



The Unfreedom Monitor

A Methodology for Tracking Digital Authoritarianism Around the World

TANZANIA
COUNTRY REPORT

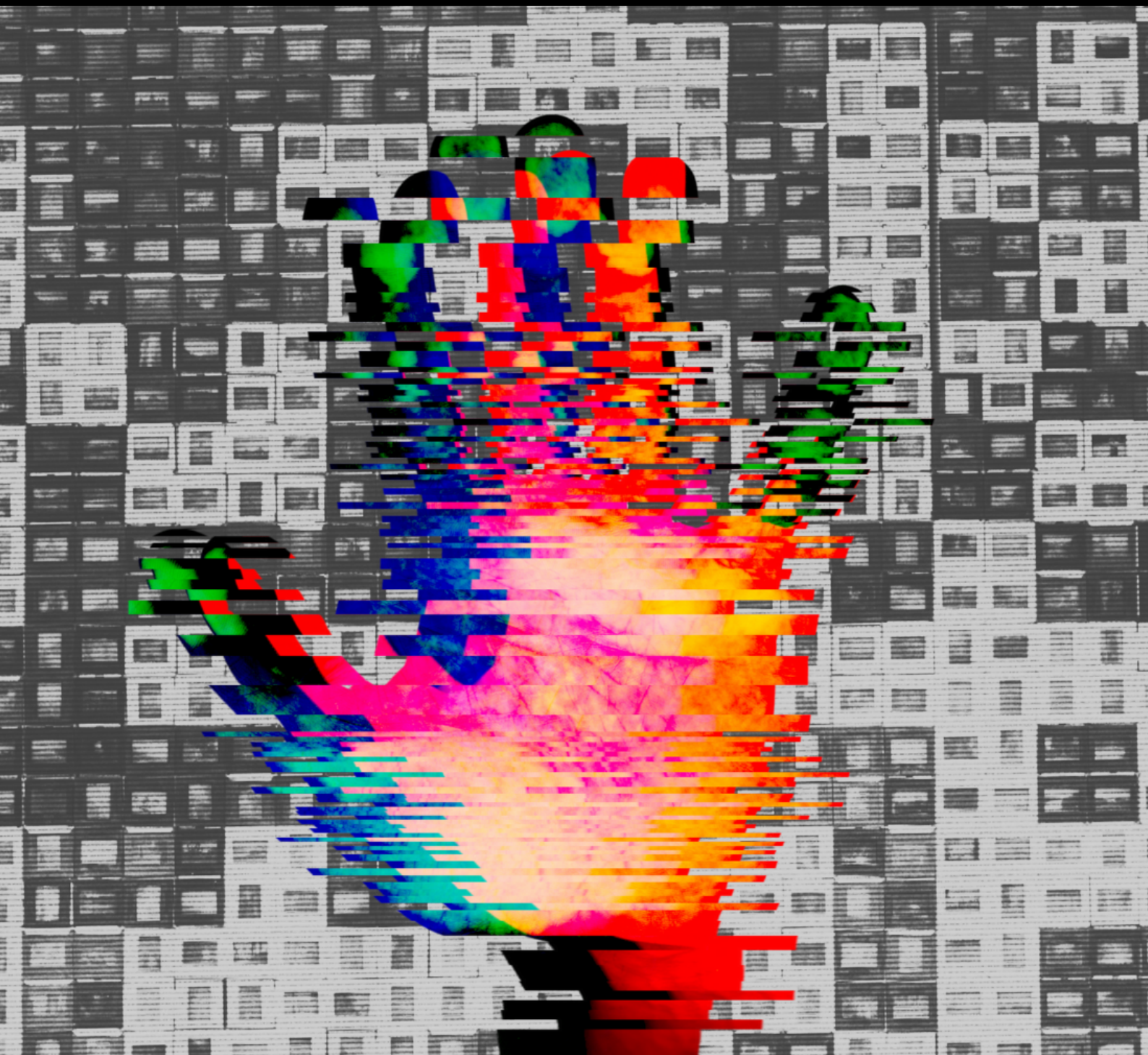


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Democracy is on the retreat in Tanzania. While constitutionally a multiparty country, Tanzania is displaying the patterns of a de facto one-party state. As with most authoritarian governments, anything that provides access to public discourse is portrayed as a “threat to national security.” At the same time, digital technologies have revolutionised how politics happen in Tanzania, from actual campaigns and rallies to online Twitter spaces and the use of video platforms such as YouTube and Facebook Live to address voters. These avenues provided space when the government banned political rallies (Tanzania Country Report), allowing the opposition to criticise the government and seek transparency.

When President Magufuli came to power in 2015, the live streaming of parliamentary sessions was banned, ostensibly because they were costly expenses for the government to incur (Shigela). Banning the live streaming of parliamentary sessions was a massive step toward keeping citizens in the dark when oppressive legislation was tabled and passed into law without citizens hearing about it. Many have questioned the manner in which the laws were passed, noting that the time frame was not long enough and public consultation was not representative. Among the laws passed were the amendments to the Statics Act, and the Electronic and Postal Regulations.

Tanzania has exercised authority on digital avenues in three main vital ways:

- **Surveillance:** Data governance in Tanzania has been one area that has had fewer restrictions as there are still laws that adequately speak to things such as data protection and privacy. However, laws such as the Cybercrime Act provide government agencies with leeway to access certain things when it suits them.
- **Internet censorship:** Tanzania’s first internet shutdown happened in 2020 and did not come as a surprise, as the country had already shown red flags in terms of internet censorship. The control and regulation of who and what content is allowed online have prompted many to believe that Tanzania is on the verge of building a replica of China’s Great Firewall that will keep the space regulated and stirred by the government’s agenda.
- **Legislating restrictions:** This is used to constrain freedom of expression and curb speech. Press freedom has been stifled through laws, citizen journalism has been taxed, and free speech has been tagged as sedition or misinformation. It is clearing the path for the government to have the upper hand in controlling narratives and polarising opinions.

Digital authoritarianism in Tanzania has paralysed the media and created a climate of fear, suspicion and tension in the broader society. When citizens complain of the government’s shortcomings, patriotism and nationalism are routinely offered as a reason for citizens not to share on social media the bad and the ugly of public life in Tanzania.

BACKGROUND

The law is frequently used as a tool for oppression in Tanzania particularly to silence the population. Most often laws are enacted under a certificate of emergency, allowing fast track approval without much public participation. Currently the majority of parliamentarians are from the ruling party. While the law is being weaponized by the government, the issue of both physical and digital security has been of great concern to human rights defenders and opposition political parties alike. The random arrest of key opposition leaders and the abduction of a journalist like Gwanda (Article 19) are just a few among the many incidents that are shrinking the civic space.

Tanzania experienced its first internet shutdown in 2020 — access to social media was blocked while the country was conducting its election (Sakpa). Even days after President Magufuli was declared the president with over 80 percent of the votes, citizens could only access Twitter through a VPN. The internet is also censored by controlling content and context, making it a space where citizens could easily be arrested, among other sanctions. With the state of laws in the country and the history of the authoritarian regime of President Magufuli, the line between free speech and sedition is barely visible. The media, a vital component of a democratic nation, suffers for fear of not complying and being charged with spreading fake news for sharing crucial information with the public and raising awareness of such bad laws.

When Tanzania enacted its Cybercrime Act (2015), it served to protect citizens online; however, the law has been criticised for having been purposely orchestrated to ensure the 2015 election ran smoothly and to silence the power of the opposition. During the 2015 election, several opposition leaders were charged with sedition under this law and accused of sharing misleading information on social platforms. Though the Cybercrime Act does tackle some online issues such as cyberbullying, it does not bring a gender lens to bear on the internet, and does not address gaps in online gender-based violence. This raises the need for a Data protection and Privacy Act, to address how data should be collected, stored, processed and even shared but the process is stalled. While there are plenty of restrictions legislated in Tanzania, we do not have many protective laws such as the Data Protection and Privacy Act, which would help to address the gaps in the Cybercrime Law.

In 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic arose, Tanzania chose prayer over science and denied the magnitude of the pandemic. During the pandemic, statistics on cases were rarely published, and several news outlets were banned and fined for publishing content that spoke to the state of the pandemic in the country. Laws such as the Statistics Act were used to establish government agencies as the single source of truth. This was further supported by the Media Service Act, and the media's hands were tied over what they could publish without violating the laws. President Magufuli disapproved of

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the COVID-19 vaccines and publicly spoke strongly of them being a ploy by the Western world to use Africans as lab rats for testing vaccine efficacy and thus causing infertility among the masses.

During the six years before President Samia Suluhu took over, Tanzania was under immense control and regulation under the Magufuli regime. Political rallies for opposition political parties were banned, and journalists such as Azori Gwanda disappeared, while others were arrested over money laundering and terrorism charges. During these crucial times, avenues of assembly and debates on critical concerns were limited. The majority turned to social media as a civic space to congregate and demand changes and rights that they had more challenges seeking offline. Despite the massive opportunities brought by these platforms, the government made great use of laws and legal mechanisms to stifle and regulate the space even more.

COUNTRY POLITICAL HISTORY

Tanzania is nominally a democracy, but the influence of the main party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) that has been in power since independence makes it more of a de facto one-party state. Tanzania's internet ecosystem is very much tied to the political and democratic situation of the country. Elections are conducted every five years, and a president is allowed to lead for two consecutive five-year terms. Since Tanzania gained its independence in 1961, it conducted its first election in 1965. By then, Tanzania was a one-party state under the rule of the Tanganyika National Union (TANU) for Tanzania mainland and the Afro Shirazi party in Zanzibar Islands. The two parties joined forces when Tanganyika and Zanzibar merged to form Tanzania and formed a party now known as Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM). According to the 2021 Freedom House country report, Tanzania has held regular multiparty elections since it transitioned from a one-party state in the early 1990s. However, the opposition remains relatively weak, and the ruling party has retained power for over half a century.

Tanzania has been a relatively peaceful and democratic country; however, the last five years have seen the democratic conditions deteriorate, and freedom and rights stifled to allow control by an authoritarian regime. Whether or not Tanzania conducts a free and fair election can be observed from the example of the 2020 elections, which were neither free nor fair. These elections were flawed in many ways, such as the refusal to admit foreign election observers, several court cases to keep the opposition party away from the polls, and the first internet shutdown in Tanzania's history. The election results left many surprised by how over 80 percent of voters chose Magufuli over famous opposition leader Tundu Lissu; the situation in Zanzibar Islands was even worse with the military being deployed on the streets on election eve. (Aljazeera)

Tanzania's government consists of three branches: the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive. The roles of the three are identified and separated by the constitution; however, the current constitution gives the sitting president lots of wiggle room over the people who run these separate arms of the government. Given how the 2020 elections were carried out, the current parliament comprises mostly ruling party members (364 seats held by CCM, 92.6 percent of all parliamentary seats). Hence, the legislative arm is practically run by one party that pushes for the agenda of its sitting president. It is also within the president's powers to select judges who preside over the judiciary, including the chief justice and the other people who work within the executive branch. Without an equally representative legislature, there is no separation between the three arms of the government.

After the 2020 elections, the government was left to defend the legitimacy of the elections being free and fair. It is alleged that the 19 women special seats were filled with 19 women members of the opposition party CHADEMA. To date, CHADEMA claims that it did not in fact nominate the women to those special seats, and that the manner in which they were chosen, sworn in and defended by the ruling party seems to indicate they were put there to counter complaints from external observers about the legitimacy of the elections. (Kiango)

International financial organisations such as the World Bank and IMF have some say in how things are implemented; however, during Magufuli's reign, much was dependent on whether the matters aligned with his plans. The denial of special grants and loans to the government has historically forced Tanzania, in some instances, to take specific actions

that they normally wouldn't, such as lifting bans on media or pushing for the presence of opposition members in the parliament to safeguard support from large entities. However, this was not the case during the rule of President Magufuli, who was often quoted calling them "Mabeberu," a Kiswahili term to refer to foreign agents and their agendas. (Awami)

In March 2021, President Magufuli passed away, and the first Tanzanian woman president was sworn in, President Samia Suluhu Hassan, who was serving as his vice president at the time. Speculation abounds over the cause of Magufuli's death; some have claimed that he succumbed to COVID-19 and others say it was due to the failure of a pacemaker over a long-term struggle with heart disease. (Mtulya)

In 2016, the parliament signed The Media Service Act, whose key role was to stifle freedom of expression and freedom of the press. This law was challenged at the Mtwara high court and the East African Court of Justice, where, after almost three years, the court ruled that the act should not stand in March 2019. Prior to 2018, blogging was widespread, and the majority of citizens took up citizen journalism, sharing content and their views on blogs and creating various content online. However, this changed in March 2018 when the Electronics and Postal Communications Act was amended to regulate content online. This amendment requires registration and licensing of all online service providers, including a licence fee of up to about USD 920 per year. As a result, most bloggers have chosen to self-censor.

In May 2018, after introducing these changes, The Mikocheni Reporter, a famous blog, bid adieu to its followers in a blog post. The author of the blog, Elsie Eyakuze, said, "Tanzania has passed laws and regulations this year requiring bloggers to register and pay a punitive fee to keep offering their content. The flimsy excuse is taxation. The real reason is the legal restriction of free speech. The Tanzanian blogosphere is too minute to generate anything worth taxing, but it has punched above its weight lately." (Eyakuze) This was the case for many bloggers who stopped because they did not make enough out of blogging to warrant them paying the ridiculous fee imposed on them.

The state of press freedom in Tanzania, despite the improvements, such as the lifting of bans on previously banned newspapers, is still lagging in many ways, mainly because the new government still runs on the old repressive laws. In 2022 the newly appointed Minister of Information and Communication lifted a ban on several newspapers shut down during the previous regime; however, as the laws remain unchanged, the struggle for media freedom is far from over (Nachilongo). The minister also promised that the Media Service Act, which has seen media outlets banned and others suspended, will be reviewed to create a smooth environment for independent media houses to operate freely.

COUNTRY INTERNET PATTERN AND PENETRATION

Internet access in Tanzania began in 1995. The first commercial full-fledged internet service was provided in 1996 by CyberTwiga. In March 2022, the Minister of Information and Communication reported that the number of internet users in Tanzania had grown from 28 million to 30 million between February 2022 and March 2021 (Takwa). The number of internet users in Tanzania has greatly leaped over the past couple of years, especially with the increase in mobile users. The mobile market in Tanzania has grown, with unique subscribers growing from 12 million in 2010 to 25 million in 2020. According to GSM, Tanzania has a unique-subscriber mobile internet penetration of 18 percent. As of 2020, however 59 percent remain unconnected to a mobile network (GSMA). The majority of users access the internet through their mobile phones, making mobile internet the largest gateway to connectivity.

The majority of Tanzanians cannot afford smartphones and do not have access to broadband connectivity. The gaps in terms of gender are even more stark as most women have little to no access to the internet compared to men; this has led to a digital gender divide among users in Tanzania. The digital gap extends to older people as well as children, who, despite having access to a mandatory information and communications technology (ICT) course in school, have limited to no access to the internet. Gaps in access to power and devices and the costs of connectivity and infrastructure favour people living in urban areas over those living in rural areas.

Tanzania Telecommunications Corporation (TTCL) manages and operates the construction of the National Fibre Optic Cable network and it's also a provider of telecom services. TTCL is government owned. The National ICT Broadband Backbone (NICTBB), on behalf of the government through the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) is developing high-speed broadband and helps to efficiently exploit the benefits from undersea submarine cables landing in Dar es Salaam by providing high-quality and high capacity fibre optic connectivity from Tanzania to within Africa. The Tanzania Internet Service Providers Association (TISPA) is an association that supports internet service providers and the five internet exchange points, according to whom Tanzania has 26 ISPs.

TTCL is a government-owned ISP that operates all over the country. However, it is not dominant in terms of subscribers. Most people default to private ISPs such as Vodacom, Airtel, Halotell, and Tigo on the Tanzania mainland and Zantel in Zanzibar Islands. These providers are foreign-owned; however, the government owns some shares in these companies, and some rely on the NICTBB, which TTCL manages.

Most media in Tanzania operate in one of two languages, Kiswahili, the official national language, and English, as these are the two languages most widely spoken across the country. The media is fast becoming dependent on the internet, and most citizen journalists use different digital platforms such as blogs and social media platforms to convey and share their messages. As of January 2021, there were over 5 million social media users in Tanzania (Kemp). As a platform that reaches a broader audience, social media is crucial and highly used, even by government officials to reach citizens. When Tanzania switched off social media, most people started using VPNs and migrated to using Signal as a secure, safe channel that protects privacy and ensures secrecy.

METHODOLOGY

The Unfreedom Monitor combines the methodology used in Global Voices' previous work on media observatories with an in-depth analysis of the contextual issues around digital authoritarianism. The Observatory approach is primarily qualitative and looks beyond socio-technical causes to consider power analysis, offer a way to discuss effects, and to emphasise what works as well as what's negative. It is a framework that can be consistently applied across a range of contexts, in order to identify and contextualise both positive and disruptive developments, to explain the forces and motives underlying them, as well as the narrative framing devices that often require local knowledge to interpret and weigh. This research method allows us to compare, draw lessons, and consolidate learning about the trends, systems and rules that influence what we know, and how we know it.

The observatory includes datasets of media items, structured analysis of context and subtext, and a civic impact score that rates media items for positive or negative impact on civic discourse. We use Airtable, a relational database, for documentation and collaborative work. The Unfreedom Monitor shifts the focus of the research to identifying and giving context to instances of digital authoritarianism. For a matrix of countries, technologies, and regulatory approaches, we will ask:

- What are the dominant and influential narratives?
- What is the evidence to support the claims underpinning these framings, and how will we document them?
- What are the actual harms, threats, and impacts of the use of technology to augment repression?
- What are potential solutions for technology interventions, policy advocacy, and information and awareness?
- What narratives more accurately reflect what is happening?

The findings of the observatory are presented separately as a dataset on the Advox website, and as part of the analysis presented in the individual country reports.

The key research question for the Unfreedom Monitor is: "what are the key motives for, methods of, and responses to, digital authoritarianism in selected national contexts?" This is further broken down into the following subquestions:

1. Motives

- a. What are the contexts that inspire authoritarians to clamp down on digital spaces?
- b. What are the immediate triggers of an expansion in digital authoritarianism?
- c. How do regional and international organisations affect how governments behave in relation to digital authoritarianism?

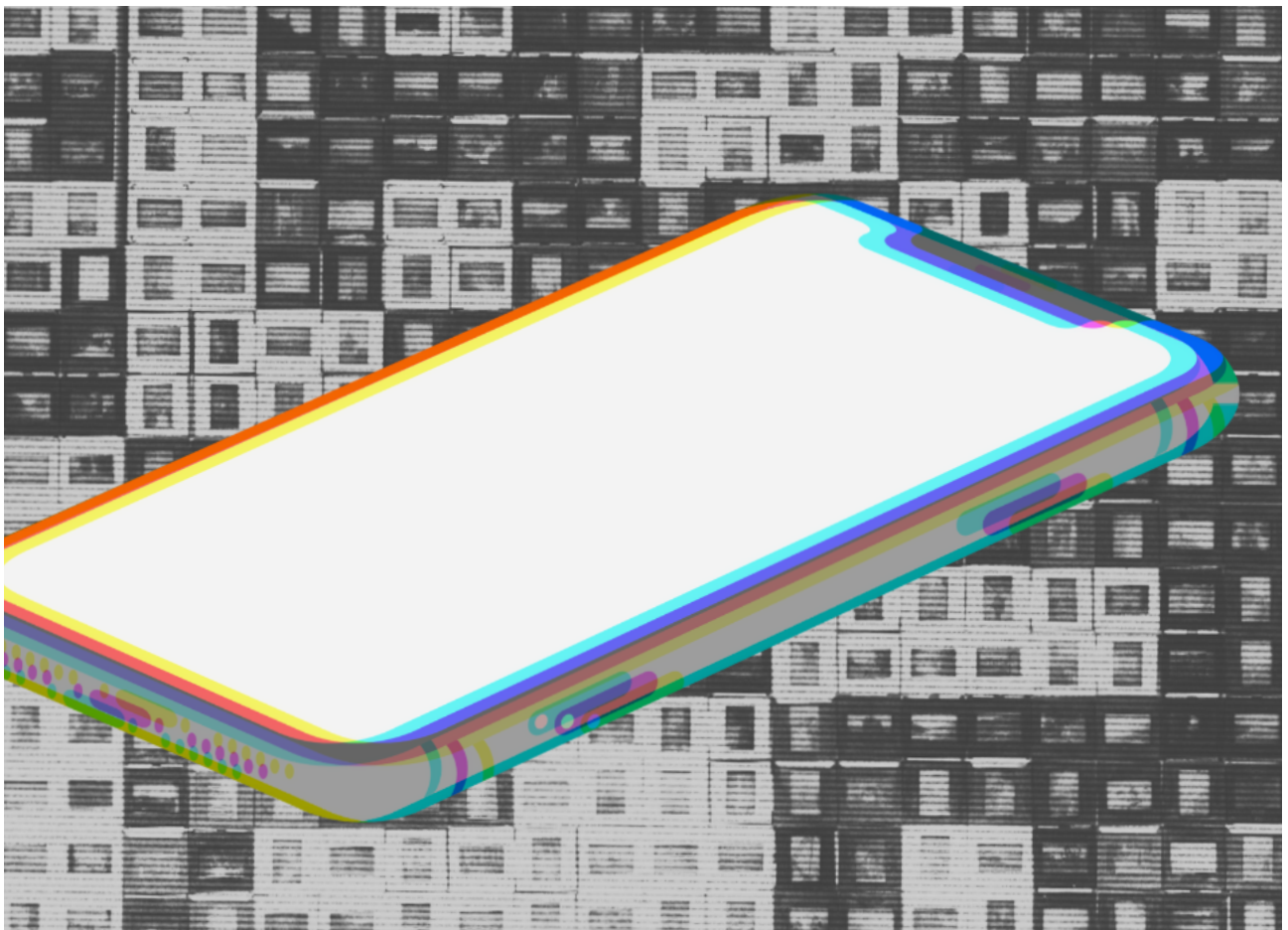
2. Methods

- a. What are the key technologies used in advancing digital authoritarianism?
- b. What are the key mechanisms — legal, economic etc. — through which these technologies are acquired and deployed?
- c. What role does money play in the choice of technologies?

3. Responses

- a. How do the citizens of the countries under investigation respond to the expansion of digital authoritarianism?
- b. How do other governments in the region and the international community respond to the expansion of digital authoritarianism?

With this information, the Unfreedom Monitor captures the key challenges of digital authoritarianism around the world, crafting a global perspective on the social and policy challenges that arise when the Internet becomes the next frontier in the battle for meaningful democracy.



MAPPING TANZANIA'S CHALLENGE WITH DIGITAL AUTHORITARIANISM

DATA GOVERNANCE

Data management is still widely regulated in Tanzania, leaving much room for the violation of the privacy of users, especially in digital spaces such as social media and government platforms. The state of privacy still leaves much to be desired for the country, which is the only one of its East African peers to not yet have legislated a data protection and privacy act. Despite not having such an essential piece of legislation, the country still collects massive amounts of data, such as biometrics for national identification cards. Some of the key challenges around data protection and privacy include:

1. **Biometric registration of SIM cards:** Several mobile service providers and their agents collect personally identifiable data without proper mechanism or a law that guides how it is collected, handled and stored. The gap between the rights of users and the access that data controllers have are wide and leave much to be desired.
2. **National identification system:** The National Identification Authority (NIDA) was established by the National Identification Authority (Establishment) Instrument, 2008 with the mandate to register and issue identity cards to Tanzanian citizens and eligible residents who are non-citizens aged 18 years and above per the Registration and Identification of Persons Act, (Act No.11 of 1986) Revised Edition 2012 (Tanzania Ministry of Home Affairs). The NIDA is mandatory to register a SIM Card, open a bank account, or gain access to public services.

Having access to key services made conditional on having a biometric National Identification card, without legislation to handle this, puts the majority at risk of breaches of their rights. So much data is collected when seeking a national ID, a driving licence, a voting card, and an insurance card, among others. Some pieces of legislation touch on aspects of data protection and privacy but do not specifically address conditions for lawful processing of data. Article 16 of the Constitution of Tanzania states: "Every person is entitled to respect and protection of his person, the privacy of his person, his family and matrimonial life, and respect and protection of his residence and private communications." However, for this to be implemented, a law must accompany it.

In 2016, Jamii Forum's office was raided by Tanzanian security forces, who also detained Maxence Melo for interrogation in December of the same year. Melo was charged with three offences: two counts of not complying with a disclosure order under Section 22 (2) of the Cybercrimes Act (2015) and one count of managing a domain name that is not registered in Tanzania under Section 79(c) of the Electronic and Postal Communications Act (2010) (CIPESA). Maxence Melo founded Jamii Forums with Mike Mushi.

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The charges stemmed from Jamii Forum’s refusal to comply with police disclosure notices to reveal the Internet Protocol (IP) addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers of users whose identity the authorities sought, for whistleblowing corruption scandals in the oil and banking sectors. Initially, Jamii Media went to court challenging the disclosure orders and provisions of Section 32 and 38 of the Cybercrime Act. The judgement for this case was postponed five times between November 16, 2019, and April 8, 2020, when the Resident Magistrates Court of Dar es Salaam at Kisutu convicted Maxence Melo on the charge of “obstruction of a police investigation” (under Section 22(1) of the CyberCrimes Act, 2015) in case No. 456 of 2016. He was sentenced to one year in prison or a fine of TZS 3,000,000 (approximately EUR 1,200). He has since paid the fine and filed a notice of intent to appeal the court’s decision before the High Court of Tanzania. (Fidh)

In the last six years, under President Magufuli, there have been reported cases of leaked audio recordings of conversations between prominent political figures. In one instance, an alleged telephone conversation was leaked involving the current Minister of Energy Mr. Makamba speaking to his father, Yusuph Makamba (a retired Dar-es-Salaam Regional Commissioner), former minister Mr. Ngeleja, former CCM secretary-general Mr. Abdulrahman Kinana and Minister of ICT Mr. Nnauye (The Citizen). Human rights defenders have questioned how such private conversations were accessed and leaked in the first place, leading to the identification of the fact that it is very possible that the government has some surveillance equipment that they make use of, and ISPs are forced to disclose certain information to the government through the use of laws such as the Cybercrime Act.

SURVEILLANCE

Sauti Kubwa, an online media outlet, revealed that “Tanzania bought the system (that operates Pegasus) in February 2017, two years after Magufulu was sworn in as president. Pegasus is malicious software created by Israeli-based cyber intelligence firm NSO Group to hack computers and smartphones to gather data and serve it to a third party,” in this case the government of Tanzania. It is believed that this software was purchased under Magufuli’s reign and used to surveil journalists and key figures such as Tundu Lissu, Maria Sarungi, and Bernard Membe, among others (Stewart).

A Wikileaks report in July 2015 revealed that Tanzania has an interest in advancing its surveillance power. The report revealed emails between a Tanzania State House official and a key account manager of Hacking Team, planning a visit to the Hacking Team offices in Milan, Italy (Wikileaks). In 2017 Tanzania signed an MoU with the Korea Internet & Security Agency (KISA) to provide Tanzania with expertise on how to monitor the security of the cyberinfrastructure and finance the sector (Lugongo).

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SPEECH (INCLUDING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, FREEDOM OF INFORMATION, AND OPINION)

Article 18 of the Constitution of Tanzania guarantees every person the right to freedom of expression and the right to seek, receive, and impart information. However, various laws limit this freedom. In 2020, Tanzania passed the Electronic and Postal Communications (Online Content) Regulations that affect anyone who uses digital media to express themselves and access information. During the COVID-19 pandemic, laws like the Electronics and Postal Communications were used to silence people from discussing the pandemic (CIPESA).

Following the pandemic, several media outlets were shut down. For example, the Contents Committee of the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority summoned Kwanza Online TV, stating that their Instagram account featured a post that was unpatriotic and negative to the country. Shortly after that the regulator stated that the broadcaster had published misleading content that contravened professional standards and hence was suspended for 11 months (CPJ).

Tanzanian Comedian Idris Sultan was arrested in May 2020 because of a video he posted on social media of himself laughing at an old photo of President John Magufuli wearing an oversized suit. These charges were later changed to “failure to register a SIM card previously owned by another person” and “failure to report a change of ownership of a SIM card.” Art as a form of expression is criminalised to ensure some topics and people were not topics of discussion (Jumanne).

By July 2021, the government had blocked 18,622 SIM cards that were found to have been involved in criminal incidents in the country (Sauwa). However, this, alongside the SIM card regulation, has left many people without access to information. Without even one of the required documents, such as the NIDA registration number, people cannot get SIM cards and then are excluded from critical services such as access to information. In September 2021, Fwema posted a cartoon on his Instagram page that portrays President Samia Suluhu as a girl playing with a basin of water while behind her, Jakaya Kikwete, Magufuli’s predecessor as president and who is regarded as her mentor, is seen reassuring the population. The cartoon illustrated Kikwete’s current influential role in Tanzanian politics. Following this cartoon, Fwema was arrested (RSF), further showing how previous laws are still being implemented even in this new regime. If the current laws are not changed, avenues of stifling freedom will continue.

ACCESS (INCLUDING SERVICE INTERRUPTIONS, PUNITIVE TAXATION, AND LEGISLATION)

During Tanzania's 2020 election, major social networks were blocked across the country. Users relied on virtual private networks (VPNs) to send messages and access information (Sakpa). At the same time, opposition leaders were criticised for being vocal on social media. Civil society, human rights defenders, and activists have pushed back against online and offline oppressions. In 2018 Tanzania made amendments to the Electronics And Postal Communication Regulations imposing a licence fee of nearly a thousand dollars for bloggers and online content creators. This fee includes registration and licensing fees for content creators online. The new law becomes an opening to effectively start taxing the internet by putting a fee on practising fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and access to information.

INFORMATION (INCLUDING COORDINATED INAUTHENTIC BEHAVIOUR AND INFLUENCE CAMPAIGNS, DISINFORMATION, MISINFORMATION, AND MISINFORMATION)

During the 2020 elections, different attempts were used to limit information, control narratives, and silence dissent. Among the tactics used was Twitter's copyright policy to report content and cause the accounts of activists and whistleblowers to be suspended. Many activists had their accounts shut down during the elections because of reports about violating such policies.

Kigogo is a famous activist on Twitter; his account was blocked just days before Tanzania's election because of "more than 300" complaints to the social media platform that the account had breached its copyright policy, a charge Kigogo denied. He describes an instance where more than 1,000 tweets from his Twitter account were copied and used to set up three websites; the complainants then used them to say that their copyright had been breached (Olewe).

In Tanzania, bots have been instrumental in cementing polarisation based on political party association. The bots were handy, especially during the election, where they were mainly used for abusing, making noise, and promoting hate and misinformation. It has been reported that the 'bots' in Tanzania are not software robots but real human accounts that use fake IDs and are registered to attack or support a particular person or agenda (The Citizen).

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CONTOURS OF DIGITAL AUTHORITARIANISM TANZANIA?

MOTIVES

Governments often find motivation in interesting concepts as reasons to carry out or enforce their authority in the digital space. These concepts are often tied to political, social, and economic aspects where the government wants to ensure they shape narratives into what works in the ruling individual or party's favour. More often than not, political activities play a critical role in enforcing specific authoritarian actions or activities. Here are some of the motives for Tanzania:

- **Peace and safety during elections**
Like most countries globally, Tanzania has also directed its authoritarian actions to ensuring peace and safety during elections. This particularly applies where they suspect strong opposition and where governments struggle to maintain their offices and control election outcomes. This is followed up by actions such as shutting down the internet just before the elections and continuing to throttle Twitter space in hopes of avoiding possible riots.
- **Authoritarian regimes maintaining power**
This is usually a key motivation behind many dictatorial governments using actions that will ensure they achieve the goal of maintaining power. This is often tied to elections as well, where authoritarian leaders such as President Magufuli use laws to limit the ability of people to question the election results and publish any independent findings.
- **Controlling narratives**
Often this involves the use of bots who crush opposition views, post-counter-narratives, and attack opposition leaders, activists, human rights defenders, and anyone promoting narratives different from what the government wants to promote. Most often, in controlling narratives like, for example, at the onset of the pandemic, the government uses digital avenues to make the issue seem like it is propagated by Western interests. Magufuli also pushed the narrative that vaccines were meant to cause infertility and extinguish the African race. Anyone who opposed this narrative was criminalised by various laws for sedition, misinformation, and disinformation, among others.
- **Nationalism and patriotism**
Propaganda that is still being propagated even in the current regime in Tanzania is that posting things that point out the flaws and weaknesses of the country and its leaders means you are not a patriot. This is a convenient motive to suppress criticism and ensure that people shy away from honesty to appear patriotic to their country by only highlighting the positive and good things.

Targeted groups :

- Human rights defenders
- Activists
- Civil society
- Opposition parties
- Political leaders
- Ordinary citizens
- International donors and agencies
- Refugees
- Women and LGBTQ+ groups

This collusion and sharing of power between the three arms of the government, though the constitution clearly specifies that they should be separate independent bodies, shows that the practice proves otherwise. In this instance the parliament legislates laws that are oppressive and the executive branch of the government then assents to the laws and the judiciary enforces the laws. In the case of a digital authoritarian country like Tanzania, there is a close relationship with and sense of purpose towards specific goals often tied to political motives. The current state of the legislative arm of Tanzania's government proves that the laws are being drafted and approved by people within the same ruling party as they are the voting majority in the parliament. It is practical to say that it's the ruling party that runs the government in efforts to fulfil their party goals and objectives rather than be a government for the people.

“ The current state of the legislative arm of Tanzania's government proves that the laws are being drafted and approved by people within the same ruling party as they are the voting majority in the parliament. ”

Oftentimes authoritarian governments support each other — hence the strong ties between Tanzania and communist countries such as China. The majority of serious contracts and work within Tanzania are normally passed on to Chinese contractors, and so China supports authoritarian regimes in setting up surveillance mechanisms and technologies. The China–Africa relationship strongly portrays just how similar ideologies of controlling the masses and everything in the digital space are propagated with support from such regimes.

METHODS

The methods applied by Tanzania towards its authoritarianism mainly fall within these three key areas.

1. Surveillance

This involves both mass and targeted surveillance that takes place both online and offline. In Tanzania, it comes in the form of national identification schemes that tie everything to digital identity, in this case, a national identification card without which you can not access

critical services. The other method involves purchasing surveillance software and devices from economically-advanced countries, many of which would be considered democratic. Tanzania has been linked to the purchase of Pegasus and tied to Korean and Chinese surveillance equipment.

2. Internet censorship

This involves silencing the public online, particularly dissenting voices, through access restrictions and the criminalisation of online speech. For Tanzania, this involves censoring content such as pornography, among others, and any websites that host such content.

- **Internet shutdowns:** The government shut down the internet and censored access to specific sites in the 2020 Tanzanian elections, whereby social media were restricted and could only be accessed through VPNs. This was also followed by blocking Twitter which left many seeking circumvention tools to ensure they could access the platform.
- **Content regulation:** This involves using laws to restrict content in the name of misinformation and disinformation. This was the case at the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the government used the Statistics Act to limit any publishing of statistics unless from a government source. Laws like the Electronics And Postal Communication Regulations were also used to limit who has permission to publish content and who doesn't because they cannot afford licence fees and comply with requirements.

3. Legislation controls

This involves legislation that allows the government to interfere with and control the media and tech landscape, and define what the single source of truth is. The use of laws to punish people for practising their freedoms online has been rising in Tanzania. Freedom of expression through platforms and even artistic expression is punished as a violation of laws such as the Cybercrime Act. Actions such as collecting biometric identities as part of the national identification process have also significantly been used to limit freedom of expression, access to information, and privacy.

The extent to which Tanzania has purchased equipment for surveillance is still unknown, because there are very few sources that address the extent of surveillance. However, some have claimed it was possibly done through the military and the national intelligence agencies. This is often with financial support from similar authoritarian countries that support surveillance technologies in the name of cybersecurity. Most often, laws are enacted beforehand to support the methods of digital authoritarianism. For example, the Cybercrime Act came right before the 2015 elections. There were many other such laws, including the amendments to the NGOs Act, that saw NGOs being deregistered and control on them tightened in the lead up to the 2020 elections.

RESPONSES

In Tanzania, digital authoritarianism is mainly opposed by specific groups that have access to technology and are literate enough to understand the power and role of the digital space. It also relies on the fact that digital spaces are an expansion of the physical civic spaces that society depends on to thrive and ensure development. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) try to raise awareness, especially among marginalised groups, about the concept of digital rights and the critical issues of concern for a country like Tanzania; however, the progress is hindered by digital divides. Some responses include:

- Advocacy and responding to the proposed legislation: Often spearheaded by NGOs and international supporters
- Awareness-raising by groups such as activists, human rights defenders, and NGOs

In recent years NGOs, social justice groups, and donors have found themselves grappling with a civic space that's no longer confined to the offline world only but extends to the digital world. While this space has much to offer for the development and advancement of the different fields and people that NGOs hope to save, it also carries newer challenges that are fast evolving, particularly with the rise of digital authoritarianism.

Though a powerful force, the media is often stifled and cannot talk about some of these things without fear of violating a specific law, a very real threat after the shutting down of several media over the last few years. The media has shied away from writing about controversial issues and concerns.

“ Though a powerful force, the media is often stifled and cannot talk about some of these things without fear of violating a specific law, a very real threat after the shutting down of several media over the last few years. **”**

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Digital authoritarianism in Tanzania comes in the form of controls, limiting access, and using the law to suppress dissent. In the case of Tanzania, the executive branch's stronghold on the legislative and judiciary accords them the opportunity to be able to constrain and restrict online civic spaces, and abuse the power they have there.

The presence of blanket restrictions still proves to be a deciding factor for those with a fear of engaging in online spaces. As a result, some groups will further be marginalised as they opt out of digital platforms. The open-ended nature of actions the authority is allowed to take for non-compliance with laws has made room for different cases to be brought upfront to the courthouses, resulting in several magazines closing down. The laws developed are very stringent and arbitrary, to the extent that they impede the right to access information and the right to freedom of expression.

Among all these laws that aim to regulate the space, the fundamental laws that will help protect users are the only thing missing. The lack of such protection makes room for the government to tamper with things like the personal data of individuals of interest. While the current office of the president seeks to enact reforms to ensure rights and freedoms are protected, the challenge of when is a question they have yet to address.

It is imperative that different stakeholders such as civil society organisations and activists join in this fight for a judicial review and make efforts such as strategic litigation to call for a collective voice that will be able to represent the different parties affected by these issues, such as the media. The proof that there is a connection between the ruling party's (CCM) political aspirations and the control of digital spaces is seen in the timing by which laws are passed and the fact that the groups that are affected by such laws are often opposition parties, activists and human rights defenders. In 2018, a special bill supplement No. 4e was tabled to make amendments to the Political Parties' Bill. This faced opposition from a coalition of political parties and human rights defenders who petitioned the court to block the passing of the bill into law in parliament. The appeal was overruled again by the court. The bill was then tabled and passed into law, granting immense power to the registrar of political parties, including even immunity against persecution (Oteng).

While politics are still tied to democracy and the rule of law in Tanzania, true freedom is far away. As long as Tanzania remains a dictatorial nation with the three branches of the government working in cahoots, tied to political parties' agendas, the people's needs will always come last. While there is hope with the coming of a new leader, there is still much that needs to change, reforms that start from the very foundation of every Tanzanian law. Hence a new constitution is needed that will put the people's needs first and ensures power is distributed in a manner that does not favour individuals but rather the country's common good as a whole.

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