



Democracy, dictatorship and demonstrations:

What do citizens really think?

1. Introduction

Though the fifth phase government has attracted praise for its determination to address issues of corruption, poor performance and inefficiency, it has also attracted criticism for its attitude to democracy and human rights. The media, parliament and opposition political parties are subject to a range of new restrictions and stricter implementation of existing rules. Live broadcasts from Parliament have been banned, a number of media outlets have been closed, suspended or put on notice for their content and at least six private individuals have been taken to court for insulting the President. In particular, on 7 June the police introduced a ban on political parties holding public rallies at this time. Subsequently, President Magufuli argued that there was no election scheduled until 2020, so such rallies would only distract the government and the public from their efforts to bring development.

The opposition parties see this as an infringement of their constitutional and democratic rights to free assembly and free speech. Some have described President Magufuli as a “dictator”. This includes Chadema leaders, who initiated *Umoja wa Kupinga Udikteta Tanzania (UKUTA)* – Alliance against Dictatorship in Tanzania – and called for a nationwide series of demonstrations to be held on 1 September, 2016. The government called this a threat to Tanzania’s peace and stability, and the police denied permission for the demonstrations. In response, UKUTA leaders described this as another infringement of their rights, and insisted that they planned to go ahead without police permission.

This short brief presents citizens’ views on democracy, dictatorship and demonstrations in Tanzania. Do the public agree with the description of President Magufuli as

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Sauti za Wananchi



a dictator? What are their views on multiparty democracy and free expression? Do they support the UKUTA protests? Do they plan to participate?

Data for this brief come from Twaweza's flagship *Sauti za Wananchi* survey. *Sauti za Wananchi* is a nationally-representative, high-frequency mobile phone panel survey. It is representative for Mainland Tanzania. Information on the overall methodology is available at www.twaweza.org/sauti. For this brief, data were collected from 1,602 respondents from the second *Sauti za Wananchi* panel. This was the twelfth round of calls to the new panel, conducted between 24 and 29 August, 2016.

These dates mean the data was collected at a time when Chadema planned to conduct demonstrations on 1 September and the police had refused permission for these to go ahead. On 31 August, after the data had been collected, Chadema leaders announced that they were putting the demonstrations on hold until 1 October, to give more time for their concerns to be resolved through dialogue.

Much of the analysis in this brief looks at differences in opinions held by supporters of different political parties. This is based on a question that asked which party, if any, each respondent feels closest to. Overall, two in three citizens (66%) report feeling closest to the ruling party (CCM), while two in ten (19%) feel closest to an opposition party (however the majority of these, 16%, feel close to Chadema and 3% to other opposition parties), and one in six (15%) don't feel close to any party.

The key findings are:

- Seven in ten citizens support democracy as the best form of government, consistent across supporters of different parties
- Support for opposition activity between elections is mixed, but support for freedom of speech is strong
- One in three citizens understand the word "dictatorship" to mean the use of brutal force by government
- One in ten citizens think Tanzania is currently led by a dictator
- Six in ten citizens support the ban on political rallies
- 16% of citizens are aware of UKUTA. Understanding of the movement is high among those who know of it
- Among those who are aware of UKUTA, one in five supports the movement, rising to over half of opposition party supporters
- Three in ten citizens say they would be willing to participate in demonstrations generally, but only one in ten of those aware of UKUTA planned to join the September 1 demonstration.

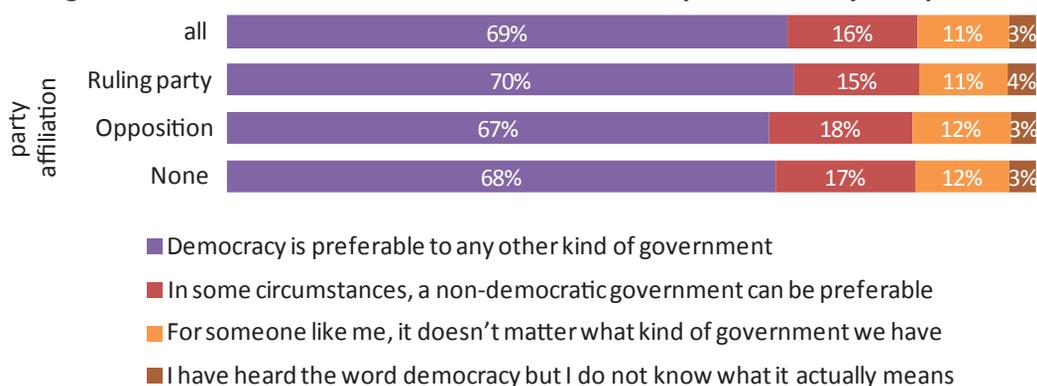
2. Nine facts about citizens' views on democracy

Fact 1: Seven in ten citizens support democracy as the best form of government

There is clear popular support for democracy in Tanzania, with seven in ten citizens (69%) describing democracy as preferable to any other kind of government. One out of six (16%) feel that in some circumstances non-democratic forms of government can be preferable.

In both cases, these findings are largely consistent across supporters of parties.¹

Figure 1: Which of these statements about democracy is closest to your opinion?



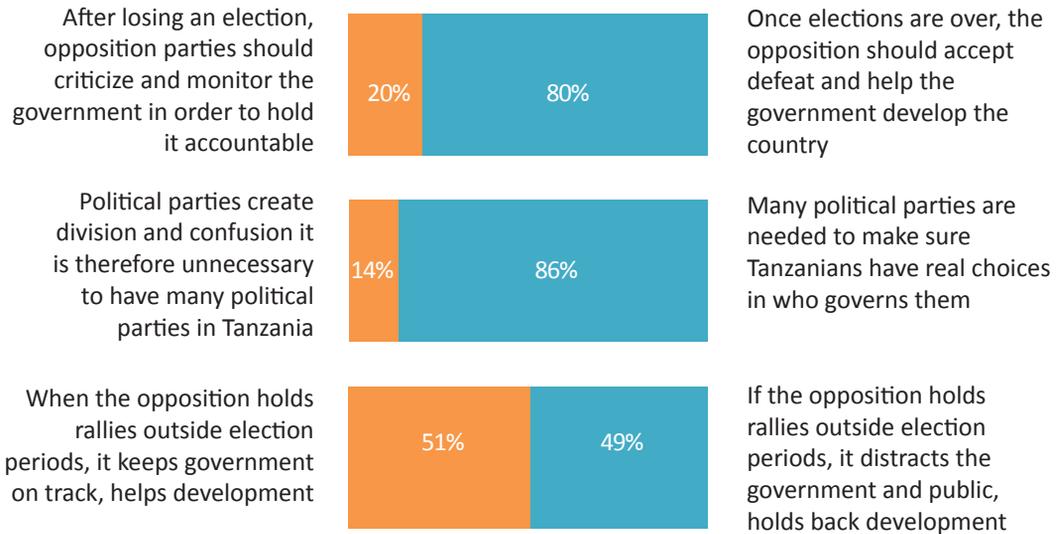
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 12 (September 2016)
Some totals do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Fact 2: Support for opposition activity between elections is mixed, but support for freedom of speech is strong

Eight in ten citizens (80%) feel the main focus of the opposition between elections should be to help the government develop the country. An even bigger majority (86%) feel that Tanzania needs opposition parties so that citizens have real choices in who governs them. On the value of opposition rallies outside election periods, citizens are split. Half (51%) feel that rallies serve to keep the government on the right track and help development, while a similar number (49%) feel such rallies distract the government and the public, holding back development.

1 *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 12 (September 2016)

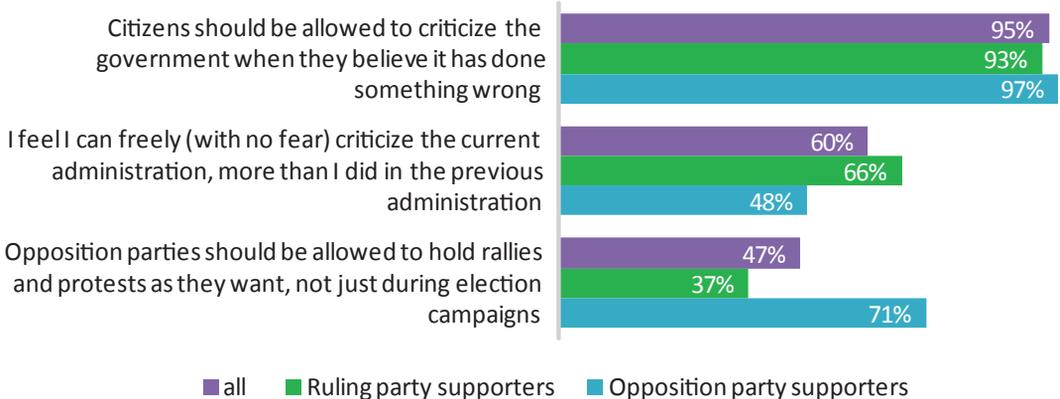
Figure 2: Views on opposition activities: With which statement do you agree more?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 12 (September 2016)

By far the largest majority (95%) – including supporters of both the ruling party and opposition parties – support the right of citizens to criticise the government.²

Figure 3: Views on democratic rights: percentage who agree with the following statements



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 12 (September 2016)

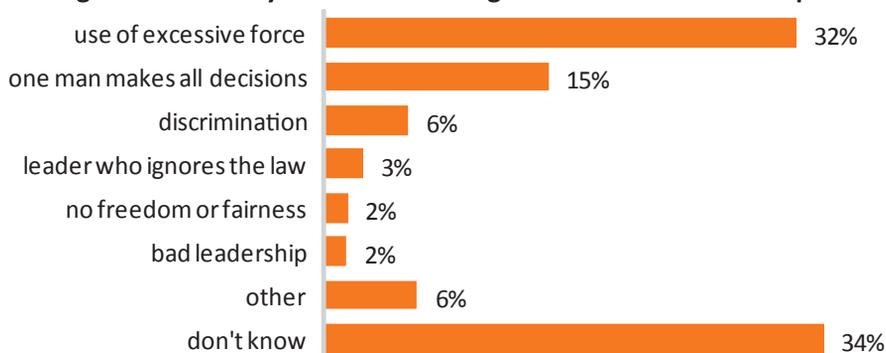
Fact 3: One in three citizens understand the word “dictatorship” to mean the use of excessive force by government

Citizens’ have a range of different understandings of the word “dictatorship” (“*udikteta*” in Swahili), but one in three citizens (32%) understand the word to mean the use of excessive

2 *ibid*

force by the government. A further 15% understand the word as referring to a situation where decision making is concentrated in the hands of one individual. However, three out of ten (34%) said they did not understand the meaning of the word.³

Figure 4: What is your understanding of the word “dictatorship”?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 12 (September 2016)

Fact 4: 11% citizens think Tanzania is currently led by a dictator, while 58% think it is not

Some politicians and elites have described President Magufuli as a dictator, and the word is included in the name, UKUTA. One in ten citizens (11%) agree with the idea that Tanzania is currently being led by a dictator, while six in ten disagree. Three in ten say they are unsure.

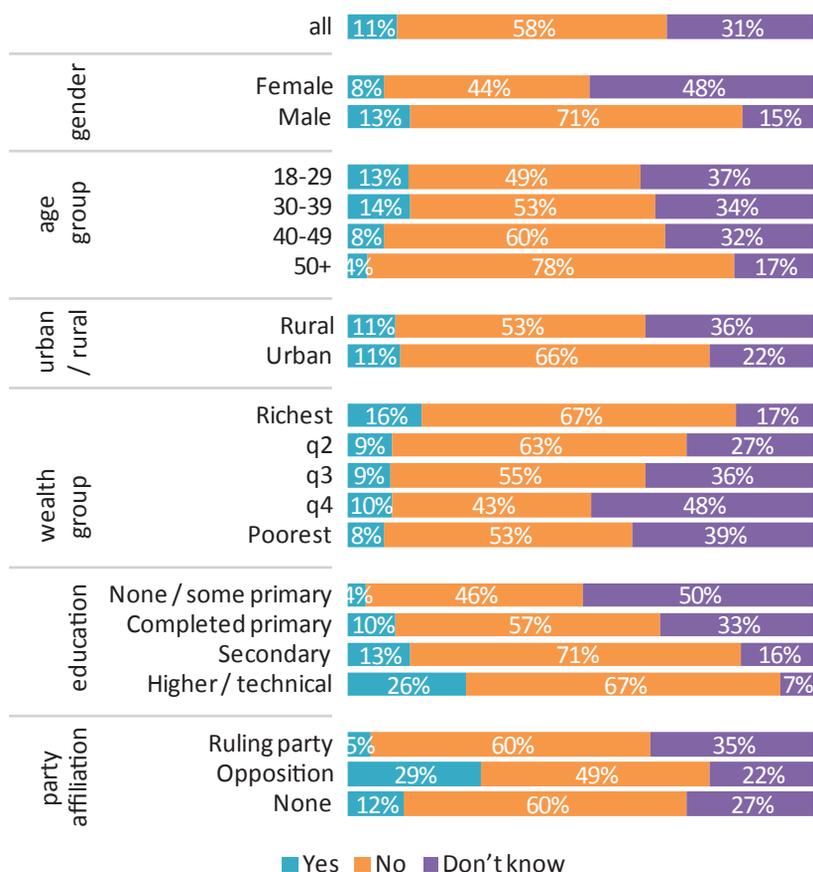
This figure varies a little between different sections of society. Men are slightly more likely than women (13% to 8%) to describe the country's leader as a dictator. Younger people and wealthier people are more likely to agree with the description than older or poorer people. People with more education are more likely than those with less education to see the president as a dictator.

The biggest difference comes when looking at political party affiliation. Three out of ten (29%) of those who feel close to opposition parties see President Magufuli as a dictator. Among those who see themselves as close to the ruling party, 5% hold this view, meaning one in every twenty CCM supporters nationwide see their party leader as a dictator.⁴

3 *ibid*

4 *ibid*

Figure 5: Do you think Tanzania is being led by a dictator?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 12 (September 2016)
Some totals do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Fact 5: Three in ten citizens say they are ready to participate in demonstrations

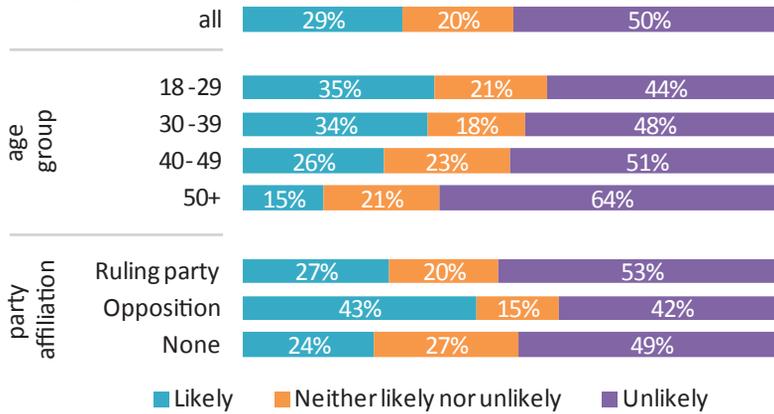
Three in ten citizens (29%) say they would be likely to participate in public demonstrations on “an issue that does not please them”, while half (50%) say it is unlikely that they would do so. Younger people say they are more likely to join demonstrations than older people.

Among those who said that in general they were likely to join demonstrations, a large majority (95%) explained that they saw it as a way “of finding justice / opposing something / expressing a community problem.”

Among those who say they are unlikely to join a demonstration, 45% said this was because they worried it could lead to violence, and 29% because “it is not the right way to solve the problem.”⁵

5 *ibid*

Figure 6: Willingness to join demonstrations in principle



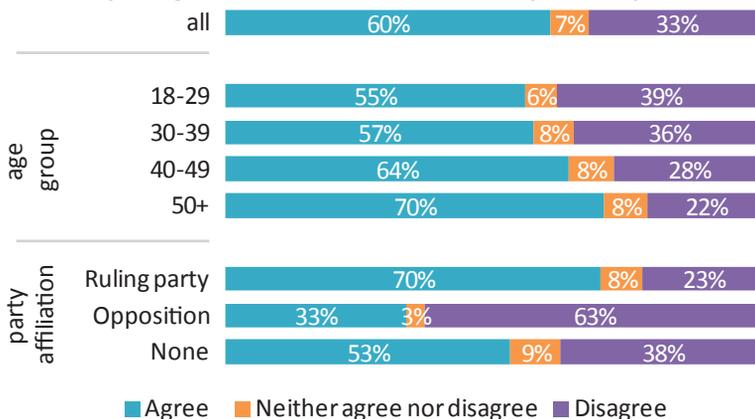
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 12 (September 2016)
Some totals do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Fact 6: Six in ten citizens support the ban on political rallies, including one in three opposition supporters

Six out of ten citizens (60%) support the president’s decision to ban political party rallies. Young people were less likely than older people (55% compared to 70%) to support the decision. Support is higher (70%) among ruling party supporters and lower (31%) among those who describe themselves as supporters of an opposition party.

However, supporters of each party disagree with their party leadership on this issue: one in three opposition party supporters (31%) agree with the ban, and one in four ruling party supporters (23%) disagree with it.⁶

Figure 7: Do you agree with the decision to ban political parties’ rallies



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 12 (September 2016)
Some totals do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

6 *ibid*

Fact 7: One out of six citizens is aware of UKUTA, and understanding is strong among those who know of it

One in six citizens (16%) know of the UKUTA movement, while eight in ten (79%) are not aware of the movement. Among those who are aware of UKUTA, understanding of the movement is strong; accurately describing UKUTA variously as a union against dictatorship (48%), as the opposition defending their rights (20%) and opposing the government (8%). Similarly, among those who are aware of UKUTA, the vast majority (84%) knew the correct date for the planned demonstrations.⁷

Figure 8: Awareness of UKUTA

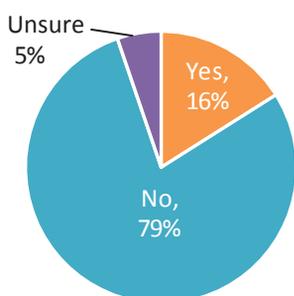
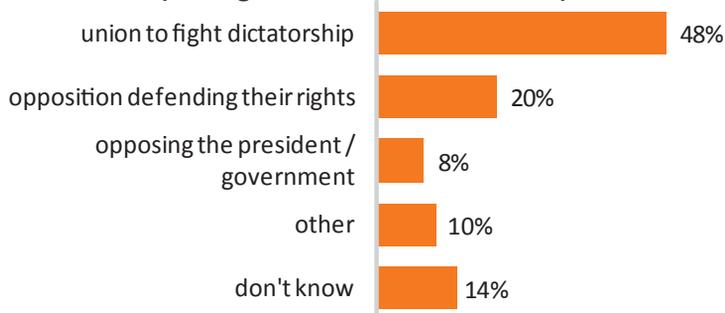


Figure 9: Knowledge about UKUTA (among those who know about it)

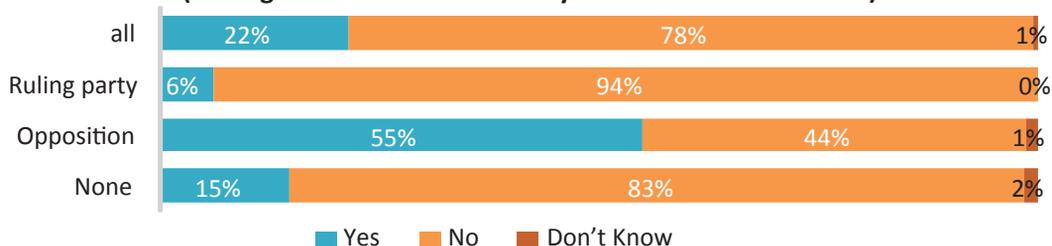


Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 12 (September 2016)

Fact 8: One in five citizens supports the UKUTA movement, rising to half of opposition party supporters

Among those who were already aware of the UKUTA movement, one in five (22%) support the movement. Support is higher among those who feel closer to opposition parties, though this group is split, with just over half (55%) saying they support UKUTA, and just under half (44%) saying they do not. Among ruling party supporters, 6% also support UKUTA.⁸

Figure 10: Support for UKUTA (among those who were already aware of the movement)



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 12 (September 2016)

Some totals do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

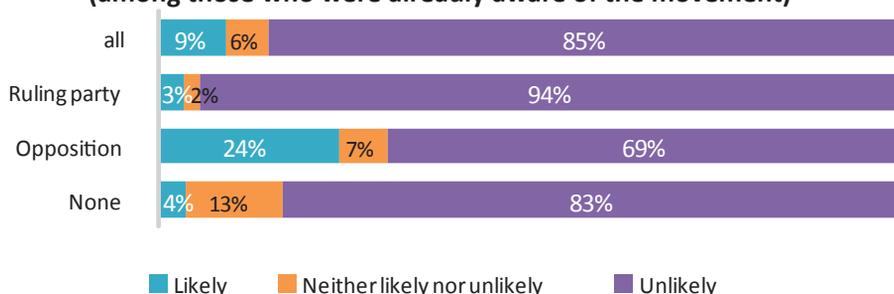
7 ibid

8 ibid

Fact 9: One in ten planned to join the 1 September demonstrations

Of those who were aware of the UKUTA movement, one in ten (9%) planned to demonstrate on 1 September, including one in four opposition supporters (24%) and 3% of ruling party supporters.

Figure 11: Reported likelihood of participating in UKUTA demonstrations on 1 September (among those who were already aware of the movement)



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 12 (September 2016)

3. Conclusion

This brief presents some fascinating findings on citizens' relationship to and views of democracy and free expression. Looking beyond the headline findings, the data show that citizens have a fairly nuanced, complex and at times contradictory set of views on the country's governance.

A strong public narrative around peace and stability in Tanzania has been created over the years. On different occasions the ruling party has successfully presented any challenge to their authority as a threat to peace in the country. Those dynamics continue to be at play, with strong unwillingness among citizens to participate in demonstrations generally, for reasons of peace and security.

This view is reflected in the split between citizens on the role of the opposition between elections; half of Tanzanians seem to think that the opposition should just be an extension of government during these periods. And a majority agree with the current ban on demonstrations and political meetings.

At the same time a significant majority are supportive of free expression and their right to criticise government. And they are unequivocal in their support for democracy.

That the UKUTA movement has garnered these levels of support and awareness in less than two months is also noteworthy. Although the numbers appear low, they are arguably high given the timeframe and the general popularity of many of the fifth phase government's initiatives. As a comparison, one year after implementation of Big Results Now, the same proportion of citizens (16%) were aware of the initiative.⁹

9 *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 17 of first panel (July 2014)

Overall, citizens are strongly in favour of the principle of multiparty democracy and free speech. But it also appears that they are not comfortable with the activist tactics proposed by Chadema to protect and advance those principles, for fear of risking peace.

The details of these findings are far more subtle than this might suggest. Among ruling party supporters, one in twenty think their party chairman is a dictator, a similar number support UKUTA, and some planned to attend the September 1 demonstrations. At the same time, a bigger proportion of opposition supporters are comfortable with the idea of non-democratic government in some circumstances, than ruling party supporters.

Similarly, one in three opposition party supporters agree with the ban on political rallies, and half do not support the UKUTA movement. On the other hand, a quarter of ruling party's followers support the right to hold political rallies between elections, in direct opposition to their own party chairman and the country's President.

One in six citizens is aware of UKUTA, and among them, one in five support the movement. Further, among those who had heard of the movement, understanding of UKUTA was strong. These are significant achievements for an idea and a movement that did not exist in June 2016. Nevertheless, the majority of Tanzanians do not agree with the opposition parties' description of President Magufuli as a dictator.

For the opposition, these findings are a concrete demonstration of the challenge of mobilising a movement against a government that, despite various measures that could be described as anti-democratic, remains popular with the general public. Across a number of issues surveyed here, there is a marked difference between responses given by supporters of ruling party and supporters of opposition parties.

For the government, the strong support shown here for multiparty democracy and freedom of speech is noteworthy. Though the majority of Tanzanians do not currently agree that President Magufuli is a dictator, this survey shows that further moves to restrict democratic space and undermine the freedom of speech and assembly will be unpopular. Citizens seem to be saying that some limitations on human rights are a price worth paying for maintaining peace and fast-tracking development. But if anti-democratic moves go too far, their willingness to accept the trade-off may well change.

Neither the opposition parties nor the ruling party can take their members or sympathisers' support for granted. Nor should the government dismiss public opinion about its actions: their intent may be noble, but the means are also important. The Tanzanian public have shown themselves to be rather sophisticated and more than a little fickle in their political views!

