

The Growing of Islamic Fundamentalism in Tanzania: Are the rising religious tensions ripping Tanzania apart?

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Abstract

For many years now Tanzania has maintained a record of been a peaceful nation in the great lake region. The national unity, political stability and social cohesion that the country has been enjoying all this years did not come by coincidence. The founders of this nation have done quite a great deal in maintaining the today's unity and harmony. The situation that the country has been proud of is indeed the product of political culture cultivated over time by the founders of this great nation. From the beginning there was a strong emphasis of equal access to social services and opportunities amongst Christians and Muslims such as education, employment as well as participation in national affairs for both Muslim and Christian. The founders of this nation did that because they recognized the potential dangers of religious discord. Contrarily to country expectations today elements of discontent and violent attacks are recurring among Christian and Muslims. Impliedly this tells us that we must have gone wrong somewhere. This paper is therefore an attempt to show where did we go wrong and provide some recommendations accordingly. As a general message the paper emphasizes that it is high time the Tanzanian government stop pretending that all is well and approach the Muslim plight seriously and objectively. Any structural injustices that probably exist according to Muslim as well as Christians should be properly analysed and handled accordingly.

Key words: Islamic Fundamentalism, religious tension, Muslim and Christian, United Republic of Tanzania

1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1 *Background to the problem:*

The United Republic of Tanzania is generally perceived as a country spared from violence and conflicts despite its multi-religious and multi-ethnic setting. By and large, this has been attributed to the secular policies of *Ujamaa*, the African-social ideology developed under the leadership of Tanzania's first president Julius K. Nyerere (Rasmussen 1993). It can be noted however, since economic liberalization and polity reforms took place during the mid-1980s Tanzania's socio- political stability has been challenged by publicly displayed religious expressions that fill the re-opened public realm. Despite of the fact that the country has enjoyed a long history of peaceful coexistence among its people, an increased tensions along intra-religious, inter-religious and state-religious lines have been recently manifested and negotiated through a multitude of religious fractions, especially along Muslim and Christian lines. Indeed, there is a growing tendency that religious organisations publicly challenge government policies and the government's relationships to sections of the society.

The increased trends of religious tensions in Tanzania can be traced as from 1990s, when the people of Zanzibar with Arab origin purported that the government of Zanzibar under the ruling party CCM seem to discriminate them in various arenas. Similarly, the same dissatisfaction has been spread over in the Tanzania mainland as well particularly along the coastal region amongst the Swahili and "Arab" population. As Bakari said "In particular, this has been represented by radical Muslim voices, which argue that Tanzanian politics has an inbuilt anti-Muslim bias which results in their exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage" (Bakari, 2008). Indeed this kind of frustrations among the fraction of Tanzanian population has been threatened the peaceful culture of Tanzanians. Of recent probably due to the same complains various attacks upon Christians have been registered. I would argue that it is obviously not hundred percent true that Muslims have been marginalized to such an extent. "Tanzania is a secular country. Because of its secularism the constitution of the country guarantees freedom of religion. Every person has right to worship anything and affiliate in any religious group as long as one does not infringe freedom of another on basis of religion. Article 26 of the Tanzanian constitution moreover, requires every citizen regardless of his or her faith to obey and respect the laws and the constitution" (Ching'ole, 2013).

Many Muslims have constantly been able to hold key positions in various institutions and the government with no exception. Prime example here can be drawn from the presidency, since its independence the presidency has

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been unofficially rotated between a Christian and a Muslim¹. This is absolutely not constitutional but rather a sheer coincidence.

1.2 *Problem Statement:*

Despite of the historical good relations amongst the Tanzanian both Muslims and Christians, of recent, enmity between these religious groups has noticed augmented. The growth of this hostility has been noted with much concern by most peace loving Tanzanians; indeed this is absolutely disrupting the country's reputation for peace. I would argue that the change of political system from a socialist political system as decreed by Julius Nyerere to a competitive market economy can to a certain extent explain this phenomenon. Religious tensions between Christian and Muslim groups in the country are rising to the extent of violent attacks on the Christians by Muslim fundamentalist.

Being Tanzanian, all this long I have observed people both at individual and community levels living very peacefully regardless of our different beliefs. It is then very imperative to ask ourselves, why now and not before? All along the people have been living side by side without any problems related to our beliefs. The key questions here remain; will these fundamentalists' tendencies rip Tanzania apart and turn it into another northern Mali or Nigeria? Is Tanzania still safe for her people both Muslim and Christian to live harmoniously together? Are these conflicts really religious or economic motivated ones?

These critical questions indisputably form the motivation of writing this paper. In this paper therefore, I want to reflect and analyze on the sequence of religious conflicts and violence that have rocked Tanzania recently. Responses to these questions may hint a little bit on the state of security in the country. But I fully believe that these violence caused by fundamentalist ideologies are deadly and indeed, is the major area that need to be addressed now before it rips this beautiful country apart.

2. **THEORETICAL UNDERPININGS:**

2.1 *Unpacking the concept of 'Fundamentalism'*

Fundamentalism frequently represents religious activities and behaviour that are negative and violent in nature. It is unfortunate that the word itself has been stereotyped with negative religious connotations. In many cases this concept has been associated with violence; this usually raises the question that is "fundamentalists" inherently violent? Can people hold fundamentalist opinions without being violent? This stereotyping has always undermined the existence of other sect of moderate Muslim fundamentalists. Keeping these facts in mind, this section tries to define fundamentalism by considering both moderate and active fundamentalism. This will perhaps clarify the fact that not all religious fundamentalists are violent in nature as it often implies.

2.1.1 *Definitions: Fundamentalism:*

As a point of departure it's important to understand that "fundamentalism" exists in all religions. According to Hadden K. Jeffrey and Shupe Anson in their book titled *Secularization and Fundamentalism Reconsidered* defined fundamentalism as "the proclamation of reclaimed authority over a sacred tradition which is to be reinstated as an antidote for a society that has strayed from its traditional cultural values" (Hadden K. J and Shupe A, 1989).

Fundamentalists often proclaim the importance of their own idiosyncratic interpretation of religious texts over any other acquired knowledge and teachings. This normally puts them at odds with the members of other religions and beliefs, the secular world and also with their less zealous brethren. Fundamentalist tries to bring religion to the center of all public policy decisions. Fundamentalism usually rejects the process of modernisation and ideology of secularisation by trying to strictly abide by the scriptures and preserve their traditional religious values in this modernized word.

2.1.1.1 *Moderate and Active Fundamentalism:*

Moderate fundamentalists often emanate from the elite classes within a society. These are moderate thinkers who apart from their strictly adherence to the religious scriptures, they do not rely on the use violence to obtain their religious ideals. Moderate fundamentalists through their work always strive to bring the desired change within a society through peaceful means without the use of violence. Whereas Active Fundamentalism as the word "active" implies do adhere to even the use of violence in order to pursue their cause. Most often active fundamentalism originates from within the followers. However, leaders can belong to both the elite as well as non-elite class it is important to note moreover that moderate fundamentalists at times can as well transform to active fundamentalism.

2.1.2 *Brief history of the term:*

The history reveals that the fundamentalism ideology came about during late 19th century because of opposition made by Protestant movement opposing the accommodation of Christian doctrine to modernization. These happened due to the reaction of Christian fundamentalists to various changes that were happening within the Christianity and the society at large that mostly emphasized science and technological developments. These

¹ First president Nyerere was a Christian, second president Mwinyi was a Muslim, third Mkapa was a Christian and now Kikwete is a Muslim

movements were basically characterized by religious beliefs and fidelity. As Grolier states “although there were some slight differences between them but these fundamentalists upholds belief in the inerrancy of the Bible and the divinity of Jesus Christ the vicarious and atoning character of his death, his bodily resurrection, and his second coming as the irreducible minimum of authentic Christianity” (Grolier, 1993).

Ernest R. Sandeen also added in his book *The Roots of Fundamentalism* when he explains; “although fundamentalist movements seem to be coined in the United States during the 1920, the momentum was given by the British Millenarian Movement during 1800-1845” (Sandeen, 1970). Therefore, when one attempts to understand the origins of the term fundamentalism, it is imperative to hint the history of the British millenarian movement. Nonetheless, I’m not going to dwell deep into this history since it’s not the motive of the paper but I think it is worth mentioning it.

In the present world, we are noticing a growing trend of fundamentalism and indeed it has been used as a very important driving force for shaping various policies in the world. Many examples can be drawn here e.g. US domestic policies in relation to abortion and gay marriage have been a result of Christian fundamentalists. Other examples are Israel domestic and foreign policy being shaped by Jewish fundamentalism, Islamic fundamentalism guides the attitudes towards women and foreign policies in Arab countries as well as Islamic Jihad, Buddhist fundamentalism being the driving force of the violence happening in Burma against the Rohingya just to mention a few.

2.2 *Conceptualizing Islamic Fundamentalism:*

In Islam the holy Quran is the main text which every Muslim is obliged to follow its teachings in both their private and public lives. The bases of the teaching of holy Quran is the set of laws called the Sharia laws which in Islamic tradition are believed to be the rules of conduct for mankind to follow. Any deviation from submission to these laws (in this case Sharia laws) ought to be condemned since it undermines the pathway laid out by God almighty for Muslims. Therefore, it is a teaching of Islam that Quran condemns such un-Islamic acts and proposes Jihad as a method to castigate these conditions and whatsoever factors that influenced them. It is because of these religious teachings in Islam which forces Muslims to follow in both their public and private lives that makes it likely to be associated with fundamentalism.

It is important to note however that religious fundamentalism is not necessarily politically conservative but it has always a social character. For example, some Islamic fundamentalist groups may be concerned with a certain socio-economic condition and may want to seek to overthrow the current regime (political order) by the use of several means, such as violence, incremental reform of existing political regimes or by means of winning elections through a certain political party. Islamic fundamentalist, just like their Christian counterparts, maintain what they believe to be God’s words as written in their holy books. In other words, Islamic fundamentalist dogma is strongly based on single scriptural revelations. A prime example of this phenomenon can be drawn from the contemporary Islamic fundamentalists’ movements.

3. ANALYSIS OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN TANZANIA

3.1 *Tanzania mainland:*

The attack which led to a bombing of the U.S. embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania back in 1998, killed eleven people and caused injuries to many, showed the existence of an element of Jihad terrorists motivated by Islamic fundamentalist ideologies. Although the bombing was not plotted by entirely Tanzanian Muslims but two Zanzibari were implicated in the same. The attack was revealed to have been plotted by Somalis al Qaeda operators, based in Nairobi with some regional links within East African countries.

Apart from the US embassy bombing there has been series of various other attacks which include among others the bomb explosion that exploded outside St Joseph’s Roman Catholic Church in Arusha on May 5, 2013. This explosion claimed two lives of people and caused a lot of injuries of more than 60 people. It was also reported that on 2/3/ 2013, unknown assailants, most likely Muslims, attacked bishop Valentino Mokiwa’s residence, the Bishop of Dar es Salaam and by then Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Tanzania.¹

Another notable incidence happened on February 11, 2013, when a group of Muslim youths violently attacked a group of Christians, who had slaughtered animals (two goats and a cow) to be sold at a local market in Buseresere a place located in Geita region. This conflict resulted in the killing of Pastor Mathayo Kachili of the TAG (Tanzanian Assemblies of God Church). Several others were seriously injured and significant property damage. In this context, the question which remains to some of us is whether this conflict simply revolves around Muslim fears of erroneously eating meat which is not halal, or whether for Christians being business competitors, while using religion as a shield. It is indeed very evident that the beheading of the pastor was essentially linked to perceived threats to Tanzanian long-standing tradition of Muslims assuming the monopoly on the meat industry.

¹ <http://midnightwatcher.wordpress.com/2013/03/24/tanzania-christian-bishop-nearly-killed-by-suspected-islamists-following-machete-attack/>

In October, 2012 moreover, a number of Muslim youth attacked and burn down churches when they failed to gain access to a 14 year old boy who desecrated the Holy Qur'an¹, sparking anger among Muslim youths in the area. I think the police mishandled the matter. They failed to take appropriate actions when the boy was initially sent to them. Muslims were enraged by police laxity.

The practice of Muslim Open air preaching (*Mihadhara*) in Tanzania have similarly been adversely affecting religious harmony and tolerance between Muslims and Christians. In these public lectures commonly known as "*Mihadhara*", Muslims mainly use the Bible to disprove certain aspects of the Christian belief and this phenomenon has had a lot of negative consequences on the relations of this two faith groups. In most cases these Muslims public lectures are one sided and lacks genuine respect for Christians. Although this phenomenon is not new in the history around the globe, it happens to be new thing in the history of this country, that's why at times it raises an alarm.

3.2 Zanzibar Island:

In comparison, the religious violence incidences in Tanzania's mainland happen to be minimal than the other side (Zanzibar) where the situation is rather more complicated. It is important also to note that about 99% of the population in Zanzibar is Muslim, so Islam is the religion of majority in Zanzibar. The threat of violence in Zanzibar has grown recently with the rise of a group called the Association of Islamic Awareness and Public Discourse popularly known as UAMSHO², which means "awakening" in Swahili. Though founded in 2001 as a charitable organization, this organization has evolved to become a strong critic of tourists' perceived excesses on the archipelago, as well as an advocate for Zanzibar secession. In its critique of the government, this Islamic group tends to normally employ the language of good governance and human rights.

Supporters of this group blame the government of intervening in religious affairs, which goes against Article 19 of the Constitution. They also argue that moral decline of the country is a results of the government corruption. Another concern of this group is based on the laws in Tanzania regulating dress codes and alcohol, but is not enforced by the corrupt government. The government of Zanzibar however, has publically declared that this group has fundamentalist views and ideology. In addition, this group is also been accused of contemplating terrorist attacks against the tourist industry in Zanzibar.

The situation turned obnoxious when people believed to be members of the UAMSHO, reportedly torched churches and destroyed other properties. Violent clashes happening in Zanzibar have already claimed a number of lives of people and the law enforcers in the island have in many occasion accused followers of UAMSHO leader, Sheikh Farid Hadi Ahmed of executing the murder. For example, Father Evarist Mushi who is a Catholic priest was reported killed in Zanzibar while he was on the way to his church. These Islamic fundamentalists have gone as far as putting some court injunctions in order to block the rebuilding of destroyed churches.

This Islamic group in many events seems to be at the center of many instances of violence against Christians in Zanzibar. Yet the Zanzibar government, seem to take no serious action in order to address the problems of violence that has claimed the lives of people mostly Christians and destroyed many of the churches in this beautiful island. Up to now, no one has been arrested in connection with these attacks on churches in Zanzibar. This leaves serious question to many whether the government condones these activities or not? The government of Zanzibar must take serious actions against these violent attacks happening in the island. In order to regain confidence of most Tanzanians, in my opinion the government needs to hold this group accountable for their actions. Until they do so, many of Christians in Zanzibar will continue to live in fear and this threatens the peace of the country.

I want to recall what Dr Helen Kijo-Bisimba³ once said when speaking to the press conference in Dar es Salaam, "it is the government that is to be blamed for the increasing hostile relations between Muslims and Christians in the country". She added that the government was slow when early signs of religious intolerance started and that has resulted in the current predicament. She called upon the government to form an independent team to probe the tensions. "Clerics from both sides shouldn't be included in the team," she advised. (Ching'ole, 2013)

The majority of Christian community in Tanzania (approximately 40%) seem to have a strong feeling that the current president who is also Muslim could be deliberately putting a blind eye on what is happening, an accusation which the government leaders strongly reject. As the government becomes hesitant on taking serious measures to resolve the problem; Christians seem to bear the brunt of the problem.

In her recent statement the Tanzania Christian Forum (TCF) which has key Protestant churches as members, such as the Christian Community Tanzania, Episcopal Council Tanzania, Seventh Day Adventists and Community Pentecostal churches said that Christians in Tanzania are subjected to a systematic persecution.

¹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/19/US-Tanzania-unrest-zanzibar-idUSBRE8911G020121019>

² UAMSHO is a religious political group that has called for the separation of Zanzibar from mainland Tanzania

³ The executive director of Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC)

“Together with this systematic persecution, we understand clearly that the perpetrators are a small group of Tanzanian Muslims, like those in the other parts of Africa (eg Boko Haram in Nigeria). Many Muslims are unhappy about these events. They also look to the government to contain these few Muslims who are tarnishing the Islamic religion and making all the other Muslims look like rivals of Christianity, something which is not true” the statement says.¹

This Christians forum continue arguing that the constitution of Tanzania guarantee freedom of religion to every citizen hence every citizen has the right to follow their own beliefs. Therefore, any even Muslim argument to claim exclusive right to slaughter animals on the basis of their faith impinges on other citizens' right to freedom of religion and beliefs. The Forum critically blames the government for not taking any serious action against this violent Islamic propaganda which has caused various atrocities such as the burning of churches, attacks and assassinations that has truly intimidated church leaders and the Christian community at large.

Accordance with Article 12 and 13 of the Tanzanian constitution, it is indeed the responsibility of the government to treat its citizens equally and without discrimination. Therefore, the Church leaders and the Christian community in general appear to have a strong feeling that the government has failed to respect the constitution on these rights of its citizens.

3.3 What are the root causes of this tension and violent conflict?

As a root cause of these tensions and conflicts several scholars have pointed to religious revivalism, both in Christianity and in Islam (Ludwig, 1996; Gifford, 1996; Lodhi and Westerlund, 1999). In Tanzania this is a comparatively new phenomenon; various terms are used to refer the same. There is no single word in Swahili language that can sufficiently express such a phenomenon. People speak about *imani kali* or *msimamo mkali*, usually translated with such terms as ‘religious extremism’ and ‘religious fundamentalism’. The terminology continues to grow and has become part of both the popular and academic vocabulary (Lacunza Balda, 1997, pp. 120-122).

Apparently, Muslims in Tanzania can organize mass rallies nationwide which openly and in live broadcasts denounce the church, criticize the government and Parliament for oppressing Muslims. The new coined word “Mfumo Kristo” roughly meaning “Christian dominance” are now part of the Muslim and Swahili vocabulary. These analogies are used freely in the Muslim media and among Muslims in every day conversation. But what usually thrills Muslims and utterly significant showing that times have changed is when in the gatherings and in normal discussion Muslims refer to Nyerere hitherto known respectfully as “Baba wa Taifa” as “Baba wa Kanisa,” meaning “Church Elder.”²

The move by the Catholic Church to make him a saint has actually worsened the matter. More so it proves all the allegations leveled against Nyerere that he never was a nationalist but a Catholic zealot. Respect and love which Muslims once had for Nyerere has been completely wiped out. The new generation of Muslims no longer believe in the official history of Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and the propaganda that it was Nyerere who single handedly defeated the British. Muslims instead are honouring other heroes of independence movement whom in their opinion believed that they are forgotten heroes and in so doing invoking emotions particularly in the new generation to stand up against oppression as their forefathers had done against Germans and the British. Muslim heroes of the Maji Maji War such as Suleiman Mamba, Ali Songea Mbano,³ and Muslim nationalists like Abdulwahid⁴ and Ally Sykes,⁵ Dossa Aziz, Sheikh Hassan bin Amir,⁶ Sheikh Suleiman Takadir, Sheikh Yusuf Badi, Bibi Titi Mohamed,⁷ Bibi Tatu bint Mzee, Bilali Rehani Waikela,¹ Ali Migeoyo² and others are now part of

¹ See on-line at: amecea.blogspot.com/2013/06/tanzania-joint-statement-of.html

² The late Prof. Haroub Othman after reading Sheikh Ali Muhsin's book *Conflict and Harmony in Zanzibar* and the writer's book *The Life and Times of Abdulwahid Sykes 1924 -1968 The Untold Story of the Muslim Struggle Against British Colonialism in Tanganyika*, Minerva Press, London 1998 and having come across hitherto unknown information on Nyerere was devastated because he was a great admirer of Nyerere as a patriot and a nationalist. The two books had painted him differently. Prof. Haroub confronted Nyerere and told him that the allegations in those two works have tarnished his image and he advised him to respond to them. Nyerere never did. Christian lecturers at Dar es Salaam University are discouraging students from making references to those two books. Dr. Harith Ghassany's book *Kwaheri Ukoloni Kwaheri Uhuru*, has also come up with more information on Nyerere hitherto unknown in the Zanzibar Revolution and the bloodbath which followed.

³ In all historical references to Maji Maji War hero and Chief of Wangoni Ali Songea Mbano, his Muslim name “Ali” would be omitted and he would be referred to as Songea Mbano.

⁴ Mohamed Said, *The Life and Times of Abdulwahid Sykes (1924 –1968), The Untold Story of the Muslim Struggle Against British Colonialism in Tanganyika* Minerva Publishers, London, 1998.

⁵ Mohamed Said, *Broken Dreams, The Life of Ally Kleist Sykes*, Phoenix Publishers, Nairobi 2011 (Forthcoming).

⁶ Issa Ziddy, *Sheikh Hassan bin Ameir (1880-1979)*. Also See Mohamed Said, “Sheikh Hassan bin Ameir - The Moving Spirit of Muslim Emancipation in Tanganyika (1950 – 1968)” (Paper presented at Youth Camp Organised by Zanzibar University, World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) and Tanzania Muslim Students Association (TAMSA) 27th February – 4th March 2004.

⁷ Bibi Titi was recruited into TANU by Schneider Abdillah Plantan and began to mobilize people particularly women to join the party even before he came to know Nyerere.

nationalist history which was suppressed for many years.³

Principally, Muslims are demanding the restoration of their history and honour as true liberators of Tanganyika. This is really very exceptional in the history of this country; one can only speculate and wonder where this would lead to. Can we identify this phenomenon as corrective and revision of history or is it a lesson of anarchy in recording history?⁴ The result of all this is that the Church has been made to stand naked. That the Church did not play any role during Maji Maji⁵ or during the struggle against the British or that it has worked hand in hand with the government to sabotage Islam and Muslims is now common knowledge.

If you look at the current politics in Tanzania one can as well argue that politics also plays a big role in exacerbating the tensions: For instance, in general election of October 2005, the ruling party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) in order to get more votes, promised through election manifesto to Muslims that once they get elected they would bring *kadhi* court and *sharia* laws in the country. This helped CCM to get more votes from Muslims. But after winning election, the promise was not fulfilled so far no such courts exist and most Christians are against those courts.

Lastly, the culture of alternation of presidents basing on religious affiliation has instinctively made Tanzanian politics to go along religious lines as well. For instance, the first President Nyerere was Christian (1961-1984) followed by a Muslim, President Ally Hassan Mwinyi (1985-1995), followed by Christian, President Benjamin Mkapa (1995-2005) followed by a Muslim, President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete (2005-to date). The questions which many Tanzanians are asking right now are: Who (in terms of religion) will follow after the current President Kikwete? Will he/she be a Muslim or Christian? Will this politics along religious lines continue to dominate?

The history has shown that religion may be used in many ways to invoked, provoke or stimulate violence. Religion could usually be used in drawing some boundaries between people in the name of 'us' and 'them'. It can be used to provide an identity amongst people of a certain particular conflict irrespective of their conflict being it religious or not, because religion is used to define and separate communities along conflict lines. Although in some cases conflicts can be purely religious, for instance the conflict in Iran during 1979 which led to Iranian Revolution. Other good example could be Al-Qaeda movement which is geared towards the restoration of the glory of Islam.

3.4 *What are the roles of religion in Peace-Building and Peace-Making*

Religious Peacebuilding in religious context can be referred to as "those range of activities that are performed by religious institutions and actors for the purpose for resolving and transforming deadly conflict, with the goal of building social relations and political institutions characterized by an ethos of tolerance and nonviolence" (David & Scott, 2002).

Every religion preaches and teaches peace so peacebuilding is always a teachings and practice of most religions. Religious actors can be able to influence elite at different levels, be it international, national or local level. Their capacity to comprehend the contexts offers unique strengths in appreciating the opportunities as well as threats presented by social change, which is an important element for peacebuilding.

The modern society is pluralistic by nature. There is no society today in the world whether in the so called developing world or developed (technologically advanced) world, that is homogeneous. Everywhere in the world social groups which are made up of people of different backgrounds in terms of ethnic origin, race, culture, socio-economic class and religion can be found, in terms of language, culture, ethnic origin, socio-economic class, race and religion.

Factors, such as access to natural resources, political power or social influence, can possibly affect interaction between the various groups both positively or negatively. Organizations with religious affiliation can be a very

¹ Bilali Rehani Waikela one of the TANU founder members in Western Province in 1955 and Regional Secretary of the East African Muslim Welfare Society (EAMWS) were detained by Nyerere in 1964 for "mixing religion and politics." His personal papers were of great help in understanding the EAMWS crisis of 1968 and the reasons why Nyerere detained prominent sheikhs banned and banned the society in 1968. A documentary of his political life has been made and although not officially recognized as a patriot Muslims now consider him as one of the heroes of the independence movement. See Mohamed Said, "In Praise of Ancestors," *Africa Events* (London) March/April 1977.

² G. Muthaba, *Portrait of a Nationalist: The Life of Ali Migeyo*, East African Publishing House, 1969.

³ Maji Maji Museum in Songea which has been greatly desecrated removing all signs of Muslim symbols during the Maji Maji War with Germans. The Maji Maji Museum at Peramiho under the Catholic Church has closed its doors to young Muslims for fear of criticism for distorting history. All Muslim symbols in Maji Maji War against Germans have been obliterated in the Maji Maji Museum.

⁴ A children's book authored by the current writer, *Torch on Kilimanjaro*, Oxford University Press, Nairobi, 2007 has been blacklisted and cannot be included as a reader in schools because it contravenes the official history.

⁵ Yusuf Halimoja, *Historia ya Masasi*, East African Literature Bureau, Nairobi, 1977 pp 163 175 gives a narration how Christians fought alongside Germans during Maji Maji. Also see P. Gerold Rupper, OSB, *Pugu Hadi Peramiho: Miaka 100 wa Wamishionari Wabenediktini Katika Tanzania*, Benedictine Publications, Ndanda Peramiho, 1980, pp 31- 42.

rich source of peace and justice services both from within religious communities and the society at large. These institutions can function as an influential force for constructive conflict-management and uphold social tolerance through interfaith dialogues etc. Religious people are peace-builders and peace-makers by nature.

In Tanzania because of the increased religious tensions, the Protestant Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT) initiated an interfaith dialogue. It was through this kind of dialogues which resulted in the formation of the Muslim-Christian Commission for Peace Development and Conflict Resolution in short TUWWAMUTA¹. "TUWWAMUTA" has a number of objectives such as to help building up mutual trust between Muslims and Christians in Tanzania and to ensure peaceful relationships and a harmonious co-existence. This commission has been so successful in improving the Muslim-Christian relationship in the country².

4. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION:

This paper sought to give an overview of the prevailing situation of increased tensions between Christian and Muslim communities in Tanzania. Indeed, in this paper I have tried to reveal the path which to my opinion I believe is very unsafe for Tanzanian. The current situation should not be ignored. It is my general hope that this paper has provided information which would reach bigger audience and may help Tanzanian (Muslims and Christians) to understand that the problem the country is facing. We should realize that Tanzania is not different from northern Nigeria, Mali, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya or any other African countries torn apart by civil strife as a result of ethnic or religious conflict.

Tanzania has been one of the peaceful countries in this region with long history of peaceful and harmonious relationships amongst her people. Despite of this good history of relationship, few commotions, riots and violence spreading up recently indicates an increase in relational tensions which should not be ignored. The paper has also revealed evidence that the recent relationship between Christians and Muslims in Tanzania has been reported tense and violent in some part of the country both within mainland and more so Zanzibar Island.

Analytically, it seems to me there is direct link between dire economic situation coupled with unemployment problem and the prevalence situation of interreligious clashes between Muslims and Christians in Tanzania. I want also to stress here that, this poor economic growth and high unemployment rate could have as well contributed towards the recent rise of religious fundamentalism in the country. Most of people who are involved in these violence and riots are unemployed youth who have nothing else to do or fear hence nothing to lose. This is group that can be manipulated easily by those who have financial capability to fulfill their own motive.

It can be noted that this problems have now been given religious expressions, for example, Muslims accusing the government for favoring Christians by refusing to incorporate the "Kadhi Courts" (Muslims courts) into the government legal system. The interfaith clashes are more about the communities' discontent with the economy than about each other's religious beliefs. Religious fundamentalism always emerges when communities are facing economic crisis. Muslims and Christians in the country are increasingly under pressure due to financial hardship and may only use religion to cope. Under these circumstances, individuals are more likely to fall victim to fringe groups that advocate extreme ideologies to which they would otherwise not subscribe.

In my opinion these issues must be properly handled. The situation is very fragile now and these may also mean that unless improved, (dire economic situation and unemployment coupled with the rise of radical Islam and religious fundamentalism) the country will most likely witness more clashes and bloodshed. This may also give one of the answers to two questions which trouble many Tanzanians: who or what stands behind these conflicts and why now and not before?

It is high time the government stopped to pretend that all is well and to approach the Muslim plight seriously and objectively. Any structural injustices that probably exist according to Muslim as well as Christians should be properly analysed and handled.

I would recommend also Politicians should also stop to use religion as their entry point to seek for positions obtain power; this in my opinion has been another major reason for the religious problems in Tanzania.

Lastly, according to both religions (Christian and Muslim) Peace is always at the heart of their traditions. Christians refer Jesus as the *Prince of Peace* and the prayers for God's peace is always at the heart of their spirituality. Equally the same In Muslim tradition (Islam) *as salam* is said to be one of the ninety nine names of God and when Muslims meet they usually greet one another with *as-salam alaikum* meaning peace be upon you. Therefore, there is no doubt, in the face of current threats of peace in Tanzania due to the prevailing religious tensions; I believe there is a significant contribution which these two religious communities can make. I see enormous possibilities for them to collaborate in terms of working together for safeguarding and promoting religious freedom, insure human rights, social justice and above all resolving conflicts peacefully.

¹ TUWWAMUTA is the abbreviation of "Tume ya Waislam na Wakristo ya Amani, Maendeleo na Usuluhishi Tanzania" <http://www.elct.org/conflict.html>

² <http://www.eed.de/ueberblick.archiv/one.ueberblick.article/ueberblick.html?entry=page.200202.116>

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