



The attempt of Socialism in Africa based upon Nyerere's Arusha Declaration

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Introduction

In 1967 Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere proposed a change in Tanzania's socio-economic policies. This proposal known as the Arusha Declaration was a form of anti-imperial Socialism that was meant to increase the country's development without being reluctant on foreign aid/investment. Nyerere's ideas were closely aligned with other African leaders such as Nkrumah of Ghana or Modibo Keita in Mali. This particular form of socialism gave Tanzania the chance to slowly detach from British colonial rule. It also functioned as a way of not taking a position in the ongoing cold war between the USA and the Soviet Union. However its main purpose, to develop the country and its economy, did not succeed as planned. A deeper look into Nyerere's Declaration in February 1967 throws up the question, *how did Nyereres reform fail its aimed purpose, and what positive results could still be drawn from it?* In the following, I will have a deeper look into the primary source from 1967 and Nyerere's policies to answer this question.

Historical Background of Tanzania and Nyerere

To understand Nyerere's ideas and their importance, a look into the history of the United Republic of Tanzania is important. The mainland part of today's Tanzania was known as Tanganyika and was incumbent of British colonial rule. After the end of World War 2, the colony got the status of a United Nations Trust territory while still having great ties to the British. The actual independence movement started in 1954, with the establishment of the Tanganyikan African National Union (TANU) of whom Julius Nyerere was the leader. Nyerere who was born in 1922 grew up as the son of a polygamic tribe chief.¹ Information about his youth is rare but it is believed that the communal living within the tribes influenced his later political agenda.² After being one of the few Tanganyikan to study abroad (studied in Edingbrough) he was one of the only intellectuals in the country. In 1961 Tanganyika got its independence and Nyerere became the first prime minister of the country.³ In 1964 after the famous Zanzibar Revolution and a brutal change of government in Zanzibar, the island got united with mainland Tanganyikan and changed its name to Tanzania.

¹ Chambi Chachage and Annar Cassam, eds., *Africa's Liberation: The Legacy of Nyerere* (Nairobi : Kampala: Pambazuka Press ; Fountain Publishers, 2010).

² Chachage and Cassam.

³ "Brief History | Tanzania Embassy in Berlin, Germany," accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.de.tzembassy.go.tz/tanzania/brief-history>.

The Arusha Declaration

When the country gained independence, Nyerere claimed that the government faced three development challenges: poverty, illnesses, and education. Nyerere wanted to address all these problems in a new form of development, he summarised all his ideas in the famous Declaration of Arusha on the 5th of February 1967. In his speech, the first president of the young nation of Tanzania criticizes foreign aid and investment from capitalistic/western markets. Foreign investment would indeed evaluate Tanznias economy but on the flip side bring capitalistic ideas and values that would prevent socialism and reinforce imperialism in the country. Nyerere goes on and explains his strategy. For him the common field worker could increase his workload and so be way more efficient, he gives the example of a male fieldworker working between 40-45 a week while his female counterpart works up to 14 hours a day in sustaining social reproduction. The often-cited and used notion of Ujamma, meaning 'familyhood' in Swahili, also gets introduced in the declaration. Ujamaa in this sense often gets described as the formation of regional sectors to establish social, economic, and political equality.⁴ It also functions as the eradication of discrimination based on assigned standing; and the central planning of the economy's core sectors. All this goes hand in hand with the 3 guiding principles of the declaration. At first equality and respect for human dignity, the effort to share resources in the community, and lastly work by everyone without any exploitation.⁵ The Arusha Declaration firmly marks a shift in Nyerere's politics that later got known as African Socialism.⁶

Rhetorical Analysis

As earlier mentioned, the connection between Nyerere's policies towards his childhood and his way of growing up is very visible. By ending his speech with "(the) foundation is the people and their hard work, especially in agriculture, this is the meaning of

⁴Emma Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania: Freedom, Democracy and Citizenship in the Era of Decolonization*, African Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316104620>.

⁵ "The Arusha Declaration by Julius Nyerere 1967," accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/nyerere/1967/arusha-declaration.htm>.

⁶Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania*.

self-reliance." a connection to his experiences growing up in a rural community, that one can rely on and share its goods with, can be made.⁷

As one of the only academics in the country, the president knew how to use rhetorical devices to portray his message in certain ways. Nyerere connected "money" to everything bad capitalism had to offer. In that way, he made money a direct symbol of capitalism, further implying imperialistic development and dependency. On the flip side, "self-reliance" was used as the potentially best achievable status. Another way he delivered his message in a rhetorically convincing way was by sympathizing with the general public through the use of "we" instead of "i" or "you".

Why did it fail its aimed purpose?

However, whenever analyzing concepts and declarations such as the Arusha one, it is of great importance to define the gap between ideology and action. With a high acceptance rate in the public, the development strategy of Ujamaa was passed on the same day as the declaration. However, It is important to note that Nyerere's plans did not work out as he imagined and in 1985 he voluntarily and gracefully bowed out of governance.⁸ The reasons why his ideas failed and did not bring the hoped prosperity for Tanzania are various and plenty, but it makes sense to name a few. Some of them can be found in his declaration already some others are part of the historical context.

The first reason that is part of an example Nyerere makes during his declaration, is the workload women have in the Tanzanian society. However the Ujamaa policies and the TANU party did not change anything regarding these circumstances and further, they made little attempt to halt the inhumane treatment of women; as a result, a woman was slapped by her superior in the face of male Tanzanians was commonplace. If a woman student was discovered to be pregnant, she was dismissed from school, and she was not even allowed maternity leave from her employment when she gave birth.⁹ This seemed contrary since one of the aims of the Arusha Declaration was equality and respect for human dignity.

⁷ "The Arusha Declaration by Julius Nyerere 1967."

⁸ Chachage and Cassam, *Africa's Liberation*.

⁹ Linda Freeman, "The Long Transition: Building Socialism in Tanzania" Adrian N. Resnick New York: Monthly Review Press, 1981, Pp. 304," *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 16, no. 1 (March 1983): 217–18, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423900028432>.

Another reason why Tanzania's public policies were severely harmed was the Tanzania-Uganda War between 1978 and 1979. Though this reason is not one that directly comes from Nyerere and/or TANU, it had a major influence on the liquidity of the Tanzanian Government. In truth, the conflict and the collapse of the Ujamaa were inextricably linked. Because the conflict lasted nearly seven months, Tanzania spent more than \$200 million on the conflict. As a result of the war expenditures, the country's poverty grew as the government halted all development projects aimed at improving living conditions.¹⁰ As a result of this scenario, the government was compelled to borrow \$150 million from the International Monetary Fund.¹¹ This move by Nyerere meant that Tanzania was ready to follow the rules of capitalism.

Positive results

Although the Ujamaa policies failed to enhance the welfare of Tanzanians. It was successful in promoting self-reliance in many Tanzanians. Nyerere's politics also, other than the policies by Nkrumah in Ghana, achieved the idea of staying independent from the cold war superpowers.¹² Furthermore, the Ujamaa strategy contributed to the development of national unity among Tanzanians, since it has been a key component in maintaining political stability in the country since independence. Due to a lack of basic social norms, such achievements are uncommon in many African countries. Nyerere achieved his primary goal of establishing a communal society to some extent. As a result, he was able to create a more classless society in which everyone worked.

It is also of great importance to mention that Nyerere, though his ideas did not work out as hoped, he is often granted as one of the founders of African socialism. These movements of African socialism and in part Pan Africanism (collaboration and unity of all people of African descent) that Nyerere inspired, still have an impact on young Tanzanians today.

¹⁰ Priya Lal, ed., "Conclusion," in *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 227–40, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316221679.007>.

¹¹ Lal.

¹² Emmanuel Akyeampong, "African Socialism; or, the Search for an Indigenous Model of Economic Development?," *Economic History of Developing Regions* 33, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 69–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20780389.2018.1434411>.

Usefulness to historians

These kinds of primary sources, especially speeches or declarations, are of great importance for historians that try to understand the context of time in which the speech was delivered. Looking at the way (word choice, use of rhetorical devices) a speech is presented, opens up the possibility to understand the intended audience. In the case of a declaration, it can be used for historians to understand the broad and general public in a country, since the declaration is addressed to every citizen in the country. Secondly, by looking at specific ideas in the declaration historians can figure out why or why not policies and ideas worked out. An example of this is this assignment. By looking at specific ideas of Nyerere it was easier to conclude why the Ujamaa policies failed or at least did not live up to expectations. But not only historians can profit from Nyerere's ideas. A lot of political and economic thought within Africa was influenced by Nyerere. His Ujamaa policies were also a topic of great debate in academia.¹³ However, it might be flawed when only focusing on the educated elite and what influence Nyerere had on them. During his time as a president but also long after, Nyerere was seen as an important figure in Tanzania and was of great popularity. Many Tanzanians still practice some of the Ujamaa policies and are still shaped by a great communal sense.

Reliability

In terms of reliability, the declaration that I am referring to in this assignment and that most of the Western world is discussing and reading as well is the English translation of a Swahili document. When talking about a translated primary source, it is of great importance to take into account that the meaning can be different from the original meaning. This happens due to a change of words or structure which can lead to a misunderstanding of the author's intended message. In terms of the Arusha declaration and its fair recentness is this misinterpretation possibility smaller than with ancient documents but never non-existing.

Summary

¹³ Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania*.

In summary, the Arusha Declaration and its Ujamaa policy were of great importance for the development and anti-colonial struggle of Tanzania. Even though Nyerere's policies failed due to various internal and external factors, he still managed to promote self-reliance within the Tanzanian population. Other than Nkrumah in Ghana, did Nyerere stay true to his idea of fighting imperialism and held his anti-superpower position till the end. He did all this by using his educational privileges, one can say that Nyerere is one of the great freedom fighters in African history. At least he is a great figure in anti-colonial thought and through his ideas, he provoked debate.

The Arusha declaration was also used by many historians to understand the decolonial struggle and the Tanzanian society and its development during the 60s and 70s. Likewise, historians, analyze political and economical scientists or researcher Nyerere's ideas.

It can be said that even though Nyerere stepped out of office in 1985 his political ideas lived on. Finally, though Nyerere died in 1999 his ideals and dreams are still of great value to many people, and that way he will long be remembered.

1885 Words

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