

OBSTACLES TO POLITICAL RECONCILIATION IN A SEMI-AUTONOMOUS POLITY: THE CASE OF ZANZIBAR

By

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1. Background

The Zanzibar political crisis following the introduction of multiparty politics in 1992 to-date has a long historical origin. Zanzibar has been prone to social and political conflicts since the colonial days when the Zanzibar political economy was structured along class and racial lines. Independence struggles and ultimately the granting of independence to the islands by the British in 1963 did not resolve the long standing social and political divisions so did the 1964 revolution and its subsequent policies and actions. Whereas there has been a high degree of social intermingling between people of different racial origins, ethnic groups and regions, politically the society still remains highly polarized. About a half of the population, most of whom originating from Pemba, and people of Arab origin as well as former members of the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP), the Zanzibar and Pemba People's Party (ZPPP), and of the Umma Party and members of the current opposition parties are discriminated in the political domain.

The current conflicts seem to be much more influenced by political actors and their strategies. The structural factors such as racial divisions and regionalism are essentially manipulated to serve specific individual or group political interests of the time, i.e., not those relating to serving identity interests, but rather political power which is inextricably linked with economic interests. The immediate (proximate) factors are traced to the introduction of multiparty politics in 1992, after 28 years of authoritarian single party rule. Instead of ushering in a new era of plural politics and of relatively harmonious political, social and economic relations Zanzibar (a semi-autonomous polity within the United Republic of Tanzania) found itself enmeshed in a deep political crisis particularly from 1995 when the first multiparty general election was held to-date. This endemic crisis manifests itself in the high degree of mistrust and political hostility which at times degenerate into violence between the two major political factions represented by the incumbent Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) and the main opposition party, the Civic United Front (CUF).

The results of all the past three multiparty general elections have been seriously contested by CUF, on the grounds that virtually all the electoral processes are seriously flawed to render their outcomes invalid. The record of human rights usually deteriorates during election times and in the aftermath of each election. Numerous incidents of human rights abuse most of which committed during this time by coercive organs of the state (both of the Union Government and the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, i.e., the special departments [*vikosi*]). The list of incidents of human rights abuse ranges from intimidation, arrests, detention without trial, imprisonment, beatings, torture, rape, looting of people's properties, discrimination in public employment, demolition of houses to killings.

The Zanzibar political crisis since the introduction of a multiparty system in 1992 reached its peak on January 27th 2001 when the police and the Zanzibar Marine Force (KMKM) used excessive force to stop CUF demonstrators following CUF nation-wide demonstrations demanding a new constitution, an independent electoral commission and a rerun of the Zanzibar election. According to the official reports, thirty one people including one policeman were killed and several hundreds wounded, properties were destroyed and over 2000 people fled to Kenya as political refugees.

The severity of the situation and intensified pressure on the Union and Zanzibar governments by both domestic and international forces in the aftermath of the January 26/27 killings compelled the two contending parties to negotiate for political reconciliation. This initiative, which was the second one since the inception of multipartism in 1992 culminated into a second reconciliation accord (*Muafaka II* signed in 2001) which was negotiated against the backdrop of the failure of the first reconciliation accord (*Muafaka I*), which had been brokered by the Commonwealth Secretary General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku in 1999 as well as the bloody events of the January 26/27, 2001. Like the previous one, *Muafaka II* was not implemented. The same controversies and conflicts surrounding the two previous general elections featured again in the 2005 general election leading to another initiative of political reconciliation following a promise by the newly elected president of the United Republic in his first presidential speech to Parliament in December 2005. The negotiations for the third accord (*Muafaka III*) have already shown signs of extended protraction if not total stalemate.

2. The purpose of the Study

The central purpose of the study was to examine the role of actors, their interests and strategies in the Zanzibar conflict with the aim of identifying obstacles to political reconciliation in Zanzibar. The underlying assumption was that when the actors, interests and strategies have been adequately explored and critically analyzed it could be discovered that these factors jointly constitute a set of variables that create dynamics of conflicts which are not necessarily logically linked to the historical and structural explanations or root causes of the conflict.

3. Main Findings

3.1.1 Delineation of Internal Actors and Patterns of Interaction

It may be misleading to talk of two major internal actors in the Zanzibar conflict. At the very minimum, there are three major internal actors. On one side, it is the opposition or to be more specific, CUF; and on the other side, there are two major actors, namely the Zanzibar Government (CCM-Zanzibar) and the Union Government (the Mainland Government or CCM-Mainland). The two actors (the Zanzibar Government and the Union Government) in a way complicate the conflict matrix. Often times, they present themselves as a single actor (i.e., the regime) with common and uniform interests. But at times, they behave as different actors with different interests and positions, albeit they belong to the same side of the conflict continuum. In other words, the relationship between CCM-Zanzibar and CCM-Mainland although is predominantly cordial and cooperative, at times, on the basis of decision theory and rational choice there is

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divergence of interests and positions. The politics of survival, however, overshadows their differences and thus their pattern of interactions is that of bargaining and compromise with each side winning and giving some concessions. The existence of the Union government is also viewed by the opposition as an assurance for the survival of the CCM Government in Zanzibar – that the opposition cannot make Zanzibar, which is simply a semi-autonomous polity, ungovernable as the Union coercive forces would prevail to contain the situation.

The main opposition party in Zanzibar, CUF, on its part, apart from enjoying considerable electoral support, it benefits substantially from the support of exiled forces. One of the key strategies used by the exiled forces is to work very closely with International Human Rights Organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch as well as with officials of foreign governments in soliciting publicity of political developments in Zanzibar and Tanzania as a whole. Thus, as far as the Zanzibar conflict is concerned the exiled forces are overwhelmingly in favour of the opposition.

3.1.2 The Role of the Armed Forces

In the case of the Zanzibar conflict the military has not been a significant actor in its own right. Part of the regime calculation is that the military in the case of Tanzania has always been on the side of the regime in power. Their loyalty to the government in power and the ruling party has been unquestionable since 1964 following the major restructuring and later heavy indoctrination, particularly after 1967. This applies to all branches of the armed forces – the army, the intelligence service, the police force, the national service, the militia and all the special brigades of Zanzibar. The opposition, on their part, both in Zanzibar and on the mainland do not have military establishments that could serve to reduce the clear advantage of coercive power enjoyed by the ruling party and its government.

Thus, in the assessment of relative power of the key actors to the conflict, i.e., the ruling party and the opposition, the former enjoys almost a monopoly of coercive power of the state and the latter seems to extensively rely on its popular support by the electorate. This reality of having unmatched and unrivaled coercive power of the state obviously seems to have a bearing when it comes to the choice and adoption of strategies used in both conflict formation and resolution. The party with a comparative advantage or close to a monopoly in the use of coercive power tends to use it to its advantage, and the party which is disadvantaged in that respect tends to resort to peaceful strategies and diplomacy. This unique situation of Zanzibar relative to other conflict theatres in the Great Lakes region brings up the need to assess the intractability or tractability of conflicts in terms of the relative power of the actors and the nature of that power – whether coercive, non-coercive or a special combination of the two.

3.1.3 The International Community

The position of Western donors on the Zanzibar conflict is not definite. It has both positive and negative signals, the latter being exploited by the ruling party and the two governments, i.e., the Union and Zanzibar Governments. The donors' position has been drastically fluctuating from 1995 to date. In 1995, for example, they adopted quite a

tough stance towards the Zanzibar Government by freezing foreign assistance to the islands and placing considerable pressure on the Union government to resolve the conflict. With time, the Western donors have been adopting a softer stance towards both the Zanzibar Government and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania. Although all the three general elections have been seriously mismanaged in Zanzibar, the donors are now recognizing the Zanzibar government and work quite closely with it claiming that some progress has been made and election processes have been improved. As to why this change of position among donors, the likely answer lies in donors' interests and motives, i.e., they are not primarily interested in democratization but political stability even in a narrow sense, of being able to diffuse the tension for some time. In so far as the regime in power can contain the situation and maintain order, however temporary, it may be, they are unlikely to exert significant pressure for democratization and political reconciliation. Part of the success of the regime in getting donors' acquiescence is attributed to the propaganda strategy depicting CUF as a religiously inclined party.

3.2 Underlying Issues

3.2.1 Revolutionary Legacy and the Politics of Exclusion

One may be curious to know as to why the first two accords (*Muafaka I and II*) failed and the contemplated third one has already shown signs of protraction and stalemate. Part of the reason is that the most fundamental issue in the conflict, notably the issue of governance - of who should control the Zanzibar government and the process by which they should be chosen remains unresolved.

The political stake between the two contending parties is considered to be very high. Under the existing conditions, neither of the parties is prepared to accept electoral defeat. For the opposition party, the main ground is that they do not have trust in the existing electoral process. But for the ruling party, particularly CCM-Zanzibar, the reluctance to concede electoral defeat partly stems from the revolutionary legacy as an ideology which is used to justify their clinging to power as they would usually put it: "We cannot surrender power that we acquired in 1964 through a peace of paper [ballot paper]". To this group, the stake is considered to be "too high" (which includes defending the revolution, its history, group and personal interests of its members) to be left to be determined by unpredictable electoral outcomes, however, free and fair they may be. The hard-line stance of CCM-Zanzibar enjoys considerable support from the mainland politicians. The dominant perception by mainland politicians is that the Zanzibar government derives its legitimacy from the 1964 revolution which dislodged an Arab aristocratic rule and instituted an African majority rule, a perception that is seriously disputed by almost a half of Zanzibaris.

3.2.2 The Union Issue and its Complexity

The Union issue is one of the corner-stones in the structure of the Tanzanian state. Unfortunately, however, the three main actors in the Zanzibar conflict are profoundly divided on the Union issue. Currently, the dominant position in Zanzibar favours a three-

government structure (about 52%), and Mainlanders predominantly favour the current set up of two governments (about 44%).

There are also differences between political parties. Whereas CCM is predominantly in favour of the current set up of two governments (50.5%), the opposition is predominantly favoring a three -governments structure (50.2%). Thus, since the opposition parties, including CUF are advocating the restructuring of the Union into three governments, the ruling party is very apprehensive of the future of the Union. To them, that option of three governments is considered untenable for it may lead to the collapse of the Union, something which may fundamentally alter the structure of the Tanzanian state. Thus, when it comes to competitive politics in Zanzibar, the Union issue has always been at the heart of the political considerations of the mainland politicians, apparently more so than their Zanzibar counterparts. On the Zanzibar side, the issue of changing the configuration state power in terms of its historical basis of the 1964 revolution is treated as the most fundamental issue. What is implied here is that among the two key political actors in the Zanzibar conflict, i.e., CCM-Zanzibar and CCM-Mainland the main issue of common interest is apparently not the Union as such, but political survival of the CCM regime on both sides of the Union. There is a tendency by CCM-Zanzibar to threaten the mainland side in a brinkmanship style about the Union should the latter attempt to give some concessions to the opposition in Zanzibar. The card that is used is that in case of a serious disagreement between CCM-Mainland and CCM-Zanzibar, the latter would resurrect Afro Shirazi Party (ASP) and break up the Union.

3.3 Strategies Used by the Regime

3.3.1 Violence Strategy

The key actors to the Zanzibar conflict employ different strategies depending on the prevailing conditions. One of the common strategies used by the regime is violence. Violence usually erupts before, during and after the elections in Zanzibar. This is apparently a pattern rather than accidental. It is a logical outcome of the processes and strategies that are prepared and executed in an organized way by the governments and the ruling party. During election times, there are usually heavy military reinforcements in Zanzibar. Defence and security forces from the Mainland are deployed to Zanzibar not with the aim of preventing chaos and confrontations, or maintaining peace and order but for the purpose of scaring and subjugating the people who may protest against fraudulent elections results. The peace of violence committed by the coercive forces of the state was in January 2001 as explained in the background (section 1).

In recent years in addition to regular and official armed forces and known para-military establishments, there have been incidents reported of youth groups given special training for subversion during election times.

Before the registration process started in Zanzibar in November 2004, it was reported that the government of the ruling party established youth camps (branded by the opposition as *Janjaweed*) in some areas of Unguja, particularly at Tunguu, Central District. It was reported by reliable sources that these camps were providing “special training for elections”. The kind of training provided included political indoctrination aimed at

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instilling hatred among Zanzibaris along racial, regional and party lines. The trainees, it was alleged, were also taught basic techniques of combat, instilling pain and even killing people using non-fire arms such as iron bars, knives, stones and acid. It was widely believed that the violence that rocked the Urban West Region in Zanzibar during the registration time was largely associated with these youth brigades trained to commit acts of violence. There was a patterned exercise of invading special areas believed to be CUF strongholds and targeting individual known to be staunch CUF supporters. These armed youth groups used to break into houses during night times to harass and beat up CUF followers.

On the other hand, there have been some incidents of violence of which each party accuses the other to be involved. In 2004, a year before the general elections, there was a spate of bombings in Zanzibar. In March 2004, a number of bombs were denoted causing loss of property in Zanzibar. The police car was set ablaze at Mwanakwerekwe Police Station, the Roman Catholic Church was set ablaze at Jumbi, the house of the Muslim Jurist (*Mufti*), Sheikh Harith bin Khelef was bombed, a bomb was diffused at Mercury Bar, and the house of the Minister for Communication, Zubeir Maulid was also bombed. During that period, a team of detectives from the Mainland was sent to Zanzibar to investigate who was behind such incidents. The government committed itself that after a thorough investigation a report would be made public. To date, no report has been issued to the public and nobody has been convicted for the crime. It is still a puzzle to analysts as to who was behind such acts – the security personnel, the ruling party, the main opposition party, the *Janjaweed* or unruly party zealots of one of the political parties acting on their own without any directives from their leaders, religious activists or any other organized group for the pursuit of particular interests.

3.3.2 Discrimination Strategy: Rewarding Supporters and Sanctioning Opponents

Discrimination in public employment and in accessing public resources and opportunities has been one of common strategies applied by the Zanzibar Revolutionary Government. This has been a long term strategy which could be traced from the early days of the revolution. Recently, a report by CUF shows with statistics the scale of discrimination in almost all key positions in the Zanzibar government. 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 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 no one is from Pemba. Again, there out of 102 directors, managers, and commissioners only 17 are from Pemba.

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 Volunteer, Anti-Smuggling Squad (Naval Force), Prisons, and Fire Brigade are from Unguja. The discrimination in public service equally applies to positions in the Union Government. For example, among the senior police officers in Zanzibar which include Commissioner,

Regional Police Commanders of 5 regions, and District Police Commanders of 10 districts, nobody comes from Pemba. According to the estimates by CUF, about 83% of senior government leaders are from Unguja and only 13% are from Pemba. Pemba has about 40% of the total population of Zanzibar. 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.

In practice, the discrimination policy in public employment seems to serve as a double-edged sword. On one side, it denies the opposition access to key government positions and hence an opportunity to weaken the government from within in terms of accessing economic and political resources and critical information that could be used against the government. That is to say, in denying access to the government circles particularly in sensitive areas the regime protects itself from possible internal destabilization and acts of subversion. Second, related to the above, in isolating the opponents and potential opponents the regime enjoys a broad avenue of distributing favours to its core and unwavering supporters hence a guarantee of maintaining its traditional support base.

On the other hand, however, the application of discrimination policy and exclusion of opponents and potential opponents seems to have yielded some dividends to the opposition. The politics of exclusion has apparently broadened the support base of the opposition and made it alive and vibrant for quite a long time. Some of the heavy weights of the opposition including those who used to occupy senior positions in the government were to a considerable degree driven to join the opposition by the feelings or experiences of discrimination and political exclusion. The more the government intensifies its discrimination policy against members of the opposition and people from Pemba the more the opposition garners stronger moral support and sympathy by both domestic and external forces.

3.4 Strategies used by CUF

Just like the governments and the ruling party, the opposition in Zanzibar has been using a wide range of strategies in the ongoing conflict. One of the strategies used is non-cooperation with the government authorities and the ruling party. For example, in post-1995 general elections, CUF boycotted to attend House of Representatives sessions but the MPs continued to participate in the National Assembly, boycotting to take part in development activities run by the Zanzibar government. The party also relies on soliciting diplomatic support. Top party officials, particularly the Chairman and Secretary General sometimes travel to Europe and the US in an attempt to solicit internal support.

On some occasions, the opposition has been using demonstrations as a strategy to express their anger and dissatisfaction with the political system. One of these demonstrations (i.e, that of January 27, 2001) turned violent as the security and defence forces used excessive power to suppress it and hence scores of people killed and several others injured. Staging demonstrations and committing acts of subversion are considered as means of popular power, e.g., the propagation of “*ngangari*”(militant) slogan during the 2000 general

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elections, a threat that the opposition was prepared confront the coercive forces of the state in fighting for their rights.

On the other hand, there have also been some violent some acts of retaliation by the opposition, eg, the killing of Major Ayoub Mohammed, a Volunteer Commander in Pemba who was stabbed to death during the registration process in 2005 general elections. This event was apparently a reaction to the killing of a standard six school-boy, Juma Omar was shot dead by a KMKM soldier at Ng'ombeni school, Mkoani District during the fracas to prevent the registration of the registration of the members of KMKM who were not resident in the area. Besides, in Unguja, a CCM party agent was reported to have been killed by unknown people during the registration time. Again in the aftermath of the 2005 general elections, apparently in reaction to the election outcomes, a member of the Zanzibar National Service Unit (JKU) was killed at Piki in Pemba by unknown people. Thus, although a few killings and injuries are reported during the election times, there are no reported incidents where there have been exchange of fire between the government forces and the opposition or between the two political parties. On some occasions CUF has been resorting to inciting communal hatred – boycotting social functions organized by members of the other party, including wedding and burial ceremonies and boycott to buy goods from members of the party. For example, after the apparent failure of the third accord in May 2008, CUF followers from Pemba declared a boycott to transport food stuff (e.g., banana, and cassava) to Unguja where a significant amount of Pemba's agricultural products is marketed.

On the whole, the opposition up to this moment has been basically relying on non-violent means of conflict resolution. This is actually one of the basic features of the Zanzibar conflict – that so far, it cannot be clearly characterized as armed conflict. Although, the government on its part has been using different strategies including using fire arms against the opposition, the fact the other party to the conflict, i.e., the opposition has not yet resorted to the use of organized violence makes the Zanzibar conflict non-armed conflict. As to whether this feature will continue for a long time, it is difficult to tell. At any rate, however, since the conflict has taken quite a long time without a solution, one of the feasible assumptions is that the opposition may rethink of their strategies.

In May 2008, there was an unprecedented move by people from Pemba logically as a reaction to the failure of *Muafaka III*. Twelve elders from Pemba presented their secession plea (with an attachment of 10,000 signatures of the people from Pemba) to the resident United Nations Representatives in Tanzania, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, and asked him to forward it to the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. Last month, the same group asked the US Ambassador to Tanzania, Mr. Mark Green to send a message to President George Bush asking him to help them break away from Pemba's union with Unguja on the basis of being politically and economically marginalized by the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar.

Given the Zanzibar geopolitical context, however, one can hardly contemplate massive violence of direct physical confrontation between the regime and the opposition. In the face of the apparent failure of non-violent means, and distrust of the commitment of other

party in the negotiation processes, there are two possible scenarios. One, is for the opposition to accept defeat and play by existing rules of the game hoping that with time the system might be gradually reformed (perhaps after the incorporation of the opposition into the government of national unity after the 2010 general elections). Two, there is a probability that the opposition may exert more pressure by using both diplomatic means and an increasing rate of subversive acts of violence aimed at compelling the regime to give basic concessions to the opposition.

4. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

A discussion on the underlying issues raised above begs an assessment of the nature of issues – which ones are fundamental and which ones are secondary; which ones are compatible and which ones are incompatible; The issue of pro-versus anti revolution stance may be one of the important issues, but it cannot constitute an incompatible issue. Assuming that all members of the regime support the revolution, the opposition is itself divided on their stance towards the revolution. Some support the revolution as a liberating event but deplore its legacy; and others condemn it altogether, i.e., both as an event and its legacy. But since it is possible for people or parties to subscribe to different views on the status of the revolution and still cooperate politically and socially as a community, their disagreement cannot be considered as a fundamental problem. This could be considered as a party or individual creed. In other words, this issue of ones' view on the revolution should not necessarily lead to a zero-sum game.

On the Union issue, another fundamental problem that seems to divide the two sides, we can also consider it as critical but by no means intractable. This is because, leaving aside personal and sectional interests, Zanzibaris belonging to the two contending political camps in principle, have similar aspirations for their country (nation), they want more autonomy in managing their own affairs and on the whole they are not happy with the current union arrangements. At the moment, they seem to have different interest (temporal) as a political strategy; but their motives are the same. If the governance problem is resolved, i.e., the problem relating to the distribution of power among themselves, they are likely to have exactly the same or almost the same position on the Union. That is to say, if the governance issue is settled the Union issue may be tractable too.

It is widely believed that the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar hangs onto the current structure of the Union basically for security reasons, just as was the motive to unite in 1964 when President Karume and his faction felt insecure after the revolution and hence united with Tanganyika to get military protection. The same motive applies to the current ruling clique in Zanzibar. Since their domestic legitimacy is seriously contested, they often pretend to be good boys to their mainland counterparts, once the issue of legitimacy of the rule is settled in Zanzibar, the unholy alliance may come to an end. New forms of cooperation of mutual benefits to each side might be negotiated by the two partners of the Union. In other words, in 1964 the Union was *instrumental* so is it today. Tanzania is still a country with two nations.

4.2 Policy Recommendations

R1: To squarely address the issue of Democratic Governance

It has been observed that there is a serious governance problem as there is no agreement on the basic rules of the political game. From the past experience the behaviour and actions of both the Zanzibar Government and the Union Government suggest that these two actors, i.e., CCM-Zanzibar and the Union Government are unreliable. They can sign peace deals without any serious commitment to honor them. In the negotiation process, this is an issue to be taken into account. If one or both of the actors are unreliable there is a need to institute of adequate institutional safeguards beyond the control and subversion by the unreliable actor or actors. In the two deals that were signed in 1999 and 2001, the institutional safeguards were lacking and therefore it was relatively easily for one the actors to subvert the reconciliation processes. Thus, one of the major recommendations of this study is that a reliable and powerful institutional mechanism has to be installed to oversee the implementation of the accord. This institution can take one of the two forms: either a third party agreed by both parties (e.g., the UN) or a joint institution that will be managed and controlled by both parties.

R2: More active role of individual actors to deal with institutional constraints

Institutional constraints have been observed among the two key actors, i.e., CCM-Zanzibar and CCM-Mainland. In a situation where there are critical institutional constraints, individual actors, are expected to play a more active role to overcome institutional constraints. In this case, the President of the United Republic is expected to become a facilitator and guardian of the reconciliation process. International donors could also play an important role in exerting more pressure on the Union and Zanzibar Governments so as to compel the President to take a resolute stance on the reconciliation process. The President can strengthen his position on the issue by soliciting the support of the moderate forces within the regime.

R3: To resolve the issue of incompatibility of interests

Since the stakes involved are considered by the key actors to be too high, particularly those relating acquisition and exercise of governmental power. The negotiation process has to take into account the need for a power-sharing arrangement between the two contending parties. The winner-takes-all system has to be discarded until such time when the political system is stabilized and the key actors have development basic trust toward each other.

R4: Addressing the Union issue

The Union issue has been one of the fundamental issues dividing the key actors, hence creating a situation of apprehension among them. An agreement on the procedural process to resolve the Union issue should be one of the items in the reconciliation deal. When the two parties are harmoniously working together in Zanzibar, that would be an opportune moment for the constructive dialogue on the Union in terms of both its structure and practices.