

## **Assessing the Secular/Religious Divide in Contemporary Tanzania through Intra and Inter-religious Relations**

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The United Republic of Tanzania is generally perceived as an African haven of peace, a country spared from violence and conflicts despite the country's many ethnic groups and multi-religious setting. This has by large been attributed to the secular policies of *ujamaa*, the African-social ideology developed under the leadership of Tanzania's first president Julius K. Nyerere. However, the increase of publicly displayed religious expressions following economic liberalisation and polity reforms in the mid 1980s have challenged Tanzania socio-political stability. Increased tensions along intra-religious, inter-religious and state-religious lines are today manifested and negotiated through a growing multitude of religious expressions in particular within the Muslim and Christian communities. Hence, in present Tanzania there is a growing tendency that religion and religious organisations publicly challenge government-policies and government-society relations. Does this mean that the secular principles implemented during the *ujamaa* ideology and one-party rule in present Tanzania are challenged?

This paper intends to elaborate the socio-political impact and function of religious institutions in contemporary Tanzania by highlighting current intra- and inter-religious relationships. Through the examination of these relationships contemporary power-relations within Tanzania's civil society are visualised and challenged. These relations of power manifest how different religious institutions play both consolidating as well as challenging roles within the contemporary socio-political context of Tanzania in reference to political power as well as issues over secular/religious character such as demands for reimplementation of *mahakama ya kadhi* (Islamic courts).

The paper will be divided into three parts. Firstly, the paper will situate religious institutions in the historical context of secular government policies with special reference to religious institutions relationship to the *ujamaa* ideology. Secondly, the paper will discuss the issue of intra-religious and inter-religious tensions as critic to government-religious relations in the new post-*ujamaa* context determined by multi-party politics and economic liberalisation. Finally, the paper is wrapped up in a critical discussion on contemporary politics of religious institutions as both government proponents and opponents by discussing the use of secular principles as a way of suppressing political discontent along religious lines. Hence, the paper elaborates on the role and extent of a secular/religious divide in the context of contemporary Tanzania through religious institutions diverse relationships to political power.