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What's in it for me?

Personalities, enticements and party loyalties in Tanzania's 2015 elections



Tanzania's fifth multi-party elections on 25 October 2015 could mark a watershed in national politics. Former prime minister Edward Lowassa is the flagbearer for Ukawa, an opposition alliance forged during a heated contest over constitutional reform and the structure of the Union. After two terms in office the incumbent president, Jakaya Kikwete, is standing down. While opinion polls indicate that his successor John Magufuli and CCM, the ruling party since 1977, are clear favourites, uncertainty about the intentions of the huge number of young voters and the level of turnout make predictions hazardous. Despite the unresolved battle over constitutional reform, campaigning has eschewed issues of importance to all Tanzanians in favour of an emphasis on personalities, and small-scale promises. This Briefing Note considers the variables in what is likely to be the most keenly contested poll since the first multi-party elections in 1995.

The *katiba* controversy

Between July and December 2012, Tanzania's Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) visited all districts in the United Republic, held 1,773 meetings and received the opinions of 1.4 million citizens, as well as civil society organisations and international experts.¹ The consultation process rekindled nationwide discussion about the degree of autonomy afforded to Zanzibar, land ownership, citizenship, and human rights. Issues, rather than personalities or party politics, were to the fore.

Two drafts of a new *katiba*, or constitution, were vigorously debated by a constituent assembly in the capital Dodoma during 2014. The main stumbling block – as in the previous two constitutional reviews – was the structure of the Union. Delegates from *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (CCM), the ruling party since 1977, steadfastly defended the status quo. Opposition party delegates supported the CRC's recommendation for a three-tier federal arrangement, adding a new government for the mainland to the existing ones for the Union and the Zanzibar Isles. Despite a boycott by opposition delegates, a draft constitution was narrowly approved by the constituent assembly in October 2014. But a popular referendum on the new *katiba* scheduled for April 2015 was postponed until after the general election. High politicking supplanted the deliberation of weighty matters that affect the daily lives of all Tanzanians.²

The heavy-handed conduct of CCM in the constituent assembly divided the nation; the decision to defer the referendum left it in constitutional limbo. Four opposition parties found common cause during the *katiba* review, uniting under the banner of *Umoja wa Katiba ya Wananchi* (Coalition of Defenders of the People's Constitution) or Ukawa. The alliance has survived

the indefinite postponement of a resolution to the constitutional issue.

Despite seemingly incompatible ideological positions, *Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo* (Chadema), which was established as a pro-business platform and draws its support from northern Tanzania and Dar es Salaam; the Civic United Front (CUF), a liberal party with strong support in Zanzibar and pockets of the coast; the National Convention for Construction and Reform (NCCR-*Mageuzi*), popular on the shores of Lake Tanganyika; and the National League for Democracy (NLD) have agreed a joint manifesto and endorsed a common list of candidates for the general election. The endurance of Ukawa suggests that the poll will be the most keenly contested since the first multi-party elections in 1995.

Enter the "big man"

Ukawa's electoral prospects were transformed in July 2015. Former prime minister Edward Lowassa defected from CCM to Chadema, the largest opposition party, after failing to secure CCM's nomination as its presidential candidate. Lowassa's exclusion by the ruling party's Security and Ethics Committee came as a surprise to many. A political heavyweight from Arusha, he is influential, well-connected and able to draw on substantial backing from Asian and Arab businessmen. But his relationship with CCM seldom ran smoothly.

Older Tanzanians recall that Lowassa failed to secure the CCM presidential nomination once before. In 1995 his candidacy was widely thought to have been vetoed by Julius Nyerere himself, founding president of the republic. Benjamin Mkapa, the victor on that occasion, did not offer Lowassa a cabinet post during his first term and only conferred a slot at the Ministry of Water and Livestock in his second. In 2005

Lowassa supported Jakaya Kikwete's successful bid for the presidency on the tacit – and ultimately mistaken – understanding that the favour would be returned in 2015.

“ 51% of those surveyed believe that “corruption cannot be controlled at all” in Tanzania ”

For all his charisma and influence, Lowassa was seemingly considered unsafe by CCM elders. He was tainted by his association with the Richmond Development Company energy corruption scandal that occurred when he was premier and prompted his resignation in 2008. While Lowassa was never prosecuted for any wrongdoing, the episode inspired the nicknames *Lo-Rushwa* and *Fisadi-in-Chief*, derived from the Swahili for “bribe” and “corrupt” respectively. His close association with certain businessmen prompts frequent and widespread speculation. “One wonders why he is the ‘magnet’ that attracts such money. More significantly, what if there is ‘pay back time’ if he wins the elections?” asked one commentator in June.³

Chadema's leader and Ukawa co-chair Freeman Mbowe appeared unperturbed by such questions when courting Lowassa, and speedily ensured that his prize was confirmed as Ukawa's presidential candidate. The recruitment of Lowassa has entailed compromise. Ukawa was forged to promote ambitious principles and progressive values during the battle to introduce a new constitution. But the coalition is equally determined to win the presidential election and has judged the former prime minister to be the man to deliver victory, despite mutterings of an “integrity deficit”⁴.

Lowassa has proved adaptable. He toed the CCM party line over the *katiba* as it sought to stymie support for radical changes to the structure of the Union, which might have loosened its grip on power. However, when presented as Ukawa's candidate he called for the constitutional debate to be reopened. Lowassa's campaign rallies across the country have drawn vast crowds, partly because he arrives by helicopter. He is presented by Chadema as independently wealthy, a man who has no need of a position in government to enrich himself. This may not matter to voters: 51% of those surveyed by civil society organisation Twaweza in June 2014 asserted that “corruption cannot be controlled at all” in Tanzania.⁵ But for all his apparent popularity, Lowassa's transfer to Chadema and Ukawa has threatened to fracture the coalition.

The fall-out

Lowassa's arrival in their midst proved too much for some of Ukawa's leading figures. CUF national chairman and Ukawa co-chair Prof. Ibrahim Lipumba and Chadema secretary-general Dr Wilbrod Slaa resigned. Both stood for the presidency in 2010 and retained ambitions to occupy the *Ikulu*, or State House. The two men also have reputations as principled individuals with a strong grasp of policy. Their departure

from the election campaign heralded a shift away from programmatic politics, while Lowassa's ascendancy brought a greater focus on personality.

For Lipumba, the identity of Lowassa's running mate also touched a nerve. The National Elections Act (2010) requires that candidates for the presidency and vice-presidency come from the same party, with one from the mainland and one from the Isles. Because Ukawa is not formally registered as a political party, Juma Duni Haji – Lipumba's Zanzibari running mate in the 2005 presidential elections – resigned as CUF's deputy chair to join Lowassa on the Chadema ticket.

The departure of Lipumba and Duni leaves CUF very much in Chadema's shadow. Meanwhile, Lowassa and Duni make an unlikely pairing. Duni made his reputation as a vociferous campaigner against CCM hegemony on Zanzibar. His incarceration following a by-election victory in 1997 led to him being listed as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International; Lowassa has never been unduly concerned with tensions in the Isles.

At his departing press conference, broadcast live across Tanzania, Slaa launched an uncompromising attack on Lowassa and those thought to be his backers. The former Catholic priest has campaigned tirelessly against corruption and named Lowassa on a “list of shame” in September 2007. Slaa emphasised Lowassa's failure to honour promises: “I had been told that he was crossing over with about 50 members of parliament and 22 regional party chairmen. In the end, this did not materialise.”⁶ The tirade made headlines for days. It was not the only controversy. The way that Lowassa asked a Lutheran congregation in Tabora to pray for him because the country has never had a president from this protestant denomination has also caused unease in a nation where religion and politics have largely been kept apart.⁷

CCM's safe pair of hands

Dr John Magufuli may be low profile, but he has never been embroiled in a corruption scandal and, as minister of works, has earned a reputation for being a sound – if occasionally demanding – technocrat, with a detailed knowledge of his brief. Dubbed *tingatinga* (“bulldozer”) by Kikwete, Magufuli was the safe choice for CCM.

Despite 20 years in government, Magufuli is attempting to position himself as the change candidate, rather than the executor of Kikwete's legacy. His campaign billboards display only a small CCM logo, in contrast to the green and gold banners that Kikwete used in 2005 and 2010. In at least one respect, Magufuli does represent a break with the status quo. Born in what is now Geita Region, south of Lake Victoria, he is the first CCM presidential candidate from the interior since Nyerere.

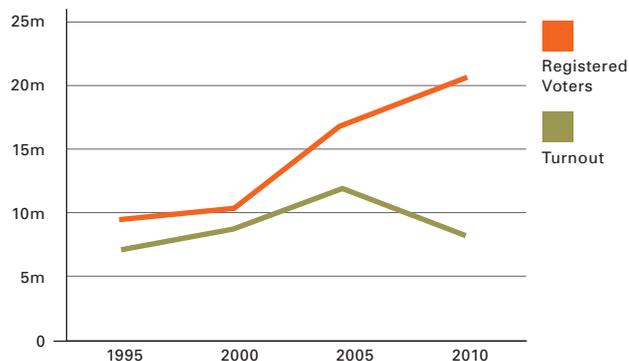
Magufuli appears to have more in common with his running mate, Samia Hassan Suluhu, than Lowassa has with Duni. Suluhu is MP for the Zanzibar constituency of Makunduchi and the first female vice-presidential candidate in CCM's history. As Minister of State for Union Affairs, she personified CCM orthodoxy over Zanzibar; and as

deputy chair of the constituent assembly during the *katiba* review, she frequently attracted the wrath of Ukawa delegates.

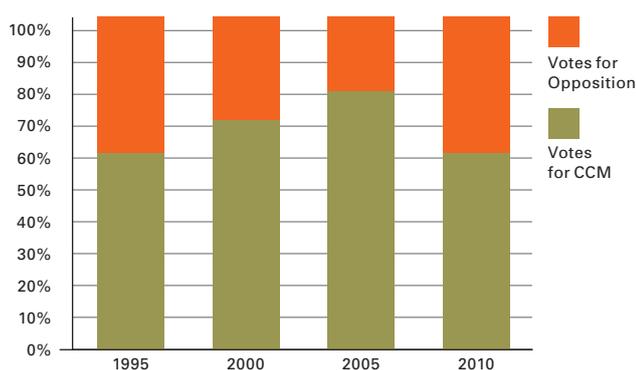
CCM has pushed through a flurry of legislation in the run-up to the election, including bills relating to the management of Tanzania's future, potentially substantial, hydrocarbon revenues. New infrastructure initiatives have been announced. Ukawa, in contrast, has no track record and no access to the machinery of government.

What young Tanzanians make of the personalities on show and how they cast their votes will be of critical importance in determining the outcome of this election – and many more to come. The August 2012 census indicates that approximately 55% of Tanzanians were aged 19 or under. Of voters registered for October's elections, over 60% are under 35 and nearly 80% are under 45.¹⁰ Magufuli is 55 years old, Lowassa 62. Fewer than one in ten Tanzanians are, like them, old enough to remember the formation of the Union in 1964.

Turnout compared to number of registered voters for presidential elections, 1995-2010



Share of the vote for CCM and all opposition candidates combined at presidential elections, 1995-2010



“ Over 60% of registered voters are under 35 years of age ”

On the campaign trail, CCM and opposition parties have made promises to improve local roads and water supply.¹¹ Pecuniary inducements are commonplace during elections. But voters do not forget. In a Twaweza poll conducted in July/August 2015, two-thirds of those surveyed said they were aware of promises made by their MP during the last election, mostly relating to the provision of local infrastructure; nearly half of them indicated that none of the promises had been fulfilled.¹² Voting an MP out of office remains all but impossible in the majority of mainland constituencies due to the clear ascendancy of one party or another. But in 2015, for the first time ever, a united opposition offers voters a presidential candidate with a chance of success.

Twaweza's July/August 2015 opinion poll refutes the possibility of an opposition victory. About a quarter of respondents said they intended to vote for Lowassa, as opposed to almost two-thirds (65%) for Magufuli. Lowassa's strongest showing was among urban, young, male and more educated respondents.¹³ Although the poll did not include Zanzibar, and could therefore underestimate support for the opposition, Lowassa's score was comparable to Slaa's 25% share of the vote in the 2010 presidential election. It is far short of the 37% polled by all opposition candidates in that contest. This suggests that Lowassa may not be all that non-CCM voters were hoping for from Ukawa. Again, the voting behaviour of the potentially substantial number of first-time voters will be of critical importance. So, too, is turnout.

In a June 2015 poll conducted by Twaweza, 46% of respondents listed “policy ideas” as the most important criteria they considered when electing a president.⁸ However, neither the media – with the notable exception of the televised debate series *MkikiMkiki* – nor campaign rallies carry much meaningful discussion of policy or feasible solutions to widespread poverty, power and infrastructure deficits, and overloaded social services. “The election campaign has been short of serious debate about *how* to tackle important issues”, Deus Kibamba, the chair of *Jukwaa La Katiba Tanzania* (Constitutional Forum), told ARI.⁹

What's in it for me?

Whatever people say to pollsters, personalities and party loyalty will inevitably trump policy and issues in the elections. It has always been thus. Magufuli and Suluhu face a tougher campaign on that score than any of their predecessors in CCM. Their public profile was negligible before the campaign started compared to that of their opponents.

Who will vote?

Turnout almost halved for presidential elections between 2000 and 2010, falling from 84% to 43% of registered voters. In the same period the size of the electorate doubled from 10 million to 20 million. The figures speak either of immense – and growing – antipathy to a formal political scene dominated by CCM, a failure on the part of CCM to attract new voters, or a combination of the two.

Despite declining turnout, CCM increased its number of votes in presidential elections by 1.2 million between 1995 and 2010 – double the 635,000 combined increase recorded by opposition parties. The ruling party is experienced and skilled at mobilising grassroots structures in rural areas untouched by the opposition. CCM's past victories, it has been said, “can be attributed

more to the regime's broad social base and organisational power than to the popularity of its policies or the performance of the government."¹⁴ Kikwete was keenly aware of the need to nurture rural voters, launching a series of agricultural development programmes during his time in office. Three-quarters of Tanzanians derive a livelihood from agriculture. The party's secretary-general, Abdulrahman Kinana, has carefully cultivated an image of agrarian activity, to differentiate CCM from opposition "city types".

“ **Turnout almost halved for presidential elections between 2000 and 2010, falling from 84% to 43% of registered voters** ”

The opposition share of the presidential vote has fluctuated since 1995 but the 37% achieved in 2010 was similar to the first multi-party elections. Whatever recent polls indicate, the presence of Lowassa as Ukawa's presidential candidate could plausibly provide a 5% boost by attracting new voters to the opposition. If he and Ukawa can "get out the vote" – by mobilising a large number of young, hitherto disaffected voters – a 10% swing might be achievable, and with it a convincing bid for the presidency. However, a substantial turnout among youth voters is as difficult to achieve in Tanzania as elsewhere.

Ukawa's appeal to young voters might have been greater had Chadema not expelled Zitto Kabwe, an energetic and plain speaking former chair of the parliamentary accounts committee. Being below the age of 40, Kabwe was ineligible to stand for the presidency under Tanzania's 1977 constitution, but he founded his own party hoping that a new constitution might enable him to compete. Lacking established grassroots structures, Kabwe's Alliance for Change and Transparency (ACT-*Wazalendo*) is unlikely to gain much traction.

CCM's partial eclipse?

CCM is the clear favourite in the elections. The constituency map is likely to resemble a crescent moon. Seats adjacent to Lake Tanganyika will be split between CCM, NCCR-*Mageuzi* and ACT-*Wazalendo*; those in the densely-populated area around Lake Victoria will be shared by Chadema and CCM. Much of the Northern Zone will fall to Chadema, which will also see its vote surge in Dar es Salaam. CUF should take half the seats in Zanzibar, while making inroads in some coastal constituencies. CCM will successfully defend its hegemony in the southern highlands and central zone. The encroachment of the opposition on CCM's agrarian heartland in previous elections continues.

The fate of Tanzania's draft constitution, and the future of the coalition that was formed to defend it, is more uncertain. Assuming Ukawa survives the election intact, its leaders and members may not have the inclination or stamina to fight again for radical reform of the *katiba*. The departure of Lipumba and Slaa has left CUF and Chadema significantly weakened, while NCCR-*Mageuzi* and NLD may suffer from their electoral association with bigger parties and more prominent political figures.

If Lowassa proves costly to Ukawa in terms of credibility and support, recriminations within the alliance will be vociferous and bitter. To many, an election campaign grounded on points of principle and common grievance about constitutional reform would, with hindsight, appear to have been the shrewd long-term strategy as opposed to an over-ambitious, opportunistic tilt at power entailing erosion of Ukawa's *raison d'être*. As Deus Kibamba told ARI, "politicians crossing the floor to join Ukawa did not augur well with the coalition taking a serious position on the constitutional project. Had Professor Lipumba and Dr Slaa remained at the helm, Ukawa's campaign would have placed a much greater emphasis on the values which united its member parties at the constituent assembly."¹⁵

Katiba reform appears to be dead and buried. Given Magufuli's desire to distance himself from Kikwete, one cannot see a plausible reason for him to expend valuable political capital on a constitutional referendum which might only serve to fuel the opposition. He will surely follow the lead of previous residents of the *Ikulu*, each of whom set aside pursuing the constitutional legacy of their predecessors and started the process anew in their own good time.

For further analysis of the party manifestos and parliamentary elections, please visit our website.

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