

‘The X Factor’ in CCM’s Presidential Nomination

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With the deadline looming for CCM Ikulu hopefuls to submit their nomination forms, Dr Alexander Makulilo and Thomas Steven consider the unprecedented number of applicants and the party’s options for handling ‘the X factor’.

2nd July was the deadline for CCM members to submit their application forms in the contest to run as the ruling party’s presidential candidate. The forms were available for collection from the party secretariat for a calendar month. At 1,000,000 Tanzania Shillings the deposit comes at an eye-watering price – at least it is costly for those who have to count their *vijisenti* to survive.

The nomination process follows a participatory model involving several stages that are all internal to the party. To initiate the process, aspirants require the endorsements of 450 party members from a minimum of 15 regions, at least three of which must be on Zanzibar. Party members can only endorse one candidate.

On 8th July the president is scheduled to chair a meeting of the national Security and Ethics Committee (*Kamati ya Usalama na Maadili*) or SEC, which makes recommendations to the party’s Central Committee (*Kamati Kuu*) or CC. The CC comprises of 32 members including the president and vice-president of Tanzania and of Zanzibar, the prime minister, and individuals drawn from some bodies linked to the party. The Central Committee is due to meet on 9th July in order to whittle down the list of initial applicants to a shortlist of five. Applications are screened with the help of dossiers from the SEC, detailing the background of every candidate. At this stage the selection process is said to be based on consensus, not voting.

This year for the first time a Committee of Elders (*Kamati ya Wazee*) will advise the Central Committee. The elder statesmen include: the former presidents of Tanzania, Messrs Ali Hassan Mwinyi and Benjamin Mkapa; the former presidents of Zanzibar, Messrs Salmin Amour and Amani Abeid Karume; and the former vice-chairs of CCM, Messrs John Malecela and Pius Msekwa.

On 10th July the shortlist of five is presented to the National Executive Committee (*Halmashauri Kuu ya Taifa*) or NEC. The NEC is comprised of the same 32 who sit on the Central Committee, and 346 other members drawn from regional party chairs and secretaries, along with one nominated member from each mainland district and six nominated members from each district on Zanzibar. Only at this penultimate stage does the voting begin, with the aim of shaving two further names off the shortlist. The closing stage is a two-day meeting of the National Congress. The congress comprises in excess of 2,000 members of CCM and its associated bodies. All

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members of the National Congress vote on the NEC's shortlist of three. The winner of this vote becomes CCM's presidential nominee to face opposition candidates in the 25th October polls.

As Tanzania's dominant party since independence, CCM has always won both the Union and Zanzibar elections. Party stalwarts boast that with this formidable track record whomever CCM nominates as its presidential candidate is all but assured of becoming the country's chief executive, i.e., head of state, head of government, head of public service, and commander-in-chief of all armed forces. To all intents and purposes – so the party faithful believe – the name that the ruling party announces at the completion of the selection process for its presidential candidate is an anointment of Tanzania's fifth president.

Others would point to the fact that since CCM's establishment in 1977 it enjoyed the luxury of fifteen years of a de jure one-party state – opposition parties were simply not permitted. Since the dawn of multiparty democracy in 1992, however, opposition parties have slowly grown in their share of the vote. The opposition now shows some signs of being able to mount a serious challenge to CCM's hegemony, and the forthcoming elections are likely to be the most difficult democratic test the party has ever faced.

With the constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania permitting the president to serve two consecutive five-year terms in office, history shows that each CCM nomination at the turn of the decade – a year that ends in 0 – is a shoe-in for the incumbent. In 1990 President Ali Hassan Mwinyi remained in power following CCM's endorsement, while both Presidents Benjamin Mkapa and Jakaya Kikwete enjoyed continuing support from the party when they were sitting president for their respective 2000 and 2010 nominations.

It is when the number 5 appears in the year – 1995, 2005, and in this July's selection – that the CCM nomination process holds more intrigue. In these years the constitutional two-term limit kicks in, and the race is more open. When Mr Mkapa took the prize for the first time in 1995, 17 aspirants entered the race for the party ticket. In the last contest – Mr Kikwete's 2005 victory – 11 party members threw their hats in the ring.

A whopping 42 aspirants travelled to Dodoma to pick up nomination forms from the secretariat. Of the 42, 38 submitted their nomination forms. In the past, many of those who failed to reach the initial shortlist of five have then supported the remaining runners – cynics might say that they do so in a bid to secure a plum job should their (wo) man hit the jackpot. The stakes are high and, like politics in any other country, the CCM presidential nomination can be a dirty process.

There could be runners who might feel aggrieved that – despite deals that may have taken place in the past – they have never fully enjoyed the bonanza. Others may be uncomfortable that if their adversaries proceed, it could soon be payback time for past disloyalty. The nomination process is a chance to settle old scores. The futures of a good number of well-known politicians and party associates are at stake.

Some votes in Tanzania's history have been easy to call. Few in sound mind would have bet against Julius Nyerere's party storming to victory in the 1960 elections shortly before independence. TANU famously won with a landslide, taking 70 out of the 71 seats – the remaining one seat going to an independent candidate who was a TANU member anyway. The emphatic electoral success of CCM's begetter is taught to all schoolchildren. What is not taught – but which any casual observer of this country's politics knows – is that the motive of many who stand for public office seems to have changed since those halcyon days of early independence.

Other votes are notoriously difficult to call, and none more so than this nomination with a far greater number of aspirants than ever before. With more players in the mix, so the machinations are trickier to predict.

A number of possible scenarios could unfold over the course of the next month. One is that the nomination process abides by the CCM regulations (*kanuni*) to the letter. In this situation there is no suggestion that there has been any attempt to deal with any candidate in an unjust or prejudiced manner, and the nomination is deemed by all involved to be free, fair and credible. Scenario 1 – '*Kanuni*' – is improbable though. As much as the regulations may indeed be strictly followed, at some point politics has to enter into the equation. Horse-trading is inevitable.

Another hypothetical situation is that circumstances conspire against certain applicants, or that events seem to focus on an individual applicant who is perceived to be an especially powerful and/or divisive figure. This scenario – Scenario 2 or 'Control' is a bid to control the nomination process with a view to eliminating the greatest threat(s). That threat could be one who nobody doubts aspires to be president or one who – in the event of being eliminated in the nomination process – might seek to influence the person who ends up being president. The influence could come in the form of the offer of a campaign team with proven experience and substantial funds to support the party's presidential nominee. In return, this individual and his/her associates would expect a close working relationship with the new president. This figure could be termed 'the X factor'.

One interpretation of the unprecedented number of CCM aspirants this year is that a significant number of applicants have been encouraged to run in order to frustrate the X factor. A problem with this strategy is that – much like parents bearing copious children who they hope will look after them in old age – the mouths have to be fed for many years before the pension plan bears fruit. But caring for numerous dependents seems to be effortless these days – for politicians, if not for the poor. The difficulty comes when the dependents are tempted to fly from the nest too soon.

The Control scenario has a number of permutations. One could be that the chair orders the removal of X from any discussion so he/she does not appear on the Central Committee's shortlist of five. Such an action could best be described as '*fiat*', whereby an official order is given by someone who has the power to do so. The directive to remove X could be issued by the chair. CCM's constitution Article 105(1) declares that the chair need not necessarily be the head of state, but in practice it is always the president.

One possible application of President Kikwete's fiat could be to remove an application or applications based on unsavoury information provided by the Security and Ethics Committee. X's weakness could pertain to a failure in at least one of the thirteen characteristics that the vice-chair of CCM, Philip Mangula, has indicated will be required when applicants are considered. According to CCM, the party's nominee must: 1, have experience in leading government, public service bodies and institutions; 2, be trustworthy, wise and sensible; 3, have degree-level education; 4, be able to strengthen the union, peace, unity and national cohesion; 5, be far-sighted, and capable of making astute and timely decisions; 6, be proficient in international relations; 7, respect the constitution, the rule of law, and good governance; 8, advocate for the poor and for human rights; 9, be considerate of others, and shun personal popularity; 10, implement the party manifesto, and be confident in fighting oppression; 11, not abuse their leadership to amass personal wealth; 12, be popular with citizens; 13, pay careful attention to accountability. The CCM list sets the bar fairly high.

There are precedents to 'Control by Fiat'. In 1995 President Nyerere is said to have ordered the removal of forms submitted by Edward Lowassa and John Malecela. The veto was also reportedly used on Mr Malecela a decade later during President Mkapa's tenure of the premiership. There are no examples where the Central Committee's presidential shortlist has been dismissed by the National Executive Committee, but in theory it is possible for a removed name to be reinstated. In Control by Fiat, X would need to be able to exert considerable influence on a significant proportion of the 378 members of the NEC to override the CC chair – or would somehow have to be able to hold sway in the CC itself.

Another course of action under the Control scenario is discipline for a past offence. 'Control by Discipline' could be meted out on X by the CC deciding to return to a previous misdemeanour. One option would be to revisit last year's violation of the Election Expenses Act (2010) by a number of senior party members. The named were Edward Lowassa, January Makamba, Bernard Membe, William Ngeleja, Frederick Sumaye and Steven Wasira. All have presidential ambitions, and all allegedly engaged in 'early campaigning'. In May 2015 it was announced that the six had all received a caution, along with the avuncular advice to read, respect and adhere to ethics and regulations governing the electoral process – more a mild slap on the wrist than a punishment. That may be to come.

The decision to hold back on a penalty could be seen as a tactic within a wider strategy. The tactic may have been to administer only a light touch approach in order to ensure that none of the six heavyweights obstructed the June 2015 budget – which, in the event, they all supported. The yellow card – with no penalty – could become a red card if a second caution is issued. The recent words of CCM's Publicity and Ideology Secretary, Nape Nnauye, offer a glimpse into this option under the Control by Discipline strategy. While the six are now free to conduct activities within the party, said Mr Nnauye, for "those wishing to contest [for the posts they have applied] ... past incidents would be used during screening for candidates."

Here the solution to the X factor could be to deal with Messrs Lowassa, Makamba, Membe, Ngeleja, Sumaye and Wasira all in exactly the same way. Each disobeyed the rules by participating in premature campaigning, so all six are treated the same.

Control by Discipline: deal with the threat by sacrificing all six. The method may appear to be foolhardy, but it removes the X factor and leaves the others who played nicely to be rewarded with leadership positions.

The next Control scenario also relates in part to leadership positions. In ‘Control by Categorization’ the CC populates its shortlist according to classificatory categories, thereby excluding the threat of X. The X factor – be it defined as ‘a noteworthy special talent’, or as ‘a variable in a given situation that could have the most significant impact on the outcome’ – is removed because he/she is nudged out by other worthies. X could be outranked by those currently holding senior positions in government. For the sake of both argument and convenience, this could be two of the five nominees. Traditions of the Union could also mean that, should X be a mainlander, a third name could be added to the exclusive list of five by the inclusion of a Zanzibari. In the event of X being male, the gender card could be played – making one of the women seeking nomination to vie for presidency a fourth name on the CC’s shortlist. The final name is the most interesting: the outsider. Historically there is always at least one person who emerges from relative obscurity. It may be a competent civil servant, or some other safe pair of hands. The shortlist may also include a name long associated with the party who has both commanded and earned respect elsewhere.

Should Control by Fiat, Discipline, or Categorization prevent X from taking the party’s presidential nomination, the offer of a high-status government appointment could be made to appease him/her. This presents a further variation under Scenario 2. ‘Control by Accommodation’ could see X being informed that Y will be president, and that X will receive another senior position such as vice-president or prime minister. Whether X would be satisfied with any appointment that is not the highest office in the land is another matter – and the upper echelons of CCM will know this all too well.

Politics anywhere is an unpredictable business, and one should be cautious of anybody who claims to know which of the above scenarios will play out. What is perhaps easier to forecast is that, if events are to transpire to X’s displeasure, he/she may well take action that leads to a new sequence of events. If X is indeed dissatisfied with the referee’s arbitration over Y’s success, there are three possible outcomes. X may decide to: 1, play ball nicely (*kanuni*); 2, play ball roughly (sabotage); 3, play ball elsewhere (defection).

In Outcome 1 a disappointed X feels that while the team gave their best effort, this just isn’t his/her year to lift the cup. X feels that the regulations were followed, fair play reigned supreme, and at the end of the tournament everyone should shake hands and exchange shirts in celebration of a thoroughly entertaining contest. X can hold his/her head up high and live to fight another day – in five year’s time.

Outcome 2 sees a disgruntled X attempt to sabotage the remainder of the nomination process. X’s team approaches Z, one of the shortlisted candidates. (Recall that X may have a campaign team with proven experience and substantial funds.) Seduced by the massive resources at X’s disposal, Z agrees to the alliance and wins the competition. X becomes the kingmaker and is a step closer to having Z, Tanzania’s fifth president, in his/her pocket.

In Outcome 3 a dejected X feels snubbed by the system and leaves the party altogether. The defection of such a big-hitter leaves CCM considerably weakened. X either establishes a new party that a number of allies from CCM then join, or X joins an existing party. CCM's supremacy is then significantly challenged in forthcoming elections.

The latter relies on one huge assumption: that an opposition party would accept X. A partnership with a newly-established political party – such as the Alliance for Change and Transparency (ACT-Wazalendo) – may not have time to make a significant impact in the October 2015 polls. X would more likely favour an outfit akin to UKAWA, with greater experience as an organisation and more established CHADEMA and CUF-like structures.

Should X indeed attempt to form a pact, then one would hope that the ruling party's 'thirteen criteria of a good CCM nominee' are attributes that any self-respecting ally would require.