

Magufuli's dilemma: corruption and the pursuit of democracy

Olle Mwalupinde

Tanzania's first President, Julius Nyerere famously said that "Tanzanians want change; if they cannot get change from within CCM [Tanzania's ruling party] then they will look for change outside of CCM" (Raia Mwema 2015). Tanzania has been ruled by the Chama Cha Mapinduzi Party (CCM) since the country adopted the multi-party system in 1992. Yet, in the time leading up to last years' general election there were signs that, as a result of Tanzania's government being tainted by corruption scandals and CCM's failure to bring development to rural areas, Tanzanians were ready to seek change outside of the ruling party (BBC Swahili 2014).

What few had expected was that CCM would choose a Presidential Candidate who would completely hijack the opposition's agenda. Dr John Pombe Magufuli, the candidate of the ruling CCM, ran his campaign on promising to combat corruption, a new style of leadership and on accusing the opposition's Presidential Candidate, Lowassa, of being fraudulent (Mugarula 2015). As a result, Magufuli won what was expected to be the tightest election in Tanzania's history. November 2016 marks Magufuli's one-year anniversary as President of Tanzania. During his first year in power, Magufuli has shown a leadership different from that of any previous Tanzanian President.

Magufuli has exhibited that his fight against corruption was not just campaigning rhetoric. He has, on many occasions, fired corrupt and negligent government politicians. For example, in November last year Magufuli made a surprise visit to one of Tanzania's national hospitals, Muhimbili, where he dismissed the Director and Board of the hospital, after accusing them of not running the hospital efficiently. During his visit to the hospital Magufuli discovered that many of the hospital's patients were sleeping on the floor and that the main diagnostic machines were not working. He also discharged a senior governmental official on live TV in April this year. Said official had been accused of signing fraudulent contracts and misusing his position, leading to the public firing (Msigwa 2016).

Moves such as these have been welcomed by the Tanzanian public and made Magufuli one of the most popular figures in the country. Recent polls have shown that Magufuli currently enjoys a stunning 96% approval rating (BBC 2016). Furthermore, the President has pleased many people by cutting down on government expenditure, through policies such as reducing government spending on travels abroad, as well as cancelling the 2015 National Day celebrations, instead ordering the money to be spent on road works in Dar es Salaam (Gaffey 2015).

However, Magufuli's first year in power is not seen as a success by everyone. According to the opposition in Tanzania, Magufuli has introduced a much more authoritarian style of rule (Mwakideu 2016). Some critics claim that Magufuli has reduced the "democratic space" in Tanzania (Mwakideu 2016). For example, the government in April this year decided to stop broadcasting parliamentary debates and proceedings on live television as an attempt to save money (Lamtey 2016). This, however, has been seen by many as an attempt at censorship (*Ibid.*). Moreover, Magufuli has banned all political rallies and public meetings

until 2020 (Mwakideu 2016). The opposition's main lawyer, Tundu Lissu, has deemed this decision unconstitutional and a threat to democratic freedom (Abdulla 2016).

Actions such as these risk to destroy Magufuli's image both within Tanzania and abroad. Furthermore, the perceived infringement on democracy has given the opposition in Tanzania an agenda to organise themselves around again (Mjema and Sauwa 2016). In reaction to activities displayed during his first presidential year, the opposition has argued that Magufuli has threatened Tanzania's democracy. Therefore, the attempts to censor and weaken the opposition can be seen as counter-productive, as they have granted the opposition with a new platform and more attention in Tanzanian and world media.

There are now four years left until the next general election. Magufuli has shown that Tanzanians can still count on experiencing change from within the CCM party. His attempt to deal with corruption is also still giving him enormous popularity. Yet, a continuation of more authoritarian leadership can lead to Magufuli losing approval in upcoming years, as Tanzania prides itself in being one of the most democratic countries on the African continent.

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