

CHAPTER 1

Political Background

In Zanzibar the political background is not a matter of abstract or academic interest. The islands' political past lives on in politics which are fiercely competitive and highly polarised.

Political History

An early African/Arab/Persian trading centre, with commercial links stretching as far as South-East Asia, Zanzibar fell under Portuguese control in the 16th and early 17th centuries. By the end of the 17th century the Portuguese had been supplanted by Arabs from Oman. However, within 100 years they had concluded an alliance with Britain. Zanzibar declared its independence from Oman in 1856 and, following the Anglo-German agreement of 1890, the British Government established a formal Protectorate over both Unguja and Pemba. Britain continued to rule Zanzibar, through a sultan, until 1963.

Elections in 1957 had been preceded by the formation of several political parties, notably the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) and the Afro-Shirazi Union, which by the time of the poll had become the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP). The former, created in 1955 from a merger of the Nationalist Party of the Subjects of the Sultan of Zanzibar and the Arab Association, was broadly identified with the Arab population while the latter, formed by a union of the African Association (AA) and the Shirazi Association (SA), was identified with the African population. The ASP won the 1957 elections. Further Legislative Council elections were held in January 1961 (producing no clear result) and again in June 1961 (won by the ZNP, in alliance with the Zanzibar and Pemba People's Party). In June 1963 Zanzibar won internal self-government and on 10 December 1963 it became an independent sultanate.

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Post-Independence Politics

The largely Arab ZNP government of the new sultanate did not last long: it was overthrown in a bloody armed uprising in January 1964, triggered by African anger that the ASP had actually secured more votes (but had lost because of the distribution of the seats), resentment at what was seen as 'Arab rule' and allegations regarding the role of the former British colonial government.

The leader of the ASP, Sheikh Abeid Amani Karume, was installed as President at the head of a Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar. The new government subsequently banned all parties except the ASP and established close links with Cuba, China, East Germany, Bulgaria and the Soviet Union.

In April 1964 Tanganyika united with Zanzibar to form the United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, later renamed the United Republic of Tanzania, with Julius Nyerere as President and Sheikh Karume as Vice-

President. Since 1964 the Union government has had responsibility for security, defence and foreign affairs, but in other areas Zanzibar has had considerable autonomy.

Zanzibar, with its capital Zanzibar town, has had its own separate Constitution since 1985, President, Ministers who are members of the ruling Zanzibar Revolutionary Council, a House of Representatives (parliament) and legal system, including its own judiciary. There is some tension in the relationship with the mainland, heightened at the beginning of 1993 when the Zanzibar Government joined the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. This was declared unconstitutional in February 1993 by a commission of the Union parliament, in accordance with the 1977 Constitution whereby the United Republic was established as a secular state and the Union government made solely responsible for foreign affairs. In 1994, when the Union National Assembly passed a constitutional amendment under which the Zanzibari president is no longer automatically Union vice-president, this tension resurfaced. (In these elections CUF pledged to restore the previous arrangement.)

There is also some tension within Zanzibar between the main island of Unguja and the more northerly Pemba, and a feeling on the part of its people that Zanzibar's CCM government gives preference to Unguja. In the 1995 elections all the Pemba seats were won by the opposition CUF.

In 1977 the ASP and the mainland Tanganyika African National Union combined to form the CCM. All other parties were banned and the distinction between the CCM and the state effectively disappeared. The CCM remained Tanzania's sole party until 1992, when the Constitutions of both the United Republic of Tanzania and Zanzibar were changed to allow for multiparty elections (although parties founded on religion, ethnicity, race, colour or gender were still not allowed). Local government elections were held the following year.

In 1997, 18 members of CUF, including members of the House of Representatives, were detained and accused of treason for allegedly staging an 'external plot' to destabilise Zanzibar. At the time of the October 2000 elections their trial was continuing, with a further hearing to be held following the elections.

1995 Elections

The first multiparty elections for the Zanzibar Presidency and the House of Representatives were held in October 1995, a week before the Union elections. They proved to be a straight contest between CCM, led by Dr Salmin Amour, and the newly formed CUF, led by Seif Sharif Hamad.

In the presidential election the Zanzibar Electoral Commission announced that the CCM candidate had won by a margin of 0.4 per cent (50.2 per cent against 49.8 per cent for the CUF candidate), while CCM won 26 seats in the Zanzibar House of Representatives to CUF's 24.

The Commonwealth Observer Group said that the elections had been peaceful and that the Election Day procedures had been followed, but it noted delays in the count and tallying. The results were not announced until four full

days after the poll which, together with the closeness of the poll, led to suspicions and allegations of fraud. The CUF claimed that the result had been rigged, rejected the outcome and decided to boycott the House of Representatives, leading to a political impasse in Zanzibar.

Subsequently substantial amounts of western development aid to Zanzibar were suspended.

Commonwealth Initiative

The then Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, decided to intervene personally by travelling to Zanzibar in May 1998 for talks with the parties. He appointed a Special Envoy to continue this work and, with the financial support of several donor countries, the Special Envoy was able to negotiate a formal mechanism for inter-party consultation and negotiation, known as the Inter-Party Committee (IPC), composed of seven members of each party. This Committee's mandate was to draft an Agreed Memorandum to provide for reform, which in turn would facilitate the resumption of normal political activity in Zanzibar.

The Agreed Memorandum was signed in Zanzibar in June 1999. It provided for two new CUF deputies to the House of Representatives, the creation of a new Electoral Commission "to ensure that all future elections are transparent, credible and free of controversy in all important respects", compilation of a credible voters' register, equal access to the publicly owned media and balanced coverage of political activities, guaranteed freedom for all parties to propagate and canvass support for their views, a review of the Constitution and electoral legislation, reform of the judiciary and various other reconciliation and reconstruction measures.

In return the CUF agreed to end its boycott of the House of Representatives and to recognise the legitimacy of the CCM's tenure. The 'modalities' for the implementation of the Agreed Memorandum were agreed by the IPC in September 1999. It appeared that a solution had been found. In fact, by the time of these elections the reform initiative had effectively collapsed.

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