Nyerere: Nationalism and Post-Colonial Developmentalism

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Introduction

One of the ideals of Pan-Africanism was to unite a fragmented Africa, not only geographically and politically, but also intellectually and economically. This was an ideal that Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere (1922-1999), though he appeared sceptical at some times, fought so hard to realise. From the very beginning of independence, Nyerere was against the idea of the balkanisation of Africa, i.e. a fragmented Africa that was comprised of too many and too small states. The first creed of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) (a political movement initiated by Nyerere in 1954) Creed stated: ‘All men are equal, and Africa is one’, and its first part was ‘All human beings are equal’. In the 1961 Second Conference of Independent African States, Nyerere stated that struggles for independence were at the same time struggles for the rehabilitation of the African personality, which depended on the unity of Africa, ‘not only in sentiment but in fact’. Accordingly, ‘We know that a balkanised Africa however loudly it might proclaim its independence and all that, will in fact be an easy prey to the forces of neo-imperialism’ (Neo-colonialism 1962: 111). Mwalimu Nyerere had ridiculed the existing African boundaries in 1962 as ‘ethnographical and geographical nonsense’. He held the view that: ‘It is impossible to draw a line anywhere on the map of Africa which does not violate the history or future needs of the people’.¹

As one of the founders of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 and a staunch fighter for her unity, he made Tanzania the headquarters of the liberation movements. A committed Pan-Africanist, Nyerere provided a home for a number of African liberation movements including the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC) of South Africa, FRELIMO of Mozambique, ZANU of Zimbabwe, MPLA of Angola, SWAPO of Namibia, etc. Under a head of state who valued equal rights, justice and development more than the pomp and power of office, Tanzania was at the heart of the anti-colonial struggle. Right from 1961, Tanzania (then Tanganyika) was in the forefront in the campaigns against apartheid in South Africa – in the UN and Commonwealth meetings. When Tanganyika cut off links with South Africa in the same year as part of sanctions against apartheid, it
lost an annual income of USD 500,000. The action also resulted in the decline of the mining industry, which was by then intimately linked to South Africa. Tanzania, a poor country by world standards, supported materially and otherwise liberation struggles even when many African countries, since 1966, shirked their duty of contributing to the OAU Liberation Fund.

Tanzania, besides hosting the freedom fighters, by 1970s had become a safe haven to US civil-rights activists, including the Black Panther party, the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, and Vietnam War resisters. The University of Dar es Salaam during the same period had become the centre for the guerrilla-intellectuals and activists of African liberation movements. As a champion of Academic Freedom, Nyerere was cautious enough not to impose his ideologies on the intellectual community at the University of Dar es Salaam. He asserted that this University ‘has not been founded to turn out intellectual apes whether of the Right or of the Left’. The students of this University, he insisted, ‘must be allowed, and indeed expected, to challenge orthodox thinking on scientific and other aspects of knowledge’. This attitude, which was accompanied by his willingness to harbour various exiled intellectuals from other African countries and the African Diaspora, fostered the creation of one of the most progressive Pan-African intellectual communities in Africa—the University of Dar es Salaam of the 1970s. It was in this university that the late Guyanese Walter Rodney conceived and wrote his seminal and by now classic Pan-African book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

Between 17 and 19 June 1974, Nyerere hosted delegations representing independent states in Africa and the Caribbean, liberation movements, and communities of people of African descent in North America, Latin America, Britain and the Pacific at the University of Dar es Salaam’s Nkrumah Hall for the Sixth Pan-African Congress (*Sixth Pan-African Congress: Resolutions and Selected Speeches 1976*). The Congress, according to Nyerere, was being held for the purpose of discussing the ‘means, and further, the progress, of opposition to racism, colonialism, oppression and exploitation everywhere...[with] special reference to [the African] experience past and present...[within] the context of a worldwide movement for human equality and national self-determination’. The reference to racismism was specifically to those countries that were still under the colonial yoke, such as Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Djibouti, Sahara, South Africa and Guinea Bissau. He continued:

For despite all that remains to be done, our struggle against colonialism and racism has made great progress since 1945. Political independence is a fact for large areas of Africa and the Caribbean. Colonialism has begun its journey out of life and into the museums of history. We now have to recognize that an end to colonialism is not an end to the oppression of man, even if it means an end to oppression based solely on colour. And now we have to work against oppression by the leaders of those countries which have recently attained freedom, whether this is directed against other black men and women, or against people of different races.
Economically, he pointed out, African countries and other underdeveloped countries had been slow in making progress, because of oppressive and exploitative systems (trade and monetary) nationally and internationally. The Congress was, accordingly dealing with oppression and exploitation over most parts of the globe.

Even though a staunch Pan-Africanist, Nyerere is the one who was responsible for moving the resolution of 1964 in Cairo, which proposed that Africa must respect the borders which were inherited from colonialism. The only countries which rejected that resolution were Morocco and Somalia. He had decided to move the motion because an American missionary from Kenya had approached him in 1960, asking him that the moment Tanganyika became independent, the section of the Maasai in Kenya should become part of Tanganyika. Then in early 1962, Dr Kamuzu Banda had approached Nyerere with some old atlases, claiming that there is no such a thing as Mozambique, since it was supposed to be part of Nyasaland; that the other is part of Southern Rhodesia; the southern part is part of Swaziland; and the Makonde part in the North is part of Tanganyika. At the same, in 1962 and 1963, Ethiopia and Somalia were at war over the Ogaden; Somalia also wanted a part of northern Kenya.

What happened to the nationalist and Pan-Africanist ideals in Tanzania and Africa in general? In this paper, we discuss Mwalimu Nyerere as an intellectual in the context of nationalism and Pan-Africanism, taking into account the history of the Pan-African movement and its strengths and contradictions of which he was part. Among the questions that we set out to answer are: what were the ideals of nationalism and Pan-Africanism? To what extent was Mwalimu Nyerere true to those ideals historically? What role did he play in shaping them? What can we learn from him as an intellectual and a leader in the contemporary times? Does nationalism and Pan-Africanism have a role to play in the current and future conjuncture in Africa? If it has, what is the role of the intellectual in the remoulding and reshaping emancipatory ideas in the struggle for the emancipation of the African people?

**Nyerere’s Intellectual and Political Background**

Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere was born on April 13, 1922 in Butiama, on the eastern shore of Lake Victoria in Tanganyika. He started school at the age of 12 and he had to walk 26 miles to Musoma, a small town on the lake to do so. He later went to Tabora Government School (then known as the Eton of Tanganyika) for secondary education. He trained as a teacher at Makerere (Uganda) where by 1943 he had become increasingly transformed politically. World War II and what it was fought for—democracy and freedom—had transformed the thinking of many people in Africa, including Nyerere. While at Makerere, he had founded the Tanganyika African Welfare Association. Its main purpose was not political or anti-colonial, but it
aimed at fighting for the improvement of the lives of Africans. In 1944, Nyerere wrote ‘The Freedom of Women’, after being influenced by the ideas of John Stuart Mill, who had written about the subjugation of women.

In an interview with Ikaweba Bunting in 1998 for the New Internationalist Magazine, issue 309 January-February 1999, Nyerere considered that it was with the writing of this essay that he began to move towards the idea of freedom theoretically, even though he was still in the mindset of improving the lives and welfare of Africans. Nyerere’s ideas strongly influenced a Pan-African student movement known as the Makerere College Political Society which was founded in 1953. This movement’s journal known as Politica went on to publish a draft constitution for an East and Central African Federation. It is interesting to note that the founders of this movement, such Kanyama Chiune, Mwai Kibaki (the current president of Kenya) and Joseph Mathenge, were to later enter politics and work hand in hand with Nyerere in the consolidation of the Pan-African Movement for East and Central Africa (PAFMECA).7

After Makerere, Nyerere went back to Tabora and took up a teaching post. He then went to Edinburgh University in 1949 for his Master of Arts. Initially, he was sponsored to go and study science subjects, which he had taken at Makerere and taught at Tabora. But he refused to do so, instead opting for history, philosophy and economics. The colonial office was opposed to this choice. Therefore he was compelled to go to Aberdeen for six months to study English before joining Edinburgh University. Behind his decision to change his subjects were two major events, namely the attainment of independence by India in 1947 and the release of Kwame Nkrumah from prison in 1949. Indian independence had shaken the British Empire. Gandhi’s forms of struggles and that victory became a source of inspiration for many freedom fighters.

Nyerere told Ikaweba Bunting that it was events in Ghana in 1949 that ‘fundamentally changed my attitude. When Kwame Nkrumah was released from prison this produced a transformation. I was in Britain and oh you could see it in the Ghanaians! They became different human beings, different from all the rest of us! This thing of freedom began growing inside all of us. Ghana became independent six years later. Under the influence of these events, while at university in Britain, I made up my mind to be a full-time political activist when I went back home’. It was while he was in Edinburgh that Nyerere, partly through his encounter with Fabian socialist ideas, began to develop his ideas of socialism within the context of Africa.

On his return to Tanganyika, Nyerere immediately linked up with the Tanganyika African Association (TAA), which was fundamentally an elitist urban association of Africans. He helped transform it into a political party – Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) – in 1954. In 1958, he called the first conference, and was one of the founders, of PAFMECA in Mwanza, Tanganyika. The first item on its agenda, as Cox (1964) notes, was the promotion of Pan-Africanism. Nyerere stressed the importance of its spirit and
urged that all Africans in East and Central Africa should unite under one militant organisation. It is not surprising then that PAFMECA’s first aim was to ‘foster the spirit of Pan-Africanism in order to rid East and Central African territories of imperialism, white supremacy, economic exploitation, and social degradation, by stepped-up nationalist activities to attain self-government and establish parliamentary democracy’.  

It should be noted that PAFMECA was formed shortly before the meeting of the first All African People’s Organisation (AAPO) of December 1958 in Accra, Ghana. It was a grouping of political parties in Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda, Nyasaland (now Malawi), Northern and Southern Rhodesia (now Zambia and Zimbabwe) and Zanzibar. In the Mwanza conference there were also representatives from Rwanda-Burundi, Mozambique, Congo Kinshasa and South Africa. Sad to say, the very borders that Nyerere was to ridicule as ‘ethnographical and geographical nonsense’ proved to be a barrier to the Rhodesian delegation, and it could not attend the conference. Besides Nyerere, another prominent leader in this movement was Tom Mboya of Kenya, while Jomo Kenyatta, who had been part of the fifth Pan-Pan African Congress, which was held in Manchester in 1945, was recognised as the natural leader even though he was in prison.

PAFMECA’s policy stood for the promotion of African unity through stages, starting with the consolidation of regional associations. This organisation was the only effective regional political organisation in Africa at the time which was able to achieve unanimity on major issues such as the need for a regional federation for East and Central Africa.

The AAPO conference held in December 1958, resolved that Africa must unite. In its resolutions, it categorically stated that ‘the bulk of the African continent has been carved out arbitrarily to the detriment of the indigenous African peoples by European Imperialists...’; that ‘the great masses of the African peoples are animated by a desire for unity’; the latter would be ‘vital to the independence of its component units and essential to the security and the general well-being of African peoples’. The resolution further stated that ‘the existence of separate states in Africa is fraught with dangers of exposure to imperialist intrigues and of resurgence of colonialism even after their attainment of independence, unless there is unity among them’. It endorsed the Pan-Africanist desire of unity and called upon independent African states to work towards the evolution and attainment of an African Commonwealth.

At AAPO and other Pan-African conferences, the members of the organisation came out with one voice. Nyerere hoped that the regional federation within East Africa would take place before independence – that is before all territories achieved their separate independence. He was quite willing to postpone the independence of Tanganyika if that would facilitate the federation of East Africa. This did not materialise. He entered the Legislative Council in 1958 and became chief minister in 1960. According to Nyerere, as he was to
inform Bunting (ibid), ‘I respected Jomo (Kenyatta) immensely. It has probably never happened before in history. Two heads of state, Milton Obote [Uganda’s leader] and I, went to Jomo and said to him: “let’s unite our countries and you be our head of state”. He said no. I think he said no because it would have put him out of his element as a Kikuyu Elder’.

Tanganyika was granted internal self-government and Nyerere became Prime Minister. Tanganyika gained full independence in December 1961. Nyerere served as Prime Minister for six weeks after Tanganyika’s independence, and resigned in order to be with the people and build the party that would serve their interests. He was elected President in 1962, when the country became a Republic. Tanganyika and Zanzibar united in 1964 to form the United Republic of Tanzania. This is the only surviving union in Africa so far since 1884, despite all the problems over the years. In 1967, he proclaimed the famous Arusha Declaration of Ujamaa, a vision for building an egalitarian and self-reliant Tanzania.

Nyerere facilitated the removal of the murderous regime of fascist Idi Amin in 1979, while the so-called democratic free world had not only supported Amin, but remained indifferent when he slaughtered the Ugandans, and could not even support the war. The costs of the war to remove Amin amounted to USD 500 million. Tanzania paid for this single-handedly. This resulted in an economic crisis which Tanzania began to face after 1979. Mwalimu Nyerere had wanted to retire in 1980. He had expressed this fact way back in 1975. But then, with the 1978-79 Uganda-Tanzania war, and the economic hardships which resulted from it, he thought it wise to stay for one more term and assist in the recovery programmes. From 1981 to 1986 was a period marked by the introduction of various reform programmes, which enabled the economy to start picking up by 1985, when Mwalimu Nyerere retired. He remained active in issues of the liberation of the wretched of the earth, the South-South Cooperation and the mediation of conflicts in the continent and else where up to the end of his life. On 14th October 1999 Mwalimu passed away after battling against chronic leukaemia – the disease that killed the ardent Pan-Africanist Frantz Fanon in 1961.

Nyerere and Post-Colonial Developmentalism

Very briefly, the Tanzanian development model in the first decade of independence stressed the need for state intervention in the economy as means to achieve development. It was premised on the need for the concentration of powers in the executive arm of the state with the intention of bringing social services, industries and infrastructure to the people – a form of welfarism or a quasi-socialistic model. The common interests of the people were made subject to government activity, from building schools, dispensaries, etc. to village communal property. In return, people were expected to accept a high degree of economic control and at the same time offer unified political loyalty. The
provision of African education, health and other social and economic services, had previously been the main domain of missionaries and the local authorities. Such moves had definite implications for ‘civil society’ involved in those areas. Associations that seem to have continued operating unhindered after independence, although in a more localised form, were those such as clans, lineages, age groups, communal labour groups, self-help groups and dance societies. Otherwise, many others became superfluous.

In general, the model of development adopted after independence registered reasonable rates of economic growth: the growth of value added in manufacturing for the period 1965 to 1974 was more than 13 percent annually. Between 1965 and 1975, the percentage share of agriculture in the GDP fell from 56 percent to 42 percent, while that of manufacturing rose from 4 percent to 11 percent. With such developments, it had become difficult for agriculture to sustain any further expansion by 1974, as no significant technical transformations had taken place within the sector. In this year, export volume fell by 35 percent. The situation was made worse by forcible villagisation, (which halted production in most regions in the country), recurrent droughts and floods, the rise in oil prices in the world market, and huge loss-making parastatals. There were nearly 400 parastatals handling production, processing, transportation, and marketing of goods and services. Prices of almost 1,000 commodities were also controlled by this time.

By 1976 there were 108 parastatal enterprises in farming. Many of them were making huge losses, but donors supported them with capital and personnel. Holland and Denmark supported sugar production, Canada wheat production, North Korea rice production, the World Bank ranching, etc. The dominance of the crop authorities in marketing and provision of inputs had resulted into the total control and bureaucratisation of the conditions of peasant production. With the villagisation programme of 1973/74 and the changes in the administration and marketing structures, production targets were imposed on the peasants and the type of crops to be farmed was administratively specified. The gainers from the enhanced role of marketing boards in the 1970s was no longer the state exchequer, as in the 1960s, but the people who manned the boards, through corruption, fraud and embezzlement. The boards consumed an increasing share of the peasant producer price themselves. The 1977 ILO report recorded that the barter terms of trade for the peasants fell by 22.5 percent between 1965 and 1973. These parastatals had also become an increasing drain on central government finances as their distribution and buying programmes consumed large sums of official credit. By 1976, the Minister of Home Affairs reported an official figure of corruption and embezzlement of funds to the tune of Tshs 1,600 million. Thus, when reviewing the ten Years of the Arusha Declaration, Nyerere said: ‘We have reached a stage where our greatest danger is a new one. The thing which could now most undermine our socialist development would be failure in the battle against
corruption, against theft and loss of public money and goods and other abuses of public office...”

Since the early 1970s, workers and other sections of the society had attempted to check these abuses, but the government opposed them. The attempts were a consequence of the introduction of Party Guidelines (Mwongozo) in February 1971, a radical document which claimed to empower the people. There were 31 strikes and lock-outs from February to September in the same year. These were supposedly illegal strikes, since they were not sanctioned by NUTA General Council. These strikes were directed against corruption, commandism and abuses of the managers and bureaucrats. These abuses included the life style and eating habits of those in management, grand parties, unnecessary trips and other extravagances. For the first time in the history of Tanzania, these were strikes that were not concerned with pay or remuneration. These strikes continued in 1972 and they were becoming almost a movement by 1973 when the government crushed a strike at the Sungura Textile Mill by dismissing workers. The climax of these strikes occurred between May and July 1973. This was when the 900 workers of the British-American Tobacco (which was 51 percent government owned) locked out the personnel manager. The case was taken to the Permanent Labour Tribunal, where the officer was accused of “wasting company resources, and of favouring his tribesmen”.13

It was after the defeat of the workers that the Party (TANU) became supreme in 1975. With the Constitutional amendments in 1977, all mass organisations became party (CCM) affiliates, and NUTA was replaced by Jamuiya ya Wafanyakazi wa Tanzania (JUWATA). Under these arrangements, the union was simply a department of the ruling party. This move resulted in the increased statisation of society and the trade unions in particular. As a consequence, the disjunction that had already been created by the mid-1970s between the formal political system and the social system was reinforced further by late 1970s.

That was not the only time the state used force against those who opposed privileges and the abuse of power: brutal force was used against a peaceful march of students on 5 March 1978. The students sought to oppose the government move to raise salaries as much as 40 percent and introduce huge fringe benefits for ministers, senior party officials, and members of parliament, at a time when it had been announced that the country was facing a crisis. This move by the government seemed to contradict the Arusha Declaration. After rounding up and sending home 400 students, the government accused the students of “having opposed ujamaa village managers” and marching instead of accepting an invitation from the President.14 Leaflets were circulated after exposing the undemocratic nature of the state, given the manner it had handled the students.

By this time, most of the parastatals, which were supposed to be purchasing crops from the farmers, were increasingly unable to do so. They were becoming heavily indebted to the banks because of unaccountability, corruption and
inefficiency. By 1981/82, some nine parastatals had combined losses of Tshs 692 million (USD 84m), which was ‘equal to 21 percent of their processed commodities’. The National Milling Corporation alone was responsible for two thirds of those losses which represented 31 percent of its sales.\textsuperscript{15} By the same year, ‘the “parastatals” overdrafts had reached Tshs 5,127 million and accounted for 80 percent of the loans of the National Bank of Commerce’.\textsuperscript{16} Meanwhile, the ‘volume handled by agricultural parastatals increased by 18 percent, whereas parastatal employment increased by 37 percent, leading to decline in labour productivity by 14 percent’.\textsuperscript{17}

The country had begun to face an economic crisis in the late 1970s. The economic crisis resulted in foreign reserves which had peaked at USD 281.8 million in 1977, falling to USD 99.9 million in 1978 and finally to USD 20.3 million in 1980. The latter ‘was less than one week’s worth of foreign exchange needed to cover the average import bill’.\textsuperscript{18} By 1980, the value of exports was equivalent to only 43 percent of imports and the trade gap was over Tshs 6 billion. Similarly, industrial capacity utilisation was between 30 percent and 50 percent on average and at this time the manufacturing sector accounted for only 5.8 percent of a smaller GDP, compared to 1977 when it accounted for 10.4 percent.\textsuperscript{19} The symptoms of the crisis by 1980 were deterioration in the balance of trade, a fall in agricultural production (food and export crops), negative per capita growth and high inflation rates. Others problems included an acute shortage of essential consumer goods, low industrial capacity utilisation, deterioration in the budgetary position and the general deterioration of the conditions of the working people.

Tanzania attempted to negotiate with the World Bank and IMF for loans to deal with the situation. But these institutions refused to lend the country unless there were changes made in the policy directions by implementing Structural Adjustment Programmes. These institutions required Tanzania to devalue the currency significantly, freeze wage increases, increase interest rates, decontrol prices, remove subsidies on agricultural inputs and foodstuffs, relax import controls, encourage private investments, and reduce government spending by cutting down on the budget for social services. While some sections of the economists, planners and politicians supported SAPs, other lawyers and social scientists opposed them for their anti-welfare and inequalitarian tendencies.\textsuperscript{20}

Despite the initial protests against the IMF preconditions, the government had started implementing them in a form of home made programmes from 1981, to the extent that by 1986 it had accepted all the conditionalities and the philosophy behind them. Thus, with the implementation of SAPs, by early 1990s the government had liberalised crops marketing; the distribution of most inputs; introduced freehold lease in land ownership; and liberalised investment policy in favour of private investments. It had also deregulated exchange and interest rates; reformed the fiscal and monetary policies; removed all subsidies for agricultural inputs and foodstuffs; reintroduced school fees in schools; and
reintroduced the poll tax under the guise of a ‘Development Levy’. Other measures taken were reform policies to allow private banking; free transactions in foreign exchange by opening bureaux de change; restructuring parastatal statutes to allow private shareholders or private ownership, and finally abandoning the Leadership Code of the Arusha Declaration which constrained capitalist tendencies among the leaders.

It was within this context that Tanzania became involved in the first major debate ever on the Constitution. In 1982/83, members of the public throughout the United Republic of Tanzania, through government initiative, participated in a debate on constitutional amendments. During this debate, the legitimacy of the supremacy of the party was challenged. Not only that: issues of human rights and various freedoms were raised, including those of rights to organise independent of the party and government control. The Union Constitution was amended in 1984, to include a Bill of Rights in the Preamble. But there were no effective articles in the Constitution itself as far as these rights were concerned. Even Union matters remained unchanged. The amendments also resurrected the concept of the separation of powers among the executive, judicial and legislative organs. District councils, which had been abolished in 1971 in the process of strengthening the regional and central governments, were recreated in 1984, but with few real powers to speak of – whether financially or in terms of appointments (except for the collection of the ‘development levy’).

Meanwhile, by the early 1980s, a parallel development was taking place in the form of the emergence of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This trend fed off on the collapse of social provisioning and the donor restructuring of aid, which supported regional development plans (as local level development) in the 1970s. With donor support increasingly directed to districts, and the existence of a middle class within districts who was connected to those in other urban areas, the result initially was the emergence of NGOs, famously known as District Development Trusts (DDTs), funded by the middle classes and donors, working in the area of establishing schools and health facilities. The emergence of these bodies – besides the consolidation of entrepreneurial roles – also strengthened the link between business and politics. NGOs basically worked through the district councils, which had been reintroduced in 1984 and were mainly dominated by businessmen and retired and retrenched civil servants and parastatal workers. Alongside this development was the marked presence of donors in community development departments.

These NGOs were developmental oriented, mainly filling the gap created by what Kiondo termed the ‘the withdrawal of the state’. These organisations were close to the state and not really accountable to a defined membership or constituency. Rather than assisting people through sponsorship or subsidies, they were more concerned with building schools or health facilities, whose general character was that of private social provisioning. They had become partners with the government, which by then was already involved in the
process of privatisation of social provisioning in terms of the provisions of SAPs. They had emerged because donor policies had changed from financing the government directly in ‘development projects’, to financing NGOs, which were thought to be less corrupt than the government, and more accountable to the donors. With sponsorship, even faith-based organisations, hitherto known as religious organisations, suddenly became NGOs!

Generally, the literature that began to emerge in the early 1980s demonstrated that the increased statisation of society had resulted in a disjunction between the formal political system and the social system. The non-existence of civic organisations and other effective independent watchdogs had over the years resulted in bureaucratic dominance of the whole society. In the process, it was the bureaucrats and the wealthy classes that benefited from corruption. Consequently, most parastatals were making losses or were heavily indebted. Rather than serving as public enterprises, they catered to the private interests of those who manned them and their cohorts. The literature also demonstrated that the crisis in agriculture was intimately linked to the forms of exploitation that thrived because of the lack of independent organisations to defend the livelihoods of the rural producers.

The government and the party were increasingly coming under heavy criticism by the early 1980s. This was the beginning of the awakening of the people at grassroots level, marked by criticisms of the state, which aimed at restructing and reshaping power relations between the state and the people. The quest was essentially for democratic rights against the monopolisation of politics and decision-making by the state. The concept of civil society in Tanzania was rediscovered around this time. It was meant to be an expression of human social will, and an agitation for the decentralisation of public processes. Civil society connoted the emergence and consolidation of social and political movements and the whole question of empowering people. In some cases, the debate raised the fundamental question of how society was organised. When a symposium to mark the centenary of Karl Marx’s death was held at the University of Dar es Salaam in 1983, intellectuals took the occasion to sum up the experiences and critique the three decades of independence and nation building. They concluded that what was needed in Tanzania and Africa in general was broad democratisation and resistance against imperialism, which sought to reinforce exploitative relations through SAPs.

SAPs had restructured capital (private and public) which benefited from the statist model of the 1960s and 1970s around newly deregulated branches (import-export activities and the plunder of natural resources). They had also heightened the marginalisation of the majority of the people and aggravated tensions and reinforced further hierarchisation. The practical problem for the IFIs and their supporters was how to win popular support for the SAP measures and the market order, which were essentially anti-people and anti-human
rights. For the IFIs and their supporters the problem was not the lack of mass democracy, as the critics of SAPs claimed. Rather, the issue was how to put forward a defence of capitalism by trying to justify economic liberalisation and commercialisation of public and civil institutions and its consequences as far as the majority of the people were concerned. It was within this context that democratic struggles which sought new historical visions and modes of politics that aimed at defending women, youth, children, workers, poor peasants, and marginalised minorities were derailed. The popular democratic opposition to SAPs, as far as the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) were concerned, constituted an attempt to thwart the fundamental basis of the liberal order and the institutions of privatisation and market forces.

Within this context, the nature of the debates changed by the end of the 1980s. The issues were recast to focus increasingly on the question of multiparty democracy, especially with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In fact, donor pressure was quite significant in pushing for the establishment of such a system, as a conditionality for donor support over and above structural adjustments. This was taking place under the banner of ‘good governance’. The introduction of multiparty democracy became one of the aid conditionalities by the end of the 1980s. This was in a context of a world that was working hard to irresponsibilise the state by removing the notion of the public and of public interests, thus submitting people to the values of individualism (self-help, self employment, cost-sharing, etc) and the destruction of all philosophical foundations of welfarism and collective responsibility towards poverty, misery, sickness, misfortunes, education, etc.

Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, who had stepped down from the presidency in 1985, with the intention of revitalising the party, had become disillusioned by the one-party system by 1987. In this year, he told Kenneth Kaunda that what Africa needed was a multiparty system, as a means to challenge the party in power, since in the one party system the tendency was for those in power to become complacent. By 1990, he started insisting on the introduction of competitive politics and challenged Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) legitimacy, and declared that it was no longer a sin to discuss a multiparty system. Donors were also putting pressure for the country to join the multiparty bandwagon as one of the conditions for receiving aid. The Tanganyika Law Society was instrumental in organising a seminar in 1990 on the Party System and Democracy which brought together various opposition groups. This seminar demanded a new national consensus and put forward a resolution proposing the adoption of a multi-party system. In 1991 professionals, students and academics joined together and formed a National Committee for Constitutional Reform (NCCR) to draft a multiparty constitution. They requested the government to permit them to hold a national meeting on the constitution. The government resisted for several months, but finally bowed after pressure from donors. A major demand of the opposition throughout this period was the need
to convene a National Conference by way of making proposals for a new constitution, following examples of the then Zaire, Cameroon, Nigeria and Congo Brazzaville.

Tanzania introduced a multi-party system in 1992. The move to a multi-party system was a consequence of the recommendations of a Presidential Commission chaired by Chief Justice Francis Nyalali. This Commission recommended a multiparty system of government. It also recommended an elaborate timetable for constitution making through a Constitutional Conference, after assessing the pros and cons of the various modalities (the others being a National Conference and Constitutional Assembly). It also identified 40 pieces of legislation as potentially harmful to the realisation of human rights and multiparty democracy. Finally, it recommended the launch of a democracy education programme. The government opposed most of these recommendations, and went ahead with the amendments of the 1977 Constitution and the engineering of the changes on its own terms from 1992.

Ironically, when the people were asked whether they wanted a one-party or multiparty system by the Nyalali Commission, 80 percent supported a one party system. The Nyalali Commission recommended a multiparty system because a substantial minority preferred it; and, even the majority who favoured the continuation of one party system demanded the cleansing and restructuring of the party and the transformation of the manner in which political affairs were conducted. Basically, the majority of those who preferred the one party system demanded major changes in the economy, the political system, governance and accountability structures of the country. They even denounced the village tyrants and district and regional bureaucrats. People reported the problems they were facing as far as social, economic and infrastructural provisioning were concerned. There were some villagers who even queried: if one party had been eating so much, what with many parties? They will finish us! In some, the majority of those who wanted a cleansed and restructured one party demanded their right to control their productive and reproductive resources. They rejected multipartyism, but they wanted democratic forms that would effectively involve them in decision-making processes over their resources.

In anticipation of the introduction of a multiparty system, the relations between civil society and the state had begun to change in 1991. The process began with the de-linking of CCM-affiliated mass organisations, Jumuiya ya Wafanyakazi Tanzania (JUWATA), the sole trade union, and Cooperative Union of Tanzania (CUT or WASHIRIKA), the only cooperative body. This was achieved through Parliamentary Acts in 1991, in anticipation of the emergence of trade unions and cooperatives, which would be affiliated to them. In both cases, there were outcries that these bodies were not independent, since they were created from above through parliamentary legislation, and that the government had imposed their leadership.
The Cooperative Union has never functioned since 1991. But in the case of the workers’ organisations matters have been different. OTTU was formed as a federation of trade unions with affiliates from different industrial sectors. There was a public outcry that the body was not independent, since it was created from above through parliamentary legislation, and the government imposed its leadership. The leadership was composed of CCM members. Some of them were essentially using the newly formed trade union for political gains. In this case, the naked example was that of the Secretary General, Bruno Mpangala, who made sure that the 1995 May Day Celebrations were held in Mbeya, where he was intending to contest an MP seat. Attempts by teachers during these early years to form an independent trade union outside the affiliates that had been established by the government met with resistance from both OTTU and the government. The latter refused to register it for some years.

OTTU, unlike its predecessor, was not affiliated to any political party. Yet it was not completely independent of the government policies. In this regard, the leadership of the union regarded the privatisation of public enterprises as a good thing. This remains the attitude of many of them to date. The only objections they had against the process were in terms of the manner in which the process was implemented. They were of the view that all that was required was the involvement of the trade unions in the privatisation exercise. Moreover, they only needed to be informed and assured of their terminal benefits, and also to be paid in time. Thus the first ‘general strike’ that was to be was planned for March 1994, as a result of the government’s inability to raise wages that were promised by the President in his May Day speech at Mtwarara, ended up with less than 15 percent of the workers participating in the three days of the strike (1-3 March 1994). Most workers did not participate, not because they were satisfied with their salaries, but because they feared that they would be fired.

With the elections of the OTTU leadership in 1995, the organisation and its affiliates decided to change the name of the umbrella body to the Tanzania Federation of Free Trade Unions (TFTU). Between 1995 and 2000, the organisation had two names – the officially recognised OTTU and the unofficial one, TFTU. Essentially, the trade unions continued to be involved in bargaining for wages and the conditions under which retrenchments should be undertaken, rather than raising the broader policy issues as has been the case in other countries, such as South Africa and Nigeria. One of the reasons for this situation (besides the fact that those who traditionally constituted the rank and file of the trade unions had been retrenched), was the fact that with the curtailment of government spending on social services, including education, the effects of retrenchment in social services, the introduction of cost-sharing in social services and the privatisation of public enterprises as a result of implementation of SAPs, had its effects almost immediately in the quality of the various human resources. Increasingly, those who were entering the labour market were endowed with fewer skills than those who had preceded them.
Following this move to introduce a multiparty system in 1992, 43 political parties secured provisional registration by 1992, but only 13 managed to get permanent registration by 1994. However, many of these parties were established for the opportunistic purpose of securing government subsidies or in the hope of securing donor funds, since donors were interested in multipartyism. These parties were not necessarily addressing the issues that were raised by the academic, professional and activist associations. At the same time, some of the newly established parties, with some degree of varying success, began to point out the flaws in both the government and the ruling CCM – issues such as human rights, corruption in government, failure to deliver social services, and so on. But all in all, the general character of these parties was the weakness in organisational qualities and the lack of clearly developed philosophies, policies and programmes. Because of their corporatist character and non-participatory methods, they increasingly became marred by inter- and intra-feuds, mostly around issues of leadership, over the sharing of government party subsidies, and organisational structures. This was especially the case after the 1995 multi-party elections, which CCM won by a large majority.

Opposition to the ruling party had emerged at a time when the convening of a National Conference to come up with proposals for a new Constitution was a popular demand. This demand was taken over by the opposition parties after their registration. These claimed that the need for such a forum arose from the fact that throughout the history of constitutional development in Tanzania, the citizenry had been sidelined. With the impeding multi-party elections in 1995 and after that, the whole debate on constitutional changes degenerated to the level of demanding conditions for ‘free and fair elections’. The constitution was turned into an article of faith by the parties, with each trying to score political points, using the question of the constitutional changes as a weapon. They claimed that there was no way that opposition parties could win, given that the party in power made the Constitution, which was meant to protect it.

What is strange is the fact that none of those who agitated for constitutional reforms have ever taken to task the government’s breach of the objectives and directive principles of state policy, as stated in the Constitution of Tanzania,26 with the implementation of SAPs. These are issues such as social justice, the provision of equal and equitable welfare (education, heath, old age provisions, etc.), accountability to the people, and effecting participation of people in government affairs. Other key issues neglected include ensuring that national resources are harnessed and preserved for the common good, to prevent the exploitation of one person by another, planting and integrating of the national economy, and guaranteeing employment for every able person. Also ignored were matters such as using national resources for the development of the people focusing on the eradication of poverty, ignorance and disease; ensuring that economic activities do not result in the concentration of wealth and major
means of production in the hands of a few people; and government according to the principles of democracy and socialism.

Behind the agitation for constitutional changes by the political parties and the donor-sponsored NGOs is the overhauling of these basic principles. It is fundamentally these principles that are espoused by majority of the villagers and other people who advocated effective involvement (not participation) in decision-making processes. As the situation reveals itself currently, most parties that have emerged are elite parties. They are not organic parties of the masses or of the community, ideologically or practically. They have accepted the universal concept of liberal democracy and human rights, which are simply viewed in terms of forms of rule and governance that include the right of representation, organisation and expression. It is individual rights that are overriding in this conception, rather than peoples’ rights as individuals and communities. It is a matter of winning through the ballot box by any means necessary – fair or foul. Democracy within this context has been reduced to the emergence of a market economy; the privatisation of state enterprises; multipartyism; the emergence of NGOs; the irresponsibilisation of the state in social provisioning; and, a democratic constitution and ‘laissez-faire’ economics. In this conception, there is no historical reference to how the transition will lead to the emancipation of the ordinary people.²⁷

More serious is the fact that hardly anything is said about the history of workers and peasants movements or even the political parties. There is hardly any consideration of the nature and the history of the emergence of these associations and parties. Even their real relation to the state and the economy is not problematised at all. In this regard, trade unions are in most cases excluded. This is not strange at all, because, internationally, the current conjuncture is one in which the labour movements in many countries are under attack. This is so because of the restructuring of production and the transformation of industrial relations. These processes have entailed the retrenchment of workers as a result of the speculative selling and buying of enterprises, the casualisation of employment, out-sourcing of some operations (given the rise of a so-called ‘flexible’ workforce, which is temporary, part-time and ‘self-employed’). The latter case, for example, aims at dividing labour, rather than bringing about the growth of employment (as most of the prophets of the current system would like people to believe).

In other words, what restructuring has been doing is to increase differentiation in employment conditions and enhance the polarisation of the workforce. The workers are no longer shielded from market forces since internal labour markets are no longer protected. With such ‘competition’ and divisions among workers, union capacities for effective action become severely restricted and the very foundations for solidarity are eroded. The strategy of outsourcing has targeted those occupations that were in the past the grounds for union recruiting.
Lessons to be learnt

Nyerere was a product of a particular milieu. Among the issues that he adhered to throughout his life were: the need to address the continent’s inheritance of the multiplicity and artificiality of nation states, with their built-in tendency to endemic instability; the need to adopt economic and social policies which maximise the mobilisation and use of internal resources, both material and human; the maximisation of inter-African co-operation in all fields of development, both at regional and at sub-regional levels; the need to work fully with other regions and countries of the South to maximise South-South Co-operation and Solidarity; and, in co-operation with other countries, the need for the regions of the South to work relentlessly with the Economic North to build a World of Justice for all, in which the struggling poor of the World have a chance, both nationally and internationally.28

One of the issues that remained elusive during his life was that of democracy. The post-independence state was a developmental one; but it was not democratic. Even when he intervened in the 1990s in the debate about democracy, he remained trapped in the universalistic conceptions of democracy. In general democracy in Africa has been reduced to the emergence of a market economy; the privatisation of state enterprises; multipartyism; the establishment of NGOs; the irresponsibilisation of the state in social provisioning; and a democratic constitution and ‘laissez-faire economics.

The fact is that both single and multiparty democracy systems have been in crisis for a long time. The germ of the crisis lies embedded in the very history of the emergence of party politics (whether multiparty or single party). Parliamentary parties emerged in Europe after 1870s, with the defeat of the working class movements (specifically the Paris Communards in 1871) and the vanguard single state parties in 1917 with Russian Revolution (specifically in its Stalinist variant). Both modes of politics have been in crisis for a long time, even before their introduction in Africa. The crisis of the parliamentary forms was demonstrated fully by the November 2000 events in the state of Florida. As demonstrated in the history of the Western world in terms of safeguarding the so called ‘economic freedom’, the struggle for or against democracy and human rights has always been in terms of how to institute/elect regimes which would not set out to destroy the fundamental basis of market economies and the functioning of capital in general.

The biggest fear in such democracies has always been the rule of the majority. Thus, in these countries, the problem has always been how to safeguard economic liberty in a mass democracy situation (if this can not be prevented). In other words, how to make the modern state that claims to represent the interests of all remain legitimate in the face of mass opposition. What this amounts to is the fact that single or multiparty regimes all over the world have made totalitarian demands, in the name of the so-called interests of the nation/country (read government). And the struggle since the emergence of
the modern state has been in terms of whether the state can dominate ‘civil society’ or ‘civil society’ will dominate the state (not as dichotomies, but as mutually exclusive entities).29

Thus, in practice, in multiparty states parties have always been quasi-state institutions competing for the distribution of positions, regulated by the constitution and operating on its basis and the prevailing system. They have never been institutions for the people’s reconstitution of the state so that it becomes responsive to popular needs and popular control. In a multiparty system, politics exist only in the parties and the government, and parties acquire state-like structures as tools of political organisation within a state project. The ultimate aim of the parties is to occupy the state house (or the treasury in Tanzania, since it is adjacent the State House). Parties in opposition merely end up working to replace the one in power rather than address real issues, since they also regard the state as the only terrain and reference of politics.

A one party system has its problems too. In the single party state system, parties tend to see themselves as the exclusive and only source of ‘progressive’ politics, and therefore reduce politics to the organisation and building of parties, while condemning people outside the parties to non-existence politically. In this system, all other sites of politics (the farm, the factory, the school, the homestead – erroneously labelled ‘household’ by westerners of our countries – the sports grounds, the media, the theatre, etc.) fall under the guidance of the party. The party becomes an organ of management, and therefore oppressive and authoritarian on the pretext that it is the only source of truth. The masses become mere non-thinking beings or at best a bunch of ignorant people, incapable of self-emancipation.

In other words, both single and multiparty forms of democracy have historically been oppressive. They have at one point or another discriminated and disfranchised people (blacks in USA up to 1960s, women in the West until early 1920s, workers, etc.). The champions of multiparty politics have not taken these facts into account. They take the system for granted. All they have been doing all along is to pitch the merits and demerits of multipartyism against those of one party by indiscriminately citing examples from Ancient Greece, Washington DC, etc. This cult of the ‘universal’ has ignored the fact that democracy is a historical mode of politics within the context of redefining relationships among the people and between the people and the state, so that the oppressors are singled out as the enemies and the masses as those in the oppressed camp (even if these are also differentiated).

This form of democracy, which was introduced from above in the early 1990s, has resulted in the sowing of seeds of discord among the people and communities. The winning and losing of votes is based on mobilisation, which include mobilisation even of forms of identities (imagined or real), prejudices, and discrimination. The simple game is, people who are in power will definitely exclude people who voted against them. Thus, the issues of ‘Who originates
from where among those in power", or "which party represents which people", predominate. It is a war of all against all, and the winner takes or remains in power. Self-censorship is imposed on the people, in that critical minds are misconstrued to belong to this or that party, and in the process persecuted, while those that toe the line or display a sense of loyalty are rewarded. Genuine liberating knowledge and critical intellectual faculties are banished and mediocrity is exalted. Citizenship, rather than nationalism, patriotism and Pan-Africanism, becomes the central issue.

Citizenship and 'ethnic' issues are politicised more than ever before, and in the process some people or communities are made scapegoats while the real oppressors are left scot-free. The result is the reinforcement of discriminatory tendencies. Instead of the state being an arbiter in resolving contradictions in a society, in this context, it tends to identify itself with certain groups vis-à-vis others, thus representing sectional interests – the powerful and wealthy. In Africa, states were born out of military conquest and occupation after 1884. They allowed no room for popular pressures, since they were based on discriminatory and oppressive practices. Political parties, as state-like structures working to occupy the state, like the colonial state itself, have tended to put a wedge between politics and economics by insisting that the only place for conducting politics is in the government and the parliament. They have often been afraid of the emergence and consolidation of independent labour, peasant, women, youths and peoples movements. The tendency for these parties has been to distance themselves from such organisations and activities, except when it is to their advantage.

In this case, the state and the political parties are part of the problem and the major obstacle to the evolution of real democratic transformations. Thus, democracy should not be taken as simply formal democracy – the existence of a number of parties and regular elections – which exclude the right of the people to recall any undesirable elected person at any time, as prescribed by the donor and international relations perspectives. It has to include the question of promotion of social justice, equity and equality (i.e. social democracy). It needs to involve the restructuring of relations and redressing imbalances (both historical and contemporary) among the people in all their manifestations, including gender, ethnic, class and racial factors. It must be redefined to include the question of poverty eradication (not alleviation) and access and control of productive resources that enable people to reproduce as well as ensure more equitable social development.

For democracy to make sense, it has to be linked with those who are victims of the prevailing circumstances, by taking into account issues of social justice and social democracy. It has to be directed to the questions of redressing imbalances, inequalities, exploitation, etc., rather than simply setting-up democratic institutions and good governance movement from the authoritarianism of one state party to that of many state parties. Multiparty politics are doing more harm
by reinforcing the politics of ‘us’ and ‘them’. We need a conception of
democracy and human rights and its organisational forms which stands for
peace, justice, equity and equality, aimed at treating/resolving differences
between workers and bosses, peasants and merchants, students and teachers,
men and women, youths and elders, Moslems and Christians, Africans and
Asians/Arabs/Europeans, majority and minorities, people and state. It has to
address issues such as: in which way is production organised? Who is
producing, and who is appropriating the surplus? What forms of accumulation
are taking place? What kind of social relations exist among individuals, groups
and organisations as far as the control of resources is concerned?

Only in this way is it possible to prevent the consolidation of unpatriotic
territorial nationalism, clothed in unanimity regarded as a basis of so-called
national unity, which is essentially false; a unanimity which blocks the possi-
bilities of resolution of problems. What is needed are serious public collective
mutual debates for self-questioning and self-criticism organised to resolve our
problems. People need to come together and talk instead of the violent confron-
tations between parties. What is required is a space for people to conduct
dialogue under circumstances whereby everyone has the right to talk and is
called upon to discuss national, developmental and transformational issues.
This means the ending of the division between the parties (political interests)
and the trade union, cooperative, student organisation, women movement, the
village, the factory, neighborhood (non-political interests), which distracts
people from effectively participating in political processes.

In this regard, only social movements (territorial and pan-territorial), and
especially those grounded on the foundation of peace, equality, equity,
democracy, stability and Pan-Africanism can articulate emancipatory politics.
Nyerere’s contribution on nationalism and Pan-Africanism is a lesson to be
taken seriously. For such movements to exist, there must be the emergence and
consolidation of politics in civil society (grass roots based movements and
people’s organisations) leading to real transformations of the state. Political
parties are not civil society organisations since their objectives are directed
towards the control of state power (state entryism), rather than its transfor-
mation. Civil society organisations that can become effective are those which
are rooted in society and are socially accountable. Civil society implies
self-organisation, which defends the interests of the majority of the people and
promotes civil liberties and social transformation.

Notes
p. 88.
6. Ibid.
8. Ibid, p. 11.
9. Legum, op cit Appendix.
11. Ibid, pp. 188-90.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
Ourselves’). His aim was to show that the country had deviated from the democratic principle.

25. The following 11 industrial unions were formed and became OTTU affiliates: (i) Communication and Transport Workers Union (COWTU), (ii) Conservation, Hotels, Domestic and Allied Workers Union (CHOWADU), (iii) Research, Academicians and Allied Workers Union (RAAWU), (iv) Tanzania Local Government Workers Union (TALGWU), (v) Tanzania Mines and Construction Workers Union (TAMICO), (vi) Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union (TPAWU), (vii) Tanzania Railway Workers Union (TRAWU), (viii) Tanzania Seamen Union (TASU), (ix) Tanzania Teachers Union (TTU), (x) Tanzania Union of Government and Health Employees (TUGHE), and (xi) Tanzania Union of Industries and Commercial Workers (TUICO).


27. The vocabulary in Tanzania nowadays is devoid of words such as exploitation, oppression, domination, class interests, neo-colonialism and imperialism. Instead, words like investors, donors, partners in development, participation, globalisation, restructuring of the economies, privatisation, etc. have become so ubiquitous.
