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The Role of International Election Observers on National Politics

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"The important thing to remember is that the group in power retained power peacefully, and this sends a very positive and hopeful message about the future of the country's political stability ..." (An Election Observer).

Introduction

Election monitoring and observation today forms an important as well as seemingly inevitable part of an electoral process in Third World countries. This is a result of the "recent wave of democratisation and spread of political pluralism in these countries, which has also led to a significant increase in the number of organisations sponsoring election observation missions" (IDEA 1995: 7). Election observation, which was initially viewed as a component of 'democracy in transition' from single party and military rule to political pluralism [or in the ending of a long term of conflict], continues even after elections are held for the first time. Continuation of this practice is justified on the basis that these states are "weak and transitory" democracies which need to be supported (Rothstein 1991: 39). Elections in Africa, as elsewhere in the Third World, have attracted both local and international observers and monitors. In Tanzania, for example, both international observers as well as local monitors were involved with the 1995 and 2000 general elections, including Zanzibar's elections.

The 2000 general elections in mainland Tanzania (for union president, members of parliament and councillors) and Zanzibar (for president of Zanzibar, representatives and councillors) were the second multiparty elections since 1995. Like the 1995 Union and Zanzibar general elections, a number of international groups participated as observers. They included IFES, the United Nations (UN) Observer Group, the European Union (EU) Observer Group, the Commonwealth Observer Group, the South African Development

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Community (SADC) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The Tanzania Election Monitoring Committee (TEMCO) and the Zanzibar Election Monitoring Group (ZEMOG) were the major local monitors/observers in the 1995 elections. There were other groups monitoring the 1995 elections, including religious groups and civil society organisations. With the exception of ZEMOG, most of these monitors and observer groups were active during the 2000 elections.

Although their role in elections has significantly increased, election observers continue to attract mixed feelings from different actors in the electoral process. Observers attract suspicion, usually from governments and incumbents, and in most cases garner positive feelings, including confidence, from the opposition. Some governments in Africa, however, have questioned their role although continuing to invite and accredit local as well as international observer groups. Monitors and observers usually issue statements during and after the electoral process. These statements have more often than not sent mixed signals instigating different reactions from various actors in an electoral process. In fact, their statements and after voting evaluations have led to different conflicting conclusions about elections. Besides the implications of their presence, the statements they issue on elections have significant impacts on the political process of a country. For example, the positions taken by observers' and monitors' on "free and fairness" of the 1995 general elections in Tanzania and Zanzibar had a lot of impact on political events in Zanzibar, lasting for the entire five years of Dr. Salim Amour's Presidency. They contributed significantly to the way elections were conducted in mainland Tanzania in 2000.

In due regard, questions arise. What is the role of observers in elections? What indicators guide their assessment of whether the electoral process was free and fair? The verdict is still open-ended and disagreement looms large. As such, some of the observer groups just end up exposing negative and positive aspects of elections leaving others to draw their own conclusion (Carothers, 1997: 23). Some observer groups declare that the elections are free and fair; while others indicate degrees of irregularities and manipulation (IDEA, 1995: 15). Sometimes, conclusions arrived at by different observer groups are contentious and conflictual.

Drawing upon experiences from the October 2000 general elections in Tanzania (for the Union president, parliamentarians and councillors) and the Zanzibar elections (for Zanzibar president, representatives, and councillors), this article explores the role of election monitors and observers, including the implications of their activities, on the political process of a country. Special attention is paid to the statements election observers and monitors issue during or after elections. The argument advanced in this article is that although observers and monitors have a common purpose of ensuring that elections are free and fair, which they cannot absolutely guarantee, their positions are guided by factors other than the electoral process itself. This is because the interests of different observer groups are not one and the same. Their positions generate different reactions from national and international actors ensuring an impact on the political process of a concerned country.

The Historical Context of Election Monitoring and Observation

Conceptually, international election observers and local monitors are often treated as being one and the same thing, except the former are foreign and the latter are local. The National Electoral Commission (NEC) of Tanzania, for example, defines local observers as those who observe "the various stages of the electoral process by local organizations duly recognized for that purpose". In terms of function, the same definition applies for international observers except that it constitutes international organizations and foreign governments (NEC, 2000: 131). Both local as well as international observers and monitors observe, verify and evaluate the election authority and its impartiality including the legality of decisions taken by organs competent in the domain of electoral disputes (TEMCO, 1997: 267).

Thus, functions for both domestic and international election observers are fundamentally the same. However, from practices local monitors differ from international observers in two important ways. First, there is the area or number of constituencies covered. Second is the number of election stages observed. Local observers cover a larger area than international observers and thus, have more personnel in the field than international observers. In regard to stages of the electoral process, the Tanzanian experience shows that local monitors cover almost the whole electoral process whereas international observers cover a smaller part of the process usually

focusing on the polling day. Being local, starting early and covering a larger area gives an advantage to local monitors in making a fair and comprehensive election evaluation.

Election observation and monitoring has registered striking developments in the 1990s. While its operations has been greatly pronounced in Africa, international election monitoring has also extended to Central America, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and, to a lesser extent, the Middle East (Anglian, 1997; ZEMOG, 1995: 103; Kaiser, 1997: 29). The emergence and growth of the international election monitoring is premised on what Anglian (1997) characterises as "...changes in the internal and external political environment...." in terms of the end of the Cold War, and the shift of the international community to issues of democratic governance and respect for human rights, including the resolution of regional conflicts through peaceful means. This also became a preoccupation of the United Nations (UN) because it persuaded its members to view democratisation as a crucial factor in political stability, social harmony and economic advancement. Internally, struggles for power and democracy informed this change in the political environment (Anglian, 1997: 2; UN, 1993: 8).

The democratisation process has been characterized by opening up the political system for multiparty politics, followed by elections. Different purposes have been attached to initial democratisation process. In some situations, democratisation and the holding of elections have been viewed as means to end conflicts and maintain peace (Rothstein, 1991: 39). In this case, former rebel groups are transformed into political parties to take part in post-conflict multiparty elections, as was the case in Mozambique and Angola. But the democratisation scene has been dominated by constitutional changes and amendments in countries which were under one-party rule. Benin, Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia are a few of many such cases. Such changes allowed for the formation of opposition parties and provided legitimacy for their participation in elections.

In situations where elections are held as a means to resolve conflicts, peace packages have typically included provisions for the process to be monitored internationally. The assumption has been that "...neutral observers could be relied upon to report objectively on alleged departures from agreed norms of electoral behaviour..."

(Anglian, 1997: 2-3). Thus, the UN has been involved in situations like this by playing different roles such as organising elections; supervising; verifying; observing; and coordinating and supporting the activities of other international observers (UN, 1993: 8).

Of all forms of UN involvement in elections, observation has become a common feature, particularly in the Third World. Observation has been conducted in situations where states have just emerged from military or single party rule. But election observation does not end with the first elections, they instead continue into subsequent elections. Thus, election observation is widely accepted as a "...means of contributing to voter confidence and assessing the legitimacy of an electoral process and its outcome..." (IDEA, 1995: 5). Although lack of trust in the electoral process and the authority administering and managing the elections is apparently dominant, there are a number of other assumptions underlying the practice of election observation/monitoring.

First, is the assumption that those in power would not like to relinquish power willingly, even after they have allowed competitive politics through multiparty elections. In such a situation, elections would be held but are unlikely to be free and fair. Thus, the presence of observers is seen as reducing the chances of a fraudulent election. Carothers (1997: 19) highlights the role of international election observers in detecting and, if possible, deterring election fraud. The notion that elections are likely not to be free and fair is given base by the nature of the adoption of a multiparty political system. In most African countries a lot of internal and external pressure was exerted on ruling parties to allow multiparty politics. Kenya is a very good example of this scenario. The Tanzanian case is somehow different because although there was an imminent internal pressure, there was no obvious external pressure for democratisation (Sundet, 1995: 7). In fact, the Tanzanian scenario and approach to acceding to a multiparty system was a pre-emptive measure taken before both donor pressure and local forces for democratisation grew in strength.

The second assumption is lack of trust. That is, important actors in the elections do not have confidence in the electoral process, particularly in the election authority administering and managing the process. In extreme cases some actors may prefer staying out of the process. In a multiparty situation, especially when there are obvious threats by opposition parties to boycott elections, monitoring

and observation become a mechanism for building confidence among participating actors - especially political parties. Monitoring and observation also guide the otherwise shaky electoral process toward its logical conclusion (Carothers, 1997: 20). One of the reasons that actors lack confidence in the system is the way the authority for administering the elections is constituted. In Tanzania, for instance, the President appoints NEC members. This has been a major source of complaints from the opposition who question the impartiality of the Commission (Sundet, 1995: 9).

The third assumption is derived from the notion that unless supported, democracy cannot grow roots in these countries. Rothstein (1991: 39) observes that policymakers in the United States were being encouraged to support democratic transitions in Africa as a way of ensuring peace and acceptance of 'western values' such as the free market. Election observation, in this sense, is seen as necessary 'technical' assistance to enhance democracy. Therefore, monitors and observers play a role of promoting the principle of democracy around the world (Carothers, 1997: 19).

The fourth assumption is based on the feelings of a regime in power and its perceptions on the role of election observers. This view holds that the West often believes that most of the regimes in power in the Third World, Africa in particular, prior to political pluralism, were illegitimate and ruled against the will of people. Thus, from the perspective of the former single-party ruling elites, multiparty elections were seen as a way for Western countries to removing such regimes from power. In due regard, election observers were suspiciously viewed as attempting to replace the old regime with a new one. According to this view of those in power, elections, according to Western observers are free and fair depending on who the winner is. If the winner is the incumbent, then elections are not free and fair. Although this is how leaders in Africa feel, actual experience in Tanzania gives a different picture. Most observers and monitors, both in 1995 and 2000, were of the view that despite problems, results were a reflection of the general will of Tanzanian people.

The role of international election observers ranges from creating confidence in the electoral process among voters and political parties, among other actors, to ensuring that "...elections were demonstrably democratic ... [with] an international seal of approval..." (Anglian, 1997: 3). When this is achieved it serves three important national purposes. First, it certifies that the process of

political transformation was free and fair. Second, it confers legitimacy on the newly elected government. Third, it bestows a badge of international respectability on the country testifying to its ability to conduct domestic elections - a matter of no small interest to the donor community (Anglian, 1997: 4). The first and second assumptions, with the benefit of the hindsight of the 1995 and 2000 elections, have a greater applicability in Tanzania.

It is indisputable that election observers have an important place in elections. As other actors in the electoral process, election observers have their roles limited to either their terms of reference as given by the sponsoring organisations, or to regulations and codes of conduct issued by national election authorities. As a result, election observers cannot prevent irregularities from happening, even if they wanted to. Likewise, election observers cannot guarantee their work will have a profound impact on the 'donor community'. Much as their reports and positions on the elections assist 'donors', collectively or bilaterally, to determine their future relations with a country, the declaration of elections as unfree and unfair does not necessarily lead to negative relations between 'donors' and a government. This suggests that although they hold a very important place in the elections, their effectiveness and relationship to 'donors' as well as governments depends on factors other than the electoral process itself.

The Political and Legal Framework of Election Observation in Tanzania

The responsibility for preparations and conduct of the Union elections rests on the National Electoral Commission (NEC). NEC was created by the Union Constitution (Article 74, Section 1), which defines its structure, the composition of its members and its powers, including its authority (Articles 74 -78). NEC, in discharging its constitutional duties, is independent and not under any obligation to follow orders or directives of any person or government department, or political party (NEC, 2000: 9). NEC also issues guidelines and codes of conduct for international election observers, as well as local election monitors. The Zanzibar Election Commission (ZEC) also performs similar functions for the Zanzibar elections. All accredited election observers and local monitors are supposed to adhere to such conditions. In Tanzania, NEC and ZEC are the sole authorities with the power to give accreditation to observers/monitors.

The guidelines given by NEC and ZEC require local monitors and international observers to be accredited by receiving a formal

invitation from the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania. Election Monitors and international observers have an obligation to respect and abide by Tanzanian laws; exercise their role with impartiality, objectivity, and independence; refrain from interfering with duties of election officials and to cooperate with election officials (NEC, 2000: 135). All election monitors and observers are required to "... report any irregularity noted in the electoral process to the National Electoral Commission or to a competent officer of the National Electoral Commission who will examine the activities reported as irregular and take corrective measures where necessary..." (NEC, 2000: 136). Copies of their final reports are to be provided to the National Electoral Commission. In addition, local and international observers must not express 'opinions' to the press on the electoral process or issue a public statement about the electoral process before election results have been officially announced; nor can they play an executive role or to act as a commission of inquiry (NEC, 2000: 136).

The code of conduct for observers and monitors in Zanzibar was issued by ZEC. It, to a great extent, is similar to the code of conduct issued by NEC. A few of the guidelines included:

1. Observer status shall be granted to an individual only upon application by the individual and subsequent approval by the Zanzibar Electoral Commission.
2. An observer shall at all times be required to adhere to General Rules of the electoral code and refrain from taking any role in the actual administration of the election process. He/she shall also be guided by the principle of impartiality and *confine himself/herself to finding facts that will assist ZEC to make informed judgements with regard to the fairness and freeness during elections.*
3. He/she shall not be allowed to perform observer activities outside the allocated constituency. The Electoral Commission will allocate observers to constituencies (ZEC 2000: 1).

Generally speaking, most observers adhered to the regulations except those which required them to refrain from issuing public statements about the electoral process. This provision is very explicit because it sets the time when observers could issue their statements. The electoral process, according to NEC, is concluded after the official announcement of election results. In the 1995 general elections, TEMCO issued a preliminary statement, just after NEC

had annulled the elections in Dar es Salaam. In the 2000 elections, especially after ZEC had annulled the elections in Zanzibar North, observers and monitors issued statements. This was in contradiction to the restriction on issuing statements before the conclusion of the electoral process. Although this happened, ZEC and NEC did not do anything against the observer groups.

It should be pointed out that there are problems with election observation. The way some observers behaved fit very well into how Carothers (1997: 22) characterised some unprofessional observer groups:

"Many of the rest are "...dabblers..." who come in for high-profile elections with short-term, poorly prepared delegations. They obtain little information of any value. Their observers often behave in embarrassingly unprofessional, patronizing ways. They deluge election commissions with requests for briefings during the most critical period of administrative preparations. *Finally, they usually make hasty post-election statements that divert attention from the more important reports issued by the organizations with more experience and a longer term presence.*" (Emphasis added).

The mode of reporting, in a sense, is supposed to help NEC and ZEC to use information gathered by monitors to improve the electoral process. This, in general, often happens in the electoral process with consultations between NEC/ZEC, the government and political parties, on one hand, and observers as well as monitors, on the other. This is important, as one observer noted, because "...we try to help both sides to ensure that the electoral process will be fair to everyone..." (Grimsley, 2001). But there are cases where monitors make statements in contravention of the code of conduct. When they are international observers, and this is usually the case, then, they are doing what Carothers (1997: 21) labelled as "election tourism". Their mission has very little to do with helping the electoral process run smoothly and fairly but instead is aimed at being the first to make the loudest voice.

Politically, environments within which observers conduct their activities send mixed signals. Politicians and parties in power suspiciously view election monitors and observers. Though this was not explicit in the 1995 general elections in Tanzania, it was very obvious in the October 2000 general elections. Just to refresh

memories, President Benjamin Mkapa said in a speech in Harare that election observers are disappointed when election results return incumbents in power. In his reading of observers' attitudes and expectations, the President remarked that elections are free and fair only when the incumbent is defeated and the opposition takes power. This remark came a few months after Mkapa was elected to his first term as President of Tanzania in 1995.

The General elections in October 2000 were different. The Tanzanian Government, including that of Zanzibar, through their presidents, made clear their positions and feelings about international election observers. President Mkapa, for example, made a remark that, "...we welcome international observers to our elections but their role should not be that of directing what should be done or teaching us how to conduct the elections..., we welcome them as observers." (The Guardian, August 17 2000). This remark was echoed by the then President of Zanzibar, Dr. Salmin Amour, who said that, "they would be allowed in but they should keep a distance..." These tones, if anything, signalled an ambivalent official attitude toward election observers, both local and international. While these remarks did not translate into the way observers were handled, they expressed the sentiments of the government in power toward election observers. In Zanzibar, where some observer groups were not allowed to operate, there were complaints from some monitors that ZEC officials were not cooperative. But again, the way observers and monitors were treated should not be the basis for judging an elections' freeness and fairness.

Observing Elections in Tanzania 1995/2000

In Tanzania, the 1995 general elections were significant in that although the country had a tradition of conducting elections after every five years since independence, these were the first elections since the multiparty political system was re-introduced in 1992 following the 8th amendment of the constitution. These elections were an important test of whether Tanzania could manage and practice pluralist competitive politics. As reports of monitors correctly observed, people were eager to participate in elections, and this was "...demonstrated by the impressive early morning voter turnout in most polling stations across the country..." (TEMCO, 1995).

The eagerness notwithstanding, the elections were also important to the outside world, especially when the political history of Tanzania is taken into consideration. Tanzania is one country in Africa, which for a long time has experienced peace and stability. Thus, the elections generated interest in different quarters. Tanzania was also ruled under a single party for a long time. The political monopoly of the ruling party CCM, ended in 1992, and the apparent unwillingness of some elements within the party to allow political pluralism created suspicion on whether or not the ruling clique would conduct free and fair elections. The situation was compounded by the fact that members of opposition parties not only challenged the constitution and electoral laws, but also questioned the impartiality of NEC and ZEC. As such, the relationship between the NEC and registered political parties was one of mistrust. This was very clearly demonstrated after the elections in 2000 when the opposition political parties called for the re-constitution of the NEC and ZEC.

Given this background, election monitoring in Tanzania became a necessity. The Tanzanian Government, acting on the advice of NEC, invited international observer groups for both the general elections (ZEMOG, 1995: 110; NEC, 2000; OAU, 2000).

Election Observers/Monitors and the Elections in 1995

In the 1995 mainland and Zanzibar general elections, local election monitors and international election observer groups issued statements with various conclusions and recommendations. Most of them issued their statements well after the electoral process was concluded. Their statements expressed disappointment and dissatisfaction with how the elections were conducted. For example, the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG), described them as "the worst we had ever seen..." But nonetheless opined that: "The outcome of the [mainland] elections fairly reflects the aspirations of a majority of Tanzanian voters..." (ZEMOG, 1995: 404). This statement came despite the fact that monitors and observers were in agreement that the elections were marred by irregularities and mismanagement. The statement of the joint donor countries in Tanzania noted that; "... there were certain aspects of the electoral process that were less than satisfactory, particularly the poor organisation of the voting procedure in Dar es Salaam and a number of other places on 29 October..." A similar tone was expressed in the statement of the European Union (EU) observer group.

"The EU noted in particular that, despite difficulties in ensuring that the electorate had the opportunity to express their choice, which required a re-run in Dar es Salaam constituencies, *the final outcome of the union elections fairly reflects the will of the Tanzanian people...*" (ZEMOG, 1995: 420).

The local monitors TEMCO did not share the opinion of international observer groups. In a statement issued on the 29th October 1995, TEMCO said that "...what happened on Sunday 29th October 1995 cannot pass as free and fair elections - at least not in Dar es Salaam and those other regions which were similarly affected..." (TEMCO, 1995). TEMCO (1995) concluded that:

"The elections on 29/10/95 were beset with a lot of administrative and logistical problems in Dar es Salaam Region as well as in many constituencies outside Dar es Salaam Region. Justification for singling out Dar es Salaam for rescheduling while letting the other regions go ahead has yet to be established by the Commission..."

TEMCO (1995) recommended that elections in all constituencies, which faced problems similar to those experienced in Dar es Salaam, be scrapped and rescheduled, and be preceded by a fresh voters' registration to ensure that nobody would be disfranchised. Other local monitors such as the Tanzania Ecumenical Elections Monitoring Programme (TEMP) held that the elections, as is the tradition of Tanzanians, were held in a peaceful and stable atmosphere, but in general were not free and fair (TEMP, 1995).

The positions held by both local and international monitors/observers for the union elections were not similar to those held about the Zanzibar elections. ZEMOG (1995: 182), who were the main local monitor group, for example, concluded in the following carefully worded position that:

"... our analysis reveals that many things did not go smoothly as such we hesitate to declare that the 1995 elections in Zanzibar to elect the president, members of the House of Representatives, and councillors were free and fair in absolute terms. However, voting in these elections occurred in a peaceful and ordered manner..."¹

Other monitor and observer groups were concerned with results. Elections in Zanzibar were generally declared unfree and unfair by international observer groups. A statement of ten nations of

Denmark, Norway, United Kingdom, the USA, Ireland, Japan, Canada, Switzerland, Belgium and Canada declared that:

"...they had found sufficient evidence to conclude that intimidation was rife during the phase leading to the elections so that people were unable to register to vote and make an informed choice. They cited biased reporting by state radio and television in Zanzibar to have been an obstacle for citizens to exercise their legal rights to vote. They also cited legal barriers, denial of the rights of assembly and of freedom of expression to have been a hindrance to them to register and vote..." (Anonymous reporter, 1995).

The elections caused a lot of concern, particularly the compilation and announcement of results. In their report issued on 22nd October 1995, the same group of countries noted that:

"The international observation team has found serious discrepancies in the compilation of the votes for the presidency ... The ZEC was made aware of these discrepancies prior to its announcement of the results. Donors are disappointed in the circumstances that the ZEC should have proceeded to declare results, and that authorities have proceeded to inaugurate the President while the outcome of the election remained unclear..." (Donors, 1995: 402).

In its final report IFES was of the view that the election results announced in Zanzibar could not be concluded as accurately reflecting the will of voters because of "...all the contradictions, uncertainty and secrecy which has surrounded the tabulation and publication of any results..." (IFES, 1995: 419).

It is interesting to note that despite various problems experienced in both elections in 1995, international observer groups were able

¹ "... uchambuzi wetu unadhihirisha kwamba mambo mengi hayakwenda sawa na kwa hivyo tunasita kuthibitisha kwamba uchaguzi wa Zanzibar wa 1995 kumchagua Rais, Wajumbe wa Baraza la Wawakilishi na Madiwani ulikuwa huru na wa haki kwa ukamilifu. Hata hivyo upigaji kura katika uchaguzi huu uliendeshwa kwa amani na utulivu" (ZEMOG, 1995: 182).

to conclude that the mainland elections was a fair reflection of the will of people and Zanzibar was not. The conclusion did not augur well for the post-election political situation in the country where the legitimacy of the Zanzibar presidency was questioned resulting into a political impasse in the isles. However, efforts to resolve the impasse did not succeed. The elections in 2000 in Zanzibar were held against this background.

The Situation in Elections 2000

Observers' reports expressed different impressions on how the electoral process was managed in the two parts of the union. The situation was said to have greatly improved in the case of the NEC and worsened on the part of ZEC. An interim TEMCO (2000) report stated the following in relation to the NEC: "...in comparison with 1995, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) showed improved skills in managing the 2000 general elections in the mainland..." Different international observer groups gave the impression that the elections in mainland Tanzania were well managed, despite minor problems here and there.

Many reports were very critical and bitter on the way elections were conducted in Zanzibar. IFES (2000) described the elections as "a squandered opportunity to advance Zanzibar's transition to democracy". The Commonwealth Group, whose statement carried the day both locally and internationally, characterised the elections in Zanzibar as "shambles". The report said:

"In many places this election was a shambles. The cause either massive incompetence or a deliberate attempt to wreck at least part of this election: we are not yet in a position to know which. Either way, the outcome represents a colossal contempt for ordinary Zanzibari people and their aspirations for democracy..." (Commonwealth, 2000).

The significance of this report is that it was made public immediately after the conclusion of voting in Zanzibar, except in the Mjini Magharibi constituencies. But it also implicated ZEC for incompetence and other interests for "... a deliberate attempt to wreck, at least, part of the elections..." A very serious accusation that needed proof in order to be authentic. But, in many cases,

proof is not easily available. One of the IFES observers in Zanzibar, for example, noted that their group maintained communication with both the incumbent government and the opposition. Each side raised their concerns but "We did not report anything to the press because some of the claims could not be substantiated and were potentially inflammatory. There was the possibility for widespread violence if the wrong things were said and done" (Grimsley, 2001).

The Commonwealth Group's statement was immediately followed by one from the Civic United Front (CUF) to the ZEC Chairperson. In a letter, CUF accused ZEC of cancelling elections in Mjini Magharibi at the order of the ruling party, Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM). The letter read:

"Mr. Chairman, we would like to insist that the election was disrupted in the whole country from the registration of voters to today in voting and counting of votes where the situation is the worst. In that case, the call to annul elections of only one region is to shun a more serious problem. We in CUF insist that if it is annulment then the whole election, throughout the country, be annulled. We absolutely disagree with the decision to annul elections in only one region on the basis of CCM worries that it has lost the elections" (CUF 2000).²

Statements from other observers came later and did not have an adverse effect as the Commonwealth interim report. The OAU report of 31st October 2000 stated:

² "Mheshimiwa mwenyekiti, tunapenda kuisitiza kwamba ikiwa ni kuvurugika basi zoezi zima la uchaguzi na kwa nchi nzima limevurugika wakati wa uandikishaji wapiga kura hadi hii leo kwenye kupiga na kuhesabu kura ambapo hali hiyo imekithiri. Kwa hivyo, wito wa kutaka matokeo ya mkoa mmoja tu yabatilishwe ni kujaribu kufumbia macho tatizo kubwa zaidi. Sisi katika CUF tunasisitiza kuwa ikiwa ni kubatilishwa basi zoezi zima la uchaguzi na kwa nchi nzima libatilishwe. Hatukubali hata siku moja kufutwa matokeo ya mkoa mmoja tu kutokana na hofu ya CCM kwamba tayari imeshindwa vibaya katika uchaguzi huo" (CUF, 2000).

"It is a matter of deep regret that notwithstanding the assurance given, the ZEC was unable or unwilling to conduct elections in Zanzibar in an efficient manner. There were many instances of late arrival of polling materials at polling stations and in some cases there was a total absence of union election materials rendering the voting process impossible. Observers noted that the counting process was in some cases interfered with by the Electoral Commission officials and by some ruling party cadres. The political crisis into which the ZEC has thrown Zanzibar was totally unnecessary and could have been avoided. It could have been prevented if the ZEC was fully alive to its responsibility" (OAU 2000).

The CUF position directly held responsible the ruling party CCM for the annulment of the elections in Mjini Magharibi. The OAU report instead, unlike the Commonwealth stand, shouldered all responsibility on ZEC.

On the elections in Zanzibar, the SADC observer group, like TEMCO, recommended that ZEC should immediately meet with stakeholders to agree on fresh elections according to the law and that ZEC be reconstituted to win stakeholders' confidence (SADC, 2000). ZEC did not heed this call and went on preparing the re-run elections in the region. ZEC's position was given strong ground with government statements. President Mkapa, in his address to the nation on what transpired in Zanzibar, said that repeating the elections when some problems arise is a normal thing. He also added that his government would listen to recommendations from election observers but would not be dictated to by election monitors (*Nipashe*, November 1, 2000).

The way elections were conducted in October 2000 in Zanzibar disappointed a lot of observer groups and no doubt voters and political parties. Disappointments were well summarised by a IFES Report (2000), which in part reads:

"Having monitored the 1995 elections in Tanzania and Zanzibar, IFES looked forward to observing the 2000 contest, with the expectation that the shortcomings that characterized the 1995 elections would have been addressed. However, ... the October 29th elections [is] a squandered opportunity to advance Zanzibar's transition to democracy."

What is interesting though is not the statements and positions held by different observer groups. Of significance is the influence these positions had in determining the relationship between Zanzibar and Tanzania, on one hand, as well as the international community and Tanzania, on the other.

Implication of International Election Monitors in Domestic Politics

Election observers usually issue a statement after the elections are over. However, this is not always the case, as some issue preliminary statements at a certain stage of the electoral process as was the case in 1995 and 2000 in the elections in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar, respectively. Preliminary reports have an immediate effect and may change the course of events in an electoral process. What is not clear is how useful, in terms of helping the process run smoothly, are the preliminary statements.

In 1995, when NEC cancelled elections in Dar es Salaam and organised a re-run of the elections, TEMCO, the major local observer, issued a strong statement, which recommended that the entire elections be repeated throughout the country. Opposition political parties boycotted the elections but NEC and some donor countries supporting the elections went ahead with their preparations. The re-run elections took place unhampered. A similar situation happened in Zanzibar in 2000. Although it may not be easy to connect the boycott and the declared positions of the observers, it is possible that such positions legitimised the opposition parties' decisions to boycott election. It is interesting, however, that some donors continued to support disputed re-run elections. This suggests that they do not always operate according to the logic of the observers' statements and recommendations.

Full and final observers' reports are issued at a later time after the conclusion of an electoral process. These, too have implications. In most cases, especially in the first elections, observers' reports are not well accepted by governments in power. The reports are always critical, even when they are short of saying that elections were not free and fair. On the contrary, such reports are welcomed by the opposition because they help to consolidate their positions and give them new a basis for their claims for such things as a new constitution, new electoral laws, and the re-composition of the

National Electoral Commission. This was the case in Tanzania after the first multiparty elections in 1995. Whenever such claims are made, reference is made to some of the recommendations made by some election observer group.

The 'donor community' also uses reports to shape its policy and future relations with a country, although sometimes they just follow the dictates of their interests. In 1995, for example, positions of election observers were translated into donor denial of assistance to Zanzibar and pressure on the Union Government to solve the political impasse. Efforts culminated in an abortive effort at conflict resolution between CCM and CUF brokered by the Commonwealth. The Zanzibar Government, not only frustrated implementation of the *mwafaka* but also reacted negatively to some donor countries that did not show any sympathy to the government and denied the European Union (EU) observer group permission to observe the elections in Zanzibar (The Guardian, August 24th 2000). However, it was not the case for the 2000 elections in Zanzibar. The way elections were conducted, as reports from observers show, was worse than in 1995. The elections, by all means and criteria, were not free and fair. These positions notwithstanding, did not influence the position of the 'donor community' negatively. There were signals that a number of donors were sympathetic to the new administration in Zanzibar under President Karume, and were 'willing' to support the government's efforts to 'develop' Zanzibar. This suggests that 'donors' often have their clear agenda even before elections are conducted that cannot be changed by the conduct and outcome of elections.

A number of factors determine the donors' position. In the Tanzanian context, these could be threats to peace in the region and the progress made economically by the regime in power. The regional situation where Tanzania is stable and thus, plays a role as a safe heaven for hot spots within the region, makes it important to think seriously about the need for maintaining peace, as well as tranquillity in the country. This is important for the management of the conflict-ridden situation in the region. Making a similar observation in relation to the election results of 1995 in Zanzibar and the political stalemate that ensued, Kaiser (1997: 41) noted that "...western donors were careful not to alienate the Tanzania government over this matter for the sake of peace and security..." Some observers thought that elections in Zanzibar had the potential to end in civil war. Therefore, according to them, the election was "...successful because there was no violence surrounding the outcome!" This particular observer even added that:

"...The important thing to remember is that the group in power retained power peacefully, and this sends a very positive and hopeful message about the future of the country's political stability ..." (Grimsley, 2001).

Another factor is also significant as far as Tanzania is concerned. The economic performance of the Mkapa government, according to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank stands as something to be praised. It could be a hope of the 'donor' community that the economic success of the Union government could be extended to Zanzibar. Hence, a willingness to support the Mkapa and Karume governments, respectively. Much as the observer reports questioned the elections in Zanzibar, donors wanted to see peace, stability and economic growth. It would seem that donors believe that peace is a *sin quo non* of adoption and support of free-market policies (Rothstein, 1991).

The question of national peace and stability is also important before, during and after elections. It is not clear though how important and influential observer reports are in maintaining the country's peace and stability. Similarly, it is not very clear whether or not observers consider the political situation existing in a country prior to elections and how their positions could help ease the situation or complicate matters. Observers are supposed to be objective and impartial, but does this impartiality and objectivity consider the need for peace and stability, or is this none of their business? Observers represent countries or international organisations, some of which, like the UN, have peace as their central and permanent agenda. But this again does not suggest that all observers and the agencies or organisations they represent have similar interests or that peace is part of their agenda. Briefly, it is possible for election observers to escalate an otherwise cooling political situation. Depending on how they conduct their affairs, they might help to prepare some actors in the electoral process to reject the verdict of voters. The case of Zanzibar and Angola in 1992 alludes to this possibility.

Reports are also a useful source of information for critical assessments of the electoral process. They give a number of useful recommendations for improving future elections and offer the basis for 'technical' assistance for the same end - improving future elections. When this happens, it helps to build public confidence in the process. The management of the general elections in 2000 was

a big improvement. NEC, based on the 1995 experience and recommendations, managed to improve its way of conducting elections. A view that the elections were smoothly conducted by NEC in 2000 was shared by all actors, political parties and observers alike. Of course, information itself is not useful if it is not translated into actions. The situation in Zanzibar in 2000 is a case in point.

Conclusion

Although distasteful to those in power, election monitors and observers have so far made a very important contribution to elections. Their role in elections will continue for the foreseeable future because in many situations in Africa and Tanzania, in particular, the public still does not have full confidence in the electoral system. There is still, in Tanzania, concerns over the impartiality of the electoral commission and the role of the ruling party, including the government in elections. In the absence of election monitors and observers, the little confidence the public has will ebb.

Election monitoring and observation could still be improved. A lot of experience has been accumulated so far but there is room to learn new things. International observers, for example, need to come early, at the beginning of the electoral process, in order to have a broad view of the elections. This is also what the O.A.U Conflict Management Division has recommended. Specifically, the document urges international election observers not to hastily "parachute" into a country (O.A.U, 2001) if they want to have a sound basis for declaring elections to be free and fair. Local monitors are in a better position to make a fair judgement because they begin the monitoring exercise immediately after the electoral process has started. Their experiences have to be emulated by international observers.

Finally, it is important for monitors and observers to continue creating some degree of confidence in the entire electoral process. Statements issued at different stages must aim at having this objective achieved. Observers should desist from making statements which would make them appear to be taking sides. In that way they would help create a smooth and ordered conclusion of the electoral process. Thus, their intervention should be constructive, not destructive. As such, they should put aside their interests and biases.

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Voter Choices and Electoral Decisions in the 2000 General Elections in Tanzania

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Introduction

A democratic system of government, at minimum, has to provide its citizens with the opportunity to organize, speak freely, and to elect its leaders. The selection of leaders by citizens is central to any democratic system of governance. As citizens participate in the process of selecting their leaders, they develop a behavioural pattern of voting which is based on a number of factors. Literature on this subject admits that voter behaviour is a very complex phenomenon and highlights party identification (partisanship), ideology, current political issues, candidates' personal qualities, and the performance of incumbents as the major influential factors. Ethnicity has also been identified as an important factor influencing voter choice, particularly in Africa.

Tanzanians have been participating in elections since the late 1950s. During the independence era there was a multi-party system which was replaced by a single-party system lasting for nearly thirty years. It was in July 1992 when the second era of competitive multiparty democracy was introduced with multiparty general elections being held in 1995. Multi-party general elections were carried out again in October 2000. This shift in electoral politics had a significant impact on voter behaviour. This article attempts to delineate the factors that influence voter choices and electoral decisions in Tanzania.

Determinants of Voter Choices: An Overview

Voter choices are determined by several factors, *inter-alia*, party ideology, party identification, social class, pressing issues of the time (questions of public policy) and the way candidates present

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