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## The impact of ethnic factor on political stability in Africa (Tanzania as a Model)

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### Abstract

Ethnicity is one of the most serious challenges facing new states in Africa, as it represents a central division. Ethnicity literature has linked ethnic politics to civil wars and deteriorating social and economic conditions. Tanzanian society represents an exception among African countries, as it is not based on this division. Despite the negative impact of political ethnicity, Tanzania is known as a country of civil peace. This is a result of several factors, including structural and historical factors, such as Tanzania's unique ethnic composition, the methods and strategies adopted by colonialism during the colonial era, and the political systems' efforts, albeit with diligent effort, to build an independent state with a national ethos.

**Keywords:** Africa, Tanzania, political ethnicity, TANU party, Julius Nyerere, ethnic pluralism, political geography of Tanzania

### 1. Introduction

Africa is one of the countries with the greatest ethnic diversity, whether linguistically, religiously, or nationally, allowing for the coexistence of more than 2,000 languages. One of the consequences of this diversity has been conflicts in many countries on the continent, negatively impacting these countries. This has forced them to adopt strategies and measures to reduce this ethnic discrimination. This requires concerted efforts between individuals and the ruling authority, prioritizing the national interest over ethnicity to achieve peace. Tanzania is one of the countries that has enjoyed civil peace compared to other countries on the continent. This is due to several factors, including the awareness of Tanzanian citizens during their political participation in elections, and their reliance on ethnic division, rather than choosing those who serve the country's interests. Furthermore, despite the successive colonial movements that have affected Africa and Tanzania and worked to change the ethnic map, they have not been able to delude Tanzanian citizens and ruling authorities into believing that this ethnic diversity is real and that they rely on it as a political ethnicity. This comes from the regime's commitment to representing the interests of different groups, ensuring justice in the distribution of resources and wealth, and avoiding economic marginalization, as the existence of political systems is linked to achieving this. Furthermore, loyalty is based on national sovereignty, not on the interests of others. The ethnic group, otherwise the state will lose its prestige and legitimacy in the eyes of these groups, and this is a fundamental issue for peoples with ethnic diversity.

The research aims to answer the following questions? What is meant by ethnicity? What is the impact of ethnicity on political stability in Africa? What is the impact of ethnicity on political stability in Tanzania?

To answer these questions, the research assumes that Ethnicity is one of the most widely used concepts in multi-ethnic countries, and its presence leads to conflict within countries if it is used to their advantage and avoids tribalism, especially in Africa. The ethnic factor affects political stability. Conflicts in Africa are based on ethnicity. Colonialism also played a major role in sowing the seeds of ethnic conflicts, especially since Africa is a continent bound by tribal loyalty, which makes it extremely difficult to abandon it in favor of sovereignty and the state. A continent like Africa consists of 56 countries teeming with thousands of linguistic and religious ethnicities. It is not easy to control this diversity without violations or divisions by ethnic groups, especially the large ones, which affects the political

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stability of the state. In addition, there are parties seeking to create strife and sectarian divisions for political gain and to monopolize power. This is what happens in most elections on the African continent. The type of party determines the future of politics in African countries. If the parties are national, the state will be strong and stable. However, if the parties are based on ethnic/religious grounds, the state will be rife with conflicts and fragmentation will prevail and the ethnic factor has a positive impact on Tanzania, making it a country that enjoys civil peace. Ethnic identity is the foundation of the political electoral process. Despite the presence of more than 125 major ethnic groups, Tanzania has maintained the principle of national unity and integration among its ethnic components since its inception as a state. This has been achieved through the historical development of national identity and policies that have adopted Swahili as the national language and the adoption of policies aimed at reducing ethnic divisions and strengthening national identity.

## 2 The first requirement

### 2.1 Ethnincty (Definition)

The presence of ethnic groups within a single state provokes conflicts between these groups, especially those seeking power, which provides a justification for foreign intervention, or which these multiple powers resort to. Ethnic conflict in Africa is more evident because political borders, in most cases, do not coincide with the borders of ethnic groups, and this is considered a source of conflict <sup>[1]</sup>.

The emergence of ethnic movements in the nineteenth century was not a prelude to the emergence of unification movements in Europe, particularly in Italy, Germany, and Belgium in 1830 AD, and in Russian Poland in 1831 AD. In 1848 AD, unification attempts occupied the forefront in the German, Italian, and Romanian states, forming social-ethnic movements seeking to establish their own homelands. This was after establishing the concept of an ethnic or racial group, i.e., establishing a human community whose members are linked together through physical, biological, or cultural ties. This community lives within a broader political community, forming a cultural and civilizational framework different from the cultural and civilizational framework of the rest. Society, and the members of this group are aware of the distinct components of their identity and self, and are constantly active to preserve these components in the face of factors of weakness and analysis <sup>[2]</sup>.

The word "ethnicity" was first used in the English language in the fourteenth century and has continued to be used to refer to marginalized or oppressed individuals. It is also worth noting that the word "ethnicity" was used in the writing of the New Testament and the Bible to differentiate between the Apostles and the Children of Israel. On the other hand, Europeans in the middle Ages used the term "ethnicity" to refer to peoples and groups that were not Christian, primarily meaning pagans <sup>[3]</sup>.

Several definitions of ethnicity have emerged depending on their scope.

- **Sociology defines it as:** A group with shared traditions and a distinct personality as a subgroup within the larger society. They have their own religion, language, and customs, and their sense of unity as a distinct group is their most important characteristic <sup>[4]</sup>.

The origin of the word "ethnicity" goes back to the Greek word "eovikos," meaning "savage" or "uncivilized." This word, in turn, is derived from the root "ehnost," which was initially used to refer to a nation, specifically to those who

were not ethnic. During the Middle Ages, it was used to refer to those who were not Christians or Jews. According to Greek beliefs, ethnicity means origin or race <sup>[5]</sup>.

The word "ethnos" is derived from the ancient Greek language and means peoples not organized in cities. In the modern era, its history dates back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, from which ethnology, meaning the study of peoples, and before that, ethnography. The word "ethnicity" was used to refer to social issues <sup>[6]</sup>.

1. **Ethnicity:** A human group that emphasizes a specific level of its members and a special quality that differs from other groups in two elements: religion and language. These elements ensure optimal communication between members of the ethnic group, provided that these two elements are truly qualitative and not shared by other social groups <sup>[7]</sup>.
2. **Ethnicity:** A concept that refers to a group of people characterized by interaction and communication among its members, and the presence of a common culture that distinguishes it from other groups. This distinction may be based on linguistic, religious, ethnic, historical, and geographical factors, in addition to the presence of an awareness of the group's goals and constant communication between its members <sup>[8]</sup>.

Ethnicity, from a technical standpoint, is a relatively new term. It wasn't used until the 1950s, primarily by anthropologists and sociologists, to address contemporary social and political phenomena and the study of problems faced by states in light of ethno-identity pluralism and conflict. Later, it transcended state borders to become a matter of concern to the international community, such as the Kurdish, Armenian, and Kashmir problems <sup>[9]</sup>.

In light of the previous definitions, ethnicity consists of physical and cultural characteristics. Physical characteristics are genetically inherited and are:-

1. **Structural characteristics:** These require special instruments to observe, such as the shape and size of the skull, face, nose, teeth, and bones.
2. **Superficial characteristics:** These are the apparent characteristics, which can be perceived with the naked eye, such as the shape of the lips, skin color, and hair.
3. Cultural characteristics are linked to the social aspect resulting from societal interaction and human relations, i.e., the social environment. These characteristics include: unity of language, culture, religion, traditions, and history <sup>[10]</sup>.

Some thinkers have identified four basic characteristics of an ethnic group, which can be summarized as follows:-

1. Common belonging, which constitutes an important factor in the formation of an ethnic group through the long shared history among its members. Some consider this feeling to be the foundation of the ethnic group, and that the unity of religion, language, and culture are merely supporting factors.
2. Cultural uniqueness. Because things are distinguished by their opposites, interaction with other groups enables an ethnic group to recognize its uniqueness and distinctiveness.
3. Compulsory membership: This means that an individual has no choice in belonging to an ethnic group; rather, membership in the ethnic group is acquired by birth.
4. **Regionalism:** An ethnic group is usually concentrated in a specific region within a political unit, such as the Basque Country in Spain, Quebec in Canada, or the Flemish Region in Belgium <sup>[11]</sup>.

The new reality of interpreting ethnic identity relies on what individuals interpret according to their social circumstances and, as Pierre L. van den Berghe<sup>[12]</sup> pointed out in 1981, ethnicity is an extension of kinship, and social behavior has a biological basis. His model assumed that people act cooperatively with others to the extent that they share interests, believe they share them, or are compelled to act in ways that conflict with their interests<sup>[13]</sup>.

## 2.2 The second requirement:

### 2.2.2 Ethnistry in Africa

The African continent consists of 56 countries, and includes thousands of ethnic groups that once coexisted, worked together, and intermarried in peaceful settings, with ethnic disputes contained through customary mechanisms. However, the severity of ethnic problems began to escalate with the advent of Western colonialism and due to the policies pursued by African governments after independence<sup>[14]</sup>. Africa is the second largest continent in terms of area and population. Its population exceeds (1.478) billion people until mid-2024, and it will double in the year 2050 to become (2.417) billion people. The population of Africa is distributed across 56 countries<sup>[15]</sup>. Ethnic diversity is a real reality in all African countries, and it was present in many ancient African political entities, including kingdoms and empires. Language is one of the most important elements of ethnicity because it represents the link and cultural vessel for individuals of a certain ethnicity. The number of languages in the world is about (6000) languages, and in Africa there are about (1500-2000) languages, the number of speakers of which varies, including (75) languages that have at least one million speakers, and this number represents a third of the languages of the world. These African languages belong to four or five major language families: Afro-Asiatic, Niger-Congo (both groups), Nilo-Saharan, Xhosa, and Austronesian. Under each family are multiple language groups<sup>[16]</sup>.

Burritt identifies three stages of ethnic (tribal) relations in Africa, which he calls ethnicity as a political basis:<sup>[17]</sup>

1. **First:** The pre-colonial period, when ethnic relations and identity were highly fluid. People moved from one region to another, and there was fusion and integration of different ethnic groups, and sometimes even separation.
2. **Second:** The colonial period, when the process of colonization made tribes fixed and defined, and established strict borders that halted the continuous movement of people, with the exception of labor migration, which was a clear political and economic factor. This ensured successful colonization, as political and social organization could be effectively implemented to exploit African resources. Borders were sometimes arbitrary and shaped according to European preconceptions and political requirements. Many of the ethnic studies conducted during the colonial era were aimed at facilitating the smooth functioning of the colonial machinery.
3. **Third:** The nationalist period, during which nationalists fighting for independence used the ethnic base for their political power. Sometimes, political parties developed along ethnic lines, such as those in Zimbabwe—ZAPU, which is predominantly Ndebele, and ZANU, which is predominantly Shona, and other smaller ethnic groups.

An interesting phenomenon is that, after independence, nationalists themselves were forced to struggle with ethnic identity in order to build the unity and identity required for a

modern nation.

Political and social systems in many African countries after World War II shifted to single-party systems, such as those in Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser, Nkrumah in Ghana, Nyerere in Tanzania, Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire, Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, and Ahmed Sékou Touré in Guinea<sup>[18]</sup>. The African reality is characterized by its ripples of social, cultural, and religious structures and diversity, making them a distinctive feature of African societies. In terms of linguistic diversity, Africa has more than two thousand languages and dialects. These languages belong to two main groups: the Afro-Asian language group and the Niger-Congo language group, both of which consist of sub-linguistic groups<sup>[19]</sup>.

East Africa, which includes the countries of the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, Kenya, and Tanzania), enjoys a global strategic position for several reasons: -<sup>[20]</sup>

1. It overlooks waterways of commercial and military importance, such as the Gulf of Aden and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and controls access to the Red Sea.
2. The region is linked to the interests of all international powers due to its proximity to the region's energy hubs and transportation corridors.
3. There is competition between regional and global powers over control of the islands belonging to the Horn of Africa countries.
4. The Horn of Africa region is the source of the Nile River, and this has security and development implications.
5. The region represents significant importance in the national security approaches of all countries in the region.
6. There is growing economic importance in terms of markets, economic projects, and foreign investment.
7. Natural gas fields are expected to be discovered off the coast of the region.

The nature of political borders and the way they are demarcated in Africa has resulted in ethnic groups that cross political borders between more than one country. This has led to the fragmentation of a single ethnic group, and the demand of a minority within it for secession and integration into its parent country. This pattern develops conflicts within a single country from simple to complex. There are approximately (15) ethnic groups and regions in the Nile Basin countries.

Transnational groups include: the Somali ethnic group, distributed in Somalia and the northeastern region of Kenya, the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, and Djibouti; the Tutsi ethnic group in Uganda, Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi; the Afar ethnic group in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea; the Tigrayan ethnic group between Ethiopia and Eritrea; the Twa and Hutu ethnic groups in Rwanda and Burundi; the Maasai, Yu, and Makanda ethnic groups in Kenya and Tanzania; the Holoholo ethnic group in Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo; the Zande in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo; the Beja (Bani Amer) ethnic group in Eritrea and Sudan; the Turkan ethnic group between South Sudan and Kenya; and the Ango and Acholi ethnic groups between South Sudan and Uganda<sup>[21]</sup>. There are several causes of ethnic conflict in Africa, which can be divided into two main factors: internal and external, as follows: -<sup>[22]</sup>

1. **First:** Factors related to the internal environment of African societies. These factors include the distinctive

phenomenon of diversity within African societies, characterized by multiple forms and patterns of pluralism, whether ethnic, linguistic, or religious, and the failure of the nation-state project in Africa. These factors also include economic factors, as economic backwardness is a direct cause of ethnic wars.

**2. Second:** Factors related to the external environment of African societies:

These factors include colonial policies, where colonial governments sought to alter the ethnic map of Africa through processes of dismantling and restructuring that suited their expansionist interests<sup>[23]</sup>. These factors are also reflected in external variables, such as political and social factors. The impact of globalization on political organizations and the spread of the ideology of human rights and fundamental freedoms by Western countries on the African continent.

### 3 The third requirement

#### 3.1 (The Impact of Ethnic Factor on Political Stability in (Tanzania)

The United Republic of Tanzania is located astronomically in East Africa between longitudes (29 and 41 degrees) east and latitudes (1 and 12 degrees) south. It is bordered by Kenya to the northeast, Uganda to the northwest, Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west, Zambia to the southwest, Malawi and Mozambique to the southeast, and the Indian Ocean to the east<sup>[24]</sup> map (1)<sup>[25]</sup>.

The United Republic of Tanzania is the largest country in East Africa, covering an area of 940,000 km<sup>2</sup>, of which 60,000 km<sup>2</sup> are inland waters. Tanzania lies south of the equator and includes numerous lakes and rivers. These include Lake Tanganyika, which runs along its western border and is the deepest and longest freshwater lake in Africa. Lake Victoria, the second largest lake in the world, flows into the Nile River. The Rufiji River is Tanzania's largest river and flows into the Indian Ocean south of Dar es Salaam. Although there are numerous rivers, only the Rufiji and Kagera are navigable. Geologically, the Great Rift Valley runs throughout East Africa and is associated with volcanic activity in the country's northeastern regions. Two branches of the rift valley run through Tanzania. The western branch contains Lakes Tanganyika, Rukwa, and Nyasa, while the eastern branch ends in northern Tanzania and includes Lakes Natron, Manyara, and Eyasi. Except for a narrow 900 km<sup>2</sup> belt along the coast, most of Tanzania lies

above 200 m, and most of the country is above 1,000 m above sea level. In the north, Mount Kilimanjaro rises to over 5,000 m, with its highest peak, Kibo, reaching 5,895 m above sea level. It is the highest point in Africa<sup>[26]</sup>. The United Republic of Tanzania consists of the mainland and Zanzibar, which includes the islands of Unguja and Pemba. The terrain consists of plains along the coast, a plateau in the central region, and highlands in the north and south. Mounts Meru and Kilimanjaro dominate the border with Kenya. To the south lies the Central Plateau, reaching elevations of over 2,000 meters. The Southern Highlands mountain range separates the Eastern Plateau from the rest of the country<sup>[27]</sup>.

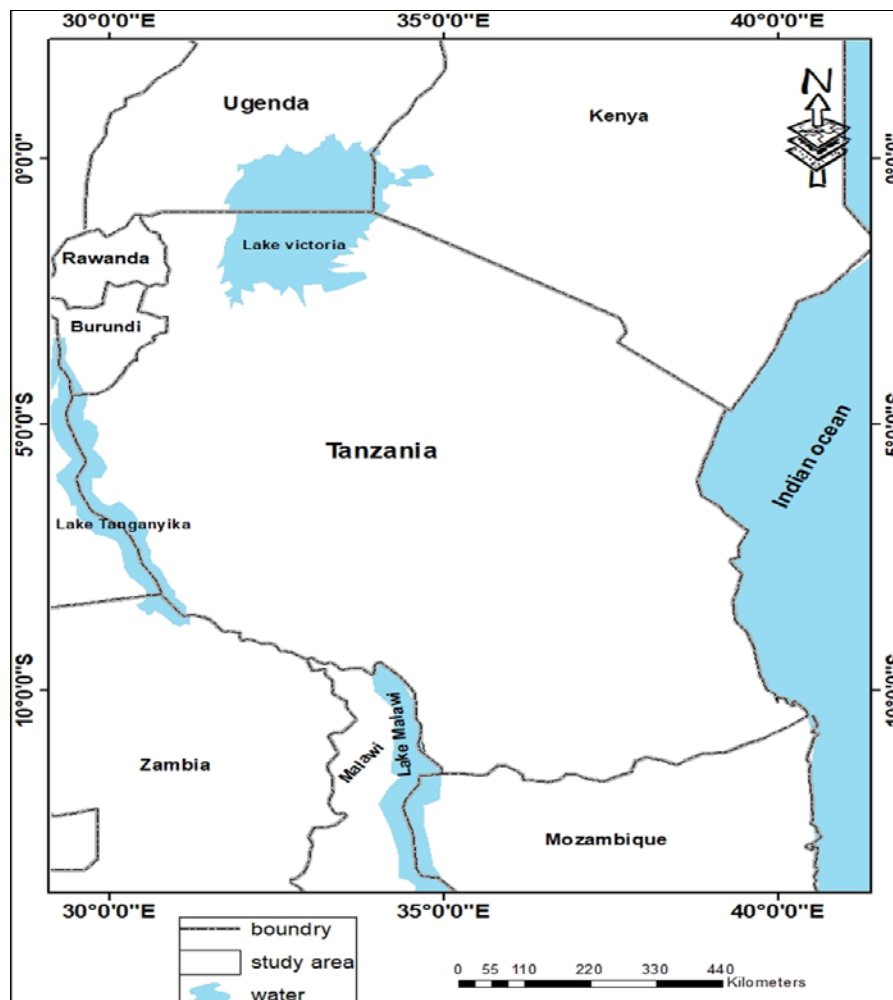
Geologically, most of Tanzania lies on the Great African Plateau, with elevations ranging from 1,000 to 2,000 meters above sea level, with the exception of the narrow coastal belt. Its geographical location between 1° and 12° south latitude and its location on the eastern edge of Africa have contributed to a truly tropical environment, characterized by high temperatures and humidity (60-80%), low wind speeds, and the absence of a cold season. This makes it vulnerable to significant seasonal variations caused by the climate the general air circulation over the Indian Ocean is one of the main factors controlling Tanzania's climate. It is classified into four types: hot and humid coastal plains; the hot and arid central plateau; the high and humid lake regions; and the temperate highlands<sup>[28]</sup>.

Tanzania's land includes three natural regions consisting of:  
-<sup>[29]</sup>

1. A coastal plain extending along the coast, ranging in width from 15 to 85 km, reaching its greatest width in the central region and narrowing in the north and south.
2. The great central plateau, rising directly after the plain and reaching an altitude of 1,400 m, is located on it. Volcanic mountains, the most important of which is Mount Kilimanjaro, which reaches an altitude of 6,000 m.
3. Lakes, which are spread across large areas, the most important of which are Lake Victoria, Lake Nyasa, and Lake Tanganyika.

Tanzania went through a period of German colonialism in 1840 AD, then British colonialism in 1914 AD, and then independence in 1964 AD. In light of this, it went through a period of one-party rule t





Source: The Research Depend on ArcMap 10.8/ Coordinate System WGS 1984

Map (1) Astronomical location of Tanzania

through the Tanganyika African National Union (TANNU) in the year (1964-1985). Accordingly, Tanzania is considered one of the countries in which parties with a medium period of rule (10-30) years prevailed, as the Tanganyika National Union Party (FANU) prevailed. Tanzania is also considered one of the countries with great diversity (+100) ethnic groups, in addition to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia. Despite the ethnic diversity in Tanzania, which is between (120-130) ethnicities, there is a nationality, as ethnic diversity does not play an effective role in political problems or changes on religious grounds, and there is justice in the distribution of wealth <sup>[30]</sup>.

Most ethnic groups in Tanzania during the pre-colonial era were decentralized, based on kinship and tribes <sup>[31]</sup>. There were only a few societies with highly communal social formations that developed centralized state systems, such as the Chagga, Hehe, Ngoni, Guineu, Nyamwezi, Shamba, and Sango. The literature on ethnicity in African countries agrees that ethnic identities were fluid, characterized by porous boundaries that were constantly being redefined. This redefinition of groups was the result of continuous processes of internal migration and societal conquests that led to the fusion of social and linguistic groups into larger ethnic groups. These ethnic fusions led to the erosion of the original characteristics of the parties involved in the integration and to the weakening of the power base of leaders in these artificial ethnic entities <sup>[32]</sup>. Tanzania was known for its political stability, which contributed to its

importance in the Great Lakes region. It also contributed to the continent's independence, its confrontation with apartheid, and its peaceful initiatives in settling regional conflicts. Its position was demonstrated by its role as a pacifist in the Rwandan conflict, as it was quick to initiate mediation in armed conflicts in both Burundi and Rwanda. In Rwanda, it was the state that sponsored the peace agreements in the capital, Arusha <sup>[33]</sup>.

Distinctive aspects of Tanzania's colonial experience contributed to the diminishing importance of ethnicity. Tanganyika was under German rule for more than thirty years (1885-1918). Unlike the British, who emphasized the importance of traditional authorities as the primary administrative units of colonial government, a practice that entrenched ethnic identities, German colonial practice focused on forms of direct administration that suppressed traditional institutions and cultures. German officials also ignored local institutions, preferring to rule through a system of Central administrators, called akidas, were then distributed to areas with which they shared no common cultural affinities. The akida system spread Swahili throughout Tanzania, whereby local communities could communicate with the appointed akidas only through a common spoken language. This system also clearly embodied Germany's refusal to recognize or integrate local forms of organization <sup>[34]</sup>.

After independence, Tanzania was dominated by two distinct economic philosophies <sup>[35]</sup>, each with its own significance. The first was Julius Nyerere's socialist

humanism, a set of beliefs that emerged from his long-standing interest in the moderate socialism of British society. Because it set the normative goals for Tanzanian development, it enjoyed significant international and domestic support. The second set of ideas was the economic analysis of development. This intellectual framework comprised a broad body of scholarly research on the best ways to achieve rapid economic growth in developing countries with agricultural economies. Although these ideas were less widely disseminated than Nyerere's due to the vagueness of their terminology and the complexity of their calculations, they had a significant impact on the government's day-to-day decisions regarding development policy<sup>[36]</sup>. Tanzania embarked on economic reforms in the 1980s following the financial crisis it faced, and by the mid-1980s, Tanzania had become the second-poorest country in the world in terms of per capita GDP. Like other sub-Saharan African countries, Tanzania is striving to improve its development prospects through stringent and far-reaching reforms across virtually all sectors of the economy. These reforms have included economic liberalization and measures to address the ongoing economic crisis through structural adjustment programs. Key reforms undertaken by the Tanzanian government during the 1980s included Tanzania's own structural adjustment programs and donor-sponsored programs<sup>[37]</sup>.

Tanzania has a great ethnic diversity, with over 120 ethnic groups spread across its coastal and continental regions, including Arab and African elements. The most prominent ethnic group in Tanzania is the Maasai, who constitute the majority of the Tanzanian population (Map 2). Other ethnic groups settled in the country include Arab and Pakistani groups, Indian, and European (this religious and ethnic diversity has not negatively affected political stability in Tanzania, unlike neighboring countries that continue to suffer from civil wars.<sup>[38]</sup> Ethnicity in Tanzania can be properly understood by dividing the concept into three distinct categories: cultural ethnicity, social ethnicity, and political ethnicity. Ethnicity in Tanzania evolved from being primarily a cultural factor to gaining significant social significance with the process of colonization. However, a particular form of political ethnicity, commonly referred to as political tribalism, did not develop in Tanzania, with particular reference to the policies of Tanzania's first independent government. All identities based on concepts of shared heritage, origin, and culture can be understood as ethnicity, and the political implications of these identities can also be described as ethnic politics. Accordingly, political ethnicity can be divided into two separate categories: political tribalism associated with established

ethnic groups (originality politics), and political ethnicity of identities of shared origin<sup>[39]</sup>.

#### 4. The Fourth requirement

##### 4.1 The impact of ethnic factor on political stability in Tanzania

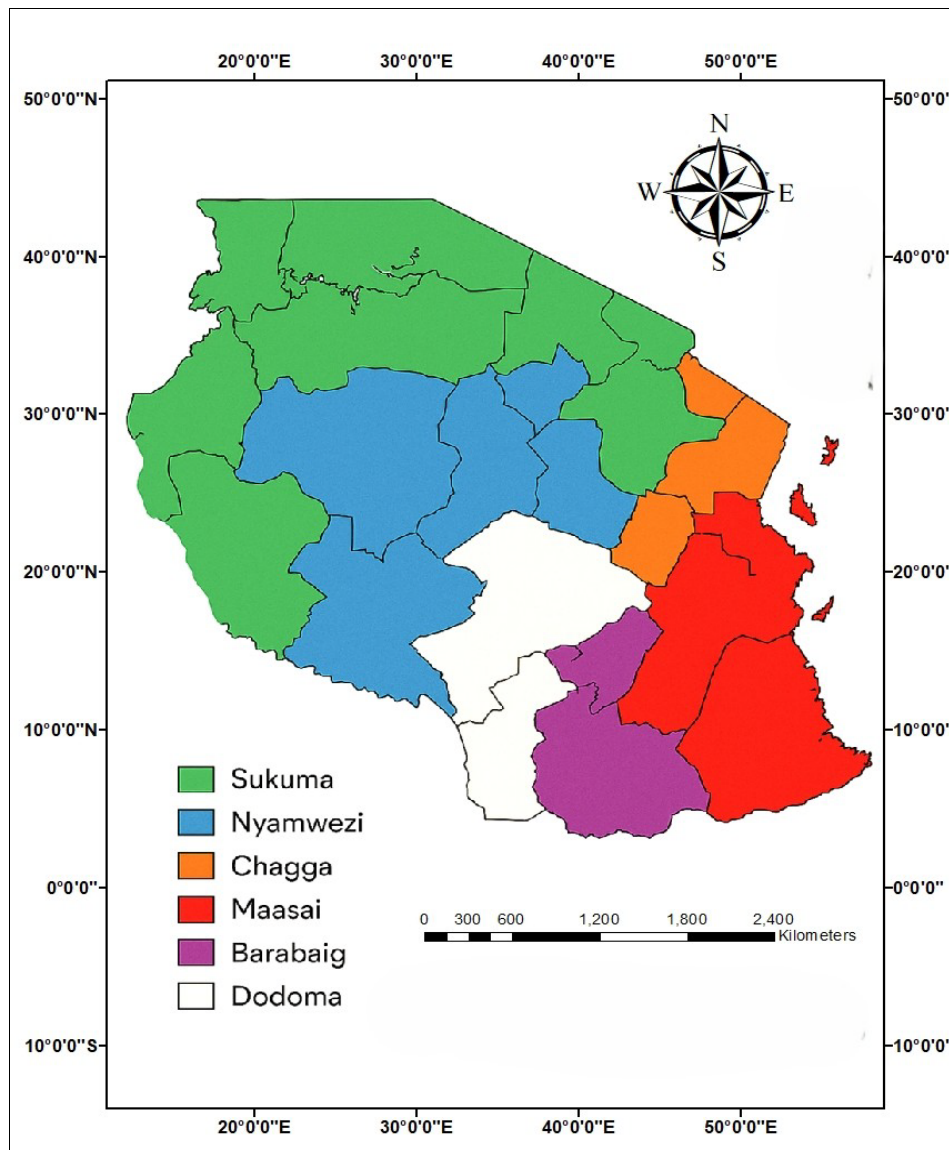
Ethnicity is an important factor in the political, economic, and social stability of countries. In Africa, and Tanzania in particular, its influence has been clearly evident in the process of political stability.

In light of this, it is necessary to point out the reasons for political stability in Tanzania: -

1. Ethnic and religious factors in Tanzania did not constitute a decisive factor in the distribution of resources, and the issue of race and religion never occupied a prominent role in the Tanzanian political scene, despite the fact that some tribes during the colonial era enjoyed greater educational opportunities than others. This policy continued after Julius Nyerere<sup>[40]</sup> took over. He implemented well-thought-out plans to weaken the power of one component over another. Nevertheless, Tanzania has set a model for religious and ethnic coexistence in East and Central Africa.<sup>[41]</sup> Tanzanian society is a model of ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity in Africa. Ethnically, the majority of the population is of African origin, such as the Bantu, Makunzi, Sukuma, Malwa, Bashanga, Sombo, Bogoro, Ngedu, Zaramo, Almera, and Juju. The remainder of the population is of Arab and Asian origin. Regarding religion, although the state prohibits census-based census, estimates indicate that more than half of the population is Muslim, more than a third is Christian, and the remainder adheres to traditional African beliefs. Language-wise, English is the official language of government, while at the popular level, Swahili is the mother tongue and the most widely spoken, followed by Arabic.<sup>[42]</sup>

We will analyze the role of ethnicity in political stability in Tanzania, in terms of language, religion, and geopolitics, as follows:

1. The Role of Swahili in Ethnic Integration and Peaceful Coexistence. The All People's Congress (APC), particularly its national integration efforts, have greatly benefited from the use of Swahili as the national language. It has been demonstrated that virtually all multiethnic integration initiatives would have been seriously hampered had Tanzanians not shared a



Source: The researcher depend on Arcmap 10.8 / Coordinate system WGS1984  
Scale 1:30,000,000

Map 2 Ethnic groups in Tanzania

common language. Multiethnic communications and nationalist messages were made possible by Swahili. Tanzanian ethnic groups are losing a valuable tool for promoting ethnic identity that can be used for political visibility. It can be concluded that Swahili facilitated the APC's components of national unity and peace by limiting linguistically informed local identities and ethnic miscommunication. Swahili thus strengthened multiethnic communications to achieve nation-building policies, which contributed to informing voters to prioritize national identity over ethnic sentiment. These sentiments have diluted the importance of ethnicity in determining voter preferences<sup>[43]</sup>. During the one-party era in Tanzania, religious institutions maintained stable and cordial relations with the state, in line with what studies on politics and religion in Africa predict. Tanzania can be defined as a secular state with a liberal approach to religion, where various "civil religions" are allowed to flourish freely. However, it is clear that religious institutions have maintained close ties with the state and its elites in Tanzania. The political state and religion in Africa are seen as closely intertwined, despite the formal separation of religion and politics: "It is difficult to ascertain where 'religion' ends and 'politics' begins." In Africa, it is difficult

to clearly distinguish between religion and politics, as political and religious authority have often overlapped, sometimes even within the same person<sup>[44]</sup>. Tanzania has had a turbulent political history, transitioning from a multiparty system to a single-party system, and from a single-party system to a multiparty system again. It has also changed from a parliamentary system to a presidential system, from a liberal economic system to a socialist system—a unique form of African socialism called Ujamaa<sup>[45]</sup>, and from a socialist economic system to a liberal economic system again. Despite these political and economic transformations, Tanzania, unlike most sub-Saharan African countries, has not experienced military intervention in politics. However, like other sub-Saharan African countries that have experienced colonialism, it faces formidable political challenges<sup>[46]</sup>.

**2. Tanzania's Political Geography:** Tanzania's distinctive political geography has given equal importance to fostering a culture of ethnic peace in the country. The most prominent feature of Tanzania's geography is its huge size, as its area is about 940,000 km<sup>2</sup>, which represents about (29%) of India's area of about (3,287,263 km<sup>2</sup>), but it only includes

(40 million people), or about (3.6%) of India's population of about (1.1 billion people). In 2010, which is equivalent to about a part of 27 (1/27) of them <sup>[47]</sup> but most importantly, much of Tanzania's land is of high agricultural quality. With a relatively small population spread across such a vast area, Tanzania is a land-rich, not a land-scarce, society. The widespread availability of fertile land alone is a powerful explanation for Tanzania's ethnic peace: its various ethnic groups were not forced to compete with each other for good agricultural land. As a result, Tanzanians were not automatically divided into land-owning and land-deprived ethnic communities, a division that has contributed significantly to ethnic tensions elsewhere in the world. The location of Tanzania's major population centers also contributes. Tanzania's population distribution can be likened to a doughnut, with the largest population centers concentrated on the country's peripheries, particularly on the northern, western, and southern borders. The center of the country, or the eastern coast (excluding urban centers such as Dar es Salaam, Tanga, and the port city of Mtwara), has much smaller populations. This unusual population distribution pattern is not surprising; it closely follows the availability of the best agricultural land, which lies in northern Tanzania on the border with Kenya, in the northwest on the borders of Uganda and Rwanda, in the southwest on the borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, and Malawi, and in the south on the border with Mozambique. The economic incentives created by this geography are clear and powerful, with people moving to the periphery to obtain good agricultural land. In practical political terms, this means that ethnic groups do not live in such close proximity that friction over land rights might arise. Elsewhere in Africa, however, this led to early nationalist movements being dominated by ethnic communities close to the capital, while in Tanzania, it was a very different experience. Thanks to the multiethnic nature of Dar es Salaam, the origins of the nationalist movement did not lead to the creation of a political party composed largely of members of a single ethnic group. Instead, with the diversity of Dar es Salaam's population, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) <sup>[48]</sup> emerged with a pan-ethnic composition representing all of Tanzania. TANU's successor, the Revolutionary Party (CCM), continued these traditions <sup>[49]</sup>.

From the above, it is clear that Tanzania's unique geographical environment has reduced the political influence of the country's largest and most prosperous ethnic groups. Their concentration on the country's periphery has made it difficult for them to transform their numbers and economic resources into a significant political force. Long distances, coupled with weak transportation and communications infrastructure, have limited the ability of these groups to exert political influence through their resources and population. On the other hand, smaller ethnic groups have been unable to capitalize on their geographical proximity to the center of power due to their small size and limited economic resources. In this way, Tanzania's geography has had an "equalizing" effect, narrowing the political gap between the large, prosperous groups on the one hand, and the smaller, less fortunate groups on the other.

Ethnic identity has been used in modern Africa as a starting point and as a key variable in explaining social divisions and political conflicts <sup>[50]</sup>, whatever the merits of this approach in understanding some other African countries, its

applicability to Tanzania is limited. Ethnic theories in African politics are not applicable to Tanzania simply because ethnicity plays a limited role in the political process. On a continent where ethnic identity is often an important input to understanding a country's political patterns, Tanzania presents a different reality: much of its stability stems from the low political importance of this factor. Although Tanzania is as multiethnic and multicultural as any other country on the African continent, with some 120 distinct ethnic groups, it has traditionally enjoyed an ethnic peace unlike any of its neighbors <sup>[51]</sup>.

## 5. Conclusion

1. Ethnicity in Africa, according to much of the literature, constitutes a fundamental division within society due to the country's vast ethnic diversity. Ethnicity has been linked to African politics, civil wars, and the deterioration of economic and social conditions, which signifies the prominence of ethnicity in African politics in general.
2. Tanzania is distinguished by the presence of more than 120 major ethnic groups, as well as multiple languages, like other African countries. However, it differs in that it was able to manage this ethnic diversity thanks to the policies adopted by Julius Nyerere and his party.
3. Tanzania's success in state-building and preventing ethnic conflicts is tangible evidence and refutation of the widespread state failure in Africa.
4. From a geopolitical perspective, Tanzania possesses the elements that enabled it to successfully manage its ethnic diversity, such as its size, resources, climate diversity, and the location of the capital. These factors and resources have also contributed significantly to its political stability and national composition.
5. The adoption of Swahili as the national language in Tanzania has contributed to strengthening harmonious relations among its ethnic components and enhancing national identity.
6. The ethnic factor has a positive impact on political stability in Africa when the government employs fairness in the distribution of resources, which enhances citizens' confidence in the ruling authority and undermines ethnic divisions. On the negative side, it widens the gap between the government and the citizens and reinforces ethnic divisions, particularly in elections and when party candidates seek to exploit ethnicity to gain power and monopolize it at the expense of other ethnic groups.
7. The ethnic factor has a positive impact on political stability in Tanzania. Despite the economic collapse that Tanzania experienced in the 1980s, it did not affect its ethnic stability, which means that it suffers from social, but not political, ethnic diversity. Therefore, it is a unified, presidential, republican, and multi-party democratic state.

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