



MWALIMU NYERERE: PAN AFRICAN NATIONALIST OR NATIONALIST PAN AFRICAN?

Ng'wanza Kamata

**Kavazi Nyerere Dialogue Lectures, No. 1
2015**

Published by the Nyerere Resource Centre

First edition 2015

Second Edition 2018

© Nyerere Resource Centre

Mwalimu Nyerere: Pan African Nationalist or Nationalist Pan African?

This lecture series is published with the support of the Rosa Luxembourg Foundation (RLS is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)

Printed by Inter Press of Tanzania Ltd., Dar es Salaam

ISBN: 978-9976-9903-1-7

PREFACE

The Nyerere Dialogue Lecture Series is one of the two major publication activities of the Nyerere Resource Centre (NRC). The other is the Occasional Papers series of which two have been published so far. The first Nyerere Dialogue Lecture was delivered by Professor Adebayo Olukoshi on the launching of the NRC in March, 2015. Professor Olukoshi's lecture was wide-ranging, tracing the historical trajectory of the African development discourse and raising issues related to its present state. The publication of that lecture is pending receipt of the revised manuscript. Meanwhile, Dr. Ng'wanza Kamata delivered the second Dialogue lecture in November 2015, tantalisingly titled *Mwalimu Nyerere: Pan African Nationalist or Nationalist Pan African?* Kamata traces and compares the origins of Nkrumah's and Nyerere's Pan-African thought. His narrative revolves around the thesis that whereas Nkrumah arrived at territorial nationalism via Pan-Africanism, Nyerere's Pan-Africanism was through territorial nationalism.

Both Dialogue Lectures discuss vital issues central to Mwalimu Nyerere's political thought and practice. Development and Pan-Africanism occupied virtually Nyerere's whole political life. Just two years before his death, Nyerere returned to the question of Pan-Africanism in an extemporaneous speech he made in Accra on the 40th anniversary of Ghana's independence. In that fascinating exposition Nyerere postulated that the first generation African nationalists had set themselves two tasks - African liberation and African unity. Liberation in the sense of independence from colonialism and minority settler regimes had been accomplished but his generation did not quite succeed in uniting the continent. That was the task the new generation ought to shoulder. Each generation must discover its mission and either fulfill or betray it, Fanon said. Fighting for the

insurrection of Pan-African ideas would be an apt mission for the current generation of African intellectuals, as Nyerere suggested. We hope that the publication of this lecture would contribute towards that insurrection.

NRC was originally conceived as an archival project, to store the material collected by three researchers who are writing Mwalimu Nyerere's biography. But just as Mwalimu should not simply be museumised, so his ideas should not merely be archived. For ideas to live, they must speak. It is NRC's mission to give voice to Mwalimu's ideas through debates, discussions and publications. Our publications, including this one, are an attempt to fulfill that mission.

Issa Shivji

Director, NRC

December 2015

Mwalimu Nyerere: Pan African Nationalist or Nationalist Pan African?

Introduction

Debates on nationalism often arouse a need to discuss the idea of *nation*. This is more pressing for Africa where it has been suggested, especially by Eurocentric scholars, that nations never existed, and perhaps do not exist even today. Stalin's definition of nation, for example, seems to underscore this view. For Stalin, a nation is:

... a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up, has its history, its beginning and end' (Stalin 1953: 307).

These defining characteristics of a nation would, according to both Stalin (1953) and Anderson (2000), have been consolidated with the development of capitalism.

Ntalaja interrogates Stalin's definition of a nation and its attribution to the history of the rise of capitalism. That definition suggests that a nation is only viable if it has "an integrated home market and, consequently, belongs to the epoch of rising capitalism" (Ntalaja 1987: 44). This position cannot have universal application, Ntalaja notes, because "nations can be found in social formations based on pre-capitalist mode of production. The key factors in existence of a nation are a centralised economic and political authority both of which existed in modes of production other than capitalism. Thus a mechanical application of the characteristic features outlined by Stalin as "a checklist against which nationhood is to be gauged" has to be avoided.

Ntalaja is joined by Rodney in the recognition that nations existed in some parts of Africa in pre-capitalist times. Rodney

associates the formation of nations in Africa with the formation of states. The “rise of states” he wrote, “was itself a form of development, which increased the scale of African politics and merged small ethnic groups into identities suggestive of nations” (Rodney 2003: 46). However, it is certain that the potential for developing viable nations in Africa out of the social formations in place was diminished by colonialism and other forms of foreign domination. The nations existing at the time of the conquest lost their vitality, if not their very existence (Ntalaja 1987). By the dawn of independence, the African nations - in existence or in the process of formation - had disappeared.

So where did Julius Nyerere stand between these two stances on nation, the Eurocentric and the Afrocentric? His idea of a nation seems to lie in the centre. On the one hand, he holds the view that in Africa after independence, no nations were in existence. What existed were states, which embarked on the work of creating nations. This was in contrast to the European process, in which nations created states. Nyerere does not problematise the African state, seeming to take it for granted as the only instrument available for creating nations and paying no heed to its questionable origin and essence.

On the other hand, in a rare concession, he expressed the thought that nations did exist in some if not all African societies. At one meeting during the Burundi peace talks Nyerere told some delegates:

I worked with Prince Rwagasore ... I used to tell him that he was lucky because he was leading the nation. Burundi was there as a nation even before being conquered by the Germans. The Burundi were under a unified leadership which was not the case with Tanganyika. By that time, I was trying to turn it into a nation and the situation was different

because I had to turn the tribes into a nation
(MNF 1996).

There are two aspects to be considered in relation to Nyerere's notion of a nation. The first is the existence of a unified leadership, which in Ntalaja's formulation would probably correspond to centralised authority. The second is a single and unified language and culture, and a common territory, because that was what Burundi had before colonisation. The *Hutu* and *Tutsi* in Burundi did not exist previously as different ethnic or tribal entities. They became so during the colonial period. In both places where colonialism either created ethnic groups or they were already in existence, as was the case in Tanganyika, colonialism turned what was a mere cultural community into a political community (Mamdani 2002: 24). In a way, it is this reality which both Tanganyika and Burundi had to grapple with after independence. They were in a similar situation in which many African peoples found themselves. As Prah suggests:

... the post-colonial states of Africa are neither nations nor nation-states, they are simply states, neo-colonial states. They are entities created, in most cases, within the last hundred years for administrative purpose, by the erstwhile colonial masters (Prah 2009: 205).

As such both Nyerere and Burundi had to forge nations from people divided along ethnic lines.

It is obvious that different colonial territories had different ethnic maps of their people; each territory had to deal with its own realities in forging a nation, if that was the ultimate goal. The immediate question then would be, as Ntalaja would submit, what would be the basis of organising the new African nation - as a Pan-African nation, a colonially-created nation, or an ethnic nation? (Ntalaja 1987: 48). Nyerere's response

to this would be phases - begin first with nation building within the colonial boundaries; then proceed, also in stages, with continental unity. The tribal or ethnic nation would have been out of the question for him.

Two elements shed some light on Nyerere's position on the basis for organising and building a nation. The first is his stand on the principle of respecting the colonially created boundaries in Africa, leading him to move a motion in support of the sanctity of colonial boundaries at the 1964 OAU Summit in Cairo (Shivji 2009: 6). The second is his loathing of the idea of a tribal basis for organising the African nation because for him the "... future of Africa ... that has a place in the 21st century is linked with its decolonisation and detribalisation" (Nyerere 1997). That is why he deplored the degeneration of African countries into narrow nationalism and because of that, as Shivji observed, he "admonished the new generation of African leaders to reject the return to tribe ... and other forms of narrow nationalism." (Shivji 2009: 5)

Incidentally, Nyerere's idea of the nation also evolved from his early nationalism, which was a reaction to and rejection of a colonial and racist system of exploitation, oppression, and humiliation of people, mostly Africans. And this became his route to Pan-Africanism.

Pan Africanism is African nationalism, not territorial nationalism. Although both had an ant-imperialist stance, their scope and mission differed. Whereas Pan-Africanism is a "vision of not only unity but liberation" (Shivji 2009: 5), seeking to defeat imperialism in all its forms, territorial nationalism was limited in its objectives and constricted in its Eurocentric view of the nation - the right to independence from colonialism and self-determination. It is this limited view of national liberation which Cabral faulted. In his address to the Tri-continental Conference held in Havana in January, 1966 he declared:

It is often said that national liberation is based on the right of every people to freely control its own destiny and that the objective of this liberation is national independence. Although we do not disagree with this vague and subjective way of expressing a complex reality, we prefer to be objective, since for us the basis of national liberation, ... is the inalienable right of every people to have its own history, and the objective of national liberation is to regain this right usurped by imperialism, that is to say, to free the process of development of the national productive forces (Cabral 1969: 83).

The national liberation of a people is therefore “the regaining of the historical personality of that people, its return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which it was subjected.” (Ibid)

Cabral’s idea of national liberation as people’s liberation resonates well with the broader view of Pan African nationalism, whose anti-imperialism went beyond the attainment of independence. As Wamba states:

... Pan-Africanism emerged as a global consciousness – the realisation that no *Black person will be free until all Black people are free* – emerged precisely to *confront the old race-based global consciousness which underlined capitalist expansionism*. It aimed at defending human equality, human rights against racial discrimination and at organising the process of liberation of Black people from subordination world-wide. (Wamba 1996: 10).

Pan African nationalism was, in the context of Africa, anti-imperialist, rejecting both colonialism and neo-colonialism (Shivji 2005: 14). However, as it progressed, its conceptualisation came to be reduced by African heads of state and government to the narrowness of African unity alone. Its liberation ethos and spirit were thus stifled.

For most of Africa, the territorial nation was or became the organising base for both African liberation and unity within the framework of Pan Africanism. Nyerere himself began his political struggle as a territorial nationalist, as is reflected in his views about “nation”. . But he developed to become one of the towering figures of Pan-Africanism. Territorial nationalism provided his route to Pan African nationalism.

Nyerere’s Route to Pan Africanism

Little is known, so far, of the intellectual and political influences on Nyerere’s Pan-Africanism. Nyerere studied philosophy, as did Nkrumah, and they read more or less the same philosophical works while in Europe and the United States respectively. Nyerere had a strong Christian orientation, being a Catholic and teacher in Catholic schools. However, he did not read theology as Nkrumah did, for which he got a degree. Nyerere obtained his degree in Scotland, where the opportunities for wide exposure to Pan African ideas were limited, compared to what Nkrumah experienced in the United States. Nyerere did not live in the heat of the debates and organising of the Pan African movement as Nkrumah did. He did not have, in the early stages of his nationalist formation, any direct contact with key figures in the movement. From this history it is not easy to say with certainty how the political, social, and intellectual environment in which he studied and worked contributed in shaping both his nationalism and Pan Africanism. But at this stage it is possible to suggest that his approach to African unity was founded in the Western tradition of the evolutionary approach to change.

Developed in early 19th century Europe, the approach assumes that “the rate of social change is slow, gradual, and piecemeal – evolutionary, not revolutionary.”(So 1990: 18).

Nyerere was a member of the African Association (AA) in colonial Tanganyika, which by the 1940s had established some contacts with the Pan African Federation based in Manchester. The latter was led by, among others, George Padmore as its Secretary. Nyerere became a founder member of the African Association branch at Makerere when he was a student there. The AA was not a nationalist movement but a welfare association of Tanganyika’s urbanised elites. Although religion, ethnicity or nationality were not criteria for membership its membership was entirely of black Africans (Mwangosi). If the AA had any influence at all on Nyerere’s nationalist and Pan Africanist thinking, then it would have been in that sense of belonging among fellow Africans who shared similar concerns and agonies.

In his 1983 interview with Peter Enahoro, Nyerere admitted that he “was not radical at all” but the event in Ghana was “another eye opener”. Recalling this event, he stated:

Ghana got its self-government led by Nkrumah. Nkrumah had been locked up and this was something to talk about among the African students in the hostels and the universities. Suddenly, the boys from Ghana became different. They had changed overnight – they were no longer like us (Africa Now 1983: 107).

The events in Ghana were for Nyerere, and perhaps other African nationalists, an “eye opener” in the sense that they served to demystify and expose colonialism on the one hand, and on the other, to restore the confidence among Africans and in Nyerere himself that Africans could fight for their

independence and rule themselves. In a letter he wrote to Nkrumah in 1963 Nyerere said:

... During the struggle for independence one of our most serious obstacles was the lack of self-confidence amongst our people. Colonialism had succeeded in making some of our people believe that being governed by the White Man was our natural lot... But the only thing which really succeeded in removing this complex was the actual experience of self-government. It is in this sense, more than in any other, that Ghana's achievement of independence gave a great boost to Africa's Freedom Movement. (Nyerere to Nkrumah 1963).

It was after this, he told Enahoro, that he decided to return home and participate in the struggle for independence. At that time, the mission he had assigned himself was to participate in his country's independence. There were no thoughts about African unity. This was in contrast to Nkrumah, who had decided to come back home with one grand mission "to throw the European out of Africa," and to unite the continent (Davidson 1973: 39). Nkrumah's vision, even when he was temporarily engrossed in the fight for Ghana's independence, and even after Ghana gained independence in 1957, was always for an independent and united Africa. This vision was the basis for his famous and oft quoted statement that "Ghana's independence would be meaningless if it were not to be linked with the total liberation of Africa." (Ibid: 43).

Thus, the early development of Nyerere's nationalism was in the mould of territorial nationalism rather than Pan African nationalism. His core mission was to fight colonialism within Tanganyika. If he was to think beyond Tanganyika, he would have considered the other two East African countries, Kenya

and Uganda. And naturally so, because all the three colonies were under the British and their economies were linked by the East African Common Services (ECOSC). Nyerere thought the latter would constitute a strong foundation for the creation of the East African Federation (EAF).

Nyerere's Pan Africanism therefore evolved along two paths. The first was through his struggle for the independence of Tanganyika, during which consultation, cooperation, and solidarity with other nationalist movements was a necessity. Of the many initiatives of cooperation and solidarity at that time, two are noteworthy. The first set of initiatives began after Ghana's independence in 1957, when Nyerere was invited and attended the independence celebrations in Accra. Nkrumah was busy organising and mobilising African states and peoples' organisations, including, significantly the convening of *the All-African Peoples Conference* in December 1958. The conference was attended by representatives of trade unions, nationalist movements and other peoples' organisations. Its major resolution was, among others, "to promote understanding and unity among peoples of Africa; and to accelerate the liberation of Africa from imperialism and colonialism." (Legum 1965: 241).

In East and Central Africa the Accra initiative gave rise to the second - a regionally based organisation, the Pan African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa (PAFMECA). The organisation first met in Mwanza in Tanganyika "... to discuss our possible contribution to the forthcoming conference" in Accra (Nyerere 1997). Nye relates that the Membership to PAFMECA was open to "all nationalist, labour, and cooperative organisations which conformed to a policy of Pan-Africanism and liberation of Africa" (Nye 1966: 124). PAFMECA was more concerned with problems among nationalist leaders and organisations in different member countries. Although the idea of an East and Central Africa Federation was mooted in June 1960, it was never taken

seriously until 1963. Despite its claims of being committed to Pan-Africanism PAFMECA's orientation towards Pan-African unity was weak.

The second path to Nyerere's Pan Africanism traversed the East African Federation. After independence it became clear to Nyerere that territorial independence was limited and inadequate, and for it to be meaningful it had to be built on the foundation of a larger political unit – the United States of Africa. This was profoundly expressed in his views about the East African Federation.

As an idea the creation of the East African Federation was first mooted by the British in the early 1920s (Nye 1966: 175). This was one of several federations that the British were trying to create, others being in West Africa and in Rhodesia (South and North). In East Africa the federation idea was opposed not only by Africans but also by European settlers in the two colonies of Uganda and Tanganyika. Their opposition stemmed from their fear of control of the whole region by the Kenyan European settlers. The idea of an EAF again emerged in June 1960 at the Second Conference of Independent African States in Addis Ababa (Nye 1966: 125). It came in the form of Nyerere's proposal to postpone Tanganyika's independence so that the three East African countries achieve their independence within a federal arrangement. The proposal was endorsed in October at the PAFMECA meeting held at Mbale, Uganda.

Nyerere's proposal for the East African Federation seems to have provoked a discussion between him and Nkrumah. In his 06 August 1963 letter to Nkrumah Nyerere reminded him of their correspondence on the question of federation which had started since November 1960. Then, Nyerere recalled in his letter, Nkrumah had warned them of the "danger that Britain would influence" their discussion. In the continuing

discussions on the EAF, Nyerere appeared to be the “crusader”.

His Pan African position and arguments were first articulated in the 1960 Addis Ababa speech, which was later published by PAFMECA. Many of the arguments made in support of the EAF remained, for many years to come, Nyerere’s major line of reasoning for African Unity. It was at this point that his Pan African credentials were clearly revealed.

In his appeal for the EAF, Nyerere strongly argued that the federation would be more achievable before independence rather than after. Complete independence of the three countries would complicate the process of unity. One of Nyerere’s worries was that “If each nation achieved independence separately any move by one of them in the direction of Federation is likely to be misunderstood and will certainly be subjected to a campaign alleging imperialistic designs and search for personal power.” (Nyerere 1966: 89). He was also concerned that after independence leaders of newly independent states would be more preoccupied with nationalism than Pan Africanism. He further feared that once leaders started experiencing sovereignty, with its various symbols of power and its privileges, they would be less attracted to the relative obscurity likely in a federation (Nyerere 1966: 89).

Nyerere regarded unity, and the East African Federation in particular, as an instrument of social and economic transformation (Nyerere 1966: 86). This was brought home after Tanganyika’s independence because shortly after, Nyerere realised that individual states were limited and inadequate as instruments of development. He confided this to Kenyatta in a letter he wrote him on 06 July 1963 where he explained why Tanganyika so much wanted the federation:

As I understand it – and certainly from
Tanganyika’s point of view – we want it

because we have been forced to recognise how weak our individual States as instruments are for the social revolution which must complete the work begun by the Freedom struggle. This is true of the whole continent. (Nyerere to Kenyatta 1963).

Nyerere was also concerned about the balkanisation of the continent. He saw this as a fault line upon which the “forces of imperialism and neo-imperialism would find their own strength” against Africa. He believed that it was unity which would provide Africa with the strength to confront imperialism (Nyerere 1966: 90).

Equally significant was his conviction that the emotions and feelings for unity were stronger during the struggle for independence than they would be after. On this Nyerere was supported by Kenyatta, who wrote, in his response to Nyerere on 12 July, 1963:

... we have at the moment a situation where all the people of East Africa are conscious of and believe in Federation, and have the enthusiasm necessary to make it succeed. Indeed, I see in them a readiness not only to federate, but even to merge our different political parties into one Federal Party – and this readiness has great meaning, because it is the nationalist parties which are the channelling focus for the people’s enthusiasm.

And this was indeed the case, initially at least, when the idea of an East African Federation seemed to enjoy wide support within East Africa. KANU, for instance, linked the campaign for Kenya’s Independence Day with the federation idea (Nye 1966: 183). And, on 05 June 1963, Nyerere, Obote and Kenyatta announced their intention to federate by the year’s

end. They also agreed to discuss a constitution to be drafted by a Working Party; and further "... agreed that we should establish a Federation, as against a Confederation" (Kenyatta to Nyerere 12 July 1963). The declaration to federate the East African countries came a few days after the conclusion of the *All African States Conference* which adopted a Charter to form the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

The declaration aroused mixed reactions. Within East Africa two groups emerged within the political class - the supporters and the detractors. Of the nationalist leaders Tom Mboya of Kenya strongly supported Nyerere. Kenyatta too seems to have initially supported Nyerere, as evidenced in the limited available correspondence between them. At one time, as can be seen in his 12 July 1963 letter to Nyerere, Kenyatta was concerned that the position on the Federation was not clear and they (KANU) wanted to take advantage of the on-going constitutional revision process to "incorporate some of the ideas which would enable us to move more easily into the Federation – without having a further major constitutional revision immediately after independence." Kenyatta argued the moment was ripe for unity and they should seize it.

Obote, although initially receptive to the proposal for East African Federation, later became ambivalent. The Uganda delegation in the Working Party seemed to frustrate and delay the negotiations by going back and forth to issues which had already been agreed on. In a letter to Obote, Nyerere wrote that the conclusion of the agreement on the federation was a matter of urgency because Kenyan had adopted a strategy which gave more prominence to the East African Federation constitution, believing that it would happen. He also cautioned Obote that:

If at the last moment Federation should not come about because of serious disagreements on the constitution, or as a

result of our having second thoughts about the very idea of Federation, then we shall have done great damage to Kenya (Nyerere to Obote 16 August 1963).

Nyerere expressed the concern that it “would be a terrible prospect for Kenya, and a terrible disgrace to the rest of us because we would be largely responsible for a delay in Kenya’s Uhuru.” Nyerere was obviously pressing Obote to make a quick decision and to make his position on the federation known. He thus asked Obote if Uganda “...want a Federation or not ... and if we all ... mean the same thing by Federation?”

Before concluding the letter, Nyerere gave Obote three options - first, a “real Federation” between the three countries, and if possible Zanzibar; second, a real federation between Kenya and Tanganyika. The third option, sounding like a threat to Obote, was:

the abandonment of the proposal for Federation of any sort this year, and a consequent and separate decision by each country as to the extent to which co-operation between us can continue. This inevitably includes a complete re-examination of EASCO and this Common Market.

The threat notwithstanding, Obote did not budge. Yoweri Museveni suggests that Obote was the reason why the East African Federation initiative failed. And the reason was Obote “... because he was not going to be the head of it, since he was a weaker politician than Nyerere and Kenyatta.”(Museveni 1997: 18). But there were additional hidden reasons for Obote’s stand. He had to appease the Baganda who were apparently opposed to the federation idea. Despite some interventions by KANU and TANU parliamentary groups to rescue the initiative, the East African

Federation never took root, although EASCO and the Common Market continued until the 1970s when a crisis ensued.

Outside East Africa the response was equally mixed. Nyerere was so enthused with the developments in East Africa, he wrote letters to many African heads of state and government to inform them what was happening in East Africa in, in his view, the spirit of Pan Africanism. Many of the responses were formal and commended the initiative.

The exception was Nkrumah, who had already indicated his opposition to the idea the first time it was introduced in 1960. In fact, Obote's later attitude to federation is partly attributed to Nkrumah's influence. According to Basil Davidson, Julius Nyerere,

... chastised him for his interference. East Africa, Nyerere believed, could best contribute to continental unity by moving first towards regional unity. Although knowing little of East Africa, Nkrumah not only disagreed but actively interfered to obstruct the East African federation proposed by Nyerere to other East African leaders. It was one of Nkrumah's worst mistakes (Davidson 1973: 188).

Nkrumah's arguments against the East African Federation are in a letter he wrote to Nyerere on 04 July 1963, in which he expressed shock at the process in East Africa and deemed it as against the Addis Ababa spirit for continental unity. He strongly emphasised his view that separate independent states be the basis for continental unity because they "...will be in a much stronger position to enjoy greater benefits and will assist the cause of African Unity better if they join the Organisation of African Unity as separate states."

Nyerere responded, in his 06 August 1963 letter to Nkrumah, that once each country separately attains its independence it would be impossible to unite. He wondered why Nkrumah was placing a lot of trust in political entities created by colonialism as the basis for unity, and not in the ones created by the initiatives of Africans themselves.

Nkrumah's insistence on maintaining the separate states was grounded in his fear that federation would frustrate the process towards continental unity. "Federation qua federation creates nothing," he wrote. Once created, Nkrumah thought, a federation would make its constituent states lose sight of the benefits accruing from continental unity. They may even be the source of friction between themselves and the African union government. In contrast, Nyerere thought that larger units would not only reduce friction but also the number of political entities which would be involved in the process of negotiating continental unity.

Nkrumah had, after Ghana's independence, tried to create a federation which failed, so he was speaking from experience. But he seemed to think that even where the smaller federal units were successful, they presented a greater potential of blocking continental unity. He remained hopeful that the separate small and weak independent political units would be easier to lobby, manipulate, and persuade on continental unity than if they were in a block. He presented his approach at the Addis Ababa meeting in 1963, without consulting the Casablanca group, which included his own Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, the United Arab Republic and Algeria. He failed in that attempt. The OAU summits were, to Nkrumah, a platform to appeal to "revolutionaries over the heads of his colleagues." After Addis, he continued to lodge his appeal in Cairo in 1964, and Accra in 1965. But in all cases he was not successful (Legum 1965: 77).

The two leaders also differed in the timing of unification within the independence process. Although both insisted that unity was an immediate imperative, and that postponement would destroy the prospects for unity, they diverged in the time of initiation of that process. Nyerere maintained that the best condition for unity was before independence, that countries in East Africa should get full independence as a united federation. Nkrumah, on the other hand, was of the view that unity should happen after countries had attained their independence, after which they would separately join the African Union. Nyerere's approach could only work for East Africa but not the whole continent. Nkrumah's approach was perhaps feasible but the qualification of independence first before unity could not have assured the compliance of the countries which would have gained independence after the 1960s.

Neither African unity nor federation materialised. Nyerere's fears were proven right over time - it became difficult for the independent countries to forgo their sovereignty for the sake of a larger unity (Nyerere 1997). And Nkrumah was proven right on two counts - the East African Federation did not happen, as he predicted, but the postponement of African unity in the 1960s also buried any hopes for its revival.

But there was one more serious axe to grind in Nyerere's and Nkrumah's exchange on federation. Nkrumah accused Nyerere of being a stooge of imperialism. In his response to Nyerere's letter Nkrumah wondered why Nyerere was pushing so hard for the East African Federation idea:

I must confess that I have not been at all happy to read reports that the British Government has been giving enthusiastic support for the proposal to create a new federation in East Africa. Indeed, the proposed federation might well be a ruse to

safeguard the vested interests of Britain in East Africa as a compensation for the losses they must suffer from the break-up of the Central African Federation. I entreat you most earnestly not to let us have some kind of a veiled manoeuvre for the entrenchment of neo-colonialism in East Africa. A federation could easily be used by our enemies to sow seeds of suspicion and misunderstanding among you and the rest of Africa, because this is in direct and flagrant opposition to the spirit and objectives of the Addis Ababa Charter (Nkrumah 1963).

In response Nyerere wrote:

The time has passed when the approval or disapproval of that Government makes any difference, and while in November 1960 you could reasonably warn us of the danger that Britain would influence our discussions, there is no longer any basis for doing so. The discussions now are being conducted between the elected representatives of the people of our three countries; we denied the right of Britain to be even officially informed of our progress despite the current technical status of Kenya (Nyerere 1963).

Nyerere cautioned Nkrumah on his efforts to sabotage the East African initiatives; and reminded him that “If anything is clearly contrary to the spirit of Addis Ababa it is your determined efforts to sow the seeds of disunity among East African leaders.” (Nyerere 1963).

However, Nkrumah’s suspicion of British influence is given some credence by Museveni’s allegation that the British and the Americans were behind the EAF through which they

wanted to achieve at least two things, to “neutralise the Zanzibar revolution by absorbing it into a wider entity and ... frustrate Kwame Nkrumah’s dream of uniting the whole of Africa.” Museveni claims that both the British and Americans were behind the conduct of both ventures (Museveni 1997: 18). Museveni’s claim, especially on Zanzibar, is suspect because the initial plans for the East African Federation did not include Zanzibar.

Nyerere’s position on the East African federation, his central role in the process, and the failure to realise his dream not only strengthened some of his views on Pan Africanism but also altered some of his positions on unity. Time has proven him both right and wrong on some of the positions he held. We now turn to a few examples which would illustrate this.

Unity in Pan Africanism

One of the strongest pillars in Nyerere’s Pan-Africanism is unity. From the very beginning when he was proposing the East African Federation, Nyerere perceived unity as a multifaceted route, geared towards achieving diverse goals and objectives. One facet, for instance, is of unity as an instrument of liberation. This position developed from Nyerere’s early nationalism; and both the struggles for the independence of Tanganyika and in the region strengthened it. In unity there is strength, and the best manifestation of this was the resistance against colonialism and the struggle for independence. Addressing a public rally on 23 June 1967 in Tabora, Nyerere alluded to the disunity of Africans as the reason for colonisation, and that it was because of unity they were able to defeat colonialism. However in many African countries, including Tanzania, especially after independence, under the pretext of maintaining unity and stability, states suppressed dissent and independent forms of political organisation. As Wamba points out “Democracy as political

pluralism appeared as a threatening anarchy.” (Wamba n.d: 17)

Nyerere’s thoughts on unity as a means to regional peace and stability developed along two prongs (1966). The first was his argument about the colonial borders being potential sources of conflict. The solutions for this, he suggested, were respect for colonial borders, and continental or regional unity. But Nyerere’s stand on the inviolability of colonial boundaries was to be tested very swiftly in the case of Biafra, whose secession efforts from the Nigerian Federation he supported (Tanzania Government 1981).

The second prong was the development of peace and stability through regional or continental unity. In this connection, Nyerere was interested in first, how unity would enhance social cohesion, and second, how it would diffuse tension and instability in smaller states. On the first, Nyerere maintained that larger political units, be they unions of unitary or federal governments, have the potential of consolidating some social cohesion. The nationalism that would develop in larger united political units would be different in being national rather than ethnic. Zanzibar, Kenya and Uganda would be his examples. In his famous speech on the fault lines in the Tanzanian society, Nyerere asserted that in the absence of the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar, there would not be Zanzibari or Tanganyikan nationalism, but rather a narrower kind of nationalism, such as that of Pemba or Unguja. When he spoke about this he was also making reference to the notion that Tanzania was still a nation in the making.

On the diffusion of tension and instability, Nyerere would draw attention to the problems of Rwanda and Burundi. His pragmatic solution for both countries is their integration into larger political units. His argument was that they are small countries with high population densities, but with meagre resources, especially land. Their integration into an East

African Federation for example, where citizenship is one and indivisible, would help those countries to resolve their problems and tensions. Nyerere recalls that he and Rwagasore used to discuss these issues in the 1960s before the latter was assassinated.

And finally are his views on unity at the continental level. This is mainly based on his perception of the non-viability of African states as political and economic entities in the face of the real hostile world. He was fond of using the Kiswahili diminutive for African countries, referring to them as “vijinchi”, capturing not only their size, but more importantly, their weakness and vulnerability. In his 1967 Tabora address he insisted on the need for unity as a way to overcome domination, exploitation and oppression. Without unity Africa would continue to be exploited. His wish was for one day the whole of Africa to speak with one voice.

Politically the independent African states were not able to exercise their sovereignty, which for Nyerere meant the right to think and make own decisions. This right was curtailed and limited by imperialist machinations and interests. What happened in the Congo in the 1960s was a clear message to Africa of what would happen if they were to try, as individual states, to assert themselves as sovereign states. (Nyerere 1966: 205).

Related to sovereignty was the inability of African countries to defend their independence in the face of the major powers. Nyerere, like Nkrumah and other Pan Africanists, adhered to the principle of Non-Alignment – non-involvement in the politics of major powers, non-hosting of foreign military bases, and freedom to choose a socio-economic programme independently without any influence from the major powers. This too was not easy without unity.

The inability to exercise their sovereignty and defend it was compounded by the fact that economically African states were

weak. They were highly dependent on the very countries they tried to free themselves from. This, in Nyerere's view, was due to underdevelopment and unequal trade between Africa and its former colonial powers. As a result, African states were unable to accumulate enough resources to finance their development. Instead, they would compete for favours from imperialist countries. The solution to these political and economic limitations in Africa was to be found in unity.

If any Part of Africa is not free we are not Free

Nkrumah's slogan that Ghana's "... independence is meaningless, unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent" became like a mantra to many nationalists and nationalist movements. Actually, in the context of African liberation struggles, it became an important expression of Pan-Africanism. But it was Cabral who gave it a deeper meaning when he stated that, "so long as imperialism is in existence, an independent African state must be a liberation movement in power, or it will not be independent" (Cabral 1972: 4). Cabral identified two forms of imperialist domination - direct domination, through colonialism, and indirect domination, through neo-colonialism. Thus in his view the attainment of flag independence was not the end of the struggle for total African liberation. For both Cabral and Nkrumah total African liberation meant the defeat of imperialism, expressed in Africa in a neo-colonial form. And the weapon for defeating imperialism was unity within the Pan African framework.

To Nyerere the statement made by Nkrumah after Ghana's independence had several implications - African dignity and respect, threats to "national" security, and advancing the cause of continental unity. When Mozambique was celebrating her independence Nyerere paid a visit and addressed a rally in Maputo. In his address he addressed three things which are worth highlighting here.

First, the independence of Mozambique had extended the freedom of Tanzania (Nyerere 2011: 61). In what ways? By moving the frontier of colonialism away from Tanzania. With Mozambique under Portuguese colonialism “Tanzania’s freedom was insecure and incomplete,” and became complete when the people of Mozambique defeated Portuguese colonialism. Nyerere observed further that Mozambique was neither secure nor free because it was “not surrounded by friendly states.” And thus, “The political independence you have won, is therefore, not yet secure” (Nyerere 2011: 58). This is partly Nyerere’s interpretation of Nkrumah’s dictum; it was a limited interpretation and revealed Nyerere’s inadequate understanding of the breadth and depth of imperialism. It does not seem that Nyerere understood imperialism as a system of capitalist accumulation on a world scale and that it assumes different political and economic forms in different contexts and times. And on this Shivji is correct in suggesting that Nyerere was “a consistent anti-colonialist”, and “sneered at imperialism” (Shivji 2009: 4).

Second, Nyerere maintained that as long as other Africans were under colonial rule the colonisers would not have respect and would not uphold the dignity of Africans in countries which were already independent (Nyerere 2011). In a way this view traces its roots to some early thinking about Pan Africanism as a “vehicle for the struggle of black people to regain their pride, their strength and their independence” (Legum 1965: 33).

The Makonde, who lives north of the Ruvuma, is not different from the Makonde who lives south of the river; a denial of freedom to one, is a denial of freedom to both. And, the Makonde born north of the river Ruvuma is a Tanzanian; a denial of his freedom is, therefore, a denial of freedom for all Tanzanians. No Tanzanian is free when

other Tanzanians have their right to freedom denied. No Africans are free while other Africans are dominated by colonialism (Nyerere 2011: 61).

Third, the independence of one more African country brings closer the reality of African unity. In his view "... the attainment of African unity, depends on the complete freedom of our continent." (Nyerere 1966: 153). In liberation Nyerere saw additional strength in the fight for unity. It is important to note the shift in position relating to the independence status of African countries. In the 1970s he seems to have accepted Nkrumah's position that independent African states were the basis for African unity, a position which he had opposed in his defence of the creation of the East African federation.

In both Nyerere's and Nkrumah's views the highest objective of Pan Africanism was unity. Their major weakness, however, was to reduce Pan Africanism to the attainment of the government of the United States of Africa (Wamba n.d.). This raises two important questions: first, what form of government did Nyerere conceive for the united Africa? And second, what was the agency for the Pan African vision?

On the Form of Government

From the time he was championing the East African Federation, Nyerere envisioned a strong federal government with full sovereignty. He expected African states committed to unity to surrender their sovereignty to the African state. The federal state would be the representative and spokesperson of Africa on the international stage, and it would be entirely responsible for the following minimum list of things: *defence, citizenship, currency, customs, foreign trade, and mineral resources*. But there would also be a concurrent list for which both the federal state and the national state would be responsible; in case of conflict the federal government would

have the final say (Nyerere 1966: 343). This view was shared by both Nkrumah in relation to the African government, and Kenyatta in the context of the East African Federation.

Nyerere's strong advocacy for a federal arrangement is summed up in his letter to Obote in which he wrote:

Tanganyika ... very much wants a Federation of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. But it must be a Federation. We are not prepared to mislead the public or ourselves by pretending to enter something called federation, but which does not have any of the powers of a Federation and cannot give a lead in development. We are not interested in a Confederation. I understand from Kenya's Memorandum that they feel the same, but can only speak for Tanganyika. (Nyerere to Obote 16 August 1963)

Agents of Pan Africanism: African People or African Leaders?

From its early stages of development, Pan Africanism started as a movement of the people. It also took a non-state organisational form. It became a vehicle of people rejecting oppression, humiliation, and exploitation based on race; a rejection of the forces and systems which perpetuated those vices. In Africa it was a summation of anti-imperialist struggles in their various forms – colonialism and neo-colonialism. Many of the early nationalists including Nyerere belonged to this movement – a people, non-state based movement.

Following the independence of African countries, Pan-Africanism became largely a state project, and its ultimate objective became African unity. The two congresses organised in Africa – the Sixth (1976) and Seventh (1997) which were held in Tanzania and Uganda respectively were

hosted and sponsored by states. Most of the delegates were sent by governments (Nyerere 1976: 5). The most important decisions of a Pan African orientation were determined and taken by summits of heads of state and government (Wamba n. d.). The people were so much taken for granted that a weighty decision such as that of converting the Organisation of Africa Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU) was not discussed by the peoples of Africa (Adejumobi and Olukoshi 2009, Mwangi 2009). It was a quiet affair involving politicians and commissioned African intellectuals meeting in workshops. Instead of it being an opportunity to mobilise and organise the people on the Pan African vision it kept them on the margins.

Frantz Fanon has lamented the reality that nationalism became a negation of itself (Fanon 1981). And one of the causes of this, according to Cabral, was the failure of national liberation movements, after independence, to become national liberation movements in power. To be a national liberation movement in power required, among other things, the transformation of the state on the basis of the demands and aspirations of the popular masses. It also required a committed and progressive class of petty bourgeois who were prepared to commit class suicide and be reborn as a working people. Cabral understood that left on their own, the petty bourgeoisie would always find a reason to revert to their own class position and privileges. To avoid this it was necessary to deny them the conditions for their class reproduction (Cabral 1969). But to lead a Pan African struggle the movement had to be informed and guided by an ideology which appreciated the fact that total liberation means the defeat of imperialism. It was from this perspective that Nkrumah pushed for the objectives and vision of Pan Africanism.

But the question of the agency for Pan Africanism does not seem to have been given serious attention by either Nyerere

or Nkrumah. Both seem to navigate between the people and the state, with the latter often gaining the upper hand in their thinking. Nyerere in particular seemed to have maintained that view throughout his Presidency and even after. In the 1960s, when he was advancing the proposal for the creation of the East African Federation, some suggestions were made on the need to consult the people on the matter. His response was that the Legislative Council of each country could do that on behalf of the people. That is also how the union between Zanzibar and Tanganyika was decided; the parliament and not all the people was the one consulted, and took the decision on the people's behalf.

The emphasis on the state or government is reflected in both Nyerere's early and later speeches. In his 1997 Accra speech Nyerere talked about the 1965 Accra Summit, saying:

Kwame Nkrumah was the great crusader of African unity. He wanted the Accra Summit of 1965 to establish a union government for the whole of independent Africa. But we failed (Nyerere 1997).

By failure Nyerere meant that the first generation of African leadership was unable to pursue the "objective of a politically united Africa." They did not "pursue the objective of African unity with the vigour, commitment and sincerity that it deserved" (Ibid). And he admitted that "... after Kwame Nkrumah was removed from the African scene, nobody took up the challenge again" (Ibid). With this confession Nyerere appealed to "the new generation of African leaders and African peoples" to "work for unity."

From the 1997 Accra speech Nyerere's views on the agency for Pan Africanism may seem to have advanced slightly because of the mention of the "peoples". However, he does not abandon his position on the role of African leaders in working for unity. Prior to the 1997 Accra speech, Nyerere

raised the issue of the people's agency for Pan Africanism in two speeches. The first he gave at the University of Zambia in 1966; and the second he made at the opening of the Sixth Pan African Congress, which was held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 1976.

In the 1966 speech Nyerere was concerned about the dilemma faced by African leaders who were committed to the Pan African vision but at the same time had to grapple with the demands and realities of "nationalism" within their states. In this regard Nyerere said:

We present leaders of Africa are grappling with serious and urgent problems within our own states; and we have to deal with dangers from outside. The time available to us for serious thinking about the way forward to Pan-Africanism is limited in the extreme – and when we do take steps in this direction we are always assailed for "wasting money on conferences", or being "unrealistic" in our determination to build roads or railways to link our nations (Nyerere 1968: 216).

In a situation like that, he wondered, who "is to keep us active in the struggle to convert nationalism to Pan Africanism if it is not the staff and students of our universities?" (Nyerere 1968: 216). In this speech Nyerere is suggesting that the struggle towards African unity has to be fronted by the African leaders, and hence the African states. The role of the people, in the limited sense used in the 1966 Lusaka speech, is simply to urge them on. While in the 1997 Accra speech he does not mention the role of the people, in the 1966 Lusaka speech he at least assigns them a role, albeit a limited one.

During the 1976 Sixth Pan African Congress Nyerere alluded to the composition of the delegations, the majority of whom were sent by their governments and liberation movements,

unlike in previous Congresses, when most delegates were from peoples' organisations. He however acknowledged the presence of concerned individuals in the conference. To them his message was clear:

... I believe that the participation in the Pan African Congress of concerned individuals and groups is as important now as it has been in the past. For it is already only too clear that the governments of Africa and the Caribbean are no more composed of angels than any other governments. Certainly independent Africa cannot claim to have been free from the sort of oppression and injustice which Pan African Congress have condemned in the past (Nyerere 1976: 5).

However, he quickly cautioned them that the Congress was "not a forum for attacks on particular governments" (Nyerere 1976: 5). The concerned individuals and organisations' freedom of expression was thus curtailed, and consequently their freedom to organise. Under the circumstances, and in a country like Tanzania where such freedom to organise was limited, the actual agency of Pan Africanism was the state. Part of the failure of Nyerere was the suppression of the people's agency towards Pan Africanism.

But the disappearance of the popular masses from the Pan African movement horizons can be traced back to the early development of the movement itself. As a movement, observes Wamba, Pan Africanism "grew from a mass based tendency ... to an intellectual elites based movement." As a result of this tendency the "role of the masses became seen as being less and less crucial." And even when the masses were to be included the consciousness had to be introduced to them by the elite (Wamba n. d.).

Conclusion

Nyerere started as a nationalist but in the rest of his political life he was a committed Pan Africanist. He was one of the few African political leaders who championed the Pan African cause. He strongly believed that Africa had no future without unity. However, his unquestionable commitment to Pan Africanism did not blind him to the potential strength of nationalistic sentiments against unity. His method of dealing with such tendencies was to counsel and condemn while at the same time appeal for unity.

He began as an optimistic Pan Africanist hoping that unity, at least in the form of the East African Federation, would happen. This did not materialise, but he succeeded in uniting Tanganyika and Zanzibar. This changed his position from the necessity for immediate unity prior to complete independence, to one in which there would be a gradual process towards unity. Despite this Nyerere remained optimistic that Africa would eventually unite. He proposed the formation of a unity committee on the model of the Liberation Committee, hoping that such a committee would expedite African unity. The question, however, was whose committee would it be, and what would be its role and functions. For Nyerere it would have been logical to suggest that the committee be composed of African states. But since state-led Pan Africanism has not been very successful, such a committee would be more effective if it were of the people, with its main role being to mobilise and organise towards the realisation of the Pan African dream.

References

Adejumobi, Saidi and Adebayo Olukoshi. 2009. Introduction: Transition, Continuity, and Change. In Saidi Adejumobi and Adebayo Olukoshi (eds.) *The African Union and*

New Strategies for Development in Africa. Nairobi: DPMF. pp. 3-17.

Africa Now. December 1983. Special interview with Nyerere by Peter Enahoro, pp. 97-125.

Anderson, Benedict. 2000. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.

Cabral, Amilcar. 1969. *Revolution in Guinea*. London: Stage 1.

Cabral, Amilcar. 1972. Homage to Nkrumah. p. 4. <https://360.worldpress.com/2014/10/03/amilcar-cabral-imperialism-betrayal-and-the-african-liberation-struggle/> (Accessed 25 November 2014).

Davidson, Basil. 1973. *Black Star: A View of the Life & Times of Kwame Nkrumah*. Oxford: James Currey.

Fanon, Frantz. 1981. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Kenyatta, Jomo to Julius K. Nyerere, (12 July 1963). Amir Jamal Papers, MISR Archive.

Legum, Colin. 1965. *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger.

Mamdani, Mahmood. 2002. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.

MNF 1996. Summary of Discussion between FRODEBU and UPRONA held on 22 April 1996.

Mwangosi, T. Edward John to T.W. L. A. and African Association Dar es Salaam. TNA File No. 571/50 (000001).

Mwangi, Susan Waiyego. 2009. From the OAU to AU: The Experience, Promise and Expectations. In Saidi

Adejumobi and Adebayo Olukoshi (eds.) *The African Union and New Strategies for Development in Africa*. Nairobi: DPMF. pp. 28-40.

Nkrumah, Kwame to Julius Nyerere, (04 July 1963). Amir Jamal Papers, MISR Archive.

Ntalaja, Nzongola. 1987. *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Africa: Essays in Contemporary Politics*. London: ZED Books Ltd.

Nye, Joseph S Jr. 1966. *Pan-Africanism and East African Integration*. London: Harvard University Press.

Nyerere, Julius K. to Kwame Nkrumah (06 August 1963). Amir Jamal Papers, MISR Archive.

Nyerere, Julius K. to Jomo Kenyatta (06 July 1963). Amir Jamal Papers, MISR Archive.

Nyerere, Julius K. to Milton Obote (16 August 1963). Amir Jamal Papers, MISR Archive.

Nyerere, Julius, K. 1964 (10 May). Reply to the Delegation from the Nairobi Meeting of Representatives of the KANU and TANU Parliamentary Groups - 10 May 1964. Amir Jamal Papers, MISR Archive.

Nyerere, Julius K. 1966. *Freedom and Unity*. Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press.

Nyerere, Julius K. 1967. Hotuba ya Rais Nyerere kwa Wananchi, Tabora; 23 June. Butiama Home Library.

Nyerere, Julius K. 1968. The Dilemma of the Pan-Africanist. *Freedom and Socialism*. Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, pp. 207-217.

Nyerere, Julius, K. 1976. President Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere's Opening Speech. In: *Sixth Pan African Congress*. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, pp. 3-10.

- Nyerere, Julius K. 1997. Without Unity, there is no Future for Africa. Speech on Ghana's 40th Independence Anniversary. Mimeo.
- Nyerere, Julius K. 2011. *Freedom and Liberation*. Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press.
- Prah, Kwesi Kwaa. 2009. *The African Nation: The State of the Nation*. Cape Town: The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society.
- Rodney, Walter. 2003. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Nairobi: East African Education Publishers.
- Shivji, Issa. 2005. The Rise, the Fall and the Insurrection of Nationalism in Africa. In Felicia Arudo Yieke, (ed.) *East Africa: In Search of National and Regional Renewal*. Dakar: CODESRIA, pp. 11-26.
- Shivji, Issa. 2009. Pan Africanism in Mwalimu Nyerere's Thought. *Chemchemi*, April, Issue No. 1.
- So, Alvin Y. 1990. *Social Change and Development: Modernisation, Democracy, and World System Theories*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Stalin, J. 1953. *J. V. Stalin Works Volume 2: 1907-1913*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.
- Tanzania Government. 1968. The Recognition of Biafra. In S. S. Mushi and K. Mathews, 1981. *Foreign Policy of Tanzania 1961-1981*. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House. pp. 275-279.
- Wamba dia Wamba, Ernest. 1996. Pan Africanism, Democracy, Social Movements and Mass Struggles. *African Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 1, No. 1. pp. 9-20.
- Wamba dia Wamba, Ernest. n. d. African People's Unification. 1.