SOCIAL NETWORKING AS POWER BALANCING IN TANZANIAN POLITICS

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Abstract

Online social networks have made communication more accessible in many spheres; they have been used as an alternative political means of regaining or equalising power between a political opposition and a ruling party, when the former is functioning in the absence of a traditional political platform. Recently opposition politicians in Tanzania have utilised online social networks towards this end. Positioning theory draws out this political dynamic in operation. Historically, political communication using electronically transmitted networks in Tanzania was necessitated after the fifth-phase presidency (beginning in 2015) placed a ban on political activities reaching outside their official jurisdictions and naming specific candidates. This ban seemed to weaken opposition politicians because they were regarded as preferring to work in collectives. The analysis here focuses on a press conference involving a United Republic of Tanzania Member of Parliament from the opposition party, addressing the national and international communities in regard to secrecy that surrounded a late arrival of two new jets into Tanzania from Canada, late in 2016. The data suggests that online social networking has enabled opposition politicians to identify themselves as fellow sufferers and representatives of the ordinary citizen, demanding good governance and speaking against misappropriation and laxity in distribution and use of national resources. The opposition has gone further in utilising social media to present the nation's presidential agenda as pitted against the ordinary citizen. Social media allows the opposition to represent the current government as an elite group responsible for the problems Tanzanians are facing, and therefore as untrustworthy. This limited case study reveals how electronic media re-introduces a potential for

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effective political opposition to the status quo at a national level.

Key words: *online social networks, Tanzania, politics, political ban*

Introduction

One might argue that when the president of Tanzania imposed a ban on politicians wishing to do politics outside their jurisdictions, the opposition felt hard pressed to compete effectively and therefore spoke against the ban. Newspaper editorials and open discussions indicated a general concern emerging that the ban had destroyed the possibility for opposition politicians to pursue their preferred strategy of involving large and widely dispersed collectives. No one could predict what appears to have happened: that as one door for public communication of political viewpoints was closed, others were opened.

Opposition politicians have managed to utilise social networking as an alternative power-balancing component between themselves and the ruling party. Investigating this dynamic may explain why the opposition has not continued speaking against the presidential ban; it may also illuminate the mobilisation capacity inherent in social networks. Using positioning theory to analyse a press conference from the opposition standpoint, provides a snapshot of how the opposition voice positioned the president and the ruling party through their comments in December 2016 about the secrecy surrounding a delayed arrival of two new jets from Canada purchased by the Tanzanian government. Through this snapshot we are able to see how each political group paints itself positively and the other negatively. By tracing this brief political episode, positioning theory reveals the mobilisation capacity of online social networking infrastructure in Tanzania.

A word about this method of political analysis

If politics is *"the theory and practice of governing a country"* (Holmes 2004: 183), then it includes the existence of rival opinions, conflicting objectives, opposing interests, and competing needs. Political activity further guarantees disagreement about the principles and rules by which people live; therefore it is linked to the phenomena of both discursive conflict and cooperation. This paper focuses upon the actions and practices of politicians who participate in this conflicted process of negotiating rival positions and interests, according to controversial rules and principles. The people in focus here are social actors who assert, produce, maintain, and resist positions of authority, and claims of legitimacy (Dunmire 2012: 738).

Political practice can be viewed as essentially both discursive and motivational. It has been characterised by the influential theorists Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 1) as primarily "a form of argumentation, and as involving more specifically *practical* argumentation, argumentation for or against particular ways of acting, argumentation that can ground decision." Further (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012: 17):

> [Political agents] view political discourse as . . . primarily argumentative discourse. [Their framework] is based on a view of politics in which the concepts of deliberation and decision-making in contexts of uncertainty, risk and persistent disagreement are central. This is a view of politics in which the question of *action* of *what to do,* is the fundamental question.

As the Faircloughs understand linguistic analysis of political discourse and practice, the case study offered here contributes to an understanding of "the reproduction and contestation of political *power* through political discourse" (Ibid.) in contemporary Tanzania. An inclusive definition of political discourse "recognises both the key role [that] language plays in struggles over power, meaning, and material resources and in acts of cooperation and resistance and the political nature of discursive practice" (Dunmire 2012: 738-739).

Studies of this kind are partly concerned with understanding the nature and function of political discourse, as well as with critiquing the broader role that discourse plays in producing, maintaining, abusing, and resisting power in contemporary society (Dunmire 2012: 736). Edelman (quoted in Dunmire 2012: 737) holds the view that "creating meaning is essential to political practice and to the construction of beliefs about events, policies, leaders, problems, and crises that rationalize or challenge existing inequalities."

The contemporary Tanzanian political climate

There are twenty-two political parties in Tanzania as a result of the impact of International Monetary Fund-World Bank 'liberalisation', which yielded Tanzania's moving back into a robust multi-party process once again in 1992. Ever since the change into multi-party electoral politics, the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) political party has continued to be the ruling constituency, with the other twenty or more parties having continuously maintained the opposition. The government has always been run by the CCM, and the central state's political power has always remained with the CCM despite the turmoil that has come during elections.

The degree to which political competition is allowed to operate depends on the government in power. Tanzania's 'fifth phase' government

introduced a ban on political activities which restricted politicians' campaign activities beyond their regional jurisdictions. This ban intensified Tanzania as a site of contestation for political power (McAuley 2003: 1) since November 2015.

As the head of the executive branch and as the leader of his political party, "the president sets the political agenda" (Cairnie 2010: 47). The 'fifth phase' president came into office with political and economic reforms in every aspect of society as he saw fit. Radical reform policies are not difficult from the office of the presidency because of the way the rules of governance are designed. As White observes (2017: 1): "the design of the rules leaves more powerful agents undisturbed – for those in a subordinate position they have considerable binding force."

Demonstrating a strategic capacity even more savvy than his party's manifesto, the president was absorbed with creating a state apparatus that supports its citizens in realising their potential over the course of their whole lives. In effect, he gave an undesired holiday to opposition politicians. He declared that his political term was a time to get all Tanzanians working so that any political activities would be obstructing Tanzanians from moving the nation and their personal lives forward through hard work.

Yet the further action of an already powerful government explicitly imposing a ban upon unfettered political campaigning was in itself divisive, since it left the opposition parties' plans in complete disarray. The ban that restricted the scope of political campaign messaging received a cold shoulder from the opposition; for it meant they could no longer reach their followers or build their constituency. Arguably, this intentional obstruction of standard methods of political campaigning has brought about the increase in power asymmetry between the president's party and the opposition. Members of Parliament could hold meetings, but only in their immediate and local vicinities. But as the political world recognises, working in packs gives politicians strength, and the lone Member of Parliament is not necessarily the heart of his or her pack. So the Member of Parliament who holds meetings in relative isolation does so without the necessary strength of support provided by a more broadly based, demographically stronger group. This drastically limits the opposition's room for manoeuvring to acquire a wider, more politically effective electoral base.

If opposition parties view what is brought about by a ruling party as coercive, they will want to meet that coercive action with resistance. And because they saw this ban on campaigning as an unmitigated partisan move of the president, gerrymandering on behalf of his party, the question became:

how could the opposition remain connected with their followers and potential recruits with whom they were abruptly denied the basic democratic right to communicate? As any political theorist would predict, the first response to the ban was resistance.

Mobilisation capacity of the online social network infrastructure

Resistance is "an action that shows that people are opposed to something" (Holmes 2004: 223-224). Oyeleye and Hunjo (2013: 84) believe in the existence of an explicit resistance ideology, which they define as:

> . . . the sociocultural beliefs shared by participants in an ongoing social interaction to exert such force, as it will deter concession to established social systems and enforce their change to match the aspirations of the majority.

In their analysis of Nigeria's response to discursive political oppression, public media have highlighted the Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka's counter-tactic in response to the former Nigerian president's effort to co-opt political opposition through a 'Coalition for Nigeria Movement, also dubbed the 'Third Force' (Ugwubujor 2018). Oyeleye and Hunjo (2013) say that "Soyinka's role in setting up a resistance machinery to counter the former president's NIM or *Third Force*, is a confrontation to counter democratic policies of the Nigerian political class" (Oyeleye & Hunjo, 2013: 84). Soyinka and other influential political activists have begun a widely successful blog, an online social network site, to counter the pretensions of the party in power to represent all interests in the country, (see for instance ₦airaland Forum 2018). So what are online social network sites and how effective are they?

Computerised or 'online' websites designed for unlimited, multi-user and multi-directional communication can be identified as a tool of resistance because political opposition movements have maximised their use of this technology in response to efforts to suppress their agency. The evidence demonstrates this happened immediately after the ban on national campaigning by parliamentarians in Tanzania in 2016.

An online social network site represents a "cyberspace where individual users can maintain their profile, link other users, share information, images and photos with each other, and also conduct social activities with other users" (Sun et al. 2014: 57). Social networks are defined as "online tools and utilities that allow communication of information . . . participation and collaboration . . . [through internet] websites that interact with [their] users, while giving them information" (Storck 2011: 11).

Christakis and Fowler (2009:113) define a social network site as a

loosely organised collection of people that consists of:

> . . . two kinds of elements: human beings and the connections between them, [and] real, everyday social networks evolve organically from the natural tendency of each person to seek out and make many or few friends, to have large or small families, to work in personable or anonymous workplaces.

Sun at al. (2014: 57) quotes Nielsen's 2009 report that "two-thirds of the world's Internet population visits a social network or blogging site." Evidence displays that this kind of Internet usage is escalating exponentially.

According to Oser et al. (2013: 91), the increased availability of the Internet has led to the emergence of new forms of political participation. In their study, they say that online activism is a distinctive type of political participation. An online social network site gives social movements the possibility of spreading uncensored messages in the attempt to influence opinion through mass media, as yet with little or no interference from a central agency in many parts of the digital world.

Besides making communication more efficient and rapid in some parts of the world, the Internet also seems to be having a significantly measurable effect on how movements structure themselves, by fostering loose ties and ideologically heterogeneous campaigns. Theoretically, the Internet favours movements with polycentric and non-hierarchical forms of organisation (Porta and Mosca 2005: 166). Marcea (2012) has reviewed political participation as it manifests in mobilisation, identity-building and organisational transformation, finding that both in Romania and the United Kingdom, digital pre-figurative participation may be extensive among unaffiliated participants at a low-risk event; and among affiliated participants at a high-risk event.

Examining data collected at the anti-G8 protest in Genoa, July 200I, and at the European Social Forum (ESF) in Florence, November 2002, Porta and Mosca (2005: 185-187) found that the Internet empowers social movements through four distinguishable ways:

> (a) purely instrumental ways (an additional logistical resource for 'resource-poor' actors); (b) a protest function (direct expression of protest); (c) symbolically (as a medium favouring identification processes in collective actors); and (d) cognitively (informing and sensitizing public opinion).

Williams and Gulati (2008) studied the contribution of Facebook's impact on the United States' 2008 presidential nominating contests, and found

that Facebook support was an important additional indicator of candidate electoral success independently of traditional measures like expenditures, media coverage and organising activities represented by campaign events. Theocharis et al. (2013) found that the extensive use of social network sites for protests purposes was a distinctive feature of the protest events in Spain, Greece and the United States.

Blommaert (2017) says that online zones of social activity provide affordances for constructing logic of action and providing rationalizations for their action offline:

> [O]nline environments have become an integrated part of social reality; as a new, huge and deeply fragmented infrastructure for social interaction and knowledge circulation . . . [T]hey add substantially to the complexity of social processes, notably those related to identity work and group formation . . . [There is a growth of] practices in online meaning making, control and circulation that betray the presence of at least widely shared systems of normative consensus . . . (Blommaert 2017: 1).

Blommaert gives the example of Elliot Rodger from California, a member of Manosphere, who went on a killing spree and killed himself afterwards, suggesting that some of the online knowledge networks spread rationalisations for such acts. The fact that these tools of social networking, which previously had a reputation strictly for socialising, are now being used as sources for information ". . . speaks volumes [about] their relevance in contemporary political mobilisation" (Storck 2011: 5-6). Thus, we should not ignore the role that social networking *online* plays in enhancing social networking *offline* in everyday, non-computerised interactions and decision making.

This is not the first century that a technological innovation has been recognised as a profoundly significant tool for change. The advent of Gutenberg's printing press in the fifteenth century played a crucial role in weakening the power of the medieval church and led to the Renaissance, and later the Reformation and Scientific Revolution (Storck 2011: 6).

In the early months of 2011, social networks like Facebook were attributed with "playing a key role in the rapid proliferation of political protests in the Arab world" (Oser et al. 2013: 91). According to Storck (2011: 5-6) the 2011 Arab Social Media Report indicated that:

> 94% of Tunisians get their news from social media tools, as do 88% of Egyptians . . . [and] there are now more users of

Facebook than there are subscribers to newspapers.

Describing social media networks as a tool of mobilisation in Egypt, Storck (2011: 25) says:

> . . . central to the acceleration of events was the efficient use of social media networks as a form of organizational infrastructure that began with virtual networks and was transposed to offline networks.

These networks have made revolutions successful by acting as organisational platforms.

The considerations assembled so far indicate that "the rising popularity of online social networking sites [has made people turn] to their social networks to find answers to questions on a variety of topics" (Paul et al. 2011: 578). With this in mind, the political situation in Tanzania after the 'fifth phase' as marked by a ban on political activities, gives rise to the question of whether there has been a significant phenomenon of opposition parties utilising the Internet's social network infrastructure as a platform to position themselves more strategically in the national political arena. The question pursued in what follows is whether a political opposition of Tanzania has been using Internet social networks as a power-balancing mechanism.

Positioning theory and the study of online political use of social networks

Positioning theory is defined by van Langenhove and Harre (1999: 16) as:

> . . . a discursive construction of personal stories that make a person's actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts and within which the members of the conversation have specific locations.

This kind of communicative practice occurs:

> . . . within a conversation [where] each of the participants always positions the other while simultaneously positioning him or herself. Whenever somebody positions him/herself, this discursive act always implies a positioning of the one to whom it is addressed. And similarly, when somebody positions somebody else, that always implies a positioning of the person him/herself (van Langenhove & Harre, 1999: 22).

Positioning theorists contend that the range of social behaviours relevant to this kind of dynamic differ depending on how the behaviour is categorised (Moghaddam and Harre 2010: 9).

A positioning act – that is, an act by which someone has been positioned by others or has positioned himself or herself – has two distinct phases: (i) the attribution of qualities of character, intellect, or temperament, sometimes supported by biographical reports of the agent's past behaviour; and (ii) the person being positioned is assigned or refused a cluster of rights and duties to perform certain kinds of acts, thus constraining what someone, so positioned, can rightly do and say. For example, if someone is positioned as incompetent in a certain field of endeavour, they will not be accorded the right to contribute to discussions in that field.

In the subject we are treating here, the president positioned politicians as having nothing to add to national development when they gather people. Therefore he saw it fit to ban them; and by that positioning, he publicly rationalised the ban. Correlatively, if someone is positioned as capable and therefore legitimately powerful, then that person may legitimately issue orders and demand obedience of others in a sector of social where his or her superior position of authority has been acknowledged. This is the basis for public acceptability of the presidential ban on otherwise conventional and acceptable, standard political practice.

Generally speaking, positions are relational, in that for one to be positioned as powerful, others must be positioned as less powerful or as powerless. Even in the case of competence, among a group of recognisably inept agents, there will be relative positionings of agents within that group who are better and worse in achieving whatever the group is designed to achieve (Harre and van Langenhove, 1999: 1-2). Van Langenhove and Hare (1999: 17) add that the same type of behaviour or communication will register differently depending upon how one is positioned:

> as . . . powerful or powerless, confident or apologetic, dominant or submissive, definitive or tentative, authorised or unauthorised, and so on. A 'position' can be specified by reference to how a speaker's contributions are bearable with respect to these and other polarities of character, and sometimes even of role. Positioned as dependent, one's cry of pain is bearable as a plea for help. But positioned as dominant, a similar cry can be heard as a protest or even as a reprimand.

There are three main ways of classifying an individual's act of positioning, depending upon whether the act is that of (i) an individual positioned by another individual, that is bilaterally, or (ii) by a collective, multilaterally; or again whether (iii) the positioning is of a collective, accomplished collaterally by another collective.

On another dimension what matters is whether an individual or collective reflexively positions themselves, that is reflexively, or whether it is by some other agency which positions and is positioned, that is, transitively.

The third dimension recognised by Harre and van Langenhove (1999: 6) addresses whether the positioning act is symmetrical or asymmetrical, that is, whether each agency positions the other (asymmetrically) or whether in positioning one, the other is also simultaneously positioned in the same act (symmetrically).

In the first phase of positioning, the attribution of personal qualities can be examined according to two different sets of criteria. First, is the attribution true? Bearing in mind how traits of character and personality are context-sensitive, the conditions in which the subsequent positioning is undertaken, gives crucial plausibility to the relevance of the traits so attributed. Secondly, a question arises regarding the relevance of these attributes to the activities in which the positioning is germane.

In the second phase, assignments to positions – that is, assignments of rights and duties to positioned individuals and collectives – depend upon prior first-phase evaluative descriptions of that person or collective. Drawing on personal psychology is not enough, since the key question relevant to local assignments of positions concerns the dispositions of the individual or collective to act in certain ways, given certain kinds of social and material circumstances. Traits are a signal indicating what the bearer is likely to do in a certain kind of context. Even shorn of the confusions that native trait theories introduce, positioning theory emphasises behavioural process and the dynamics of social engagement (Moghaddam and Harre 2010: 10).

An analysis of positioning relies upon John Austin's (1961) suggestive though controversial distinction between the illocutionary force of an utterance and its perlocutionary force (van Langenhove and Harre 1999: 17). Perlocutionary force refers to a speaker's saying something that has consequences on the feelings, thoughts or actions of those hearing the utterance. We can say that by saying something, a speaker does more than make an intelligible utterance. The speaker has performed a further kind of act, which is captured by reference to the perlocutionary force of the utterance: e.g. what the speaker said has the effect of convincing, alerting, amusing, getting someone to do something, frightening, pleasing, persuading, annoying, and so on.

Arguably, it is obvious that when the president positioned politicians from the opposition as making no useful contribution to people's work output,

his speech act had a negative effect, and perhaps further, provoked in them the felt need to respond.

How did the politicians position the president in turn? We place their conduct on a matrix to see whether they fit the president's positioning or whether they act against it. Following from Fairclough's suggestions about the positioning method of analysis (1992: 237), we may speculate how he would apply the theory to this particular study, to see whether and how the opposition appropriated the Internet social networks to reclaim their place in politics. That is, activity in the infrastructure of social blogs and chat trails may be analysed to see whether the political agents stand in opposition or capitulation to the president's rationale for a political campaign ban.

When the ban was laid down in 2016, several voices reacted quickly, but the media landscape soon became relatively quiet again. Only a few prominent voices were heard, but they were not complaining against the ban. Rather their reaction was against the president and his establishment as having committed an error in governance. These spokespeople included Freeman Mbowe (MP and Chairman for CHADEMA), Zitto Kabwe (MP and Leader of ACT Wazalendo), Halima Mdee (MP for CHADEMA), Godbless Lema (MP for CHADEMA), and Tundu Lisu (MP for CHADEMA, Official Opposition Whip and Chairman for the Tanzania Law Society). Their voices were amplified through the online social network infrastructure.

The data gathered here consists of materials that were posted on YouTube. The data set is restricted to a videotext of a press conference addressing the national and international community. The explicit focus of the conference was the secrecy surrounding the late arrival in 2016 at Tanzania's airport of two new jets from Canada. In attendance at this press conference were social media such as AYO TV, Dar24, Five, Global TV, Bongo Stars and SASA TV. Voice Of American and Deusche Welle were also in attendance.

Results

This section presents findings from a positioning critique of the press conference. The data is divided into two parts: the first table presents data exhibiting the opposition aligning with the people, positioning themselves positively. The second table has data that exhibits the opposition going further, to position the president and government negatively. The data is presented in Kiswahili (in which the press conference was conducted) with an English translation presented in brackets. The interpretation of the data is presented after each table.

Table A: Aligning with the people (positioning positively)

1. Vyombo vyetu vya usalama (Our security forces)
2. Watumie muda na rasilimali za nchi hii. (They should utilise the country's time and resources.)
3. Wasipoteze muda wao na pesa zetu. (They should not waste their time and our money.)
4. Tunaona mambo mengi sana makubwa sana ambayo hatujawahi kuyaona katika miaka zaidi ya hamsini ya uhuru wetu. (We are seeing numerous and enormous things such that we have never seen in more than fifty years of our independence.)
5. Tunajifunza kuona miaka miwili hii anaendesha nchi kwa kudhani kwamba kauli yake ndiyo sheria ya nchi. (Within these two years we are learning to see him leading the country, thinking that his word is the law of the land.)
6. Kulikuwa na mjadala bungeni nami nilizungumza. (There was a debate in parliament and I spoke up.)
7. Haiji kwa sababu tulivunja mkataba. ([The jet] is not coming because we breached the contract.)
8. Tuliowavunjia mkataba wametushitaki. (Those for whom we breached the contract have sued us.)
9. Wametushinda kesi. (They have won the decision, i.e. they have defeated us.)
10. Hatujalipa deni. (We have not fulfilled our obligation [not cleared the debt].)
11. Tunadaiwa shilingi bilioni 87. (We owe them 87 billion Tanzanian shillings.)
12. Tumebanwa. (We are fixed.)

The opposition chose expressions that located their own political concerns as part and parcel of ordinary Tanzanians' sufferings. Here is where the analytical use of expressive potential becomes important, in that for each of the expressions they use for its perlocutionary effect, they could have used a different expression to say the same thing.

For example, despite the fear that the state machinery is hunting them down, the opposition still embraces the state powers with the possessive 'ours'; this implicates that desired forces, time and resources are not accessible to the opposition, but rather belong to Tanzania generally (lines #1, 2 &3). This positioning aligns the opposition with the masses, who may in truth be suffering from the opposition's own security forces, and whose precious time is being wasted. This is the first step in which the opposition manages to show their creative use of the online platform, presenting

themselves in contrast with the president's representation of them as offering nothing useful for ordinary Tanzanians.

The opposition positions itself alongside the Tanzanian masses as being subjected to the threat of "numerous and enormous things" which has never been witnessed before in more than fifty years of Independence, due the idiosyncrasy of the president who presumes that "his word is the law of the land" (lines #4 & 5). The opposition, like every other Tanzanian, is presented as suffering from the president's disillusionment.

The opposition next represents itself as having something of value to provide ordinary Tanzanians. In parliament the opposition is resisting the authority's mismanagement of Tanzanian resources (line #6); but the government does not accept the allegation, insisting that as a sovereign state Tanzania can always dishonour international obligations. But the opposition counters that, contrary to the authority's misrepresentation, the real scandal at the door is a result of dishonouring these obligations. Tanzania is now primed (lines # 8 & 12) for the undoing of the elected in power who claimed to be in authority in order to rid the general public of poverty.

Throughout this discourse, the opposition used the third person singular and plural pronouns ('he' and 'they') to refer to the activities of the president and elected government, to distance themselves from their effects, identifying themselves with the suffering masses whom are aligned with by using the inclusive first person 'us'. The opposition might have used the second person pronoun 'you' to refer to the sufferer. Identifying with the suffering masses, the opposition's uncovering of the story that the government was presumably covering up, would likely carry greater significance to the general public.

Table B: Positioning the President and Government negatively

1. Vijana wanaowatuma (The youths they are commissioning)
2. Wawaelekeze watumishi wao watumie muda na rasilimali za nchi hii. (They should direct their servants to spend our time and resources.)
3. Wafanye kazi ya kupambana na wahalifu. (They should fight criminals.)
4. Wanapoteza muda wao. (They are wasting their time.)
5. Wanahangaika na raia. (They are bothering [innocent] citizens.)
6. Miaka miwili hii anaendesha nchi kwa kudhani kwamba kauli yake ndiyo sheria ya nchi. (Within these two years he is leading the country supposing that his word is the law of the land.)
7. Ni mengi kiasi kwamba hatuhitaji kuyazungumzia hayo kwa sasa.

([What he has done] is so much that we don't need to talk about them now.)

8. Anaendesha nchi kama kwenye mahusiano ya kibiashara akidhani kwamba anahangaika na vikampuni vya humu. (He deals with foreign commercial companies as if he was dealing with domestic ones.)

9. Athari za raisi wetu kuvunja mikataba na wawekezaji wa nje na kudhani kwamba hakuna madhara yanayotokea. (The deficiency of our president breaching contracts with foreign investors supposing there will be no repercussions.)

10. Kabudi na Mwakyembe walisema kwamba "kama nchi huru hatuogopi kushtakiwa katika mahakama za kimataifa kwa kuvunja international obligations." ([Prominent lawyers] Professor Kabudi and Dr Mwakyembe said that "as a sovereign state we do not fear being sued in international courts for dishonouring international obligations.")

11. Alipokea Bombadier kwa mbwembwe na shamrashamra kubwa sana akiahidi nyingine zingekuja. (He received Bombadier with discomfiture and euphoria promising that others would come.)

12. Hazijaja na mwezi umepita. (A month has gone and they [the jets] have not come.)

13. Haraka haraka Professa Mbaraa Mnyaa alijibu kwa twitter kwamba . . . (Hurriedly [Minister responsible for transport] Professor Mbaraa Mnyaa responded through his twitter account that . . .)

14. Bombadier ya Magufuli imekamatwa na inashikiliwa. (Magufuli's Bombadier has been 'captured' and is withheld.)

15. Waziri Mahiga alifanya ziara kimya kimya. (Minister [for Foreign Affairs] travelled [to Canada] stealthily.)

16. Balozi Jack Zoka yule wa usalama wa taifa, yule wa akina Ulimboka na wengineo (Ambassador Jack Zoka, from the internal security, the one for Dr Ulimboka and others)

17. Fedha hizo zilitokana na hukumu mbili. (The money [the debt] is due to the two case judgments.)

18. Waziri ametoka kimya kimya akitafuta namna ya kujiokoa (The minister left the country stealthily looking for a way to rescue the situation)

19. Rais akiwa Waziri wa Ujenzi aliwavunjia kandarasi Sterling Civil Engineering Ltd na kuwafukuza nchini (When he was still a minister the president breached the contract with Sterling Civil Engineering Ltd and deported them)

20. Alifanya hivyo kwa mazingira tuliyozoeshwa ya kuvunja mikataba kama hakuna sheria (He did so in the contexts we are being used to breaching contracts as if there is no law)
21. Waziri Mahiga alisisitiza suala hilo lisijulikane (Minister Mahiga insisted that the issue should be kept secret)
22. Kwa nini Magufuli alivunja mkataba wakati huo? (Why did Magufuli breach the contract that time?)
23. Kwa nini deni halikulipwa wakati ule ilipokuwa bado bilioni 50? (Why was the debt not cleared when it stood at 50 billion?)
24. Msisitizo wa suala hili kuwa siri unalenga kumlinda nani na kwa nini? (Who does the insistence that this issue should secret aim to protect and why?)

The youths mentioned here are positioned in the same way as the president's establishment, wasting Tanzanians' time and resources. These are presented as distinguished from the major group of ordinary suffering Tanzanians, wasting their time to utilise our resources to embarrass innocent citizens, instead of dealing with criminals. These are grouped in their position with Jack Zoka (line #16). According to the opposition, the youth's resources of time and energy should be used profitably for the nation. These young people are what Nilsson and Brante (2010) would call *time thieves* and even resource thieves; in this way the opposition positions itself as time guardians.

Because positioning "begins with the claim that the persons being positioned as having certain rights and duties have or lack relevant attributes" (Nilsson and Brante 2010: 32), the opposition positions the president as one who lacks leadership qualities, which has led Tanzanians to shoulder the 87 billion shillings debt. The opposition maximises the presumed negative effects of the actions of the President and his establishment; reporting nothing of value or positive about the president. They position the president as a disillusioned person whose style of leading the nation is governed by his 'own misguided thinking'. This can be seen with the word *kudhani* (lines #6, 8 & 9), which is translated closely with 'thinking'. The thinking here is not similar to saying 'I was thinking about it' which would be a positive depiction. *Kudhani* is associated with indecisiveness, but more precisely it means 'make yourself think as if', whereby this self-delusion or make-believe is wrong. 'Supposing' would be a more suitable translation. This kind of thinking is the one the opposition has ascribed to the president. So he "thinks that his word is the law of the land" (line #6); he doesn't see the difference between domestic and foreign companies (line #8); he breached the contract with Sterling Civil Engineering Ltd. and deported them (lines #9 & 19); and that is why the whole country is facing the repercussions.

The debt Tanzania is shouldering, as a result of two case judgments (line #17), stands against what prominent lawyers Professor Kabudi and Dr Mwakyembe claimed, that as a sovereign state Tanzania was not afraid of being sued in international courts for dishonouring international obligations (line #10). Again, alluding to rights, duties, and obligations as moral imperatives associated with their position, these lawyers are presented as people who did not perform their duties well enough to be able to inform the government, and therefore they are positioned as irresponsible, undeserving of their positions of authority. Now that the damage has been done, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is presented as stealthily going to Canada to rescue the situation (lines #15 & 18), insisting that the whole scandal should be kept secret (line #21). Now that the Minister is busy trying to recoup the situation, a host of questions about credibility are left ringing in Tanzanians' ears.

In the above light, it is difficult to see why the president was receiving the jets "with discomfiture and euphoria promising that others would come" (line #11), positioning the president as the man behind the 87 billion shilling scandal (lines #19 & 22). The opposition wants to sustain their positioning of the president; so they ask questions to cast doubt on the president's capacity and goodness (lines #22, 23 & 24). These remarks position the president as someone who should not be trusted when he tells Tanzanians that he wants to rid them of the poverty that afflicts them.

Discussion

The analysis of remarks made by members of opposition parties demonstrates their use of online social network infrastructure as a platform to position themselves in a better light than cast by official presidential remarks made to justify the ban on their standard means of public communication. The discretion exercised by the fifth phase government in the name of crisis management has been coupled with efforts to change the political landscape, which has provoked acute resistance and contestation. Depending upon which side one assumes, one might regard this opposition as conducting what White (2017) has called the politics of principled disobedience. They are operating in a power asymmetry, which was exacerbated by the president's banning them from holding political rallies.

Foucault (2000) refers to power as something that exists in a field between different actors. Therefore, understood in this dynamic dimension, power is recognised as productive and as contributing to how different activities evolve. This perspective frames the Tanzanian political opposition as resisting the massive power of the government, provoked by the

presidential positioning as alien to the general public's welfare and best interests. Therefore the political opposition is observed using the Internet as a platform to engage in a power-balancing strategy, an important element in democratic political dynamics.

This perspective gives rise to a further question concerning this political dynamic: in using the social networking platform in this way, has the political opposition conformed to their president's positioning of them; or have they initiated the use of online social networking against the president's polemical gerrymandering tactic?

One might argue that the opposition has acted creatively by using the Internet platform and thereby has managed to achieve two things: first, they have cleared the president's negative positioning of them as self-serving politicians with nothing productive to offer Tanzanians, people who are undermining the dedicated public's industry and hard work. In response, the opposition presents themselves positively with the Tanzanian masses as fellow sufferers and as their true representatives in wrestling the country's resources away from the inept and careless government whose primary focus is to cover up egregious error when things go wrong. Further, the opposition's focus on the president's mannerism positions him and the established government in a negative light. They present the president as appropriating too much power and as supervising issues of national significance like a family affair. They represent him as disillusioned and as unnecessarily coercive, and therefore deserving of the general public's resistance.

Arguably, these further observations illuminate the political dynamic that currently obtains in Tanzania today. This scenario provides a good example of power balancing as a feature of democratic governance more generally. The positioning rebuttal of the opposition captures a moment in the dynamic between the party in power and its opposition.

The introduction of the social networking component in this repartee introduces a new aspect whose significance has yet to be witnessed in political history, reinforcing the perspective of political phenomena as non-deterministic. By repairing to the online infrastructure, this opposition's commentary has reached far beyond the impact it could have had if they were addressing their remarks to just one constituency, one audience assembled for a political rally at a physical location beyond their assigned district. Through the online platform the opposition's message carries immeasurably farther than its standard reach. Moreover, that message is retrievable. If the opposition had not reverted to the online platform, one may presume that they would not have been able to reclaim their representative proximity to the people. The social network platform can be seen to introduce a wholly new

element in the political dynamic. One might argue that the impact of the online messaging precipitated the Minister's travelling to Canada in attempted secrecy. If this is so, then it may indicate that the political opposition in the United Republic of Tanzania will remain a productive force in the democratic process, so long as the social media platform exists.

There are negative aspects, certainly, to the politics of power-balancing that depends upon positioning opponents as 'good' and 'bad'. Arguably, the rhetorical influences that these attacks and counterattacks have upon the perspective of potential voters constitute a harmful oversimplification, one which may affect the entire society for generations to come. Further, the online strategy adopted by the opposition carries the risk of exposing the youth to the established practice of sending anonymous and uncensored messages with impunity, into the inestimably vast field of influence constituted by the worldwide web. This may have the potential effect of transforming Tanzanian youth into irresponsible digital citizens who pose a threat to their own nation's stability. A healthy political environment requires that participants share a readiness to submit their actions to public assessment and approval before their implementation.

Resorting to online platforms as "alternative avenues for expressing political grievances . . ." (Marcea, 2012:2) is a political move devoid of the calibrating effect of immediate public feedback. Blommaert says that online zones of social activity afford the capacity to construct a logic of action that is disassociated from counter-opinions, providing rationalisations for participants' actions offline (Blommaert, 2017: 1). In Egypt it was the use of "the social media networks as a form of organisational infrastructure that began with virtual networks and was transposed to offline networks" (Storck 2011: 25). Tanzania may well be in its nascent infancy of evolving an online social infrastructure which functions as a tool of mobilisation which moves offline. The data assembled here is insufficient to speculate about whether the power-balancing conducted online has carried implications for offline activity. However, it is pertinent to observe that the Tanzanian government felt seriously challenged by these online communications; and within a few days of the opposition's press conference detailed above, the government sent a spokesperson to explain some of things. One may presume this was done in a vigilant attempt to pre-empt the offline effects of the impact of the online communications.

Conclusion

Using positioning theory to analyse the power-balancing by opposition representatives in current Tanzanian politics, relying on the text of

a Youtube interview, this study found that social networks could well be functioning as a significant element in the dynamics of representational participatory democracy at a national level. The resort to the online social network has introduced a new level of indeterminacy in several dimensions: in outreach, the communication has an unlimited extent which is unprecedented in single political rallies; temporally, the rhetoric remains indelibly retrievable. Further, the precedents for influencing offline activity through online communication, as witnessed in the recent dramatic political developments of other countries, carry as yet unexplored implications for Tanzania, some of these possible, unpredictable consequences are undeniably dangerous. Thus it has been argued that the online social networking infrastructure introduces a genuinely unprecedented element in the country's political dynamics, one which the government has demonstrated that it takes seriously. The resort of the opposition to online social networking indicates the government should find ways to address internally the society's need for structured and institutionalised political participation.

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