

# Comparative Politics



---

Socialism and the Field Administrator: Decentralization in Tanzania

Author(s): Louis A. Picard

Source: *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Jul., 1980), pp. 439-457

Published by: Comparative Politics, Ph.D. Programs in Political Science, City University of New York

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/421835>

Accessed: 05-02-2016 14:54 UTC

## REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

[http://www.jstor.org/stable/421835?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/421835?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents)

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*Comparative Politics, Ph.D. Programs in Political Science, City University of New York* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Comparative Politics*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

# Socialism and the Field Administrator

## Decentralization in Tanzania

*Louis A. Picard\**

Tanzania's<sup>1</sup> experimentation with socialism over the past fifteen years has been unique for a number of reasons. As Michael Lofchie has noted, it is one of the few socialist societies in the Third World that has allowed research access to its rural sector throughout most of the period of its experimentation with socialist policy.<sup>2</sup> Thus there is an extensive literature available on Tanzania's approach to rural development, and the success or failure of Tanzania's experiment is likely to be of interest to those who are concerned with the potential as well as the difficulties facing those who opt for a socialist pattern of economic change.

The Tanzania experiment is unique for a second reason. It represents one of the few attempts to refashion the British colonial district administration into an agent of socialist economic change. As Norman Uphoff and Warren Ilchman have noted, "Infrastructure that has been created for one purpose . . . cannot always be transformed to serve another purpose."<sup>3</sup> The extent to which the district-level administrator, the epitome of law and order during the colonial period, can be redirected toward development administration is central to Tanzania's economic strategy in the rural sector.

The Tanzania experiment is unique for a third reason. Tanzania's leadership is trying to transform society into socialism while at the same time decentralizing its administrative structures and its decision-making process. In doing so, Tanzania hopes to avoid some of the dysfunctions of the overconcentrated centrally planned economy so characteristic of many socialist political systems.

It is the purpose of this study to examine the changes that have taken place in Tanzania's field administration both prior to and after decentralization. Two

concerns will predominate the body of this study. First, what were the motives that led Tanzania's decision makers to opt for a decentralized administrative structure in 1972? Second, how well does the decentralization scheme fulfill the goals set out for it by President Nyerere and other Tanzanian leaders?

In the next few pages, a number of conclusions will be drawn with regard to the decentralization scheme. It will be argued that the schemes themselves were a response by the political leadership to a decade of increased centralization of responsibility and decision making in the capital of Dar es Salaam. Though the tendency toward centralization of decision making can be noted prior to 1967, this tendency snowballed after that time. A number of decisions were made between 1967 and 1972, each of which had an effect upon the position of the administration in the field. These were (1) the Arusha Declaration of 1967, (2) the decision to establish *ujamaa* (cooperative villages) in 1967-68, (3) the publication of Tanganyika Africa National Union (TANU) party guidelines (*Mwongozo*) in 1971, and (4) the decision to abolish district councils prior to 1972.

There was a cruel irony to each of these political decisions. Each was designed to encourage rural development and popular participation in its planning and implementation. However, each of these decisions took planning further away from the rural areas that it was designed to serve and made popular participation in rural development increasingly more difficult.

As a result of this centralization of authority, throughout the 1960s the regional and district administration had accrued more responsibility than power in Tanzania. Down to 1972, the commissioner was much less central to the activities of government than was the case prior to independence. The political commissioner's role was less clear as well. By way of contrast to the dominant role played by the provincial commissioner and the district commissioner during the colonial period, the regional and area commissioners were only two of several kinds of regional and district officials, both party and government, both generalists and specialists, who were competing for political influence in the district.

The 1972 decision to decentralize was designed to strengthen the role of the region and district in order to cut down on the amount of decision making. There were two stated purposes of the decentralization scheme. It was designed to make the bureaucracy more accountable to the political party, TANU, and to enhance popular participation at the local level. Preliminary evidence suggests that while decentralization has brought about a degree of deconcentration of power to the regional and district level in Tanzania, politically, decentralization has been less successful. The relationship between the party and the civil service remains an ambiguous one, and there is little evidence to date that decentralization has done much to strengthen popular participation within the district.

## **Prelude to Decentralization: Decision Making at the Center**

The vehicle through which the political elite in Tanzania intended to carry out its policy changes after independence was the political party, TANU. The party was chosen the instrument of political mobilization and control because it was the only organization with the potential for reaching people, both to disseminate goals and to organize efforts. At independence, most of the administrative structures, with the exception of TANU, were inherited institutions from the colonial government. The 1962 decision to reform the field administration was designed to transform the administrative setup of the country from top to bottom.<sup>4</sup>

By 1967, however, it became clear that the politicization of the office had not stopped the erosion of authority at the district and regional level. This loss of authority was not an unusual pattern of development in postcolonial Africa. Early dissatisfaction with the district officer as symbolic of the colonial past, combined with the evolution of the ministerial system, led to a period of decline in the authority and influence of the district administration in many former British colonies during the period just after independence.

**Loss of authority prior to 1967** The 1962 change in the status of the district administration was first of all an abandonment of the principle of dualism between administration and politics. The new commissioners were political appointees and automatically held the post of TANU secretary at the regional and district levels. On the administrative side, the political commissioners inherited a number of the functions of the provincial and the district administrations. However, the commissioner did not, through the reforms, attain full administrative control of the party as well as the district or region.<sup>5</sup> To some extent, then, the attempt at fusion of the government and party role may have deprived the commissioner of more authority than he gained. Thus, it might be argued, there was a danger that the commissioner might be caught between the two stools of party and administration. Two new positions were created under the aegis of the regional administration, which, though designed to aid the regional and area commissioner, threatened to cut into the commissioner's authority.

The first of these two positions was the regional administrative secretary (area secretary in the district). This was a civil service position; the secretary was responsible for all of the technical matters of daily administration and "with respect to the work they performed, these secretaries [were] far more the actual successors of the former (District and Provincial) Commissioners themselves."<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the *de facto* head of the party was the executive secretary, a full-time functionary employed by the central organs of TANU. The executive secretaries, while in reality much less powerful, were to function

as the counterparts in TANU to the civil service secretaries. To round out the picture of the district-level administrative structure, the party at the district and regional levels had an elected party chairman. This tripartite linkage between TANU and government was a potential source of power diffusion in the field, and clashes between the regional and area commissioners and the TANU chairmen were one of the most important potential danger points in the party structure.<sup>7</sup>

The main purpose of the politicization of the offices of area and regional commissioner was to challenge the historically dominant government bureaucracy at the regional and district levels and to ensure popular participation there. However, political commissioners often were not able to control the bureaucracy, even in their own offices. Because of the administrative setup, commissioners found themselves isolated from their staffs. After the 1962 reforms, the commissioner had access only to one adviser, the administrative or area secretary.<sup>8</sup> Since the civil service secretaries often had a great deal more administrative experience than the commissioners, this limitation of access had important implications in terms of political communication and control.

In terms of financial procedures, Tanzania's regions and districts, during the first five years of independence, were effectively blocked out of the budgetary process. The district administration's residual responsibility during this period was to inspect district council books in order to insure correct procedures and prevent corruption. The district administration had even less influence over the preparation of the national budget than was the case with local government. Ministries, prior to 1972, had the final say in putting in the estimates and were unlikely to take regional plans seriously.<sup>9</sup> Under the system, as it existed prior to the 1972 reforms, it was impossible to shift funds from one ministry to a second one within a region, but it was quite easy for a ministry to shift funds between regions.

The regional and district administrations were given little responsibility for the preparation of economic planning. A survey of the budgets and the appropriations for this period reveals little concern for any concept of regional planning. The role of the regional administration, insofar as it was involved in economic development projects, was of a general and supervisory nature. Prior to 1972, the district administration was primarily involved in the implementation of decisions already made at the center.<sup>10</sup>

**Political decisions, 1967-1972** Politicization of the field administration in Tanganyika was designed to ensure TANU control over the field administration and, with party control, a modicum of public accountability. Government rhetoric suggested throughout the 1960s that political elites desired at least some policy making to be decentralized to the field administration and district councils. However, the thrust of policy decisions after 1967 was to ensure that

more and more policy decisions were to be centralized to the exclusion of both field administrator and councilor. By 1972, both the council and the district administration were perceived to be increasingly irrelevant to many central government administrators in Dar es Salaam. The 1969 local government reforms virtually abolished independent local government in Tanzania and increasingly the tendency to centralize decision making had “cause[d] frustration for the District and Regional officials of Central Government . . . who find all their ideas and their enthusiasm—buried in the mass of papers flowing backwards and forwards to Dar es Salaam.”<sup>11</sup>

**The Arusha Declaration** The Arusha Declaration “confronted the problems of economic imbalances, the ownership of means of production and some problems of distortion.”<sup>12</sup> In a pamphlet entitled “Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism,” President Nyerere had discussed in general terms the concept of African socialism without openly advocating the adoption of this ideology by TANU.<sup>13</sup> In the Arusha Declaration, Nyerere and the party placed on record the acceptance of socialism as the ideology of the country. The major tenets of the new policy included an emphasis on self-reliance with the development of agriculture as the basis of economic development.

The Arusha Declaration nationalized the major economic units of the country, including the almost entirely foreign-owned industrial, financial, and commercial companies. This action had an immediate effect on the bureaucracy. By 1970, the size of the civil service had doubled from what it was at independence. A large set of parastatal organizations was created as a result of the Arusha nationalization, and government involvement was evident in almost every aspect of the Tanzanian economy. An increase of centralized decision making was inevitable.

The effect of the Arusha Declaration was to increase drastically the number of decisions made at the center in Dar es Salaam. As James Finucane notes, “the capacity of Commissioners to affect government allocations [was after Arusha] greatly restricted by the making of almost all allocations in Dar es Salaam rather than at the district or regional levels.”<sup>14</sup> In addition to government ministries, huge, cumbersome parastatals made decisions that affected all levels of Tanzania society.

Between 1967 and 1972 the need for a “hierarchy stemming from the goal of economic development and the consequent need for the rational organization of work”<sup>15</sup> led to increased decision making at the center and the growth of both the governmental administrative apparatus and Tanzania’s public corporations. Further, by 1970 the few functions that had been given to district councils were being taken away from them, including the right to collect taxes and prepare their own budgets. Administrative results of the Arusha Declaration were in danger of clashing with the spirit and goals set forth in the document.

**Ujamaa villages** The decision to establish a series of cooperative villages (*Ujamaa Vijiji*) in Tanzania was in part a response to the increased centralization that had occurred throughout the 1960s and was an outgrowth of the Arusha Declaration. The idea of the ujamaa village was first enunciated by President Nyerere in September, 1967. At first the idea behind the villages was that they should be small, self-sustaining economic units of less than thirty families. The voluntary nature of the villages was initially a cornerstone of government policy. According to Nyerere the nation should be made up of small, democratically organized, cooperative villages. He insisted that the establishment of such villages had to be done with the full and active cooperation of the peasants.

Ujamaa policy, and specifically the 1969 government circular, had an impact on administrative structures. From this time, government departments started placing as many of their products as they could in ujamaa villages. In addition, money from a regional development fund became available for financing small projects in ujamaa villages. In theory, the district was to become the operative level for the administration of ujamaa villages, and district level officials thus became the main initiators of new village schemes.

However, the villageization program, like the Arusha formulations, contained centralizing tendencies as well. According to John Connell,

the amount of . . . material assistance [to the ujamaa villages] results in considerable dependence by the village on regional and ultimately national authority, especially since some village-level allocation decisions are actually made at the national level.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, while it was intended that the village program should be largely voluntary, there remained a high level of dependence upon the central government for the establishing and the populating of the villages.

The creation of ujamaa villages was to have an effect on district-level policy, foreshadowing the later decentralization scheme announced in 1972. According to Presidential Circular No. 1, the district administration "must allow for flexibility, and local initiative and experimentation."<sup>17</sup> In order to provide for the coordination of party, district administration, and development extension services, it was announced that there would be a transfer of all functions relating to village development from the Ministry of Lands, Settlement and Water Development and that each regional administration would have a regional ujamaa and cooperative development officer to provide support for the ujamaa villages. The regional and district administrations were to act as coordinating agents to ensure the full cooperation of all technical cadres of central government ministries in the initiation and consolidation of ujamaa villages.

In reality this initial attempt at a devolution of authority had little impact on villageization policy. As Andrew Coulson demonstrates in his criticism of the Tanzania villageization scheme, despite the 1969 policy shift, ujamaa policy

continued to be more rather than less centralized and increasingly the emphasis came to be placed on forced collectivization rather than voluntary movement into the ujamaa village.<sup>18</sup>

As was the case with the Arusha Declaration, the ujamaa village policy had contradictory effects on the administrative system. While in theory the policy was designed to increase the amount of local-level decision making and ensure local control over economic and social changes, in fact ujamaa policy continued to be largely directed from the center in Dar es Salaam. Decisions continued to be made in the capital with an increase in central bureaucratic authority over the district and the subdistrict levels of society.

**Mwongozo: TANU party guidelines** The Tanzania government was badly shaken by the military coup in Uganda in February, 1971. The Uganda example brought home to Tanzania's leadership the dangers, both external and internal, to the stability of the regime. These dangers were perceived to have been brought on because of the continued privileges and inequalities associated with a process of internal class formation and the country's dependence on the international capitalist system.<sup>19</sup> The stated goal of *Mwongozo*, produced in response to the Uganda coup, was good leadership in both party and government. The guidelines were an indirect admission that a party structure had not yet been established alongside the existing civil service and parastatal management that was being created.<sup>20</sup> The party guidelines said little about the relationship between the party and the civil service but rather emphasized the importance of the relationship between the party and the people.

The questions raised by the party guidelines were seen to have important implications for the administrative patterns of Tanzania, however. *Mwongozo* states that the masses of the people are to participate in the consideration, the planning, and the implementation of their own development programs. The call was for a democratic pattern of policy making. To Tanzania's party leadership, the implication of this call was that this goal could only be accomplished at the lowest levels of society, an idea in implicit contradiction to the then continuing pattern of centralization of administrative decision making and the hierarchical, functionally specific administrative arrangements in Tanzania's technical ministries. As B.U. Mwansasu points out, the administrative institutions that existed prior to 1972 were not particularly conducive to the maximization of participation. The implication of the TANU guidelines was that the center was going to have to give up some power to other units of government. But, as Mwansasu put it,

to what unit are the powers to be surrendered by the centre to be given; precisely who, or which body, is going to exercise those powers in these units? There is a world of difference . . . between posting powerful, centrally-appointed government representatives in the regions and districts and establishing strong popularly constituted representative bodies at these levels.<sup>21</sup>



### **Decentralization: Tanzania's Administrative Policy since 1972**

On January 27, 1972, President Julius Nyerere announced the policy of decentralization in a radio broadcast to the nation. On February 18, Nyerere announced a cabinet reshuffle and reinstated the post of prime minister in his government with the specific task of overseeing the regional administration under the decentralization process. This change, added to the decentralization announcement, was designed to strengthen the role of the regional administration in its relationship with the central government. To give added prestige to the regional commissioner, five former ministers were appointed regional commissioners in key regions of the country while retaining ministerial status. As announced by President Nyerere, the key to the reforms was the decision to create a new post in the region to replace the administrative secretary (and the area secretary at the district level). The new officers, entitled regional development directors (and district development directors) were to act as regional permanent secretaries to the commissioner, who was seen as the regional and district minister, thus paralleling the national structure. The regional development director (and his district counterpart) was to be a civil servant and head a team of ten regional officers representing the ministries at the regional level.

According to the announcement, the central government would eventually make available to the regions 40 percent of the budget. The intention of the reforms was that all major development schemes were to involve the regions as well as the center. Though the regions fell short of being autonomous, substantial new powers were given to the regional commissioner. Under the new system four major changes have taken place: (1) the regional commissioner's office pays salaries for each region; (2) decisions involving staff and finance are to be decided in the regions; (3) regional commissioners are given the power to freeze projects and apply money elsewhere without consulting the ministries; (4) the main function of the ministries in Dar es Salaam is to be advisory and experts are to be provided to the regions for consultation and implementation under the control of the regional administration. All communications between the ministry and its specialists in the field are to go through the regional and district development directors.

**Decentralization as a concept** Perhaps the simplest definition of decentralization is that of James Fesler. He defines the concept as the "transfer of powers from a central government to an areally or functionally specialized authority of distinct legal personality."<sup>21</sup> He suggests that a distinction be made between the transfer of authority between levels of administration (others refer to this as deconcentration of power)<sup>22</sup> and devolution of authority to subnational democratic governments.<sup>23</sup> Selznick in his study of the TVA takes the conceptualization process somewhat further, suggesting that there are three different levels to the concept. According to Selznick, the first level concerns the location of

administrative control in the area of operation. The second level refers to the execution of operations with and through already organized institutions in the area of operation. The third level deals with the participation of local people at the end point of the administration and implementation of the program.<sup>24</sup>

An examination of the goals of the reforms as they developed in Tanzania indicates that all three of Selznick's levels of decentralization are involved. As we have seen, by 1970 a number of patterns had begun to appear in Tanzania's administrative structures. As perceived by party and government elites, the system contained a number of bottlenecks that were structurally based; and all areas of post-Arusha economic and social policy—the nationalized industry, the villageization scheme, and efforts at party control—were being slowed down or stopped because of the organizational structure of the administration.

**The goals of decentralization** The goal of the reforms themselves was to deconcentrate power to the regions, especially on development issues, and to break down the distance between Dar es Salaam and the rural districts. Nyerere and other party officials focused on several areas of concern. The first of these was the excessive and continuing centralization of decision making. Speaking of regional and district administrators, Nyerere noted: "At present these officials have, in reality, very little local power. They have to consult the ministries in Dar es Salaam for almost everything they wish to do, and certainly about every cent which they wish to spend."<sup>25</sup> Rural development, Nyerere felt, required more autonomy at the grass roots level. Yet, since independence, more and more decision making had accrued to the center with little discretion at the district and regional levels. The Rural Development Front and ujamaa village programs were only partial countertendencies to a general pattern of concentration of power in Dar es Salaam.

However, much of the initial justification of decentralization was made in terms of political participation, Selznick's third level of decentralization. As John Saul points out, Tanzania's leadership was concerned with "the overcentralized planning system (with its attendant dangers of extensive bureaucratization) and concrete steps to significantly decentralize and democratize it."<sup>26</sup> The new district and regional development councils were to be agencies of political mobilization and participation. This idea was in line with those ideas raised in *Mwongozo*. Nyerere, in his discussion of the decentralization scheme, argued that "the purpose of both the Arusha Declaration and of *Mwongozo* was to give the people power over their own lives and their own development."<sup>27</sup> This would be done, he said, by bringing the decision-making process closer to the people at the district and regional level and ensuring party control over the mechanisms of the decision-making process. Such party control at the district and regional levels was considered crucial to the evolving political system of the country, which called for party supervision and control of all levels and types of political activities. According to Nyerere, "the Decentralization exer-

cise is based on the principle that more and more people must be trusted with responsibility—that is its whole purpose,”<sup>28</sup> and it will, he said, be up to the party to ensure this popular control.

The government hoped through the decentralization process to reorient the attitudes of civil servants away from administrative routines and toward development activities. As Nyerere put it, “It is intended that all of these [district level] officials, and the Commissioners, should be required to think and act in terms of development, and not in terms of administration in the traditional civil service lines.”<sup>29</sup> The structural changes that were occurring in Tanzania were in part designed to reorient administrators toward developmental tasks.

The reason that centralized decision making was so objectionable to the Tanzania leadership was that it was based on the vertical pattern of communication between district representatives of ministries and the ministry in Dar es Salaam. This situation was in part a result of increased emphasis on social and technological change throughout the 1960s. By 1972 it was considered both possible and desirable to try to reverse this process and place sufficient trained and experienced staff at the district and regional level so that effective and efficient decision making could occur there. A major step in this direction was to be the transfer of authority over functional staff in the district and the region from the ministry in Dar es Salaam to the regional and district administrations in the field. One major benefit derived from decentralization was seen as administrative. Transfer of technical staff from functional ministries to the regional and district administrations was designed to provide the kind of coordination that is often lacking in a more functional arrangement of authority. The administrative reforms that were made under decentralization focus primarily on intragovernmental organization and productivity.

Structurally, decentralization meant a number of changes at the district and regional levels. Under the new arrangements, all staff, even those working locally in the district, were to be employed by the central government. This meant that local government was completely abolished as a separate entity. The political commissioner of the district or region would remain in overall charge of the area, but the administrative and area secretaries would be replaced by the regional and district development directors. The development director would be the chief executive officer in the district and region, and the position would also replace the old district council executive officer. The district development director would incorporate all of these functions into his area of responsibility. Assisting the development director would be three assistants: a personnel officer, a planning officer, and a financial controller, plus a number of administrative officers who would assist the three above-named officials. In addition, the development director would be responsible for ten functional managers who would replace the existing ministerial representatives in the field. The areas covered were health, education, agriculture and natural resources, water, land development, public works, and village and cooperative development. Vertical

communications between the functional manager and his ministry were to be replaced by horizontal communication at the district level with the district development director, who would pass on all information and instructions from the region. The district teams were seen to have a structure not unlike that of the existing central government structure in Dar es Salaam. Money would be allocated to the regions and, through the regions, to the districts for development projects within the district. It was hoped that substantial parts of the agricultural programs would be the direct responsibility of the districts and regions. The same would be true of small industrial and commercial developments. Local roads, water supply, health, and primary education would also be dealt with at the local level.

To replace the abolished district councils, new district development councils were established under the district administration. These were to be composed of the elected members of the former councils, plus the district's MPs. Also to be included as *ex-officio* members were the area commissioner (chairman), the district development director, and the administrators and specialists who made up the district development team. In theory the district development councils were to be the public bodies responsible for the use of the new powers at the district level.

In practice, policy making was designed to follow a three-stage process. Development schemes and financial policies were to be written by the district administration and the functional managers. They would then be submitted to the TANU district executive committee and then to the region, and then from the region to the prime minister's office. The body which would assist the functional managers and the development director in the planning process would be the smaller district development and planning committee (DDPC) which is made up of one-quarter of the elected councilors (no less than ten), plus the area commissioner and the district development director (chairman and secretary of the body, respectively). Other members include the local MPs plus the staff and functional officers of the district team. Acting as an executive committee of the development council, this body, in which elected members are a minority, is the chief decision-making body at the district level.<sup>30</sup>

**Decentralization in action: limits to participation** The decentralization exercise began in 1972 and was not completed until mid-1974. Thus, at the time of writing, the decentralization program has been in operation a little more than five years. It is possible, then, to discern at least tentatively some of the patterns that the new system of administration has taken and to speculate on some potential difficulties that might develop under the new system.

**The effects of decentralization** What clues are provided as to the utility of the structural controls over the Tanzania administrator at the district and regional levels? The evidence that exists here is mixed. In-depth interviews

with government and party officials in the Dar es Salaam region suggest that while there has been a modicum of decentralization to the regions and districts, the administrative structure has not yet been able to establish mechanisms that will ensure increased participation at the district and subdistrict level.

The first step in Selznick's schema was to transfer the location of administrative control to the regional or district area of operation. The evidence that exists from the Dar es Salaam region suggests there has been a transfer of specialist control from the ministry in Dar es Salaam to the district and regional development director. Almost all specialist administrators interviewed in the Dar es Salaam region perceived that the development director had direct responsibility for their actions.<sup>31</sup> As one district agricultural officer put it, "The DDD is our boss. We must tell him about all of our projects. He will veto them if he feels the projects are no good. He may instruct the functional managers [specialists] in anything. He can interfere with any part of our job."<sup>32</sup> An ujamaa and cooperative development officer at the regional level concurs: "Now, most of the problems that used to be referred to the ministry are being solved at the regional level."<sup>33</sup> There is little doubt that President Nyerere's desire to shift the responsibility for specialist administration from the ministry to the districts and regions has succeeded.

Selznick suggests, however, that the next question to be raised is to what extent existing institutions at the lower level are capable of handling their new responsibilities. Here the evidence is less encouraging. As Finucane makes clear in his discussion of regional administration in the Mwanza region, there might be specific costs to be paid as a result of the introduction of decentralization:

duplication of facilities, competition for central resources, inter-regional policy discrepancies and differential rates of development, and the time of scarce technically skilled personnel expended in co-ordination and consultation in the field.<sup>34</sup>

Most of those interviewed in the Dar es Salaam region felt that decentralization was a positive thing and was beginning to work.<sup>35</sup> However, a number of those interviewed suggested that district institutions were not capable of dealing with specialists' problems. Specifically, the change in the pattern of communication from vertical communication through specialist ministries at the center to horizontal patterns of communication through the development director presented some problems to the functional managers in the field.

There are some potential costs to a prefectorial supervision of government as opposed to a functional division of responsibility. A horizontal pattern of communication has the possibility of cutting off vertical patterns of interaction within the various parent ministries. The requirement that all communication between the functional managers and their ministries pass through the devel-

opment director's office could lead to a bottleneck of administrative authority that outweighs the advantages of coordination in the prefectoral system. A number of the functional managers in the Dar es Salaam region pointed to this problem. Two types of complaints predominated. First, functional managers complained that they were being evaluated by people who were ignorant of their area of specialty. This complaint was made by a group of functional managers at a seminar of regional department heads held at Morogoro in 1975.<sup>36</sup> Secondly, a number of those specialists interviewed in the Dar es Salaam region indicated that they felt cut off from their home ministry by decentralization. As one ujamaa and cooperative development officer put it, "In some ways decentralization has caused an increase in red tape. There is less vertical contact with our ministry. We feel isolated from them here in the field."<sup>37</sup>

**The issue of popular control** Whatever the administrative costs, the reforms were justified by the need to make government institutions more responsible to the population. Government policy, according to B.U. Mwansasu, "suggests strongly that decentralization in Tanzania is not being understood as a mechanism for 'decongesting' the work load at the centre, but as a means of maximizing participation."<sup>38</sup> Thus a major question to be addressed is to what extent decentralization in Tanzania has gone beyond Selznick's first two levels, transfer from the center to the area and expansion of the functions of existing institutions, to level three, participation by the local population.

There has been concern by policymakers in Tanzania that decentralization will do no more than shift a pattern of bureaucratic procedures downward to a different level of government. Nyerere himself notes, "The transfer of power to the Regions and Districts must not also mean a transfer of a rigid and bureaucratic system from Dar es Salaam to lower levels."<sup>39</sup> In large part, the effort that has been made to relate administrative behavior to popular control has been left to TANU. The political objectives of decentralization include the enhancing of the leading role of the political party in the role of development.<sup>40</sup> As Nyerere himself put it in the decentralization announcement:

From this it is obvious that the decentralization proposals will provide a new opportunity for local TANU leadership . . . [T]he TANU branches throughout the rural areas could, and should, make themselves into the active arm of the people, so as to ensure that every advantage is taken of this increased local responsibility.<sup>41</sup>

Political elites in Tanzania in effect adopted three political strategies to promote popular rule over the bureaucracy. The first was the retention of the political prefect, the regional and area commissioner, who is supposed to maintain political and party control over the field administration. The second strategy was the establishment of development committees at every level of political division—ward, district, and region. The third way in which party

control would be ensured was to increase the ideological consciousness among bureaucratic officials themselves rather than through structural changes such as would occur under a system of devolution of authority. Bureaucrats would be conscious of the will of the party and be willing to implement it.

What clues are provided as to the utility of the structural controls over the Tanzania administration at the district and regional levels? The evidence that exists here is not encouraging. Henry Bienen has noted the problems the commissioner has faced in the past, caught as he was between two stools, one administrative and one political.<sup>42</sup> Finucane, in an important study of the Mwanza region in the early 1970s, provides more empirical detail. Commissioners have had difficulty in communicating with party leaders and are not considered party representatives by the local party leadership.<sup>43</sup> The area commissioner has tended to work more closely with the civil service than with the party structure. As one TANU chairman in the Dar es Salaam region put it, "The problem is the Area Commissioner wears two hats. As Chairman I'm not sure how, as secretary of the party, he is supposed to communicate to the people above me in party or in government."<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, the commissioner, because of the structural setup in the district, has not been able to control the bureaucracy within his area of responsibility. While the tensions between the functional managers and the district administration seem amenable to a solution under the decentralization scheme, relationships within the district administration seem more ominous in light of the strengthening of the civil service at the regional and the district level with the creation of the regional and district development director. Prior to 1972, all communication to, and most communication from, the area commissioner went through the area secretary. Further, it was the area secretary who ordinarily communicated with the principal secretary in Dar es Salaam. This monopoly of communication made the area secretary a powerful political actor in his own right since he could block access to and from the area commissioner, and he was in effect the area commissioner's only government advisor. Prior to 1972, commissioners were not able to lessen significantly the dominance of the bureaucracy over district affairs in favor of increased political participation in economic and political decision making. The implication of this pattern of decentralization seems obvious. It would seem that the role of the development director "has . . . been given additional resources, which, one might predict, will ensure that in most instances that portion of the control of government operations that is permitted to be exercised outside the capital will continue to be controlled by them and not the Commissioners."<sup>45</sup> Evidence in the Dar es Salaam region supports this contention. Both administrative officials and functional specialists felt isolated from the commissioner, and few felt that there was any direct relationship of authority between them and the regional or area commissioners.<sup>46</sup> As one agricultural officer noted when asked what kinds

of skills were needed to be an area commissioner, "I can't give you any. I don't know what work he does. There doesn't seem to be very much to it."<sup>47</sup>

It seems unlikely that the new development councils will be able to maintain much effective control over regional and district administrators either. The pattern of interaction between councils and the central government throughout the 1960s was that of a central government challenging any attempt at council independence. The newly created district development councils (DDCs) are nominal bodies with real decision-making authority located in the district development and planning committees (DDPCs), composed of more civil servants than elected members. It is the district and regional staff and functional managers sitting in the DDPCs who draw up the plans for development, which are then submitted to the DDPCs and the DDCs for formal approval. There is little reason to expect that decentralization will be able to change this pattern of decision making.

Felix M. Ndaba, an assistant district development director in Dodoma, has provided us with an interesting picture of the operation of the district development and planning committee in that area after one year of decentralization.<sup>48</sup> According to Ndaba, participation by the elected members was limited by the representatives' general level of competence in development matters (because of their low level of education) as well as by their weakness in bargaining power and their lack of access to important policy documents, which he sees as crucial to participation in development decisions. A district land officer interviewed in the Dar es Salaam region reflected on this problem. When asked about the responsibility of the district development and planning committee he said:

I don't know why we really have these committees. The staff officers and the functional managers evaluate all the projects proposed for the districts. We are a team of experts. It's difficult to know what the Development Committees actually do. They always accept our recommendations.<sup>49</sup>

According to Ndaba, the area commissioner helps consolidate the position of the bureaucrats rather than that of the politicians. He notes that the area commissioner's role in both party and government "mystifies" the politicians. Thus, though the DDPC is supposed to be concerned with planning, he says no planning is actually done in the development and planning committee, and the DDPC has no influence over the economic bodies and parastatals in the district. Finally, no planning exists below the district level (an average district has between 30,000 and 50,000 people in it). District officials deal with projects rather than plans from the ward development committees, and the projects are chosen haphazardly. While it is perhaps the case that such planning is unrealistic at the subdistrict level, the point is that subdistrict organization is not even able to implement plans issued from above.

If structural controls are unlikely to enhance the amount of popular control



over the district level bureaucracy, existing research on the attitudes of Tanzania administrators<sup>50</sup> seems hardly encouraging to those who hope for an "ideological" solution to the participation question. Finucane found that administrators in Tanzania "have not been able to avoid the bureaucratic imperative to consider citizens as clients with its concomitants of a bias in favor of the better-off members of the community and a lack of responsiveness to the aspirations of, in particular, poor peasants."<sup>51</sup> Further, research in the Dar es Salaam region has shown that many bureaucrats in the district offices see the political party as an element to be ignored, if possible, or to be used to carry out bureaucratic goals, if not.<sup>52</sup> As one district engineer noted, "The political people can be a nuisance to us but they are also useful sometimes. They can help us get things done; get us transport or other assistance. They have political influence where it counts."<sup>53</sup>

The role of the political party in Tanzania continues to be perceived by administrators largely as an agent of mobilization for self-help rather than as a vehicle for popular participation. The major political goal of decentralization, popular participation in the development process, has not yet been implemented.

As one goes below the district level, educational weakness off-balances relationships between politicians and administrators even more in the direction of the civil servants. This imbalance is likely to result, where there are firmly established local leaders, in a high level of tension. There exists among administrators in the Dar es Salaam region a clear picture of relationships between district-level officials and the population they are supposed to serve. A letter from an administrative officer in the Ilala district to the civil service commission in Dar es Salaam poignantly demonstrates this situation. He comments:

Most of our politicians and administrators visit Ujamaa villages and make long speeches. Mostly they speak what has already been said. The peasants are always told to work hard and cultivate their farms. But they themselves have no plot. Office work is done by their subordinates. Their only work is to ride or be driven in government vehicles.<sup>63</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Tanzania's policymakers have been sensitive to the need to adapt the administrative system to avoid the excesses of central planning that are endemic to many socialist countries. Further, the administration is at least formally committed to local-level participation in rural development planning. In order to provide a check on overbureaucratization at the district and regional levels, the political leadership has tried to build up the political party, TANU (now the Revolutionary Party), as a mechanism of political control.

Decentralization has brought about a modicum of deconcentration of power to the regional and, to a lesser extent, the district levels in Tanzania. Politically, however, decentralization has been less successful. The role of the commissioner vis-à-vis the civil service and the political party remains an ambiguous one. The civil service, because of the higher level of education of its workers, remains the dominant force in policy making at the district and regional levels. This domination is even more evident as one examines policy at the subdistrict level.

A major goal of President Nyerere, that decentralization provide mechanisms for popular participation in the districts, remains largely unachieved. Decentralization as it exists in Tanzania seems most closely to resemble the type of administration labelled by Brian Smith as deconcentration of authority within the bureaucracy, involving the delegating of the authority to make decisions on behalf of the central administration to civil servants working in the field. There is little evidence of representative institutions at the district and regional levels, where people can relate planning proposals by the administration to their immediate experiences and problems. Further, there are few mechanisms at the district level to ensure that local-level party leadership has any control over the policy process. Decisions continue to be made largely by civil servants, now located in the regions or districts, but still uncommitted to the need for popular participation or party control. Local-level political institutions, such as the district development councils and the TANU district executive committee, are unable to break the civil service's hammerlock on the policy arena. It is these kinds of changes that would be a prerequisite to any devolution of authority from the civil service to territorial units of authority, whether party or government. The Nyerere formulations and the subsequent reorganization focused primarily on intragovernmental relationships and productivity. These reforms do not lead to popular control of the state apparatus in the field but rather to a concentration of authority at the lower levels, a better coordination of decision making, and a more responsible relationship between administration and clientele in the district. Nonetheless, it must be kept in mind that a civil servant making decisions in the *boma*, in a pattern of administration not overly different from that which existed during the colonial period, still has a better perception of local problems than would be the case if the policymaker were located several hundred miles away in Dar es Salaam.

## NOTES

\*Research for this paper was carried out in conjunction with field work done in Tanzania in February and September-December, 1975. The writer is grateful to the Office of the Prime Minister, Dodoma, and the University of Dar es Salaam for research clearance. Funding was provided by the U.S. Office of Education under a Fulbright Fellowship. My thanks to Walter

Maeda, who assisted me in translating a number of the documents cited in this paper, and to Professor M.G. Schatzberg, Virginia Polytechnic and State University, for helpful suggestions.

1. Tanganyika became independent in 1961, and the Union with Zanzibar occurred in 1964. The name of the country was changed to Tanzania shortly thereafter.

2. Michael F. Lofchie, "Agrarian Socialism in the Third World: The Tanzanian Case," *Comparative Politics*, 8 (April 1976), 481.

3. Norman T. Uphoff and Warren F. Ilchman, "The Political Economy of Political and Administrative Infrastructure," in Uphoff and Ilchman, eds. *The Political Economy of Development* (Berkeley, 1972), p. 413.

4. Little need be said about the colonial district officer here. The pattern of British administrative rule in Tanganyika prior to 1962 might be classified as a proconsul or autocratic style which had developed in British Asia and Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries. The functions of the administrator were both administrative and judicial. The district commissioner's administrative responsibilities included the maintenance of civil order, the direction of the police and military forces, and the collection of taxes (through African authorities). In addition the district commissioner was seen as the coordinator of all central government staff in the area and the chief executive of local government (or the authority in charge of creating a local government system). Judicially, he was the chief and often only magistrate in the area, served as a court of appeal to traditional courts, and often acted as a mediator between tribal and racial groups. The best work on the colonial district officer in Tanganyika is Robert Heussler's *British Tanganyika: An Essay and Documents on District Administration* (Durham, 1971).

5. K.W. von Sperber, *Public Administration in Tanzania* (Munich, 1970), pp. 74-75.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

7. William Tordoff, *Government and Politics in Tanzania* (Nairobi, 1967), p. 100. On the evolution of Tanzania's government and party system see James R. Finucane, *Rural Development and Bureaucracy in Tanzania: The Case of Mwanza Region* (Uppsala, 1974); Henry Bienen, *Tanzania: Party Transformation and Economic Development* (Princeton, 1970); R.G. Penner, *Financing Local Government in Tanzania* (Nairobi, 1970); and R. Cranford Pratt, *The Critical Phase in Tanzania, 1945-1968* (Cambridge, 1976).

8. Finucane, p. 120.

9. O.B. Jones, "Rural and Regional Planning in Tanzania," (paper presented at the Conference on Comparative Administration in East Africa, Arusha, Tanzania, 25-28 September 1971), p. 23.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

11. Julius K. Nyerere, "Decentralization," pamphlet (Dar es Salaam, 1972), p. 1.

12. S.M. Mbilinyi, R. Mabele, and M.L. Kyomo, "Economic Struggle of TANU Government," in Gabriel Ruhumbika, ed. *Towards Ujamaa: Twenty Years of TANU Leadership* (Nairobi, 1974), p. 75.

13. Nyerere, "Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism," reprinted in Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity* (Dar es Salaam, 1966), pp. 162-71.

14. Finucane, p. 111.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

16. John Connell, "Ujamaa Villages: Institutional Change in Rural Tanzania," *Journal of Administration Overseas*, 11 (October 1972), 279.

17. In Lionel Cliffe et al., eds. *Rural Cooperation in Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam, 1975), p. 29.

18. Andrew Coulson, "Peasants and Bureaucrats," *Review of African Political Economy*, 3 (May-October 1975), 57. See also C.K. Omari, "Tanzania's Emerging Rural Development Policy," *Africa Today*, 21 (Summer 1974), 14.

19. "Mwongozo: The TANU Party Guidelines," translated from the Swahili by *The Standard of Tanzania*, reproduced in mimeo at the Danish Volunteer Training Centre, Tengeru, Tanzania, n.d., KO/101271/23/T1, p. 2.

20. Knud Erik Svendsen, "Tanzania after Mwongozo," in A.H. Rweyemamu and B.U. Mwansasu, eds. *Planning in Tanzania: Background to Decentralization* (Nairobi, 1974), p. 41.

21. James W. Fesler, "Centralization and Decentralization," in David L. Sills, ed. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 2 (New York, 1968), p. 370. Also Michael G. Schatzberg, "Decentralization, Cooptation and Class: A Cross National View of Agricultural Policy" (unpublished essay, 1974), pp. 2-3.

22. See Bryan C. Smith, *Field Administration* (London, 1957).

23. Fesler, "Approaches to the Understanding of Decentralization," *Journal of Politics*, 27 (October, 1965), 545.

24. Philip Selznick, *TVA and the Grass Roots: A Study in the Sociology of Formal Organizations* (New York, 1949), pp. 44-45.

25. Nyerere, "Decentralization," p. 1.

26. John S. Saul, "African Socialism in One Country: Tanzania," in Giovanni Arrighi and Saul, eds. *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa* (Nairobi, 1973). Important critiques of bureaucratization in Tanzania include many of the essays in Cliffe and Saul, eds. *Socialism in Tanzania* (Nairobi, 1972), 2 volumes. See also Saul, "Tanzania's Transition to Socialism?" *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 11 (June, 1977), 313-39; and "The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Tanzania," in R. Miliband and J. Saville, eds. *The Socialist Register*, (1974); also Issa Shivji, *Class Struggles in Tanzania* (London, 1976). An important dialogue on the nature of the state apparatus in Africa is Colin Leys, "The 'Overdeveloped' Post Colonial State: A Re-evaluation," *Review of African Political Economy*, 5 (January-April 1976), 39-48, and Michaela von Freyhold, "The Post-Colonial State and its Tanzanian Version," *Review of African Political Economy*, 8 (January-April 1977), 75-89.

27. Nyerere, "Decentralization," p. 1.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

30. Much of the material in this section and the following is based on research carried out in the three districts of the Dar es Salaam region between September and December 1975. It is based primarily on interviews with district and regional administrators and party leaders. References are made only to interview numbers in order to protect the anonymity of my sources.

31. Louis A. Picard, "Attitudes and Development: The District Administration in Tanzania," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, 21-24 March 1979), pp. 18-21.

32. Tanzania Interview Number 12.

33. Tanzania Interview Number 2.

34. Finucane, *Rural Development and Bureaucracy in Tanzania*, p. 178.

35. Picard, pp. 19-20.

36. Minutes, Community Development Seminar of Regional Department Heads of Ukanda and Pwani Districts, Morogoro Region, September 1975.

37. Tanzania Interview Number 2.

38. Mwansasu, "Introduction" p. 10.

39. Nyerere, "Decentralization," p. 10.

40. "Government Decentralization and the Management of Rural Development in Tanzania," (research proposal, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, University of Dar es Salaam, 1975, mimeo.), p. 1.

41. Nyerere, "Decentralization," p. 11.

42. Bienen, *Tanzania*, pp. 317-32.

43. Finucane, *Rural Development and Bureaucracy in Tanzania*, p. 181.

44. Tanzania Interview Number 36.

45. Finucane, p. 181.

46. Picard, "Attitudes and Development," pp. 22-24.

47. Tanzania Interview Number 12.

48. Felix M. Ndaba, "Decentralization and Development in Ngara District," *Taamuli: A Political Science Forum*, 4 (December 1973), 48-54.

49. Tanzania Interview Number 8.

50. Raymond F. Hopkins, *Political Roles in a New State: Tanzania's First Decade* (New Haven, 1971).

51. Finucane, p. 185.

52. Picard, pp. 24-26.

53. Tanzania Interview Number 6.

54. Tanzania Interview Number 63.

55. Smith, *Field Administration*, p. 1.