From "Imagined Community" to Multicultural Mosaic: "The Politics of Difference" in Tanzania

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Abstract

Economic and political liberation in Africa has affected fragile national identities constructed over the past thirty or so years. This has led to the reconstruction of different identities and contestations affecting the legitimacy of government institutions in mediating conflict over the distribution of scarce resources. Using Tanzania as a case study, this article examines the relevance of multi-culturalism as a solution to the contest between sub-national identities mobilized by the current economic and political reforms.

Introduction

Ethnic genocide in Rwanda and Burundi, inter-clan violence in Somalia, and religious conflict in Sudan, exemplify the violent balkanization of some African countries into sub-national entities formed on the basis of ascriptive identity.[1] Given the increasing prevalence of structural adjustment and political liberalization throughout Africa, these reform processes have affected—to varying degrees—he disintegration of national identity into a polarized landscape of separate groups that sometimes resort to violence in pursuit of the economic and political rewards of a captured, and often exclusionary state. There is a need to examine the extent to which differing notions of identity affect the legitimacy of government institutions in mediating conflict and distributing scarce resources among these competing groups.[2] The current scholarly debate on multiculturalism, with its emphasis on the need to balance group specific rights with individual rights, specifically addresses these questions in a distinctly Western context. This article explores the degree to which the ideas offered by proponents of multiculturalism are relevant to countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

In order to systematically explore the relevance of multiculturalism to political realities in sub-Saharan Africa, I specifically examine the case of Tanzania. Long

heralded as an island of stability on the African continent, this assumption is being called into question as economic and political reform have opened the door for long dormant, and often suppressed, sub-national identities to emerge. Religious cleavages between the Muslim-dominated islands of Unguja and Pemba and mainland Tanzania (with its substantial Christian population), racial tension between the black African majority and the Asian[3] minority, and the emergence of ethnic and regional politics during and following the 1995 and 2000 presidential elections are examples of ascriptive identity articulation and tension in the social, political and economic spheres of life in the country. Instead of examining countries that are in the process of, or recovering from, sustained violent conflict between different groups, Tanzania offers a chance to systematically examine a country that has a long history of relative political, economic, and social stability. Ongoing violence is certainly not inevitable in Tanzania, but the process of social and political fragmentation based on ascriptive identity articulation has already begun. By studying Tanzania at this time, there is a unique window of opportunity to identify practical ways to address the competing forces of fragmentation and national unification in multi-ethnic, -clan, -racial, and -religious African countries. Can multicultural solutions address this kind of diversity in sub-Saharan Africa? Lessons learned from this research will be useful for Tanzania and many other sub-Saharan countries that are trying to balance economic and political reform with the needs of a diverse array of ethnic, racial and religious groups struggling to obtain the shrinking resources of the state.

The Politics of Identity

The degree to which liberal states are relevant to their constituent communities depends on how these communities view themselves (what is their own identity?) and to what extent the state is a natural outgrowth of this self-identification process. This is not a new debate, given the state-building challenge that faced the first generation of independent African leaders. Indeed, racial, religious, and ethnic unity were of paramount importance as new leaders attempted to build nations from often disparate collections of ascriptive and associational identities struggling for the scarce resources of the state.[4] These issues have become increasingly salient again as the post-cold war international order has enabled groups to reformulate sub-national and/or transnational identities that struggle, sometimes violently, for shrinking state resources. According to Bethke Elshtain, "[y]our identity becomes the sole ground of politics, the sole determinant of political good and evil. Those who disagree with my 'politics', then, are the enemies of my identity" (Elshtain 1995: 53).

There are numerous studies that focus on the politics of identity throughout the world.[5] Walter Morris-Hale's book (1996) addresses colonial heritage and ethnicity as a global phenomenon in his comparative case study of Switzerland, Britain, Canada, Malaysia, Nigeria and South Africa, while Edwin Wilmsen and Patrick McAllister's (1995) edited volume on the "politics of difference" examines

ethnicity in a distinctly theoretical context. According to Larry Diamond and Mark Plattner, ethnicity is depicted as a "key obstacle to successful democratization". [6] Clearly, ethnicity as a conception of self-identification is relevant and necessary to the study of politics in the North and South,[7] but it needs to be more broadly defined in order to understand the disintegration of social cohesion in select countries throughout the world.[8] Crawford Young's edited volume (1993) on "cultural pluralism" focuses on ethnicity, but also accommodates issues related to language, nationalism, caste and class, while Stanley Aronowitz examines class analysis in a cultural context of identity construction (1992). Will Kymlicka's edited volume on *The Rights of Minority Cultures* presents a series of case studies that address how groups formed on the basis of sub-national identities struggle for their rights (Kymlicka 1995).

While research on the politics of identity is well developed theoretically and empirically,[9] this does not extend to the study of Africa. There are numerous studies on ethnicity and religion in Africa,[10] but they are not theoretically grounded in current research on identity. For example, Lissi Rasmussen comparatively examines Christian–Muslim relations in Tanzania and northern Nigeria (1993), and J. Bayo Adekanye explores the relationship between structural adjustment, democratization and ethnic tension in African countries known for their histories of ethnic division and conflict such as Burundi, Nigeria and Rwanda (1995). While both of these studies are useful, neither of them is conceptualized in terms of identity. A notable exception to this claim is René Lemarchand's case study of identity construction among the Hutu and Tutsi in Burundi (1994). Rose Marie Kadende and Paul Kaiser build on Lemarchand's thesis, arguing that the "long-term, transformative process of identity creation needs to be factored into analyses of political change in the multi-ethnic terrain of Burundi society" (1997: 29). Terence Ranger has long argued that "tribal identity" is "a product of human creativity which can be re-invented and re-defined ..." (Ranger 1985: 19). In all of these studies, ethnicity is portrayed as an evolving identity that is continually reinvented (and often manipulated) in different political contexts.

There is also a substantial amount of research on structural adjustment and political reform in Tanzania[11] (and Africa in general)[12] which clearly documents and analyses the demise of former President Julius Nyerere's socialist *ujamaa* policies and the increasing prominence of liberal economic and political reform. However, this research does not address potential avenues of reform that can redress the sub-national balkanization process exacerbated, at least in part, by the structural adjustment process.[13] In an article recently published in the *Journal of Modern African Studies,* I addressed this issue, contending that "market-based solutions to Tanzania's economic woes have not built on the assumed social cohesion of the *ujamaa* years, and divisions are beginning to emerge" (Kaiser 1996: 236). This research moves beyond this tentative conclusion by integrating theoretical conceptions of identity and multiculturalism in a distinctly African context.

Multiculturalism and the "Imagined Community"

According to Benedict Anderson, a nation is an imagined political community that is inherently limited and sovereign (1991). While this definition of the nation is linked to historical forces that converged in Europe at the end of the 18th century, its relevance today remains intact (see also Gellner 1999). Specifically, proponents of a liberal democratic political/economic order often build on the assumption of "imagined community" at the national level, applying "universal" standards of equality and participation for diverse and homogenous societies alike, based on the assumption that the individuals who belong to diverse groups within a society have similar expectations in terms of freedom, social justice, and national unity. This has been the hallmark of political development in the advanced industrialized countries during the post-war era, and the decolonization process throughout the "South" reinforced this approach in the newly independent countries in Asia and Africa. However, while rhetorically clinging to universalist principles in the North, policy-makers have also adopted approaches to political and economic organization that accommodate ascriptive and associational forms of identity articulation in diverse societies. From bilingual education policies to affirmative action programmes, Western countries have tried to balance universalist "melting pot" assumptions with the practical realities of societal diversity and differential group needs. This "melting pot" perspective embraces the notion of universal equality in creating an "imagined" national community, while the more recent intellectual and popular culture depictions of "multiculturalism", with its commitment to the official recognition of sub-national difference, can be depicted in terms of the image of a mosaic.

Multicultural approaches to diversity have not been, to a large extent, formally applied to countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, the donor community—most notably the World Bank and International Monetary Fund—has consistently pressured African governments to accept universalist approaches to political and economic reform (such as structural adjustment programmes) in countries where ethnic, racial, religious, or regional diversity, has precluded the formation of national, "imagined communities". This has impacted the uneven reform process in many African countries, where national/sub-national conflict has undermined political stability and economic growth.

During the transition from colonialism to independence, the first generation of sub-Saharan African leaders had to contend with the assumed presence of the modern liberal state, which imposed national values on sub-national communities with already established forms of social organization. Ethnic, religious, racial, regional, and clan-based identities were subsumed by supposedly "national" governments, which were recognized as legal and sovereign by the international community. Many of these leaders maintained this liberal notion of the modern state, although they purposefully transformed inherited, democratic forms of government into one-party systems in the name of maintaining order and facilitating "national" development in their newly independent, predominantly agricultural

countries. More recently, this inherited form of multiparty, democratic governance has been reinvented in many sub-Saharan countries, albeit with different levels of success. Given this return to the liberal model of social and political organization in sub-Saharan Africa, there is a need to address the plethora of competing identities that are expected to coexist within the national community.

While Western countries have dealt with this diversity in a variety of creative and provocative ways (for example, affirmative action in the United States), many African countries, still undergoing long, cumbersome, and occasionally violent transitions to the liberal democratic order, have yet to seriously address this issue in a way that balances the liberal assumption of universal equality with the sub-national recognition of difference. As mentioned earlier, the reforms demanded by organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, have propagated Western notions of universal equality—in the market place and on the political playing field—as a condition for loans and infrastructure project funding. A brief overview of the research on multiculturalism, which assumes a liberal democratic foundation, yields insight into the difficult choices that liberal democratic African countries will have to contend with in the new millennium.

According to Will Kymlicka, the modern, Westphalian state developed under the assumption that national societies were homogenous (1995). However, this was not the case, given the variety of religious, racial, ethnic, regional, and linguistic identities that comprised the supposed national communities of the newly formed modern states. Further, he argues that the state has addressed these differences by implementing strategies that include physical elimination (including mass expulsions and genocide), coercive assimilation, the granting of resident alien status (which often results in physical separation, economic discrimination, and the denial of select political rights), and the protection of ethnic minorities. Since the end of the Second World War, this last strategy has become less prevalent, as liberal notions of "human rights" have gained appeal, thus resulting in indirect "national" protection of freedom of speech, association, and conscience. In short, there has been a shift from group-specific recognition to a more universal approach to the rights of the individual in a national community. Despite this liberal commitment to universalism that is advocated in most advanced industrialized, liberal democratic countries (including the United States), group specific recognition still exists, albeit in a variety of forms. For Kymlicka, these forms of recognition include self-government rights (federalism and the devolution of political power to the local level), polyethnic rights (demand for public funding of certain sub-national, cultural practices and select exemption from laws and regulations that disadvantage certain groups), and special representation rights (assure that certain groups are represented in various government policy-making fora).

Charles Taylor addresses the dilemmas inherent in multicultural societies in terms of the demand for recognition among the different groups that coexist within the Westphalian state. For Taylor, identity is shaped by the recognition, non-recognition, or mis-recognition of others within a society (1992). Since a

person or group can suffer from a reinforced, negative self-image, identity needs to be positively affirmed and respected in a multicultural context. In Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's seminal book *Beyond the Melting Pot*, they demonstrate that during the early 1960s, social and political institutions in New York City did "not merely respond to ethnic interests; a great number of institutions exist[ed] for the specific purpose of serving ethnic interests. This in turn tend[ed] to perpetuate them" (Glazer and Moynihan 1975: 310). While the terminology of multiculturalism was not used when they wrote their book, their research clearly demonstrates that diverse societies are often self-sustaining and enriching even if they are not unified.

The remainder of this article will explore the degree to which the multicultural solutions offered by Taylor and Kymlicka are viable solutions for African countries that have embraced liberal economic and political reform in recent years. Specifically, I will briefly examine the impact of political and economic reform on intensified sub-national identity articulation by focusing on several interrelated debates in Tanzania.

The Case of Tanzania

Issues related to religion, race, and ethnicity are publicly debated in Tanzania's vibrant popular press, with government newspapers repeating the mantra of national unity and opposition press outlets often airing grievances that are implicitly and/or explicitly framed in terms of group rights. This section will provide a brief overview of these issues.

Muslim–Christian Relations and the Union Agreement: The Muslim/Christian divide has become a popular topic of discussion, especially as it relates to the complex relationship between the Muslim-dominated islands of Unguja and Pemba and mainland Tanzania, where "approximately one-third" of the population "professes to be Christian" (Ofcansky and Yeager 1997: 158). Once seen as a model for pan-African unity, the union between Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania has become the topic of intense parliamentary debate, with a group of mainland members of parliament calling for the establishment of an additional government designed to serve the mainland population only. This would be in addition to the already existing Union and Zanzibar governments. While this suggestion was never implemented, it served to highlight a potential fracture in the union based on regional and religious considerations (see Heilman 1997). In addition, when the Zanzibar government entered into the Organization of Islamic Conference without the assent of the mainland union government based in Dar es Salaam, anti-Muslim sentiment became prevalent and pronounced among the Christian population of mainland Tanzania. For example, in 1993, the Catholic Bishops issued three related pastoral letters to the government in Dar es Salaam regarding the rise of "Islamic fundamentalism", and the National Council of Laity in the Catholic Church "actively pushed their Bishops to speak out" about the OIC issue (West et al. 1994: 90). During this period, which also coincided with the formative stage of multiparty

politics in the country, Democratic Party followers under the leadership of Christopher Mtikila were "continuously harassed and jailed for openly espousing separation from Zanzibar and the expulsion of Zanzibaris and Asians from the mainland" (West et al. 1994: 106). In response to these episodes, many Muslims on the islands have reinforced their religious identity and commitment to their status as Zanzibaris in lieu of the "imagined community" of the Tanzanian nation.

Muslim–Christian Relations on Mainland Tanzania: The assertion of Islamic identity is not limited to the issue of Zanzibari autonomy. In a controversial book on the "Mwembechai incident" written by Hamza Mustafa Njozi, the author describes the events leading up to and immediately following a February raid of the Mwembechai Mosque in Dar es Salaam by government Field Force Units. His findings are provocative and critical of the government, which subsequently banned the publication in Tanzania (Njozi 2000).

According to Njozi, in a 4 January 1998 speech at a church in Tabora, President Benjamin Mkapa spoke out against "people who go about distributing cassettes, booklets and convening meetings where they insulted and ridiculed other religions" (Njozi 2000: 30–31). Even though followers of Islam were not singled out in this statement, many Muslims believed that Mkapa was directly addressing their religious community. This speech was followed by a series of events that resulted in government security forces surrounding the Mwembechai Mosque on 12 February 1998. Violence erupted the following day, with the death of four people (Njozi 2000: 30).

Subsequent violent clashes resulted in numerous injuries and heightened tension between the Tanzanian government and some members of the Muslim community. Government sources report that Ponda Issa Ponda (Secretary of the Committee for Muslim Rights) and Omar Bashir (Chief Imam of the Mwembechai Mosque) preached division and inspired a violent uprising on 29 March that resulted in the death of a young girl, the burning for four government vehicles, and the destruction of private property in the Magomeni neighbourhood of Dar es Salaam. Fifty people were arrested after the riot (Features East Africa Network News Bulletin, 1 April 1998 and 1 May 1998). According to a police inspector investigating the incident, one of the riot participants said that "the Bible is not a true book and Jesus is not the Son of God and that the Government is hypocritical and favour only Christians" *(Guardian,* 3 April 1998). However, other people associated with the event stated that they were protesting the alleged humiliation of Muslim women and past police brutality against Muslims (Features Africa Network, 31 March 1998). In response to this conflict, Home Affairs Minister Ali Ameir Mohammed stated: "We have all indications that the Mwembechai issue is a political one and foreigners are likely to be involved. But the best I can say now is that the government will put its foot down to stop such kind of crisis" *(Daily News,* 31 March 1998).

The advent of multiparty politics has served as a catalyst for public debate among the diverse communities that comprise Tanzania, with many using the

opportunity to create societal divisions and emphasize difference in lieu of focusing on unity and inter-group similarities in an international context. The religious Muslim–Christian schism has become synonymous with regionalism, since Zanzibar is overwhelmingly Muslim, and mainland Tanzania has a large Christian community. On the mainland, the Mwembechai incident and the rise of the Democratic Party highlights religious tensions that transcend the historical mainland–Zanizibar divide (see also Heilman and Kaiser 2001).

African–Asian Relations: Compared to Uganda and Kenya, African–Asian relations in Tanzania have been relatively calm and cooperative since independence. However, as Tanzania has undergone an intense period of structural adjustment and political reform, this relationship has begun to deteriorate, sparked by an "indigenization debate" over who should own privatized parastatals in the country (see Heilman 1998). This conflict is rooted in the events of the *ujamaa* period, when the Nyerere government implemented a leadership code which prohibited political leaders from engaging in business activities that could lead to "conflict of interest" issues for public servants. However, this did not prevent others from profiting from business activities despite *ujamaa* policies that limited private sector growth. With many African elites attracted to public service as their main source of employment, Tanzanian Asians remained active in the private sector throughout this period and they were well placed to benefit from the privatization rush of the late 1980s precipitated at least in part, by the President Ali Hassan Mwinyi's acceptance in 1986 of World Bank and International Monetary Fund structural adjustment programmes. However, the majority African community, bound by *ujamaa* leadership code restrictions, was less prepared for a privatization process that required a familiarity with the assumptions and trappings of a competitive, and potentially lucrative, private sector environment. This impacted a reawakening of long dormant racial, African–Asian hostilities in the country (Heilman 1998).

Ethnic Relations on Mainland Tanzania: Tanzania also has a long history of peaceful and cooperative ethnic relations while neighbouring Rwanda, Burundi and Kenya have periodically experienced ethnic conflict and violence. However, during the 1995 elections, the myth of an "imagined community" was eroded as ethnicity, race and regionalism became political issues throughout the electoral process. One of the primary presidential contestants for the national presidential election was Augustine Mrema, an ethnic Chagga from the northern region of the country. While Mrema did not overtly play the "ethnic card" during the election campaign, he was viewed by many as a "Chagga candidate" beholden to his ethnic community, thus engendering muted ethnic tensions. Throughout the campaign, enclaves of Mrema supporters emerged throughout Dar es Salaam, often dominated by ethnic Chagga who moved to the capital city over the years. Mrema was also a populist candidate who appealed to a variety of diverse constituencies, due in large measure to his reputation as an anti-corruption maverick in CCM who cleaned up a large market area in Dar es Salaam. However, the visibility of Chagga campaign supporters in his home area in the north and in Dar es Salaam before the election

brought ethnicity to the fore. Political party allegiance during the elections was often communicated symbolically, with easily identifiable colours and flags representing each party. In the case of Mrema's party, NCCR-Mageuzi, these colours and flags were most visible in the Chagga-dominated neighbourhoods of the capital city. In lieu of the formally ubiquitous green CCM flag that symbolically represented the nation, each community, however so defined, developed their own symbols of identity and, in some cases, political defiance.

Ethnic Relations and Regionalism in Zanzibar: The 1995 presidential election in Zanzibar was also affected by sub-national ascriptive group divisions. Unguja residents, for the most part, supported CCM candidate Dr Salmin Amour, and most Pembans voted for the Civic United Front contestant Seif Shariff Hamad. This Unguja–Pemba split has a long history, dating back to the early settlement patterns of the islands and explosively erupting during the Zanzibar revolution of 1964 (Heilman 1997). During and immediately following the 1995 election, the CCM/Unguja-CUF–Pemba split became visible and pronounced, with repeated clashes between the CCM government and CUF supporters (Kaiser 1999).

Garth Myers' insightful case study of Zanzibar's Commission for Lands and Environment (COLE) highlights the conflict that began during the early stages of preparation for the 1995 multiparty contest. According to Myers, the combination of the privatization process and the 1995 elections facilitated deep "frictions" between the two groups on the islands:

> Employees from regional strongholds of CUF, especially Pembans, are routinely suspected by their superiors of being anti-CCM, or deliberately sabotaging COLE programmes to make CCM look bad. Lighter skinned officials are accused of showing favouritism to people of Arab or Indian descent in land matters, especially to returning Omani exiles reclaiming confiscated properties. By contrast, others distrust anyone with strong mainland connections, as this is seen as anti-Zanzibari, even by many CCM supporters (Myers 1995: 22).

Nathalie Arnold substantiates the Pemba/Unguja and related CUF/CCM schisms in her research on "The Zanzibar Elections and the Creation of the WaPemba" (1996). According to Arnold, "the equation of Pemba and its inhabitants to the CUF became and is now an *a priori* assumption of analysis, whether in government speech or in the press" (1996: 2).

Given the political predominance and power of CCM supporters on Unguja during most of the isle's post-revolution history, and the economic development of Unguja at the expense of the poorer Pemban island, intra-island competition and animosity has been present, but mostly contained, since the 1964 revolution. However, the advent of multipartyism provided a forum for the articulation of this long-brewing conflict, and given the relative silence and inaction of the union government regarding this issue, the problem has intensified since the 1995 elections (Anglin 2000). Theses tensions culminated in repeated violent conflict between government forces and CUF supporters following the October 2000

multiparty elections on the islands, which resulted in the disputed election of CCM presidential aspirant Amani Abeid Karume. On 27 January 2001, CUF demonstrators in Zanzibar were greeted with government security forces, with over twenty people killed and over 1,000 CUF supporters seeking safety in neighbouring Kenya. The exact number of people killed is not clear since the government claims that 23 died in the violence (including 1 police officer), and CUF estimates exceeding 75 (Heilman and Kaiser 2001).

As the remainder of this article demonstrates, economic and political liberalization, if properly managed, can result in an open environment that respects sub-national difference in the context a vibrant and diversion nation of people. The case of Tanzania demonstrates the negative potential of this process if not properly and proactively managed by the national government.

The Multiculturalism and the "Imagined Community" in Tanzania

Multiculturalism attempts to address and recognize sub-national difference in lieu of a sole focus on individual rights and national unity. Western countries rhetorically embrace this "melting pot" vision of national unity while adapting to ascriptive group difference with group-specific public policies. In short, a tenuous balance is maintained between universal equality and the protection of group rights. Given the recent transformation to a liberal, multiparty democratic state in Tanzania, the government should have the freedom to achieve this tenuous balance in a distinctly African context.

After independence, government policies emphasizing national unity facilitated the development of a national consciousness in Tanzania that surpassed many of the country's East African neighbours. During the socialist (*ujamaa*) period that began in 1967, former president Julius Nyerere implemented policies designed to create a nation despite ethnic, religious and racial diversity in the country. However, over the past ten years, ethnic, racial and religious divisions have developed as the Tanzanian government has responded to domestic and international pressures for structural adjustment and political reform. This, in turn, has facilitated the emergence of a variety of groups—defined in terms of their ascriptive identities—that have become active in the political arena. Do these divisions run too deep to reinvent an "imagined community" that maybe never really existed, or is the "politics of difference" a permanent part of the political landscape for the foreseeable future? With ethnic politics in its infancy, and the re-emergence of religious, racial and regional difference in the country—exacerbated by liberal economic and political reform—this is a question that needs to be seriously addressed before political and social divisions have the chance to devolve into group violence. For Taylor, a shrinking state beholden to market relations cannot expect to achieve societal stability, given "the competitive jungle that a really wild capitalism would breed, with its uncompensated inequalities and exploitation" (Taylor 1992: 110).

The Tanzanian government could consider ways to recognize group difference while working toward maintaining a national community that was nurtured

throughout the *ujamaa* period. Specifically, a constitution that clearly articulates a fair balance of power between Zanzibar and the mainland, along with the official recognition of a Pemba–Unguja conflict rooted in historical difference and the maldistribution of scarce resources on the islands, are starting points for multicultural solutions that address regional and religious tension in the country. Specifically, the government could proactively respond to the crises associated with the perceived illegitimacy of the 1995 and 2000 elections, the Mwembechai incident, and the CUF demonstrations in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar. In terms of ethnicity, the national government could develop the institutional mechanisms necessary to ensure that state resources are fairly distributed throughout the country to all ethnic groups in all regions—thus assuring all groups equality under the law and eroding fears that if one group comes to power, others will suffer. In terms of Asian–African relations, the government could diligently recognize and protect the rights of those in the minority Asian community who are Tanzanian citizens, while assuring that black Africans handicapped by past *ujamaa* policies have the opportunity to benefit from the privatization process as much as their Asian neighbours.

Conclusion

For multicultural solutions to be successful, public policies must be implemented that balance the recognition of group rights with the preservation of a coherent "imagined community". Countries throughout sub-Saharan Africa attempted to address this challenge in a variety of ways. The emergence of one-party regimes across the continent were often defended in the name of national unity and preservation in the fragile nation-building process. Strategies for developing "imagined" national communities have included, using Taylor's typology, the non-recognition and mis-recognition of ascriptive identities.

During Burundi's Second Republic, President Jean-Baptise Bagaza attempted to address ethnic tensions in the country with ethnic non-recognition, effectively suppressing ethnic-based discourse in the name of national unity. However, his successor, President Pierre Buyoya reversed this approach, recognizing difference and opening the way for multiparty elections in 1993. The subsequent violent civil war triggered by the assassination of newly elected President Melchior Ndadaye highlights the challenge of successfully maintaining the tenuous balance between group recognition and nation-building in countries with the potential for inter-group violence based on ascriptive identity. Apartheid South Africa and President Habyarimana's Rwanda are extreme examples of recognition strategies that were based on assumptions of inherent inequality and institutionalized discrimination.

In order to successfully address sub-national differences in a diversity of national contexts, African leaders need to develop strategies for public discourse and craft public policy initiatives that are logical extensions of unique historical trajectories. The international context of these strategies and initiatives needs to be carefully considered by astute leadership, especially given African dependence on the donor community for assistance and, in many cases, economic survival. The

liberal model of economic and political organization throughout the West is a given, and African countries are faced with this same reality with far less resources and a chronic dependency on the donor community. Kymlicka's triad of recognition strategies, including self-government rights, polyethnic rights, and special representation rights are useful starting points for African leaders.

In some countries, decentralization and self-government have the potential to provide local autonomy in a national context, while in other countries, this might not be a feasible option.[14] The Tanzanian Government has used this strategy to maintain the fragile union born in 1964, but the perceived over-representation of Zanzibaris in the national government by mainlanders, and Zanzibari calls for more autonomy, have led to political conflict over this issue.

In terms of polyethnic rights, scarce resources make it difficult for African governments to fund select sub-national, cultural practices, although this strategy should be part of the dialogue with the donor community. Given the instability in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the case can be made to the donor community that clear and fair public policies based on the equal recognition and support of all groups are necessary for a successful liberal economic and political transition process. Finally, special representation rights are already a part of the political landscape, with some countries formally assuring for the representation of disadvantaged groups in government, and others informally accommodating sub-national interest in government decision-making fora. This strategy needs to be carefully explored, given the potential "reverse discrimination" repercussions of poorly conceived and implemented policies based on group representation in lieu of individual qualification, however so defined.

Given the diversity of sub-national configurations throughout sub-Saharan Africa, these strategies need to be systematically examined and adapted according to each unique context. Achieving the balance between multiculturalism and promoting an "imagined community" based on group-blind, universal equality in a global context of dependency will be a challenge for sub-Saharan African leaders for years to come. Many countries in the West are still coming to terms with this balance. Maybe it is time to provide African leaders with this same opportunity.

Notes

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1. In this article, the term "ascriptive" describes those identities that a person inherits at birth, such as ethnicity, race, clan, and religion. Alternatively, the term "associational" refers to those identities that are consciously chosen by individuals and often articulated in formal professional and nongovernmental organizations.

2. Citizenship is defined in terms of community, where one is allowed to "participate in that community while enjoying certain rights and being obligated to perform certain duties in return" (Ndegwa 1997: 2).

3. The Asians living in Tanzania originally came from the Indian sub-continent.
4. See Peter Ekeh (1975; 1978) for more on this perspective.
5. See research by Walker Connor (1972, 1978, 1984, 1987), Jack Eller and Reed Coughlin (1993), Joseph Rothschild (1981), Edward Shils (1957), Cynthia Enloe (1973), Donald Horowitz (1985) and Gurnarn Singh (1994).
6. See Diamond and Plattner's edited volume of essays from the *Journal of Democracy* (1994).
7. In this proposal the term "North" refers to advanced industrialized countries while "developing" or "Third World" countries are referred to as the "South".
8. See the Fall 1995 issue of the *South Atlantic Quarterly* on "Nations, Identities and Cultures" (Mudimbe 1995).
9. Robert Earle and John Wirth (1995) have also co-edited a volume on identity in North America, which comparatively examines Mexico, the United States, and Canada.
10. For example, see research by Victor Olorunsola (1972).
11. See research by Oliver Morrisey (1995), Goran Hyden and Bo Karlstrom. (1993), and Jumanne Wagao (1993).
12. See research by John Ravenhill (1988), Sayre Schatz (1994), Giovanna Cornia et al. (1993), Steven Kayizzi-Mugerwa and Jorgen Levin (1994), Nicholas van de Walle (1994a, 1994b) and Gerald Helleiner (1992).
13. Henry Bienen and Mark Gersovitz explore the relationship between consumer subsidy cuts often associated with IMF conditionalities, violence, and political stability in select African and Latin American countries (1986).
14. In Dean McHenry's examination of federalism in Africa, he concludes that instead of serving as a panacea, federalist arrangements also have the potential to intensify ethnic divisions in African countries (McHenry 1997: 15). While this is clearly not the answer for societies that have non-spatial divisions that encompass race, ethnicity and religion, there are other more creative ways to deal with this challenge.

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