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Deconstructing Ujamaa: The Legacy of Julius Nyerere in the Quest for Social and Economic Development in Africa

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The death of Julius Nyerere, African independence leader and longtime dictator of Tanzania, evoked a flood of encomiums worldwide. The praise is misplaced. Nyerere's approach devastated much of postcolonial Africa (Forbes, 1999).

How does a leader wreck a country's economy yet die a national hero? Julius Nyerere's inefficient leadership dried Tanzania of funds, but his personality was irresistible (*Newsweek*, 25 October, 1999).

An avowed socialist, Nyerere never deviated from his humanist path. He was not a doctrinaire, he always sought the pragmatic option that favoured his people. He made original contribution to progressive dialectics with his concept of ujamaa, ... as the basis for equitable economic production and distribution.... With the idea of ujamaa, he popularised the idiom of self-reliance and non-exploitative development (*The Guardian* (Lagos, Nigeria), 15 October, 1999).

The contrast is extraordinary between the easy international generalizations that Nyerere had not served his people well and the profoundly different judgment of Tanzanians themselves...What are Tanzanians responding to that the international commentators are ignoring? The short answer is that Tanzanians have no doubt that for over forty years, they had in their midst a leader of unquestionable integrity, who, whatever his policy errors, was profoundly committed to their welfare (*Pratt*, 1999: 138).

Abstract

The death of Julius Nyerere in 1999 has renewed interest in the history of the socialist experiment in Tanzania and its relevance for the future of the developmetalist project in Africa. Positions on the issue have been polarized, with some commentaries based on reasoned, empirical research and analysis and others, essentially speculative, assuming a pattern that has been described as "African bashing".

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This article explores Nyerere's philosophy of Ujamaa as an attempt to integrate traditional African values with the demands of the post-colonial setting. As a philosophy, the central objective of Ujamaa was the attainment of a self-reliant socialist nation. The fact that its achievements were rather qualified was no doubt partly due to its inadequate appreciation of the Tanzanian reality, and the fact that it was more utopian than practical. But this is not to deny the legitimate intentions and aspirations that informed ujamaa as a development strategy. Implementation was a major challenge. However, in assessing how well it fared as policy, Ujamaa has to be placed side by side with comparative schemes, or alternative developments models, including the IMF/World Bank sponsored structural adjustment programmes.

Given the current developmental challenges in Africa, there is need to go beyond "Africa bahing" to constructively interrogate previous developmental experiments like Nyerere's Ujamaa and ask what lessons they hold for the quest for socio-economic development in the continent.

Introduction

The death of Julius Nyerere in October 1999 has renewed interest in the history of the socialist experiment in Tanzania and its relevance for the future of the development project in Africa. Flowing from this new interest, popular and academic representations of Nyerere and his legacy of socialist experimentation in Tanzania have been mixed and perhaps even more polarized than before. There are those writers who while acknowledging some of the flaws in the Tanzanian experiment, argue that it was basically a sound attempt at avoiding the post-independence perils of inequality, elitism, and political instability in Africa (Pratt, 1976; Boesen, *et. al.*, 1977; Versi, 1999: 7–13; Ishemo, 2000: 81–85). On the other hand, Nyerere's socialist strategy in Tanzania has been portrayed as a classic example of misplaced philosophical idealism, squandered developmental opportunities and broken political promises (Gerhart, 1997; Scott, 1999; Johnson, 2000). These critics include those who are sympathetic, and those who are antagonistic to the socialist ideology. To critics on the ideological left, Nyerere's Tanzania was merely a professed socialist state whose leadership elite either abandoned, or never really undertook the class-based struggle for a genuinely socialist society (Shivji, 1974). To those not sympathetic to the socialist ideology, Nyerere and the ruling elite are seen as having robbed Tanzanian society of the personal freedoms, private incentives, and individual rewards that are essential for a transition to a modern, prosperous and democratic society (Yeager, 1989: 1).

While some of these commentaries are based on reasoned empirical research and analysis of the Tanzanian experience, many others merely border on the speculative, conforming to a pattern that Fredrick Cooper has described as "Africa bashing". Cooper points out that all too often, many

commentators on Africa, particularly, but not exclusively journalists, have taken to a pastime of "Africa bashing". The focus, he contends, is most often on African governments who stand accused of corruption, incompetence, and an urge for self-aggrandizement that stifles any initiative not directly controlled by the state. While these representations may, for the most part be true, Cooper contends that without a coherent explanation for what circumstances in Africa gives rise to the syndrome of oppressiveness and economic mismanagement, "Africa bashing" sometimes sounds like "the resurrection of the myth of a backward Africa of an older era" (Cooper, 1997: 189).

The "conventional wisdom" has been to examine Ujamaa mainly as an ideological issue. However, this paper points out that Ujamaa can be better understood if situated within the pervading concern with modernization and development in postcolonial Africa. In doing this, the paper seeks to evaluate Ujamaa, not merely in terms of its workings as a state political ideology but more as a development paradigm constructed, like other contemporary paradigms, on the visions and imagery of emancipation and modernization. It is from this perspective that the achievements and shortcomings, as well as the legacies of Ujamaa for the development project in Africa, can be better understood.

We argue that beyond its socialist rhetoric, Ujamaa shared the same premise and fallacy, of developmentalism that has propelled and constrained successive development initiatives in Africa. That is, the objectification of African peasants and rural dwellers as hapless victims of underdevelopment who needed to be emancipated to higher levels of social and material well being, where these better standard of living was defined in terms of the Westernization of the peasantry. As a result, the Ujamaa's commitment to the modernization paradigm resulted in a situation where improving the conditions of the peasants meant alienating them from their cultural and social realities in favor of transplanted Western ways of life. Yet in other ways, the Ujamaa experiment was unique in the paradoxes it reflected, in its inward orientation and in its attention to social equity and distributive justice.

The Ujamaa Philosophy

A plethora of published works exist on Nyerere and the Ujamaa experiment in Tanzania particularly in the 1970s when the reforms in Tanzania caught world attention, leading to the long-drawn debate about the merits and demerits of the experiment. Indeed the discourse over Ujamaa became a thriving industry for academics and popular writers. More recently however, a wave of the kind of "Africa bashing" to which Cooper alludes, dominated the reaction of the Western press to the renewed interest in Ujamaa generated by the death of Julius Nyerere in 1999. In one of such commentaries, Charles

Lane (1999: 16) writing in *The New Republic* stated that the "former Tanzanian dictator, Julius Nyerere, was single-handedly responsible for the economic destruction of his *potentially wealthy* nation" (our emphasis). But what was the Ujamaa philosophy? This section briefly highlights the main elements of Ujamaa.

Nyerere's philosophy of Ujamaa was rooted in traditional African values and had as its core the emphasis on familyhood and communalism of traditional African societies. At the same time, it was influenced by a mix of Fabian socialism and Catholic social teachings. Stoger-Eising (2000: 134-5) has argued that there are close parallels between Nyerere's political ideas and those of Rousseau. She further noted that Nyerere's ideas represented an attempt at fusing European concepts deriving from Kantian liberalism with the ethos derived from his more communitarian native African society. Nevertheless, Ujamaa was founded on a philosophy of development that was based on three essentials – freedom, equality and unity. The ideal society, Nyerere (1967: 16) argued, must always be based on these three essentials. According to him, there must be equality, because only on that basis will men work cooperatively. There must be freedom, because the individual is not served by society unless it is his. And there must be unity, because only when society is unified can its members live and work in peace, security and well being. These three essentials, Nyerere further contended are not new to Africa; they have always been part of the traditional social order. Osabu-We (2000: 171) notes that Ujamaa "was supposed to embrace the communal concepts of African culture such as mutual respect, common property and common labor." The challenge was how to extend these traditional values to the modern postcolonial setting. It was in meeting this challenge that Nyerere postulated Ujamaa – his version of African Socialism – as an answer. Since Western-style capitalism was seen as incompatible with the aspirations of the newly independent African states, and indeed, the underdeveloped world, a more desirable alternative was socialism. In his categorical words, "no underdeveloped country can afford to be anything but socialist" (Nyerere, 1961: 2).

Nyerere was not alone in his postulations of African socialism and the appeal to what some critics have summarized as a non-existent idyllic vision of a traditional Africa of manifest harmony and communitarianism (Boesen, *et. al.*, 1977; Freyhold, 1979; Ergas, 1980: 387–410). Kwame Nkrumah's agenda for "social revolution", Leopold Sédhar Senghor's "negritude" and Kenneth Kaunda's "Zambian humanism" all reflected similar attitudes among these postcolonial African leaders. What was unique to Nyerere's concept of Ujamaa however, was the complete rejection of class struggle as the basis of his "African socialism". For him, the foundation of African socialism is not the class struggle, but the traditional African institution of the extended family system. It was as a result of his or her socialization in

the family – not antagonistic class relations – that the African acquired that attitude of mind, which ensured a predisposition towards socialism. The ideals of traditional African society were however, destroyed by the impact of colonialism, capitalism and Western-type education. Colonialism shifted the center of political, social and economic gravity from the African's own environment to the colonial metropole (Mohiddin, 1976: 167). Nyerere thus saw the central challenge in terms preserving within the wider society, the same socialist attitudes, which in the pre-colonial days supposedly gave every individual, the security that comes from belonging to the extended family (Nyerere, 1967: 165).

Although not often acknowledged, Nyerere made particular efforts to disclaim Marxist, Leninist, Fabian, Maoist socialism or indeed any Western ancestry to his socialist vision. Ujamaa, he asserted, is opposed to capitalism, which "seeks to build its happy society on the exploitation of man by man". It is also opposed to doctrinaire socialism, which seeks to build its happy society on the basis of the "inevitable conflict between man and man" (Nyerere, 1968). Ujamaa in contrast to these was to represent a third way – a synthesis of what is best in traditional African peasant society and the best the country had acquired from its colonial experience (Nyerere, 1967: 7). However, in practice, Nyerere's socialism had a lot in common with Fabian and Maoist socialism. Nevertheless, Ujamaa was in certain significant respects unique in its commitment to raising Tanzania from a level of dependency to one of self-reliance. On this, Ujamaa would appear to have drawn extensively from the dependency discourse that dominated the intellectual landscape in Latin America and later, Africa, in the 1960s and 1970s.

The famous Arusha Declaration of 1967 set the stage for the formal inauguration of Ujamaa. The Ujamaa philosophy was seen as central to the attainment of a self-reliant socialist nation. National self-reliance had gained currency in the lexicon of development discourse in the immediate post-independence era when it began to be argued that the structure of dependency and underdevelopment tended to externalize the locus of national development in various ways, which undermined the gainful and effective participation of African states in the international economy. It was suggested that to redress this, African states needed to aim at localizing the factors of economic development through autonomous policy formulation and implementation. To achieve this, there was a need to mobilize the efforts of the community and maximize the utilization of available resources towards the satisfaction of the basic needs of the population (Palmer, 1975: 5–6).

However even before the Arusha Declaration and the inauguration of Ujamaa, Nyerere (1968: 60) had identified national self-reliance as the only way out of Tanzania's poor economic situation. Reviewing the poor performance of the First Development plan in 1965, he pointed out to his country-

men and women that it was in the spirit of "ever increasing self-reliance" that Tanzania must face the coming fiscal year, adding that "our motto for the coming year must be self-reliance". However, while harping on the theme of self-reliance and its indispensability to Tanzania's economic situation, Nyerere was quick to stress that by self-reliance, it was not intended that Tanzania would pursue isolationist policies. In his words:

> The doctrine of self-reliance does not mean isolationism. For us, self-reliance is a positive affirmation that for our own development, we shall depend upon our own resources (Nyerere, 1968: 319).

In any case, Tanzania's experience in the years of the First Development Plan was significant for Nyerere's renewed emphasis on self-reliance in two respects. First, it showed that Tanzania could not continue to rely on external grants and aid – as it had done in the past – for her development needs. As Nyerere (1968: 319) so aptly put it, "it comes much later than one expects and not always in the form it is wanted". Second, and perhaps more importantly, the increase, beyond the projected figures, in domestically generated funds during the 1965 fiscal year showed that Tanzania could do more for her own development than had earlier been thought possible. Thus, besides Nyerere's idealism, the inauguration of Ujamaa in 1967 was also an expedient political response to the range of economic problems that became apparent in the years of the First Development Plan and the subsequent realization of the need for a more inward-oriented policy towards national economic development.

Ujamaa, as outlined in the Arusha Declaration – its primary working document – was therefore essentially an agenda for achieving self-reliance through government control of the economy. Informed by the experiences of the First Development Plan, the Declaration proclaimed that "gifts and loans will endanger our independence", and that "gifts...have the effect of weakening [and] distorting our own efforts" (Nyerere, 1968: 239). In the same vein, the Declaration stressed the need to de-emphasize Tanzania's dependence on international finance capital for development, arguing that "it is stupid to rely on money as the major instrument of development when we know only too well that our country is poor". The alternative it proffered was agriculture, which was considered "the basis of development."

The Challenge of Implementation

Nationalization

The nationalization of the commanding heights of the Tanzanian economy was central to the implementation of Ujamaa. For the purpose of the nationalization exercise, economic activities were grouped into three categories – those restricted exclusively to state ownership; those in which the state had a

major share and controlling power and those in which private firms may invest with or without state participation. Immediately following the promulgation of the Arusha Declaration, the Nyerere regime announced the nationalization of all banks and large industrial enterprises including large-scale agricultural processing industries. Also announced were the nationalization of part of the trade sector and 60 per cent nationalization of the dominant sisal industry (Arkaide, 1973: 37). By the end of 1967, the "commanding heights" of the economy had come under the direct control of the state.

The international response to Tanzania's nationalization was mixed. Some Western governments, particularly the Scandinavian countries were impressed by the commitment to self-reliance and were willing to overlook the nationalization that followed the Arusha Declaration (Coulson, 1985: 2). Others however, were not so sympathetic. Three large British banks – Barclays, Standard, and National and Grindleys – adopted a strategy of non-cooperation aimed at ensuring that public sector banking in Tanzania failed. Rapid withdrawal of personnel, instructions to staff to "work to rule" and highly polemical statements apparently designed to destroy international confidence in Tanzania's export economy, followed in quick succession. Their concern was to prevent the spread of bank nationalizations in Africa – a spread they justifiably feared would be inevitable if Tanzania's nationalized public sector banking turned out to be a success. On an intergovernmental level, the government of Kenya and Uganda with their decidedly capitalist-oriented economies hastily affirmed that they had no intention of adopting similar nationalization policies (Coulson, 1985: 41).

Despite the policy of nationalization however, many of the nationalized corporations, went into partnership with a number of foreign firms, some of which were the original owners of the companies that had been nationalized. For instance, the international management consultancy firm Mckinsey was given the all-important contract to set up management control systems for the National Development Corporation, the Tanzanian Sisal Corporation and the East African Harbors Corporation (Loxley and Saul, 1975: 72). It is partly for this reason that some commentators argued at the time, that in spite of the nationalizations, control over Tanzania's most important decisions was still in the hands of foreigners. Shivji in particular, argues that the process of nationalization neither really gave the government a complete control over the "commanding heights" of the economy nor did it successfully exclude the continued penetration of foreign capital into Tanzania's political economy (Shivji, 1973).

Early indications from the operations of the newly nationalized sectors were quite positive. One of the objectives of nationalization was to ensure that domestic capital generated was available for use in the country by reducing the amount of capital exported out of the country. This goal would

appear to have been achieved, at least within the first five years of the nationalization process. Not only was there progressively less dependence of the Tanzanian monetary system on that of Western economies, capital outflow from the economy was significantly reduced. In fact, by the end of 1967, the Bank of Tanzania had so successfully diversified the country's foreign reserves away from the British pound sterling that it was able to avoid a devaluation of the Tanzanian shilling in the wake of the British devaluation of the pound sterling in November 1967. This would have been inconceivable before nationalization (Nnoli, 1978: 213). Another index of the early gains of the nationalization policy was the increased mobilization of domestic resources. Whereas in 1964, fixed capital formation constituted 15 per cent of the monetary Gross Domestic Product (GDP), in 1969 it had reached 20 per cent and in 1970 moved up to 26 per cent. There were growths recorded in the industrial sector as well as an increase in the balance of payments position of the country from about 81.9 million Tanzanian shillings in 1968 to about 134.5 million Tanzanian shillings in 1969 (The United Republic of Tanzania, 1970: 16).

But there were fundamental problems that became more evident as the nationalization process progressed. State control of the economy did not exactly appear to guarantee a more effective restructuring of the national economy towards the envisaged self-reliant model. There were contradictions, especially within the industrial sector as demonstrated in Dianne Bolton's (1985: 154) incisive study of the nationalization of the sisal industry in Tanzania. Bolton concludes that "the concept of nationalization as illustrated by the sisal industry played a dubious role in the transition program to socialism and self reliance". This was because the nationalized sisal industry did not have the capacity to dispose effectively and efficiently of "the means of production and its social product". Structural changes like over-bureaucratization and centralization effected by nationalization created opportunities for increased corruption, inefficiency and resource dissipation (Bolton, 1985: 156). Indeed by 1975, it was already clear to policy makers that a development policy that was primarily centered on nationalization could neither solve the problems of underdevelopment nor offer expedient paths to economic self-reliance. In fact, as some scholars have postulated, what the policy of nationalization so effectively achieved was to give rise to "state bureaucratic capitalism" – the use of state capital by a managerial elite in a manner which entirely conforms to the ethos, values and dynamics of private capital (Shivji, 1974: 85-90).

The Villagization Scheme

The other significant theme of Ujamaa – rural development – flowed out of the theme of self-reliance. To ensure the place of agriculture as a viable

substitute for international finance capital, the Declaration emphasized rural development. It emphasized the need to adapt education, investment programmes and political thought more to the needs of the rural areas. While the policy of nationalization was adopted for the industrial and finance sectors, the Ujamaa villagization scheme (*Ujamaa vijijini*) was adopted for the rural sector. Indeed villagization was a central goal of Ujamaa. According to the policy statement of Ujamaa Vijijini – "Socialism and Rural Development" – the aim of the scheme was to initiate the transformation of rural society to create "rural economic and social communities where people would live together for the good of all" (Nyerere, 1968: 337). It advocated the development of Ujamaa villages in which people would have their homes around a common service center - instead of living on scattered homestead plots - and land farmed by cooperative groups rather than by individual farmers. Nyerere legitimized the villagization scheme in terms of traditional African practices of communal living and social equity.

Despite initial enthusiasm and early successes, the Ujamaa villagization scheme soon ran into difficulties, as people became increasingly reluctant to join Ujamaa villages. This, coupled with the rising cost of providing material incentives for the villages, engendered a move towards forceful methods of persuading people into collective villages – a method that the regime had earlier condemned and resolved not to employ. 1970 for instance, saw the start of "Operation Rufiji" whose idea was to move "by coercion if necessary", the whole population of the lower Rufiji floodplain into Ujamaa villages on higher ground not so near the river. There was also "Operation Dodoma" conceived to solve the problem of the Dodoma region by moving all the people in the region into planned villages (Coulson, 1975: 55). In 1972, more "operations" were launched in Chuya and Kigoma. In the event, many of these operations turned out to be failures since local peasants, suspicious of official motives and fearing the nationalization of their land, refused to cooperate. By late 1973, after many of these operations – the military analogy being quite apt – Nyerere revised the initial policy of immediate villagization to bring it in line with the prevailing realities and made it compulsory for all rural villagers to live in cooperative villages within three years. Even at this stage, it had become apparent that the policy of villagization had failed hence by 1975 it was informally abandoned.

The quest for an explanation for the failure of the villagization scheme has been the subject of numerous and varied studies. One of the earliest of such studies was a first hand account of the organization and operation of Ujamaa villages undertaken by a multi disciplinary group of scholars at the University of Dar es Salaam (Proctor, 1975). Another is Goran Hyden's polemical work on underdevelopment and the "uncaptured peasantry" in Tanzania (Hyden, 1980). These and similar studies suggest that the failure

of the Ujamaa scheme was predicated on a number of salient *a priori* and empirical factors. Three of these factors are pertinent to this discourse. First is the argument that the initiative to start Ujamaa villages did not come from rural peasants. The scheme failed to gain the necessary ideological acceptance among the vast majority of the peasantry. Right from the beginning, the dominant attitudes of the people ranged from skepticism and mistrust to outright resentment and opposition (Lofchie, 1978: 452). Secondly, the use of coercion to ensure mass villagization – from threats of forced transportation to short prison sentences under the pretext of tax arrears - militated against the effective operation of Ujamaa villages. Finally, the efforts at building Ujamaa villages were greatly constrained by bureaucrats who held out government aid as incentives to peasants to move into villages. Peasants began to perceive such "free goods" as substitutes for available labor resources rather than being complimentary factors for increased production. Promises of official assistance resulted in an over-dependence of the villages on government initiatives and incentives that left villages extremely vulnerable when government assistance eventually stopped. However, perhaps the single most adverse limitation of the Ujamaa villagization program was the practice which Shivji (1974) and Raikes (1975) have described as "Kulak Ujamaa". This was a practice in which a number of rich peasants, having attained positions in Ujamaa village committees or forged links with local bureaucrats, began to use the villages to further their own interests.

Comparing the Ujamaa scheme with forced collectivization in Russia in the 1930s and in Maoist China, some critiques of Ujamaa have blamed the failure of the villagization scheme, on the rather simplistic explanation of the inherent individualism of peasant farmers who, they argue, held back cooperative development (Scott, 1999). However as some other writers have demonstrated, there is plenty of evidence from Tanzania, which shows that peasant farmers were quite willing to cooperate, and had in fact formed various self-help organizations in response to colonial exploitative policies (Osabu-We, 2000: 166-7). Rather, the issues involved in the villagization experiment were more complex and deep-seated (Jones, 1988: 58). It has been suggested for instance, that the failure of villagization can more appropriately be explained in terms of the fact that in its operation, the scheme did not seek a radical transformation of the existing colonial-oriented production structures. In effect, villagization did not seek to fundamentally restructure the rural economic base. Many collective villages were entirely integrated into the previous dependency pattern of the production of export crops. The consequence of this was that far from generating more surpluses out of the peasants, the scheme became a major drain on economic surplus (Raikes, 1975: 47). Thus, the great limitation of villagization was not that

it changed the existing modes of agricultural production, but rather that it did not change it radically enough.

However, it is clear that the Ujamaa villagization scheme, like the nationalization project was constrained by a number of limitations that cannot be explained away in terms of intrinsic attitudes or popular aversion to communal work. One plausible explanation for the failure of the villagization scheme, as indeed the entire socialist experiment, is the fact that the policy was rather too ambitious and optimistic about what could be done within a short span. Both the nationalized industrial sector and the collectivized agricultural sector were expected to usher almost immediate improvements. The high sounding aspirational rhetoric which ushered in the Arusha Declaration tended to create the impression that Ujamaa was the long-sought panacea which would provide the solution to the manifold economic problems of the post colonial state. Little attempt was made to drive home the hard reality that Ujamaa, like any other path to economic transformation was fraught with its fair share of difficulties and limitations. This, coupled with the fact that the implementation of Ujamaa was rather hasty, tended to create wide aspirational gaps between popular expectations and actual performance.

The policy of nationalization for example, sought an immediate break in all dependent or neocolonial links with Western capitalist interests. It took literally, the clarion call of the dependency theorists for Third World countries to "delink" from the capitalist world system (Wallerstein, 1961; Frank, 1979; Amin, 1990). Given the precarious state of the Tanzanian economy in 1967, this was a tall order and an ill-informed approach to the strategy of delinking. In a situation of fragile domestic resource base, an almost stagnant growth rate in domestic production and an international commodity pricing system over which it had no control, it made little sense for a country like Tanzania to abruptly severe crucial links with the "Western capitalist economies". Similarly, the villagization scheme would perhaps have been more acceptable to rural dwellers if its pace had been more moderate. A. M. Babu who was Tanzania's minister of economic planning for much of the Ujamaa period acknowledged this constraint many years later when he opined:

> That we failed to achieve those lofty objectives cannot be blamed on the Arusha Declaration or Ujamaa itself but rather on the mistaken order of priorities. What we should have tackled last was given top priority and what should have come first was consequently never attempted (Babu, 1991:31–34).

It has also been observed that the peasant farmers did not embrace the villagization scheme because its manner of implementation was out of tune with the social and cultural realities of the rural economy. According to

James Scott (1999: 239) "...the modern planned village in Tanzania was essentially a point-by-point negation of existing rural practice, which included shifting cultivation and pastorialism; polycropping; living well off the main roads; kinship and lineage authority; small scattered settlements with houses built higgledy-piggledy; and production that was dispersed and opaque to the state". Given the fact that Ujamaa was not only at variance with the prevailing realities, but equally negated the time tested ecological practice of the peasant farmers, they saw the scheme as not relevant to them. There are some evidence to support the point that Ujamaa failed partly because of its inadequate appreciation of the Tanzanian reality and the fact that it was more utopian than practical. To make this point however, is not to deny the legitimate intentions and aspirations that informed Ujamaa as a development strategy.

Beyond Failure: The Legacies of Ujamaa as a Development Paradigm

That two decades of nationalization and villagization neither helped to launch Tanzania into economic prosperity nor ensure its economic self-reliance is now hardly a matter for contention. What remains an issue of debate however is what broad interpretations can be made on the influence and legacy of Ujamaa as a development strategy. The quest for answer to this question has attracted the attention of several scholars who basically fall into two opposing schools of thought (Raikes, 1975; Ergas, 1980; Freyhold, 1979; Hyden, 1980; Coulson, 1985; Yeager, 1989; Green, 1995). The first argues that the Ujamaa policies were unmitigated failures and that under Nyerere, Tanzania's economic progress was distorted and resources wasted in the "slavish adherence to ideology", giving rise to a marginalized rural sector and a corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy (Nursey-Bray, 1980). It is thus concluded that Nyerere's idealism was detrimental to the country's development. Through his failed economic schemes, he left his country poorer than it would have been under less utopian-minded leadership. Proponents of the second school, while conceding that the economic achievements of Ujamaa were quite modest, point to significant successes in social welfare terms such as the provision of health and educational facilities; a movement towards greater social equality in income distribution; the maintenance of political stability and the achievement of a substantial degree of harmony between the country's ethnic groups. It is thus contended that quite apart from the criterion of economic performance, it is necessary to examine the extent of social progress, which attended Nyerere's development strategy (Legum and Mmari, eds., 1995; Pratt, 1999; Ishemo, 2000). These are issues worth addressing in any appraisal of Ujamaa as a development experiment.

Although Ujamaa can be described as a kind of state corporatism, the party-state system sought to mediate interests in such a way as to achieve the creation of a self-reliant socialist nation without the reliance on an elite vanguard group. While in certain instances state officials used coercive means to ensure the implementation of Ujamaa policies especially the villagization program, only the most sanguine Nyerere bashers would argue that he was a dictator. Indeed, Nyerere sought to institutionalize a relatively participatory political and social process from the early days of independence and throughout the transition to multi-partyism (Mutahaba and Okema, 1990; Landau, 1998: 5). In this regard, the villagization scheme, in spite of some of the abuses associated with its implementation process, was a harbinger of social welfare development. The Ujamaa villages were seen as the most important units for the provision of social resources to the majority of the people. Under the policy of education for self-reliance, these villages became very important centers for the promotion of literacy among both adults and children. By the early 1980s, even in the face of economic difficulties, Tanzania had one of the highest literacy rates in Africa with every village boasting of at least a primary school (Samoff, 1990). 90 per cent of these villages had at least one village cooperative store while over 60 per cent had relatively easy access to safe water supply, a health center or dispensary (*Africa Now*: December 1981: 58).Thus villagization provided a bridge in the gulf between urban and rural dwellers by ensuring the latter's access to basic social amenities.

In spite of the wide agreement on the failure of Nyerere's economic policies, several writers have identified Tanzania's most notable national achievement as its ability to create a strong sense of national identity among Tanzanians and in the advances made in terms of social welfare. Few sub Saharan African countries have achieved the level of national unification that Tanzania did under the leadership of Nyerere. Under Nyerere and his successor, Ali Hassan Mwiyi (1985-1995), the Tanzanian mainland was largely spared the ethnic and regionalist politics that have proved so dysfunctional in Kenya, so catastrophic in Rwanda and Burundi, and so prevalent throughout the rest of the continent (Landau, 1998: 4). Whether these social and political gains of the Ujamaa policy really adequately compensate for its economic shortcomings is open to debate. What is important, however, is to recognize the need to transcend the emphasis on purely economic and GDP criteria in evaluating the legacy of Ujamaa. The relative political stability, which Tanzania - unlike most of her neighbors - enjoyed during the Nyerere years, is one that cannot be appreciated in economic terms. Indeed, the legacy of stability which Nyerere's policies promoted in Tanzania has made the country to remain one of the most stable countries in Africa.

Where are the More Successful Alternatives?

If Nyerere's socialist experimentation was clearly not the answer to the development question in Africa, what are the alternatives? This is a question that many commentators on Nyerere's legacy in Tanzania have not sufficiently addressed. Some liberal critics who have addressed this question are wont to compare Tanzania's economic performance under Nyerere with that of neighboring Kenya. In the early 1960s the two countries were broadly similar in terms of living standards with Kenya perhaps only 10 per cent higher. Both countries relied on the export of agricultural goods mainly coffee, tea and sisal to pay for the importation of manufactured goods. But while with the Arusha Declaration in 1967, Tanzania began to organize its agriculture into collectives and nationalized its industries, Kenya continued with owner occupied small-scale farms and allowed much of its commerce, manufacturing, large farms and estates to remain in private hands. In the intervening years, Kenya's output grew more rapidly than Tanzania's by 50 per cent up to 1973 and 30 per cent faster over the decade between 1974 and 1984 (Nnoli, 1978: 375). This point has been advanced as a self-evident indication that a more liberal development strategy would have served Tanzania much better than Ujamaa. While these observations rightly underline some of the limitations of Ujamaa, this comparison fails to point out the fact that the economic situation of Kenya would have been just as bad as that of Tanzania were it not for the fact that Western countries and international financial institutions extended relatively generous aids to Kenya and Uganda during a period of general economic downturn in the region. In the case of Tanzania, they were reluctant to do likewise except under certain conditions, which Nyerere rejected on the grounds that they would mean abandoning Tanzania's socialist goals. In fact, as a way of teaching Tanzania a lesson and preventing other African countries from following her example, Western countries and the international financial institutions which they controlled, were bent on ensuring the failure of Ujamaa.

Nevertheless, faced with crippling economic difficulties in the mid 1970s, Tanzania was forced to resort to the IMF. By 1977, Tanzania had become heavily indebted to the IMF, which began to prescribe, as a condition for further loans, the liberalization of the national economy, the devaluation of the national currency, the lifting of price control and cuts in government expenditure. Nyerere was particularly concerned about the implications of the IMF's prescriptions to reduce expenditure and raise taxes, for Tanzania's political and social stability. He argued that "there is a limit to which taxes can be raised without forcing the people into the streets and the soldiers out of the barracks" (*Africa*, June 1984: 13-14). Even though by the 1980s, Tanzania had been forced by crippling economic difficulties to adopt most

of the IMF conditionalities, Nyerere remained skeptical about the viability of the IMF'S neo-liberal option. In 1983, he insisted rather defiantly that:

> The IMF goes out and makes conditions and says, "if you follow these examples, your economy will improve". But where are the examples of economies booming in the Third World because they accepted the conditions of the IMF?...The IMF may be economic experts but I am an expert in my own country! (*Africa*, June 1983: 73).

These concerns, which Nyerere expressed two decades ago, have become even more pertinent today.

The two nations – Cote d'Ivoire and Kenya – whose liberal pro-farmer, pro-export policies have been most enthusiastically applauded by the free marketers have lost much of their luster in recent years. The Cote d'Ivoire "miracle" now appears quite unmiraculous. Its 'success' was based on temporary favourable export markets, the sale of non-renewable resources like hardwoods, and on the same ponderous alliances of state and multinational enterprises that have elsewhere fostered spurts of economic growth without creating a web of internal linkages capable of sustaining and deepening that growth. By the early 1990s, the depression in the Ivorian economy led to widespread unrest that underscored the thin veneer of stable political and economic structures in an export-oriented regime (Cooper, 1997: 189). In 1999 a military coup shattered the country's fragile democratic arrangement that had become shaky even before the death of Houphouet-Boigny in 1993. The current paralyzing social and political instability in Cote d'Ivoire is partly attributable to the depressed state of the country's economy. The case of Kenyan "exceptionalism" has also weakened, as the neo-liberal economic policies have fostered increased mass misery while worsening the development crisis. Indeed recent studies have shown that the IMF and World Bank-inspired SAPs have wreaked so much poverty, misery and instability on the African continent, that they constitute a dead-end for Africa's development (Dibua, 1998: 119-130; 2003: 509-529; Founou-Tchuigoua, 1996: 5–24).

The increasing challenge to the neo-liberal capitalist paradigm is not peculiar to Africa. Recent developments in post-cold war expansion of global capitalism, particularly in Asia and Eastern Europe have also lent impetus to new critical lines of thought in the assessment of the neo-liberal development paradigm. The crisis of neo-liberal market reforms in Russia and parts of Asia have become reference points for varied reinterpretations and reassessments of global capitalism and the challenges it poses for transiting national economies. These developments provide Africanist scholars with new empirical grounds for a comparative re-evaluation of the legacies of the IMF and World Bank-inspired neo-liberal economic policies which for

so long has been seen as the most viable development option for the continent. As Manfred Bienefeld puts it:

> The disastrous impact of the neoliberal adjustment policies in Eastern Europe is a *graphic reminder* of the centrifugal forces unleashed by their reckless adoption or imposition under inappropriate circumstances... Africa bares the scars of the same error of judgment (Bienefeld, 1998).

It is noteworthy that even traditional proponents of global capitalism and the neo-liberal model have begun to rethink the relevance of the neo-liberal paradigm for economic development in the Third World. World Bank Economist, Jeffery Sachs, once a leading advocate of the Eastern Europe's "big bang" approach, has made some revisionist, or at least "moderating" arguments with regard to the neo-liberal agenda. Sachs has recently argued that, from a global perspective, liberalization might be defended not as in the interest of the initiating country, but rather in the interest of the rest of the world. He concedes that to the extent that such external factors are the real motivation for the pressures for liberalization, "it makes little sense for poor countries in dire economic difficulties to make rapid structural changes on behalf of the rest of the world" (Sachs, 1987).

What flows from the discussion in this section is that the much vaunted, neo-liberal economic policies do not constitute suitable alternative to Nyerere's Ujamaa. As will be shown later, there are some aspects of the Ujamaa philosophy that are pertinent to any quest for meaningful development in Africa. But before discussing this issue, we will briefly examine a common shortcoming of all development policies that have been prescribed for Africa. In certain respects, the Ujamaa was equally guilty of this shortcoming. The shortcoming is the pervading emphasis on developmentalism.[1]

The Fallacy of Developmentalism

James Ferguson in his incisive work on the failure of the development project in Lesotho analyzes the theoretical and institutional framework within which development projects in Africa are shaped. He reveals that in spite of all the "expertise" that go into formulating development projects, they nonetheless often demonstrate a startling ignorance of the historical and political realities of the locale they are intended to help. Drawing on Foucault's treatise on language, power and knowledge, Ferguson argues that "development" institutions generate their own forms of discourse, and this discourse simultaneously constructs the locality as a particular kind of knowledge, and creates a structure of knowledge around the object. Interventions are then organized on the basis of this structure of knowledge, which in the first place has not adequately conceptualized the development project. Other significant defects of this process, include the expansion of

bureaucratic power side by side the projection of a representation of the economic and social life that denies "politics". The development project thus becomes an "anti-politics machine" whisking political realities out of sight and all the while performing, almost unnoticed, its own preeminently political operation of strengthening the state's presence in the local region (Ferguson, 1994: xv).

The failure of Ujamaa can, in the same way be appraised in the light of this fallacy of the development discourse – of both neo-liberal and socialist persuasion - which swept across post independence Africa in the 1960s and 70s. Both liberal and Marxist/dependency discourses on development were caught in the same discursive field and patterns of knowledge which objectified African peasants and rural dwellers as hapless victims of underdevelopment who needed to be emancipated to higher levels of social and material well being. Oftentimes, these were visions and images – completely at odds with historical and prevailing realities – constructed and maintained to justify development interventions. Nyerere, like earlier modernists, assumed that the "conservatism" of the Tanzanian peasantry was an obstacle to development that should be overcome at all cost. It could not be accepted that, perhaps, the peasants' customary forms of herding and crop rotation were time-tested adaptations to the ecological and technological conditions of the country (Richards, 1985). For Nyerere, larger villages were means of bringing the people under the purview of a central government so that they could be provided with social amenities and to also enable the government control them politically. The villages were to serve as an "aesthetic" conduit for modernization.

James Scott (1999: 223–261) has identified such "high modernist aesthetic" as underlying many of the ruinous or bloody social experiments of the twentieth century. Scott describes these errors of construct as "tragic episodes" of state development informed by "high modernism". Such high modernism has three elements. The first is a weakened civil society "that lacks the capacity to resist these plans". The second, an unrestrained use of "the power of the modern state as an instrument" for achieving change. The final, an "aspiration to the administrative ordering of nature and society, raised to a comprehensive and ambitious level".

Nyerere's Legacy: Any Relevance for Socio-Economic Reconstruction in Africa?

It has become quite common to find writers who argue that the only lessons, which Ujamaa provides for the rest of Africa and the developing world, are negative lessons of how not to succeed.[2] Yet, many also concede that in spite of its acknowledged shortcomings, Ujamaa provides significant lessons for future attempts at economic development in the continent

(Legum and Mmari, eds., 1995; Ishemo, 2000). This becomes even more significant when viewed against the background of the long-standing debate as to where the structural issues involved in Africa's economic underdevelopment are to be located and the quest for development agenda for the future. Many liberal writers within and outside the continent continue to argue that free trade and export orientation provide the best prospects for economic growth and development in the continent. The classic rags to riches cases of the newly industrialized Asian economies of Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore are projected as examples of the success of liberalization and rapid export induced economic growth. It is argued that even in African countries, primary agricultural export production, sustained by international finance capital can lead ultimately to economic diversification and transformation (Baregu, 1988).

On the other hand, neo-Marxist scholars contend that the development of a home market or a national economy in African countries is a *sine qua non* for sustained economic growth. It is argued that the current trend towards economic globalization will only serve to further undermine the role of African economies in the international capitalist system since economic globalization or the new world order is not in a position to provide a solution to the problem of Africa's underdevelopment (Onimode, 1988; Biersteker, 1992). The logical and historically necessary solution therefore is for African regimes to rethink the IMF and World Bank economic liberalization agenda that swept across the continent in the form of Structural Adjustment Programs in the 1970s and 1980s. African regimes are urged to resist the currents of globalization that threatens to suck them into the international economy at an even more marginal and dependent level.[3]

It is within the context of this rather bleak economic reality that currently confronts the African continent and the quest for a way out of the conundrum, that Nyerere's legacy bears renewed relevance. In post-cold war Africa which has witnessed the collapse of Marxist Socialism and an increasing indictment of the prevalent neo-liberal development ideology, the need for alternatives which draw from universal ideals but are yet grounded in indigenous realities and aspirations, makes Nyerere's Ujamaa relevant. As Stoger-Eising rightly notes: "(f)or Africa's future the indigenous elements in Nyerere's thought are, nevertheless, of great potential significance" (Stoger-Eising, 2000: 140). This time though, not necessarily as a derivative of orthodox Marxism of Maoist socialism, (as Nyerere himself may have construed it), but as a legitimate quest to find a third way in the face of the failure and irrelevance of the two dominant imported development paradigms. This quest for an African way, which neither denies the appeal of universals nor rejects local exigencies, but builds on local inventiveness, is the challenge that currently confronts the development project in Africa. It

was a challenge to which Nyerere was so acutely conscious and responsive. It is from this perspective that we can understand Ujamaa's emphasis on self-reliance and non-exploitative development.

Paul Richards has pointed out that Africa possesses a history of self-reliance and inventiveness from which it can tap to meet current development challenges. Richards therefore asks, "could not inventive self-reliance" be turned into a resource for economic growth rather than obstacle to economic control? (Richards, 1985: 16). The answer to this question is obviously an affirmative one. Yet, Africa's own inventiveness – the energy devoted to making something out of very little, to finding new uses and new meanings for local resources and imported goods and practices – remains the least tried approach to economic advance (Cooper, 1997: 193). It is in this regard that Nyerere's legacy of self-reliance, inspired as it was by local exigencies, may prove most relevant. It provides an alternative and more realistic Afrocentric strategy for Africa.

In 1989, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) produced a report criticizing adjustment programmes in Africa and provided what it called an "African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programs for Socioeconomic Recovery and Transformation" (AAF-SAP). The report stated that, "the overall assessment of the Structural Adjustment Programs has led to the conclusion that, although these programs aimed at restoring growth through the achievement of fiscal balances and the free play of market forces, these objectives cannot be achieved without addressing the fundamental structural bottlenecks of African economies" (UNECA, 1989). The frustration with the failure of IMF and World Bank-inspired neo-liberal development was further demonstrated with the unanimous adoption by the United Nations General Assembly, of the *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation,* in 1990.[4] The charter called for the encouragement of increased participation of community groups and individuals in the design and evaluation of development projects. Even the World Bank in an attempt to appropriate this increasing emphasis on an endogenous self-reliant development strategy, purportedly indicated its agreement with the policy through a half-hearted and diversionary commitment to community centered and populist policies of development in Africa in its 1989 and 1994 reports (World Bank, 1989; 1994). Even then, the quest for alternative development paradigms that strikes the delicate balance between the universal and the particular has not been limited to Africa. Within the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), the new thinking has been towards a strategy of "neo-structuralism". Moving away from the import substitution industrialization model, which it advanced in the 1940s and 1950s, the ECLA has begun, in recent years, to set itself apart from both the import substitution industrialization model and neo-liberalism. The new

approach is towards a policy of *desarrollo desde dentro* (development from within) or what has been described as the "integrated approach" (Osvaldo, 1991, quoted in Sikkink, 1997). The ECLA now stresses the problem of poverty in the region and the importance of finding a development strategy that increases equity while leading to growth. It emphasizes that growth, social equity and democracy can be compatible.

In order to promote growth with equity, the ECLA supports the general move in the direction of trade liberalization, competitive exchange and export promotion, while still advocating a more central role for the state in the directing of economic policy. The goal is neither to return to the rigid protectionism that had underlined orthodox ECLA thought, nor embrace economic openness *per se*. Rather it is to achieve competitiveness – a competitiveness that requires the deliberate and systematic incorporation of technical progress (Sikkink, 1997). By this approach, the ECLA seeks to correct both what it saw as the main errors of the import substitution approach and of neo-liberalism. This ECLA initiative, together with the ECA's African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programs (AAF-SAP) in some ways, reflect the same kind of aspiration towards inward-oriented development which Nyerere's Ujamaa emphasized. This aspiration can provide a starting point for the quest for viable alternatives to the crass liberalism or protectionism of earlier development paradigms.

Conclusion

It would be wrong to write a history of the Ujamaa experience in Tanzania purely in terms of its extremities whether in terms of the dependency theory, which explains underdevelopment simply in terms of the loss of surplus in the colonial and neo colonial economy or solely in terms of what it failed to achieve in economic terms. There is also hardly any practical use for a reconstruction of Ujamaa, which seeks to romanticize Nyerere's legacies and reconstruct a history of Tanzania around a biography of him.[5] There is a need for a deconstruction of Ujamaa, which goes beyond these binary frameworks. Such deconstruction must seek to interrogate Ujamaa not only as a political ideology but also within the context of the varied objectives and aspirations, which informed it. Ujamaa was also conceived as a development strategy, a path to social equity and distributive justice based on a self-reliant development strategy. Unfortunately the emphasis on the politico-ideological and economic dimensions of Ujamaa has obscured these aspects of the experiment. Given the current developmental challenges in the continent, there is a need to go beyond "Africa bashing" to constructively interrogate previous developmental experiments like Nyerere's Ujamaa and ask what lessons they hold for the quest for socio-economic development in the continent.

Notes

1. In certain respects, the Ujamaa policy fell into the same trap of previous development paradigm, which objectified Third World peoples and practices as backward and pre-modern. Development was therefore seen mainly in terms of applying more "modern" Western economic and social models to local situations. In most cases, scant attention was paid to the historical, cultural and social peculiarities of local contexts. For an excellent treatment of this theme see the critique of mainstream development theories by alternative development theorists like Jonathan Crush (1995), and Arturo Escobar, (1995).
2. Johnson describes the continued popularity of Nyerere among Tanzanians and Africans generally in spite of his "economic failures" as a "myopic vision" sustained by the continent's desperate need for heroes. According to him, there are two primary reasons for this. "First, Africa badly needs its own heroes. Too many leaders have turned out to be grave disappointments, and some have been monsters. It needs not just heroes but saints and martyrs if it is to restore its belief in itself. And there are not too many candidates for sainthood apart from Nyerere. Second, African independence and resistance to white minority rule has involved an enormous act of assertion by peoples and individuals, many of whom have been deeply damaged by what they have endured. The miseries and mistakes of the independence era lie heavily upon the continent and on the black diaspora – and they threaten to squash that collective self-assertion. Celebrating Nyerere is a short-term way of keeping that self-assertion alive, though its long-term dangers are obvious. For what Africa needs above all is honesty about itself, its mistakes, its history-and even about its great men" (Johnson, 2000: 66–75).
3. For an incisive study on the main currents of post-Marxist discourse on developmentalism, see Stuart Corbridge (1990).
4. The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and transformation was adopted in Arusha, Tanzania, in 1990, at the end of the International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa. The conference was a collaborative effort between African people's organizations, African governments and United Nations agencies in the search for a collective understanding of the role of popular participation in the development and transformation of the region.
5. Cranford Pratt's (1976) study of socialism in Tanzania has been particularly accused of presenting Nyerere as a far-sighted superman who can do little that is wrong. Colin Legum and Geoffrey Mmari's more recent work have also been criticized for presenting only "the stereotypical simplicity of Nyerere as Mwalimu (teacher), but not his complexity as a political leader whose failed economic schemes and misguided crushing of Tanzania's entrepreneurs have probably left his country poorer today than it would have been under less utopian-minded leadership" (Gerhart, 1997).

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