

Critical evaluation of african socialism, with regards to ujamaa policies assignm...



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In 1960s when African states gain independence, many leaders felt that they can not celebrate their victory if they continue using the economic-political system that has been established by colonizers such as capitalism. They perceived capitalism as the bearer of social inequalities, and ignorance that exists within societies. They wanted a unique economic and political system with no resemblance of outside influence. African Socialism was then a unique political ideology and identity of Africa.

Julius Nyerere was one of the leading proponents of African socialism “ African traditional way of life” (Hyden, 1980: 200). African socialism as an ideology has its own successes and also its own criticism. Therefore, this essay will critically evaluate African socialism with the reference to Ujamaa policies of Tanzania. Tanzania for many years after 1967 has been referred to as a socialist country due to its commitment to socialist ideology and has put African socialism into practice. African socialism was very good ideology for development in theory.

Thus, in practice it failed to deliver its objectives because of mismanagement associated with the lack of proper planning, lack of understanding and acceptance of some policies of African socialism, bureaucracy created contradictions, problems and poverty, inequality, non democratic, dependency increased. African socialism is the ideology with the belief of sharing economic resources in African traditional way. African socialism can be considered as the response to the colonization. This means that African socialism was the condemnation to colonialism and embracement of African traditional life with the basis of extended family.

Main features of African socialism were to sustain political democracy and mutual responsibility to end poverty, inequalities, create a classless, egalitarian and self-relied, united and developed society and unity. African leaders believed that traditional political democracy will eliminates the accumulation of power through economic domination and enforce mutual responsibility with equal labor and distribution of wealth. Thus the principle beneath socialism was the renewal of the continent through the preservation and utilization of tradition to advance society and establish humanitarian principles (Kotze, 1983: 74).

African socialism like all ideologies has its own successes and its shortcomings as well. It was a good ideology that embraced African perspective on political and economic matters. It provided Africans with autonomy to do thing in their own ways without the outside intervention which normally suppress African policies and ideologies over their own. Although African socialism was created as the response to African underdevelopment, thus it has been unsuccessful to assist African countries escape their underdevelopment associated with humanitarian, suppression, human rights abuse that they were facing during the colonial era.

It has not provided them with the explicit and sustainable plans for development. This is mostly the case of reality that although political independence was obtained, the same cannot be claimed about economic independence (Kotze, 1983: 84). Meaning that although African socialism is based on economic growth it has however, failed to free African states from their dependence on foreign aid. For many years after 1967 Tanzania was

regarded as the main country that was committed to socialist principles and has put African socialism into practice.

Yet today Tanzania is one of the most poorest countries in the world and it is in need for an international financial support. There has been the move from socialism to capitalism because they have realized that it does not help them. Ujamaa was at the heart of Nyerere and Tanzanian political thought. Ujamaa is the Swahili name refers to familyhood. It expresses the strong sense of similar spirit, belonging and shared responsibilities with the culture of sharing. There are many features of Ujamaa namely: democracy, human rights, egalitarian, education for self-reliance etc (Cameron 2007: 130).

Ujamaa is based on Arusha declaration of 1967 the first political effort to fight the accumulation of capital resources in hands of elites which ends in class divisions and struggles. Nyerere proposed three important assumptions beneath traditional Ujamaa living: the recognition and respect of one another, common ownership and the elimination of class divisions (Cameron 2007: 130-132). African socialism failed to deliver its promises and saved people from the aftermaths of colonialism. Many African leaders failed to put in practice policies that they preached during the African socialism adoption, they also lacked proper planning.

Therefore, African socialism seemed as the mislaid philosophy idealism, worthless development with broken political promises which contained so many contradictions that then hindered its successfulness. Ujamaa policies shared the same basis and fallacy of development that has propelled and inhibited successive development initiative in Africa. This is objectification of

African peasants and rural settlers as the hopeless sufferers of colonial era who were supposed to be lifted to higher levels of social and material well being.

Thus, Ujamaa's dedication to modernization paradigm ended in a condition where improving well being of peasants perceived as alienating them from their cultural and social realities to the reinvented colonial practices (Cameron, 2007: 116). The main problem of African socialism was the contradictions that African leaders make when it comes to the practice of African socialism policies. They seem to talk right while walking left e. g. they preached democracy but practice autocracy.

African socialism policies failed due to the absence of comprehensive planning, proper management and democratic planning. Ujamaa's main principle was to uphold democracy for all thus when it comes to practice Nyerere did not plan on how he was going to deal with those people who were not willing to accept Ujamaa policies. There is a contradicting practice to Nyerere's declaration of 1967 and 1968 that Ujamaa was going to be voluntary thus what happened in practice it tend to be an opposite of this declaration (Coulson, 1982: 2).

From 1972 onwards when the implementation of Ujamaa villages was slow and people not willing to join the developed villages it then characterized by bureaucratic high-handedness who were no longer worried about the communalization but they were concerned with the compulsory settlement of peasants. The enlistment of rural settlement was the still the main aim but the strategy of mobilization was no longer the same (it was non-voluntary)

(Von Freyhold, 1979: 28). People were forcefully moved from their homes with the intimidation of burning their home and beatings etc.

This was totally against African socialism principles of democracy and the protection human rights. Freedom of expression was eliminated, strikes were prohibited which prevented people from expressing their feelings and opinions and Tanzania become a country with large political prisoners (Coulson, 1982: 2). Therefore, the involuntary move and bad treatment of people in Tanzania alienated African socialism from peasants it vowed to save from colonialism and neo-colonialism bondages. Furthermore, African socialism failed to uphold its principle of mutual responsibility.

The lack of proper planning when it comes to informing, distribution and sharing of the wealth contributed to the failures of African socialism. In Tanzania the development in villages did not become Ujamaa as Nyerere hoped. Nyerere 1965-67: 6 argue that " there will be no masters who sit in idleness while others labor in their farms or in their factories. Nor there will be no too great degree of inequality between the incomes of different members of society. " However, he did not address the question that one might ask about how to deal with those who are lazy yet share equal amount of the income of which negatively affected Ujamaa success.

Many village residents were not happy with the planning and state supplies. In general residents were not informed about the income and expenditure. Chairman made withdrawals in the village funds without the permission of the financial committees. There was no plan on how the income will be shared to Ujamaa workers between those who are committed and those who

come late and leave at the same time as those who arrived early with no records of attendance (Coulson, 1982: 246). This clearly discouraged people from participating in Ujamaa and focused more on their private gain because nobody wants to work while others are free riders.

African socialism intended to create self-relied states and democratic socialism however, the ideology beneath African socialism lacked clearly established systematic focus in the linkages between agriculture and industry. What has been witnessed is the abandonment of industry and too much focus in agriculture of which it was too political focus without advance technology. That created the biased economy of which is wrong. State cannot heavily rely on one production which is agriculture. If the agricultural production collapse also the country's economy collapses.

Nyerere argued that Tanzania will develop through farming not industry for which there is no sufficient funds and skilled people to make it useful and economical (Duggan and Civile, 1976: 202). Furthermore, Ujamaa policies failed to take into consideration the variety of geographical and geological conditions in different areas and also local differences in the basically similar structure. They moved people from the land that they have known for a long time into unknown land some of it is not suitable for both farming and residing.

This seems as if Nyerere and his officials have taken away the personal freedoms, private incentives and individual rewards that are essential to an advanced and prosperous and democratic society (Hyden, 1980: 101). All of the above is the elements that encourage people to work hard so that they

can be able to sustain themselves. African socialism proponents argued that there could be no permanently unemployed people, but technological changes will be accumulated as well as the economic flexibility will be adopted.

However, there was no suggestion to recruit and train political cadre specifically appropriate for this move, most of the task of persuading peasants was entrusted the administrators and staff who has been previously in charge under colonial era (Von Freyhold, 1979: 53). Then the question is how people can trust the officials from the regime that negatively affected them. This made people even more reluctant some fearing that it might be the socialism with the colonialism face (Von Freyhold, 1979: 30).

Many African countries that claimed to be socialist were characterized by a explicit bureaucratization, both in public and private conspicuous urban consumption of salary structure, “ inherited from colonial era that have only marginally reformed Tanzania after the Arusha declaration being the exception and by a tilting resources towards an increasing consumption middle class (Nyerere 1965-67: 1)”. This resulted to the absence of common acceptance and understanding of the broad commitment to socialism (Nyerere 1965-67: 1).

To conclude this essay has critically evaluated African socialism with the reference to Ujamaa policies. African socialism was indeed very good ideology in theory and if African leaders implement it properly it could have been able to uplift Africa from underdevelopment to a very developed advanced independent continent. Thus they lacked proper understanding of

the demands of African socialism and ended up doing the opposite of what they have planned which bring them down to the position of dependency and underdevelopment. Reference 1. Coulson, A. (1982) Tanzania: Political Economy: O.

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