A NON-POLITICAL Myth Of The Dual Citizenship Debate In Tanzania

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Introduction

In the ongoing constitutional review in Tanzania, dual citizenship has emerged as topic of interest among Tanzanians and people of Tanzanian origin in the diaspora who may or may not be citizens of the countries where they currently live. The increase in migration for business, education and work or even family reunion will increasingly force people to consider the advantages and disadvantages of their immigration status in the countries where they temporarily or permanently live.

In principle, when you live in a country other than your country of birth as a visa resident, there are restrictions in getting a professional job, owning property, your education fees are twice that of local students and legal permanent residents, you are not eligible to obtain a loan you need to pay for basic necessities such as university and college education, and you and your dependent children or spouse may not be entitled to other social benefits other people in the country receive on regular basis. The difficulty to obtain a professional job is even harder in the public sectors, because governments cannot be seen as outsourcing jobs to foreign workers as private companies do. Because the need for sustaining life and life of the family triumphs over national patriotism, Tanzanians like citizens of other countries will increasingly acquire citizenship of countries where they live.

In today’s globalized economies, travelling is a requirement for some of the jobs such that ease of travel across country borders may be a deciding factor in getting a good paying professional job. In addition to visa requirement, travelling will be increasingly complicated by global security concerns and scrutiny depending on the passport you hold. European countries, North America and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand) have the least movement restrictions among their citizens. Most of these countries do not require visas to enter and leave each other’s country. In addition, because of history and economic integration, these blocks of countries have an environment, which culturally and linguistically make them a destination for Tanzanian economic migrants. By economic migrant it is meant anyone who relocates to another country for the purpose of getting a job and improving living standards. Therefore, at some point, most Tanzanians living in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand will increasingly become citizens of those countries.
The discussion of whether or not Tanzanians who acquire citizenship of other countries should lose their Tanzanian citizenship is not new. Discussion of dual citizenship as it is called is not unique to Tanzania. It is a common discussion among Diasporas of developing countries because it is developing countries whose citizens are likely to acquire naturalized citizenship of developed countries not the other way round. In this critique of the discussions on dual citizenship for Tanzania, I will outline the unstated obstacles of including provisions for dual citizenship in the new constitution and show that dual citizenship is essential and possible, but this requires a political will to overcome political obstacles that are usually not stated in the debate. I will also show that the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) could easily enable dual citizenship in the new constitution if it chooses after overcoming undue fears from its counterparts in Zanzibar.

**Dual citizenship globally**

Even without venturing into the academics of dual citizenship, one can search the Internet and confirms that dual citizenship is widely spread across the globe with many countries allowing some form of dual citizenship. Interestingly, most of the developed western countries such as Australia, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany (with some restrictions), Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Portugal, Spain (with some restrictions), Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and Turkey allows or accept or tolerate dual citizenship. I deliberately used the words accepts or tolerates dual citizenship because, even if some of the countries may not have laws that formally allow dual citizenship (e.g., USA), they do not require that naturalized citizens (immigrants) renounce citizenship of their countries of birth as a condition for being naturalized. Instead, these countries have policies that exclude holders of dual citizenship from specific government jobs or positions of authority. Likewise, there are developing countries such as Chile, Hungary, Romania, Egypt, South Africa and many others that allow dual citizenship. In general, a quick examination of dual citizenship globally shows that there is far less tolerance of dual citizenship among developing countries (especially Africa) than western countries where any security concerns of divided loyalty ought to be the greatest. It is therefore surprising that countries that are sources of dual citizens and beneficiaries of the economics of dual citizenships (e.g., international financial remittances) feel more threatened by dual citizenship than countries that are recipient of dual citizens.

**Dual citizenship debates in Tanzania**

Reading dual citizenship debates in Tanzania newspapers, online forums and in the Internet reveals that the major concerns for those opposed of dual citizenship is divided loyalty and national security. To begin with, Tanzania like all other countries grants citizenship to people born in other countries including those without Tanzanian parents. This means Tanzanians by birth are acquiring citizenship in other countries (emigrants) at the same time Tanzania is granting citizenship to people born in other countries (immigrants). If Tanzanians are concerned of divided loyalty and national security, the fear of emigrants while receiving immigrants presupposes that foreign-born and grown citizens are less risky than people who were born, grew and educated in Tanzania before acquiring citizenship in other countries. Given that these first generation emigrants have spent a considerable part of their early lives
and careers in Tanzania and still have relatives and affiliations in Tanzania, it is disconcerting that one would consider them a greater security threat than foreign nationals who have been naturalized as adults largely seeking business opportunities.

Tanzanians in the Diaspora are probably the greatest advocates of Tanzanian economic interests than Tanzanians who live in Tanzania. For example, here in Canada, whenever opportunities arise for Canadians to celebrate their heritage in a Canadian multicultural society, Tanzanian Canadians are quick to display all that is good about Tanzania from history to tourism and other economic opportunities. The recently launched Tanzanian Diaspora conferences that have taken place in the Britain, USA and Canada in attendance of Tanzanian Presidents and senior government officials are meant to showcase what is good about Tanzania to encourage foreign investments into Tanzania. In 2004 at the peak of the Asian Tsunami that killed hundreds of thousands of people in the Far Eastern countries, the Tanzanian Canadians in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada observed that the Government of Canada and individual Canadians channeled their emergency financial and material aid to affected countries through immigrant communities from those countries. In other words, countries with large immigrant communities in western countries are more likely to be assisted when struck by natural disasters than countries with few or no immigrants in the aid donor countries. In response, we immediately created the Tanzanian Community Association of Northern Alberta (TANA) to be both a unifying society among Tanzanian Canadians and an insurance policy for Tanzania in Canada in case Tanzania was to need disaster assistance in the future. Nine years later, TANA had grown up to organize the first Tanzanian Diaspora conference in Canada attended by President Jakaya Kikwete. Any positive thing that will be advanced from this conference and other activities TANA may do in the future can rightly be traced back to our 2004 response to the Asian Tsunami. Subsequently, I can still testify that whenever developing countries (e.g., Haiti, etc.) have faced natural disasters, the governments in Canada and individual Canadians continue to respond through immigrant communities. Again, emigrants with divided loyalty who may potentially pose a security risk to Tanzania do not do these positive things in support of their country of birth.

It is right to say that those who doubt the loyalty of Tanzanian emigrants and see them as a national security risk are either not familiar with the attitude and activities of Tanzanian emigrant communities or are still glued to the long gone era of east-west cold war when Tanzanians were fearful of travelers and imaginary spies. Such individuals would benefit greatly by hosting testimonies from Tanzanian Embassy officials in the USA and Tanzanian High Commissioners in Britain, Canada and other western countries who work closely with Tanzanian communities overseas.

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1 Tanzanian diaspora conferences in USA (see http://dicotaus.org/event/)
2 Tanzanian diaspora conference in Canada (see http://www.cantanpi.org/documents/PROCEEDINGS_OF_THE_TANZANIAN_DIASPORA_CONFERENCE_IN_CANADA_2012.pdf)
Tanzania government support of dual citizenship

In the speeches made at Tanzanian Diaspora Conferences overseas (see for example http://www.cantanpi.org/documents/PROCEEDINGS_OF_THE_TANZANIAN_DIASPORA_CONFERENCE_IN_CANADA_2012.pdf), President Jakaya Kikwete has openly stated his unequivocal support for dual citizenship since when he was minister of foreign affairs and international relations. He has challenged the Tanzanians in the Diaspora to campaign and lobby the constitutional assembly for dual citizenship to be included in the new constitution, because as a president he has no authority to make this happen.

At the October 2012 Tanzanian Diaspora Conference in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, dual citizenship was discussed with a bit of reluctance by the Tanzanian delegation. When I suggested that, although dual citizenship is enabled through the constitution, it can be included in the constitution through a political process because the constitution itself is a product of a political process, the Tanzanian delegation objected, insisting that dual citizenship is purely a constitutional issue. Apparently, the Tanzanian delegation did not understand my reasoning, which I would reaffirm here. The Constituent Assembly (also known as Constitutional Assembly) or CA, while composed of more than regular members of Parliaments, is largely a reflection of political affiliations aligned with the governance ideologies and policies of political parties and their sympathizers. In this regards, the CA is a temporary pseudo-political body that is charged with debating and adopting a presupposed non-political country governing document (the Constitution). One does not need more evidence to prove this than watching the drama being played in the CA about the disagreements for specific contents of the proposed constitution, which runs deep along political party lines between the governing and opposition parties. In such an environment, one would be naïve not to believe that the final constitution will largely represent the wishes of the political party that has a majority in the CA. It is this connection between the CA and political parties that makes dual citizenship possible only through a political will of the party with the majority in the CA.

Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) which has no official English translation but based on its history and ideology can be rightly translated as “Progressive Party”, has ruled Tanzania for 54 years under two different names. The current structure and governance of the country is the result of the ideology and policies of CCM. Given that none of the opposition parties has ever governed the country, it is right to asset that only the CCM machinery with the majority in the CA is capable of inserting dual citizenship in the new constitution. If this is true, which it is, and the President is the head of CCM and has full support of the party, why is he not able to insert dual citizenship which he fully support into the new constitution? Given that the Diaspora community does not doubt President Jakaya Kikwete’s commitment to dual citizenship, there must be a political obstacle that must be overcome before the president and CCM can gain confidence to steer dual citizenship through the CA and adopt it into the new constitution.

As I have indicated in earlier paragraphs, the fear of divided loyalty and national security arising from dual citizenship is a myth. The unstated obstacle that prevents the government of the United Republic of Tanzania, which is by default the mainland government under the current union structure, is an unjustified fear of Zanzibar about the return of the Oman Sultanate they overthrown in 1964. This fear
has been cited in Tanzanian newspapers and by undisclosed members of the CA. The legend goes that, if dual citizenship was allowed, the presumed far economically and possibly intellectually and administratively advanced Omanis would come back to claim some elements of power and economic influence they once had and which they were deprived during the Zanzibar revolution of 1964. The myth further assumes that the dominance of these defunct elements in the isle would somehow destabilize the mainland to some extent. This is really a myth of great proportion if is not xenophobia (fear of unknowns or foreigners or strangers). If the Mainland Tanzania (formerly Tanganyika) does not fear for the return of the British citizens born in Tanganyika, why would Zanzibar fear of the Omanis born in Zanzibar? Even if there were evidence that Omanis would return to Zanzibar as dual citizens, what is the basis that they would claim power and properties they once owned, given that Tanzanians and private institutions in the Mainland Tanzanian cannot successfully claim and obtain back the properties that were nationalized by the government in the mid-1960s and early 1970s, and during the economic crackdown on private businesses in 1983? Is the same thing possible in Zanzibar but impossible in the Mainland Tanzania? This obstacle to dual citizenship is baseless and requires three things,

i. Aggressively educating the Zanzibaris that after 50 years of independence, they are a free people and cannot be easily recolonized by defunct elements from the Oman peninsula.

ii. The union with the Mainland Tanzania (Tanganyika) guarantees the security of Zanzibar against rogue elements that would otherwise overwhelm a small community like Zanzibar.

iii. Because of shared culture and religion, Omanis and other Arabs are much more likely to see Zanzibar as an opportunity for foreign investment than a colony to be reoccupied.

It suffices to say that, because CCM rules both in the Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, it is only CCM that can overcome Zanzibar’s fear of dual citizenship. If the mainland government under President Jakaya Kikwete adopted a policy to support dual citizenship as the president himself does, dual citizenship would easily sail through the CA, the people and into the new constitution. If the president supports dual citizenship but cannot direct CCM members of CA to support and vote for dual citizenship, it is because he cannot afford to convert a policy into a constitutional provision that is supported by one part of the country and opposed by another part of the country under the rule of the same party. Thus, dual citizenship will be enabled when ambiguities of the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar are resolved or when the union government has courage to tell Zanzibar that imaginary fear cannot cost the rest of the country what it wants to achieve. When this is done, it will be easier for CCM to use the party whip⁴ and compels its CA members to vote for dual citizenship. Lobbying the CA by the Diaspora community which the president has challenged them to do will never overcome an obstacle that is built in the current political structure which the Diaspora is neither part of nor able to influence.

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⁴ A whip is an official in a political party whose primary purpose is to ensure party discipline in a legislature. Whips are a party's "enforcers," who typically offer inducements and threaten party members to ensure that they vote according to the official party policy. A whip’s role is also to ensure that the elected representatives of their party are in attendance when important votes are taken. The usage comes from the hunting term "whipping in," i.e. preventing hounds from wandering away from the pack.