputed by election observers, serious discrepancies were pointed out which in essence would amount to discrediting the validity of the election outcomes as well. In essence, the electoral process in Zanzibar has further polarized the society and in recent years the pattern of polarization

has increasingly shifted from racial and ethnic assumed a regional dimension between the two islands of Unguja and Pemba such that are complaints, among the common complaints voiced include the fact that all the six presidents since the 1964 revolution have come from Unguja. Since 1985, there were expectations that Pemba could also produce a president, but this dream is yet to be realized.¹⁰

Political parties, elections and patterns of mobilization

In the general electoral pattern and voter behavior racial and ethnic loyalties if any are less definite as they compete with an array of other politically important loyalties, reflected in a mixed party systems and complex issue configurations. Some formally staunch ASP/CCM members defected to the opposition due to personal negative experiences of the system that was in place. There is no indication that voters have voted in favour of certain candidates because of their ethnic or racial identity. This applies to both parties. No party is known to have benefited or suffered an electoral defeat at the constituency level due to the racial or ethnic identity of its candidate. Arab candidates win in those constituencies which were formally ASP strongholds, and African or Shirazi candidates win in those constituencies which were formally ZNP or ZPPP strongholds. The political configuration within CUF is fluid enough to accommodate diverse groups and interests. It is largely a political agenda rather than racial or ethnic, or regional identities that defines the overall mission and mobilization character of the party.

As regards alternative forms of political mobilization between the two main contending political forces in Zanzibar represented by CCM and CUF, they both use conventional and non-conventional methods of political mobilization including cultural, religious and civil society avenues. In principle, both political parties carry out their normal party activities using formal and informal structures. Both parties are mass parties with elaborate structures from the centre to the grassroots. The linkage between civil society organizations and political parties in Zanzibar is not well developed yet. Due to the legacy of a single party authoritarian system and the politics of exclusion that has been in existence for decades, the civil society in Zanzibar is generally weak, although in recent years it has shown some signals of growth. Apart from the constraining political environment the law governing civil society organizations in Zanzibar and Tanzania as a whole disallows civil society organizations to engage themselves in politics particularly in

expressing their position or preference toward a particular political party. Under the prevailing political and legal environment therefore it is very difficult if not impossible for political parties to use civil society organizations as vehicles for political mobilization except in those areas which are considered as politically insensitive.

In the specific case of Zanzibar, however, the informal arrangements of party organization have been playing a very critical role in political mobilization. Since the advent of multiparty politics in 1992 *maskanis* or *vijiwe* (gossiping centers)¹¹, for instance, have emerged to become formidable informal arrangements of party socialization and mobilization to the extent that they have been widely recognized and patronized by the top leadership of both political parties, although they have not been integrated into the formal party structure (Mmuya 2003, Bakari 2001).

Relatedly, in the politics of Zanzibar from the time of nationalist struggles to date, the elders have been quite a significant force in political socialization and mobilization. Even before the advent of multiparty politics, for example, during the underground political resistance championed by those who had been purged from the ruling party in 1988, the elders played an important role in sustaining political resistance and discrediting the regime. Under a situation of communal politics and wide political polarization the elders from both sides of the political spectrum are informally used for purposes of political articulation, socialization and mobilization given the strategic historical position and social status in their respective political groups.

In addition to the *maskani* phenomenon, and the elders, religious institutions have also been used for not only religious and cultural socialization and mobilization but for political articulation and mobilization as well. Just like civil society organizations, legally, religious institutions are also not allowed to engage in politics. In practice, however, religious institutions in Zanzibar, including mosques have been used for political socialization, articulation and mobilization. Mosques, for example, particularly due to their speeches during Friday prayers can be categorized in terms of their stance towards the regime. There are mosques which are known for being critical of the regime such as Kikwajuni Mosque, which was formally under Sheikh Nassor Bachu, one of the prominent religious leaders of the Islamic reformist movement in Zanzibar, and Mchangani Mosque under Sheikh Ally Hemed Jabir. Both

mosques are located in Zanzibar Town. On the other side, there are also mosques which are known for their pro-establishment stance such as Malindi Mosque, also in Zanzibar Town. The situation is similar in Pemba, but since Pemba is predominantly in the opposition, there are fewer mosques which could be considered as pro-regime mosques.

Apart from the mosques, some religious institutions in some ways have been associated with preaching with effects on political articulation and mobilization. The Association for Islamic Mobilization and Propagation – Zanzibar (UAMSHO), for example which was established in 1998 has assumed quite a high profile in its stance against the regime and has been critical of the government of the day in a number of policy issues, including tourism policy. The government on its part by law prohibits preaching or distributing material that might be considered inflammatory or represent a threat to public order. The government occasionally denies permission to religious institutions seeking to hold demonstrations if there is a perceived likelihood that the gathering could lead to confrontation or ignite religious tensions. Relatedly, the law imposes fines and prison sentences on political parties that campaign in houses of worship or educational facilities. However, the enforcement of this law has been a problem.

Whereas the opposition camp and the politically marginalized groups may enjoy the support of some religious institutions, the ruling party and the government of the day have also a set of religious institutions in their service. According to the Mufti Law of Zanzibar (2001), for example, the president of Zanzibar is authorized to appoint an Islamic leader, or *mufti*¹², to serve as a public employee of the Zanzibar government. The *mufti* has the authority to approve or deny the registration of Islamic societies and supervise mosques. Under this law, the secular government is empowered to supervise and coordinate all Muslim activities. That said, what follows therefore, is that those groups that have been discriminated, marginalized and excluded in the political process as represented by opposition parties, some civil organizations and some religious institutions, on the other hand, and the ruling party and the government of the day, on the other, are constantly fighting for the control of the religious space due to its potential strategic position in political articulation and mobilization.

Whereas in principle and in reality politics permeates all domains and is practiced using both formal and informal channels, conventional and unconventional methods, secular and religious institutions, the use of unconventional channels and methods may have a potential for eroding a civic sense of duty in politics. This trend, if not properly directed and managed may have a negative impact on the political discourse as may gradually degenerate and lead to parochial communal politics, an outcome which does not sit well with national integration agenda and democratic politics.

Discrimination in public employment

Discrimination in public employment and in accessing public resources and opportunities has been one of the common strategies applied by the Zanzibar Revolutionary Government. This strategy can be traced from the early days of the revolution. The extent of application of this strategy, however, has been fluctuating over time. It was applied extensively immediately after the revolution in the name of safeguarding it. All Zanzibaris who were perceived to be enemies or potential enemies of the revolution were the target of this strategy/policy. Due to stereotyping, the victims and potential victims were many. The list included people originating from Pemba, former members of ZNP and ZPPP, Zanzibaris of Arab and Asian origin and Comorians. During the second phase government under Aboud Jumbe (1972-1984) there was an attempt to reduce discrimination on the basis of one's origin. The policy was also widely applied during the one-year interim presidency of Ali Hassan Mwinyi in 1984/1985. Since the political crisis of 1988, however, which culminated in the expulsion from the party and government of Seif Shariff Hamad and his associates, the discrimination policy has been widely applied against perceived opponents of the regime (Bakari 2001).

In its June 2008 report in Parliament delivered by Hon. Shoka K. Juma, CUF showed with statistics the scale of discrimination in almost all key positions in the Zanzibar government (see Table 1). For example, all the top five leaders of the government are from Unguja. These are the President, Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister, Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Chief Justice. Besides, out of 17 ministers only one comes from Pemba and she is a minister without portfolio. Similarly out of 6 Deputy Ministers, there is only one from Pemba. Out of 15 Principal Secretaries only two are from Pemba and out of 12 Deputy Principal Secretaries none is from

Pemba. Again, out of 102 directors, managers, and commissioners only 17 are from Pemba.

Table 1: Government Positions: Unguja vs. Pemba

Government positions	Unguja	Pemba	Total
Cabinet ministers	14	1	15
Deputy ministers	5	1	6
Permanent Secretaries	13	2	15
Deputy Permanent secretaries	12	0	12
Regional Commissioners	4	1	5
District Commissioners	7	3	10
Special Forces Commanders	5	0	5
Police Commanders	18	0	18
Heads of government departments	87	13	100
Total	165 (88.7%)	21 (11.3%)	186 (100%)

Source: Parliamentary Debates, Parliament of Tanzania, Speech by Hon. Shoka K. Juma (CUF MP), Dodoma, June 25, 2008.

This pattern is not only visible in political and civil service positions but also in the military and quasi military positions of the Zanzibar government. For example, all Heads of the Zanzibar Government Brigades (Special Brigades) namely Volunteers, Anti-Smuggling Squad (Naval Force), Prisons, and the Fire Brigade are from Unguja. This discrimination in the public service equally applies to positions in the Union Government. For example, among the senior police officers in Zanzibar which include the Commissioner, 5 Regional Police Commanders, and 10 District Police Commanders, nobody comes from Pemba.

Whereas discrimination against certain sections of the people in Zanzibar could be observed in most public institutions, the situation is so conspicuous in defense and security establishments both of the Union government and the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar. This tradition has a long history right from the early days of the revolution. Zanzibaris of Pemba, Arab, Asian and Comorian origins were not trusted by the authorities. They were generally considered to be against the ideology of 'African' majority rule or

'African' aristocracy, i.e., they were considered as anti-revolutionary forces in society. In 1972, for example, following the death of the first President of Zanzibar, Abeid Amani Karume, at a party meeting in Pemba it was explicitly stated that Zanzibaris of Arab origins, Indians and Asians should never be recruited in the military (Bakari 2001). Although this has not been officially stated particularly since the 1980s, the behavioral part of it seems to be still in existence. Although with time one could observe some relaxation, particularly with respect to Arab half-cast Zanzibaris, the general attitude among Zanzibaris of Arab and Asian origins has been to avoid seeking employment in security and defense establishments for fear that they may not be acceptable by the authorities and that should they join these establishments, they will not have any prospects of promotion or career advancement for they are viewed as intruders and outsiders in those institutions.

The Zanzibar Constitution of 1984, Article 21 (2) clearly outlaws discrimination. But there is convincing evidence indicating that the Zanzibar government (usually behaviorally and sometimes by policy implications) discriminates Zanzibaris on the basis of their political affinity as well as color and where they come from. Those who are followers, let alone leaders of opposition parties find it very difficult to get entry into the public service. Generally, it is rare for people perceived to support opposition parties and those originating from Pemba to be given high positions in the government. Immediately after the 1995 general election, for example, the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar established a special security unit in the President's Office called the General Security Office (GSO) with a special mandate to carry out political screening of employees and applicants of public employment. Related to that, there are also plausible claims that Zanzibaris of Arab, Indian and Comorian origins are usually not employed in the security and defense forces including in the Zanzibar special units (LHRC 2006).

The disparity in public employment between Unguja and Pemba and among the various racial and ethnic groupings is quite evident. The worst situation is observable in the recruitment within the defense and security establishments. On the whole, according to the estimates by CUF, about 83 percent of senior government leaders are from Unguja and only 17 percent are from Pemba. Pemba has about 40 percent of the total population. This

disparity in the allocation of senior positions in the Zanzibar government is also evident in the Union government, but in relative terms a larger proportion of people originating from Pemba are represented in the Union government. Currently, for example, the Vice President of the United Republic and two Deputy Ministers are from Pemba.

There is a very high rate of emigration from Pemba to Unguja, the Mainland and other parts of the world due to economic hardships and political repression. It is important to underline the fact that this glaring disparity in the allocation of government posts is not due to an imbalance in educational achievements between the two islands. Although hard data on the differences in educational achievement between the two islands are not available, it is widely believed that people originating from Pemba constitute a greater proportion of the people with higher education. Thus, it is fair to consider this disparity as outright political discrimination used as a strategy aimed at rewarding supporters and sanctioning both real and perceived opponents of the regime.

Apart from rewarding supporters and sanctioning opponents through the allocation of government posts, the allocation of public resources through the annual budget constitutes another device for implementing the discrimination policy. During the seven years of Karume's administration Unguja's roads have taken up about 83 percent of the budgeted funds while Pemba roads have received only 17 percent of the funds. According to CUF sources, the current demand for road construction in Pemba is 320 km whereas in Unguja it is only 87 km (Hansard, URT Parliament, June 25, 2008). Given the fact that this pattern is observable in most of the sectors in development expenditure, it could be roughly estimated that the total development expenditure allocated to Pemba is less than one-third of the annual budget.

As an illustration of the gravity of polarization between the two islands, following the failure of reconciliation talks for the third accord in May 2008 a group 12 elders from Pemba presented their petition for the creation of a State of Pemba to the UN Secretary General through the UN Country Director, Mr. Oscar Oscar Fernandez-Taranco. The elders were arrested and released a few days later. Connected to that, four members of the House of Representatives were also summoned to a police station for questioning in

what was considered by the authorities as treason (*The Citizen*, 11 June, 2008). In the following year there was also a formal threat by CUF leaders to impeach the President of Zanzibar on the grounds of applying an outright discrimination policy against one side of Zanzibar (Pemba). Apparently, this was a mere threat or simply a public relations exercise as it would not have been possible for the motion to be adopted in the House of Representatives where CUF is in the minority, with only 25 members against CCM's 52.

Given the severity of the problem of discrimination in public employment, far reaching institutional reforms are needed in Zanzibar. Good intentions, Horowitz observes, "will not necessarily be enough to establish points of contact and sympathy among elites whose backgrounds do not mesh" (Horowitz 1985: 565). For example, in case an agreement is reached that recruitment in the public service should strictly be on meritocracy, the ruling party cadres and followers may stand to lose, for they have been beneficiaries of a patronage system as a way of rewarding their party supporters and punishing their opponents. There is no denying the fact that part of the power they possess accrues from a patronage system. At the moment, for example, there is a very large number of the youth who have been employed in the Zanzibar special brigades who are in turn used to vote for the ruling party and carry out violent attacks during election times. On the other hand, if meritocracy is adopted the group belonging to the opposition camp stands to gain for there is quite a large number of the educated people and professionals in this group who have not been absorbed by the public sector. These are among the areas where the competing parties seem to have divergent interests.

Development disparity and poverty between Unguja and Pemba

Historically, Pemba has been on the periphery of political circles even during colonial times when Unguja used to be the headquarters of both Arab and British administrations. Separationist demands are made due to recurrent claims of marginalization of Pemba in terms of government positions and resource allocation. As table 1 shows, only 11 percent of senior civil servants hail from Pemba. Pemba residents use these figures as evidence of their exclusion from the governing process.

Moreover, people of Pemba strongly assert that the CCM government has not been keen to bring development in Pemba. Due to lack of disaggregated

data on government funds allocation in Unguja and Pemba, it has been difficult to determine the validity of this persistent claim. However, according to the Household Budget Survey (2004/05), 61 percent of households in Pemba live below basic needs poverty line compared to 42 percent in Unguja (see table 2). Indeed, the poorest district in Zanzibar with the highest number of people living below the basic needs poverty line is Micheweni (74 percent) in Pemba.

Table 2: Poverty Status from Household Budget Survey (HBS): Zanzibar

	1991/92 HBS			2004/5 HBS		
	Unguja	Pemba	Zanzibar	Unguja	Pemba	Zanzibar
People living below basic needs poverty line (%)	59	64	61	42	61	49

Source: Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar (2007) *Zanzibar Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty, Progress Report*, p 16.

However, a sketch of a sample of policies and associated practices could provide a clue of the actual situation on the ground. According to available statistics, social services and infrastructure are generally poor in Zanzibar, but the situation in Pemba is more pathetic than in Unguja (Chachage, et. al., 2006). Generally, the degree of poverty is higher in Pemba than in Unguja. The following section shows how centralization of power facilitates discrimination and political exclusion and the widening of differences between the two islands.

Centralization of power and the politics of discrimination

A policy decision of whether to centralize or decentralize power in a polity is not simply an administrative or managerial decision seeking to maximize efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of public policy. Rather, it is first and foremost, a political decision relating to the exercise of power and control over resources. Centralization of power at the expense of local government system or regional autonomy is one of the characteristic features of undemocratic regimes and those regimes that tend to discriminate certain sections of the people particularly if those people are geographically concentrated in specific areas. Overcentralization of power “facilitates abuse of power, corruption, erosion of democratic institutions and government

accountability” (Lawoti 2007:x). In addition to that, centralization may also significantly contribute to ethnic exclusion and conflicts.

Whereas the government of the United Republic of Tanzania has undertaken remarkable reforms of the local government system with the aim of devolving power to the grassroots, the Zanzibar government has been lagging behind in undertaking local government reforms or devolving substantial power to the people in the regions, districts and sub-district levels up to the village levels. An argument could probably be made to the effect that given the small size of the polity in Zanzibar, there is no need for decentralization and devolution of administrative power to the lower units - that the entire Zanzibar polity could be effectively administered from the centre in Zanzibar Town. But, if democracy and good governance, means among other things, popular participation both directly and through representatives in decision-making and development processes, then any argument against decentralization, devolution of power and local government system is likely to be self-defeating regardless of the size of the polity in question.

In the case of Zanzibar, it is plausible to assume that the sluggishness of the process of devolution of power to the grassroots has been caused by the endemic political hostilities between the two main rival political parties. The level of decentralization of administrative authority responsibilities is strikingly low. The village executive officer (*sheha*) who is actually a representative of the Central Government is an appointee of the Regional Commissioner, who is an appointee of the President. As a result of persistent political conflicts, the level of cooperation of the people in the grassroots in decision-making and development activities has been generally very low. At any rate, the ambiguous local governance status and decentralization power ought to be resolved in Zanzibar in order to promote democratization and good governance at administrative levels from the centre to the grassroots.

Conclusion

It has been observed in this paper that the Zanzibar society has been polarized as a result of among other things different outlooks on nationalism and citizenship. The post-revolution regime under the Union arrangement sought to promote African [i.e., black African] nationalism instead of broad [multiracial] Zanzibari nationalism. History has proved that the notion of an

African majority rule versus an Arab minority rule in post-revolution Zanzibar was an erroneous interpretation of the Zanzibar political discourse since politically the society has continued to be divided almost along the middle with two political communities which are now largely represented by the two main rival political parties. Given the nature of the Zanzibar society demographically, genuine nationalism cannot be black African, Shirazi or Arab nationalism. Genuine nationalism ought to be inclusive and representative of all the society's population segments and cultural patterns. The challenge ahead therefore is to promote Zanzibari territorial nationalism as opposed to racial, ethnic or regional based nationalism.

In the case of Zanzibar, it has not been possible in this paper to delineate a specific ethnic or racial minority for in-depth interrogation on how it has been discriminated, marginalized and excluded in the political process for the whole issue is not about a contest between a majority and a minority group or groups, but rather political polarization involving two numerically almost equal political camps. The group that has been a victim of discrimination, marginalization and political exclusion, cuts across racial, ethnic and regional boundaries. Development in Zanzibar as a whole has evidently been negatively affected; but in relative terms, Pemba Island has generally suffered more than Unguja. People of Pemba, Arab, Asian, and Comorian origins have also been victims of the politics of discrimination. Besides, the marginalized groups, particularly women, youth and the elders within the marginalized political community have immensely suffered as a result of perpetration of the politics of discrimination and exclusion.

A wide range of policies and institutional arrangements have facilitated discrimination, marginalization and political exclusion of certain segments of the society. These include the electoral system based on majoritarian principles of winner-takes-all system, centralization of power (at the centre at the expense of local governance and regional autonomy), and employment in the public service and in the defense and security establishments. Currently, however, there seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel following the new reconciliation initiative headed by the President of Zanzibar, Amani Abeid Karume and the CUF Secretary General, Seif Shariff Hamad. In January 2010, a bill was passed by the House of Representatives for the creation of a government of national unity after the general election of October 2010. The election has been held, and the government of national

unity has been created. The ruling party (CCM) still retains the presidency, but the first vice-president (non-executive) comes from the main opposition party (CUF). If this latest initiative becomes successful, Zanzibar will remarkably change its historical course of discrimination and political exclusion on the basis of racial, ethnic, regional and political affiliation and will open up new avenues for political dispensation, representation and empowerment of the citizenry including the marginalized groups such as women and the youth, and the elderly across the political spectrum in the Zanzibar political landscape.

Notes

1. The Zanzibar Government has all the three arms of government, namely the Executive (under the President of Zanzibar) the Legislature (House of Representatives) and the Judiciary up to the High Court. The Court of Appeal was formally the East African Court of Appeal and following the collapse of the EAC, it became a Union matter in 1977. A union with two governments [instead of a unitary state or a clear federal structure with three governments] was favoured by the founders apparently due to two main reasons. One, due the fear under a unitary state of one government the smaller partner (Zanzibar) could loose its historical identity and be completely swallowed by the bigger partner (Tanganyika). Two, it was assumed that it would be too costly to run three governments (Nyerere, Uongozi Wetu, 15).
2. Based on the projection of 2002 census which was provided by the National Bureau of Statistics Office.
3. The figures were quoted from the 1948 census. It is important to note that the demographic composition has remarkably changed as a result of the 1964 Revolution in Zanzibar. Quite a significant number of people (mostly Arabs, Indians and people originating from Pemba) left the islands and settled elsewhere either on the Mainland or overseas and people from the Mainland continued to flock into Zanzibar.
4. In the post-revolution era, the new rulers who claimed to have deposed an Arab aristocracy/oligarchy to institute a majority rule constituted another aristocracy, namely "African aristocracy".

5. Waswahili basically refers to the people along the coast of East Africa whose dominant culture is Islamic and Swahili language.
6. Coutts, Methods of Choosing Unofficial Members.
7. *ibid.*, Clause 8.
8. The controversy over whether Zanzibar is a country or not (*Zanzibar ni nchi au si nchi*) arose in Parliament in July 2008 following the remark by the Prime Minister Mizengo Pinda that “Zanzibar is not a country” since according to the URT Constitution, it is part of the United Republic of Tanzania. This kind of controversy has always been there as evidenced by the landmark case before the Court of Appeal (Criminal Application No. 8 of 2000) between SMZ v. Machano Khamis Ali & 17 Others. The Court of Appeal revised the decision of the High Court of Zanzibar (Case No. 7 of 1999) on the argument that treason could not be committed against a non-sovereign entity, namely Zanzibar. It was held that Zanzibar, just like its partner, Tanganyika, is neither a state nor is it sovereign. The state and sovereign is the United Republic of Tanzania.
9. Mbita’s Commission. CUF sources, however, disputed the findings of the Commission claiming that those killed were more than 46 people (CUF, 6).
10. In 1985, Seif Shariff Hamad (who was then the Chief Minister of the Zanzibar Government and a very popular political figure among the people) contested party nomination for a presidential candidate with Idris Abdul Wakil, who was the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Hamad was defeated by a narrow margin in what was viewed by analysts as a bitter contest between liberators (hardliners) and frontliners (reformers).
11. Traditionally, Zanzibaris have a custom of spending their evening time, usually after Magharib prayers gossiping and drinking coffee at special centers called *barazas*. In the advent of multipartism in 1992 the name *barza* was replaced by the name *maskani*. This informal institution which has been traditionally predominantly social in nature was now transformed to be predominantly political and exclusive in that each *maskani* or barza was affiliated to a specific political party.
12. A *Mufti* is an Islamic Scholar who is an interpreter or expounder of Islamic law (*Sharia*).

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