

Tanzania General Election 2015: Religious factors as political instrument in determining voting preferences

Fredrick Alleni Mfinanga¹ Issa Hamisi Issa² and Rofina Mrosso³

¹Assistant Lecturer at Institute of Rural Development Planning -Tanzania Department of Development Finance and Management Studies.

²Assistant Lecturer at Institute of Rural Development Planning -Tanzania, Department of Population Studies.

³Assistant Lecturer at Institute of Rural Development Planning -Tanzania Department of Development Finance and Management Studies.

Abstract: Religion can be an operative instrument in politics. This has been a phenomenon in Africa under different political contexts either directly or indirectly. Politicians use religion to gain public office. In Tanzania its undeniable that religion is a factor in the electoral process as in every stage citizens, politicians and political parties they are aware with anything that has linkage between religion and electoral process either covertly or overtly. The specific objective of the study was to examine the role of religious factor in Tanzania general Election 2015. Data were collected using questionnaire, interview and Focus Group Discussions between August, 2015 and October 20th 2015. Findings indicated that religious factor was used as a political instrument by both citizens and politicians in 2015 Tanzania general election whereby citizens voted against politicians who used religious factor in their favour during election campaign. Also citizens were aware that Tanzania is a secular state. She does not uphold any of the existing religions in the country as a state religion. Furthermore religious leaders were criticised by citizens for engaging in politics including election campaign instead of preaching peace, unity and provide education on voting for good leaders without bias. The study recommends; religious leaders to stop creating classes among the people in the society by using religion instead religious leaders should be the agent of uniting the people. Lastly politicians should stop using religion as a tool of fighting against their opponents in election campaign and political forum in order to ensure national unity.

Keywords: Religious factor, politics, general election, religious leader.

1.0 Introduction

That religion has an interactive relationship with other social units of a society is an undeniable fact. This is to say that religion goes beyond the context of people's communion with the supernatural, an expression of an instinctual reaction to the cosmic forces and an explicit set of messages from a deity. Thus it follows and illustrates sociological principles and laws (Johnstone, 2001). According to Dzurgba (2009) argued that religion created the society in as much as God created the universe. He represents religion while the universe represents society. Thus, all aspects of society, such as marriage, homes, schools, medical institutions and business corporations, among others, are influenced by religion. The study on Religious (de) politicisation in Uganda's 2016 elections by Alava & Ssentongo (2016) argue that what religious leaders say and do within these religious spaces and in public debate in Uganda is of consequence for the country's politics: religion serves both to enhance, and to diminish Uganda's political proper.

According to (Gahnström, 2012) noted the use of religion in political election is a common feature in the politics of many African countries. There is an incontrovertible connection between religion and politics. While the actual role that religion plays in politics has remained debatable, the nexus between the two concepts has been established for long period (Falana, 2010). Bompani & Frahm-Arp (2010) contend that religious and public political spaces in Africa are commonly used concomitantly. The political implications for this view are outlined for instance by Ellis & ter Haar (2007) who regard politics and religion as inseparable from each other as religions in Africa have a "holistic approach, where sacred and the secular can be considered to constitute one organic whole" while Chabal (2009) sees religion as the "glue that binds societies together. In Tanzania the constitutions of the union government and of the semi-autonomous government in Zanzibar both prohibit religious discrimination and provide for freedom of religious choice. Most Tanzanians are religious people and religion plays an important role in the everyday life for many Tanzanians. 99 percent of the population on the island of Zanzibar is Muslim and Tanzania's mainland is mostly populated by Christians, traditional African religions and Muslim communities found in coastal areas (Tanner 2002 as cited in Tetti, 2014). As the religious surveys were eliminated from the government census after 1967 there are no current statistics on religious demography (Tripp, 1999 as cited in Tetti, 2014).

In the 2010 elections, the set-up of the presidential race raised concerns regarding religious relations in the country. The incumbent CCM candidate, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, was a practicing Muslim, while his main

contender in 2010, Chadema's Willibrod Slaa, was a former Catholic priest and former Secretary General of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference TEC (Gahnström, 2010). In 2010 then, the race was considerably closer, and there were a range of religious issues that featured in the campaigns, including the "elections manifestoes" by TEC and Baraza kuu, as well as the debates around the possible Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) became membership and the reestablishment of the Kadhi courts. The existence of religious tensions seemed to be confirmed by Kikwete during his speech at the inauguration of the 10th Tanzanian parliament after the elections. Kikwete mentioned that there had been "religious incitements" during the campaigns, which according to him could jeopardize national unity. He announced that "the election is over, we must now concentrate on building our country" and assured the parliament of his "readiness to collaborate with fellow politicians, religious leaders and those of the community to find a solution to the problem" (Gahnström, 2012).

Since last Tanzania General election 2010, it was manifested there was possibility in future religion to be used by politicians as political instrument to acquire public office if serious initiatives would not be made to restore the situation. Great initiatives has been done by civil societies, government and NGO'S to respond to the situation in order to strengthen nation unity but very little have been documented to answer the question, does religious factor used as a political instrument by citizens in 2015 Tanzania general electoral process?. The duration of five years since last election in 2010 a lot has been done as far as Tanzania politics is concerned and the role of religion in politics and national unit thus Tanzania general election 2015 was the right time to evaluate and see whether religion was used as a political instrument to get political office or as a tool to secure a national unity among Tanzanians. Therefore this study attempted to examine religion factor a political instrument in Tanzania's General Election, 2015.

2.0 Materials and Methods

2.1 The study area

The study was conducted in three selected regions in Tanzania including Dar es Salaam, Singida and Dodoma. The reason for selection of the study area was based on the facts that the selected areas had different religions followers and even those without any religion. In addition the selection of the study area was based on the fact that Dar es Salaam is the most populated city in Tanzania with political potentials and Dodoma being the capital city whereby the influential political institutions headquarters located including the parliament of Tanzania and the headquarter of the ruling political party CCM. Moreover Fox (2008) indicates that a study focussing on one context is more possible than the entire global context. This research focuses on the context of Tanzania in order to arrive deductively at reasons for the renewed religious interest in politics.

2.2 Research design and sampling procedure

A case study research design was used so as to give a unitary character of data being studied. A case study generally aims to provide insight into a particular situation and often stresses the experiences and interpretations of those involved. It uses direct observation to give a complete snapshot of a case that is being studied. It is useful when not much is known about a phenomenon (Ball, 1981). A total of 100 citizens were randomly sampled from three regions including 44 in Dar es Salaam, 32 in Dodoma and 24 in Singida.

2.3 Data collection and Analysis

Primary data were captured through interviews with respondents using questionnaires, while checklist was used to collect data during focus group discussion with the key informants. Nine Focus Group Discussions were conducted covered three (3) groups in each region and in each group composed of six respondents including two youth, two elders and two adult. In addition, secondary data were obtained from books and published and unpublished documents. Subsequently; the responses from the questionnaires were coded, summarized and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to obtain frequency counts and percentages of various coded responses.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Respondents by education level status, age, gender and marital status

The age group of the respondents ranged between 18 years and above 60 years. About 44.7% of the respondents were youth in Dar es Salaam, 36.8% in Dodoma and 18.5% in Singida (Table 1). Furthermore those married were 62.5% in Singida, 56.2% in Dodoma and 40.9% in Dar es Salaam as shown in Table 1. Those who were separated were 4.5% in Dar es Salaam, 3.1% in Dodoma and 0% in Singida. Furthermore 16.7% of the respondents in Singida, 6.8% in Dar es Salaam and 6.2% in Dodoma were divorced as shown in Table 1. The number of youth and adults in all areas indicated that the large segment of the population is occupied by youth and adult people.

In terms of education of the respondents 56.2% in Dodoma, 40.9% in Dar es Salaam and 37.5% in Singida had tertiary education. Only 9.4% in Dodoma had non- formal education while in Dar es Salaam and Singida had no any individual with non-formal education. The varied level of education among respondents from primary to tertiary education levels indicates that the majority of them in all study areas had access to education.

Table 1: Respondents by education level, age, gender and marital status

Characteristics	Dar es Salaam	Dodoma	Singida
No of respondents	44	32	24
Age group (%)			
Youth	44.7	36.8	18.5
Adult	47.1	26.5	26.4
Elders	22.2	55.6	22.2
Marital Status (%)			
Single	34.1	31.4	20.8
Married	40.9	56.2	62.5
Divorced	6.8	6.2	16.7
Widow	13.7	3.1	0
Separated	4.5	3.1	0
Education level (%)			
Non- formal	0	9.4	0
Primary education	27.3	21.9	45.8
Secondary education	31.8	12.5	16.7
Tertiary education	40.9	56.2	37.5

3.3 The roles of religious leaders on the 2015 national election

The respondents' opinions in three regions were 69.7 % in Dar es Salaam, 24.2% in Dodoma and 6.1 % in Singida said preaching peace and unit were among the roles of a religious leader. Furthermore 58.8% of people in Dar es Salaam, 23.5% in Dodoma and 17.6% in Singida said religious leaders have the role of warning their followers not to mix religious matters and politics (Table2).

Table 2: Respondents opinions on roles of religious leaders

Citizens' opinions (%)	Locations of respondents		
	Dodoma n =32	Dar es Salaam n =44	Singida n =24
To preach peace and unit	24.2	69.7	6.1
To educate their followers on the importance of having a peaceful election	36.4	32.7	30.9
To warn religious leaders who mix religious matters and election campaign	23.5	58.8	17.6
To unite the people	46.9	37.5	15.6
Educate their followers the qualities of good leaders to be selected	38.1	38.1	23.8

Other main opinion of the citizens on the roles of religious leaders was to unite the people noted 46.9% in Dodoma, 37.5 in Dar es Salaam ad 15.6% in Singida. This shows that religious leader were peace creator and stabilizer as they used religion as a tool to absorb political shocks that if not properly handed might destroy the society and the country as a whole and religion can be misused and become a catalyst for initiation of national insecurity which at the end the whole state enter in the world of civil wars and haphazard killing among people themselves i.e genocide. This study is supported by that of Hastings (1991) conducted in South Africa who noted that religious leaders played a pivotal role in the process of leading South Africa to a democratic country. He further described the way in which leaders from Christian churches played a role in opposing political policies which created an oppressive environment for many of the inhabitants of South Africa.

3.4 Religious issues in the campaign

There was a range of issues relating to religion that featured in the election campaigns. The Organization of the Islamic Conference became topical again in 2015 with the silence by the union government that they saw it would threaten unity of the state. The main line of argument now as in 1992 for those advocating membership was that it would make Tanzania eligible for cheap loans and other benefits. Previously Christian leaders, as in the early 1990s, forcefully opposed the proposal for membership, and the Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT) even demanded the resignation of foreign minister Bernard Membe, who had advocated membership. This time in 2015 election campaign the CCM ruling political party government did not promise anything on OIC because the government dropped the issue with no apparent conclusion to the debate.

The Islamic Kadhi courts in turn stood out as more widely debated issue again in 2015 election. Tension began earlier in 2014 whereby the ruling CCM government sent a bill to the parliament for the establishment of the Islamic Kadhi courts. On 20th January, 2015 Christian's religious leaders under their associations Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT), Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) and The Council of Pentecostal Churches of Tanzania (CPCT) came with the statement to the government on amendment of the Islamic law of 1964 which focused on the introduction of the Islamic Kadhi Courts. Religious leaders demanded the government to stop the introduction of Islamic Kadhi Courts as it would threaten the nation unity and might create conflicts between Islam's and Christians. The government dropped the bill and it was not discussed in the parliament but the effects went on and rise up again during election campaign and affected more CCM party as it was used by the outgoing president Jakaya Kikwete during the election campaign in 2005 election and it was included in CCM political party manifesto although in 2009 CCM announced that establishing Kadhi courts was not on the agenda of the government, but that "Islamic principles" would be incorporated into lawmaking.

There were personal attacks on the use of religion in election campaign by candidates and political party. For example the opposition candidates former prime minister he was accused by CCM that when he was at Tabora during Sunday mass congregations in Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania he said it's now time for Lutheran Church to get president. This statement brought chaos and used by CCM in their election campaign claiming UKAWA candidates is religious candidates and insisted if he will be selected he will disunity the citizens and distorts the nation unity. This message raised debate and criticism among politicians and citizens nationally on the regionalization in politics which might lead to disintegration of nation unity among Tanzanians.

3.5 Religion factor and voting

The study revealed religion was a critical factor used by the voters in analysing the election campaign and voting. The respondents were asked as to whether they would vote for or against the candidates on the basis of religion. In Dar es Salaam 36.4 % of citizens, 36.4% in Dodoma and 27.3% in Singida said they would vote against a candidate who uses religion as a tool for convincing citizens in his/her election campaign. In Focus Group discussion citizens said it's not acceptable because our country has no religion instead its citizens has religion and religion should not used to threaten our nation unity. Others citizens emphasized further the politician of this type want to bring crusade and civil unrest situation in the country. For instance, one older man respondent in Singida at Manyoni district said *"We don't need a leader who campaign on dividing the people on the basis of individual religion but rather we need a leader who will enhance our peace and unit; we hear our neighbour Somalia how they are suffering from civil wars and religious conflict caused by Alshaabab militants we don't need the same to happen in Tanzania"*.

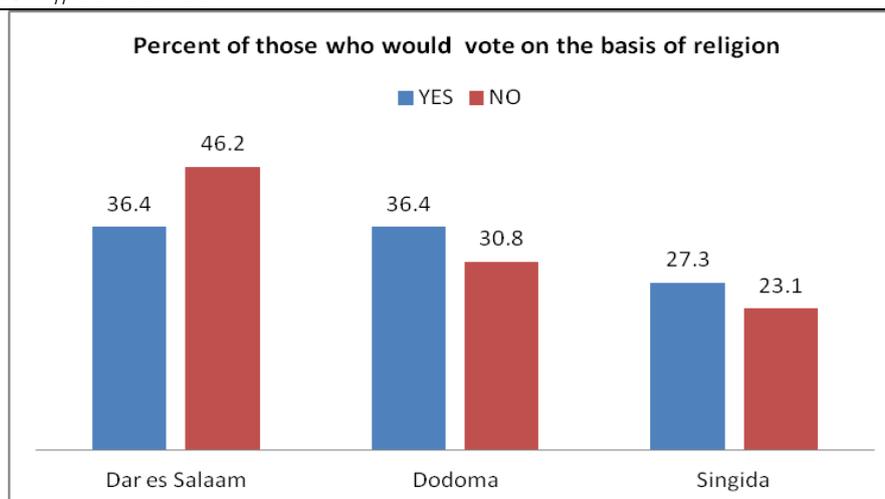


Figure 1: Citizens who would vote on the basis of religion

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The aim of this article was to explain the influence of religion in 2015 Tanzania Election which held on 25th October, 2015. The study conducted in Dar es Salaam, Dodoma and Singida regions enabled to explain the influence of religion in election campaign and even enabled to capture citizen's views on how they voted on 25th October, 2015. In all study areas youth and adults were highly registered and said they would vote because it was time for change. Citizens said they would use religion as one of the criteria to disqualify the candidates who use religion as an instrument to get political office. Also the religious leaders were criticised by the citizens for interfering politics instead of being watchdogs to political office holders by guiding them against unacceptable practices. The study recommends the following; religious leaders to stop creating classes among the people in the society by using religion instead religious leaders should be the agent of uniting the people. Lastly politicians should stop using religion as a tool of fighting against their opponents in election campaign and political forum.

References

- [1]. Alava, H. & Ssentongo, J. S. (2016). Religious (de)politicization in Uganda's 2016 elections, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
- [2]. Ball, S., J., (1981) *Beachside Comprehensive: A Case Study of Secondary Schooling*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [3]. Bompani, B. & Frahm-Arp, (2010) (eds.) *Development and Politics from Below*. Exploring Religious Spaces in the African State. Nongovernmental Public Action Series. Palgrave
- [4]. Chabal, P. (2009). *Africa: The Politics of Smiling and Suffering*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Scottsville, South Africa.
- [5]. Dzurghba, A., (2009). *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*. John Archer Publisher Limited, pp: 23.
- [6]. Ellis, S & ter Haar, G. (2007). *Religion and politics: taking African epistemologies seriously*. *Journal of Modern African Studies*. Cambridge University Press.
- [7]. Falana, F. (2010). A public lecture delivered at the 51st birthday anniversary of Rt. Rev Alfred Adewale Martins, Catholic Bishop of Abeokuta, Ogun State on Saturday June 5, 2010.
- [8]. Fox, J. (2008). *A World Survey of Religion and the State*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- [9]. Gahnström, C. S. L. (2010). *Ethnicity, Religion and Politics in Tanzania; The 2010 General Elections and Mwanza Region*, Unpublished Master Degree Thesis, University of Helsinki.
- [10]. Gahnström, C. S.L. (2012). *Ethnicity, Religion and Politics in Tanzania: The 2010 General Elections and Mwanza Region* University of Helsinki
- [11]. Hastings, A. (1991). *Politics and Religion in Southern Africa*. In Moyser, G. *Politics and Religion in the Modern World*. Routledge: London.
- [12]. Johnstone, R.L., (2001). *Religion in Society: A Sociology of Religion*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, pp: 1.
- [13]. Tetti, M. B. (2014). What Went Wrong in Tanzania: How Does Religious Tension is threatening National Unity and Cohesion. *International Journal of Education and Research*, Vol. 2 No. 6.