

The Relationship of Socialism, Nationalism and Pan-Africanism in the Thinking of Nyerere and Nkrumah

Linlin Jiang *

University College London, UK

* jianglinlin2022@163.com

Abstract. Nyerere is the first-generation of African nationalist, while Nkrumah is a famous ideological theorist and politician in the history of Ghana. They all saw socialism as manifestation of communitarianism. Nyerere believes that socialism is a state of mind and elaborates on the relationship between nationalism and Pan-Africanism, putting forward that unity is more important than independence and that African countries should establish federalism before achieving national independence. While Nkrumah holds the view that African socialism is the reappearance of traditional spirit in a modern environment. Pan-African Movement is the expression of African nationalism, and his socialist thought is mainly embodied in the philosophy of conscience. Socialism is the defence of local autonomy, and the goal of socialism is the decolonization of Africa.

Keywords: Nyerere; Nkrumah; Socialism; Nationalism; Pan-Africanism.

1. Introduction

Nyerere is the first-generation of African nationalist, while Nkrumah is a famous ideological theorist and politician in the history of Ghana. Both of their thoughts are extensive and profound, and they have written a lot of works, among which the African socialist thoughts and Pan-African thoughts are the most remarkable. Nyerere and Nkrumah have many similarities and differences in their thoughts. This essay will discuss the thoughts of socialism, nationalism and Pan-Africanism and their relations in Nyerere and Nkrumah respectively, and make a brief comparison and evaluation.

There are many historical sources on the thoughts of Nyerere and Nkrumah. Among the secondary historical sources, Kwame Shivji introduced Nyerere's political philosophy in the article "Nationalism and Pan-Africanism: decisive moments in Nyerere's intellectual and political thought". The author considered Nyerere as a first-generation of African nationalist, who saw the tension between nationalism and Pan-Africanism, as well as the changes of Nyerere's thoughts in different periods.[1] Deji Adesoye discussed the nature of African socialism and the different views of Nyerere and Nkrumah on African socialism in "African socialism in Nyerere and Nkrumah". Their ideas both converge on the idea that African socialism is a manifestation of communitarianism. Nyerere considers socialism as a state of mind, while Nkrumah prefers socialism as a tool of political action.[2] In the book "Kwame Nkrumah", Yuri Smertin, a scholar of the Soviet Union, introduced Nkrumah's doctrine and its implementation in detail. Among them, he also made a discussion on the implementation of African socialist thoughts in Ghana, and compared the changes of his socialist thoughts. This is the value of the book, although it is clearly marked by ideology. In the book "Kwame Nkrumah's Politico-cultural Thought and Policies", Ghanaian scholar K. Botwe-Asamoah discusses the relationship between culture and politics in Nkrumah's thought, it is helpful for us to understand the connotation of "African individuality" and African socialist thought. [3]

Among the primary resources, Nyerere expounded Tanzania's socialism in "From Uhuru to Ujamaa". He believed that although Tanzania policies did not fully reflect socialism, the government and leaders knew the political goal and had achieved certain success in realizing socialism.[4] At the same time, Nyerere expressed his thoughts on the relationship between the establishment of African Unity and national independence in detail in "Freedom and Unity". He believed that the African Unity should be established after each African country elected a responsible government, and then independence could be realized. Nyerere described the relationship between nationalism and Pan-Africanism in detail. He held the view that the pan-African movement and nationalism were mutually

contradictory. Unity was more important than independence. African countries shall establish federation before realizing national independence.[5] Nkrumah discussed his views on socialism in the article "African Socialism Revisited". He believed that African socialism was the reappearance of traditional spirit in modern environment. In his monograph "Africa Must Unite", Nkrumah described the social background of Africa's colonial period, how African countries gained independence and the gradual development of the Pan- African Movement. This primary historical source covered a wide range of time, from the colonial period to the period of African neocolonialism. It was a good reference for the study of African history and an objective description of the truth. But the book was more of a straightforward account of events than Nkrumah's views on socialism, nationalism and Pan-Africanism.

2. Nyerere's Thinking

In general, as far as the relationship among socialism, nationalism and Pan-Africanism is concerned, Nyerere's views could be summarized as follows. Socialism and nationalism were complementary to each other, while Pan-Africanism and nationalism were contradictory and the former should take precedence over the latter. That is to say, Nyerere's socialistic thoughts emerged in order to solve the further development of the country after political independence under the historical background of the vigorous development of the national liberal movement and the union of Tanzania. It represented the common interests and ideals of Africa in opposing imperialism and colonialism, developing national economy and building a nation-state. He believed that there were two basic economic and social systems in modern society, which were the capitalist system and the socialist system. And the newly independent country had to make a choice between them. [6]

First, Nyerere's socialist thought was not very clear. His socialist thoughts were mainly reflected in The Arusha Declaration of January 1967, in which he defined socialism as the call for self-reliance and the establishment of leadership to ensure that the party and government served the people of Tanzania. Just as Nyerere himself was a king and philosopher, his socialist thought was a political strategy or a philosophical belief of the future social vision.[7] Nyerere's socialism was a state of mind. Nyerere specifically uses the term "Ujamaa," which referred to extended family ties and the influence of family members on each other, with particular emphasis on: "Our socialism is based on the traditions of our past, and our own designs."

In fact, Nyerere's idea of socialism was Irwinian at best, neither inspiring anyone nor mobilizing the masses. But even so, in the process of national construction of Tanzania, Nyerere adopted a series of policies and measures, such as the democratic system under the one- party system, Ujamaa socialism, national convergence and non-aligned diplomacy, which laid the foundation of Tanzania's status in Africa and even the world today. As C.L. James observed, his socialist ideas laid the foundations of an African nation, both in theory and in practice, in a way that Nkrumah could not. But it is worth noting that Nyerere's socialist thought was very different from that of Marx in that he abhorred class struggle. For example, Mwingo lit the fire of class struggle against a new class, the proto-bourgeoisie. Nyerere stated this publicly in the public speech in 1974 that state-owned enterprises were public property, and when workers attacked them, they were actually hurting themselves.

Secondly, another striking aspect of Nyerere's thinking was that he saw an irresolvable tension between nationalism and Pan-Africanism. African unification was bound to mean the construction of a united government of African countries. In the ongoing process of unification, each nation would cede some of its sovereignty to the federal government. Nyerere had made it clear that he opposed tribalism and would not succumb to tribalization.

Nyerere's thinking also changed in dealing with the relationship between nationalism and Pan-Africanism. In the 1960s, Nyerere stressed gradualism in the debate, opposing Nkrumah's call to establish the African Union. In 1997, however, Nyerere argued that Africa was at a crossroads, either

led into the path of Pan-Africanism or into the abyss of ethnic division and tribalism, and he called on the new generation to refuse to return to tribalism.

Finally, Nyerere emphasized the importance and priority of Pan-Africanism when it comes to the relationship between nationalism and Pan-Africanism. He believed that Pan-Africanism and national independence movements were contradictory, and that the call for Unity was much stronger than that for independence. And it was the best time to establish the African Union before the countries achieved independence. He discussed the demand for African unity elaborately. Nyerere held the view that the African Unity made them a continent capable of speaking or acting as a whole. They didn't have superpowers, and the African Unity was the only major force that they had.[8] For example, after the establishment of federation, people from different countries could cross borders without visas, and trade was free of tariff barriers, which would benefit the development of the whole continent.

He also pointed out the pitfalls of Western imperialism in nationalism and the fact that independence would make African states even more disunited and permanently Balkanized.

3. Nkrumah's Thinking

There is a great similarity between Nkrumah's socialist thought and Nyerere's.

As far as the relationship between socialism and nationalism is concerned, Nkrumah, like Nyerere, believed that African socialism developed as an ideology with the aim of uniting the African people and establishing a truly independent African country, that is to say, socialism and nationalism were mutually reinforcing. However, Unlike Nyerere's views on the relationship between nationalism and Pan-Africanism, Nkrumah believed that the pan-African movement was an expression of African nationalism.[9]

First of all, Nkrumah's socialist thought was embodied in the philosophy of conscience. He put forward the view that socialism was the defence of local autonomy and the goal of socialism was the decolonization of Africa. He criticized the blind worship of traditional African society. For instance, Senghor thought African society previous to colonialism was essentially socialism. Nkrumah took doubtful attitude to this, but did not deny that the traditional communitarianism spirit, because the communitarianism spirit was mainly embodied in its humanism and its balance between individual progress and group welfare.

The leaders' goal, he said, was to reshape African society in a socialist direction and to reinvigorate the humanism of traditional African life in a modern technological society.

Moreover, Nkrumah argued that one of the obvious contradictions in building African socialism was the vast difference between the societies of today and the communitarian societies of the past. Among them, in the development of socialism, Nkrumah argued that individualistic tendencies should be abandoned. For example, when people and leaders were divided, leaders would begin to ignore those who put them in power and were prone to become the tools of neo-colonialists. Therefore, the capitalist egoism, individualism and exploitation ethics must be transformed into the egalitarian communitarianism ethics. The most controversial aspect of Nkrumah's socialist ideology was his promotion of a one-party system, which he saw as a way against a common enemy, which was capitalism. But some critics saw Nkrumah's preference for a one-party system as a method motivated by a selfish desire to remain in control of Ghanaian affairs.

Secondly, one of the striking points in Nkrumah's thinking was the call for African unity. In the 1960s, after several countries in Africa had gained independence, Nkrumah proposed the formation of a common political party with common goals. Each country with a common goal cooperated with each other for the freedom and unity of Africa. Africa was a continent where political and economic development was uneven, where some countries were poor in natural resources while others were rich, where some countries had achieved independence relatively easily and peacefully, while others were still struggling. In terms of this issue, Nkrumah suggested that the most obvious solution was solidarity and a cohesive plan for development.

Nkrumah firmly believed that the desire for unity was far greater than the desire for division.

Thirdly, Nkrumah clearly stated the relationship between nationalism and Pan-Africanism. He held the view that Pan-Africanism and nationalism were complementary to each other, that national independence led to the unification of Africa, and that the Pan-Africanism movement was an expression of African nationalism. For example, nationalism and Pan-Africanism were embodied concretely in the Fifth Pan-African Conference. Since then, the Pan-Africanism movement had been no longer a vague movement, but an expression of African nationalism. Nkrumah used the Gold Coast as a starting point for African independence and unity. Ghana became a sovereign state in 1957, and he made it clear that Ghana's national independence would have no meaning unless it was linked to the complete liberation of the African continent. He stated that Ghana had made its position clearly and that the Constitution of the Republic stipulated that, in the broad interest of African unity, Ghana's sovereignty must be renounced in whole or in part, as did Guinea, Mali, Tunisia and the United Arab Republic.

Finally, African socialistic thought and pan-African thought were the two most important political thoughts of Nkrumah, which were also the most remarkable ones. In Nkrumah's view, these two ideas were complementary to each other. African socialism was an internal means and a wise development path for Ghana after its independence. Pan-Africanism was the external goal and the direction that all African countries, including Ghana, needed to move forward after their independence. Therefore, the former was the premise of the latter, the latter was the generalization of the former, and they were closely dependent on each other. For instance, at many Pan-African preparatory meetings, Nkrumah always showed that socialism was the best option for Africa, and that it was ready for Africa to embark on unity. After the independence of Ghana, Nkrumah actively carried out socialist policies at home, and actively expanded the Pan-Africanism in diplomacy, making Ghana the center of the Pan-African political arena. He not only held several Pan-African conferences in Ghana, but also used a lot of socialist construction and resources in China to support the Pan-African cause.

The famous Volta Dam, for example, was not only the basis of Ghana's industrialization, but also provided electricity to the rest of West Africa. He was active in popularizing university education, and the goal of university education was to cultivate pan-African talents. Nkrumah's pan-African enthusiasm remained strong, especially at the end of his reign, when conditions in Ghana became worse and worse, but it continued unabated. Some scholars had interpreted his growing enthusiasm for Pan-Africa as a kind of confidence he sought in the diplomatic career. [10]

All in all, Nkrumah's African socialist thought was rich and complex, which could be summarized into the following four aspects. Firstly, commune socialism was the core of Nkrumah's African socialism thought, which not only reflected Nkrumah's yearning for the primitive commune system, but also reflected Nkrumah's diversified cultural characteristics. Secondly, class and class struggle theory were important parts of Nkrumah's African socialist thought. He emphasized that there was no class and class struggle in traditional African society, which were accompanied by the invasion of foreign capitalism. All these were conducive to the consolidation of the nascent political power and the cohesion of social forces. Thirdly, economic reconstruction and comprehensive modernization were the reflection of African socialist ideology in economic and social affairs, which was manifested by the comprehensive intervention of the government, the designation and implementation of a series of social development plans, and the demand for economic independence. Fourthly, the one-party system under the democratic regime was an important part of the African socialist thought, which also reflected the strong religious culture in his thought. On the one hand, the one-party system was conducive to establishing authority and promoting national identity; on the other hand, it was easy to go to the other extreme of individual centralization and personality worship.

4. Similarities and Differences

There were many similarities and differences in Nyerere's and Nkrumah's views towards socialism, nationalism, Pan-Africanism and their relations. As far as I am concerned, there were two

obvious similarities. For one thing, with respect to relation between socialism and nationalism, they both thought that they prompted each other. That is to say, to achieve national independence, African countries should choose socialistic system. And meanwhile, African leaders' recognition of socialism came into being in the context of national liberation movements. For another, their definitions of socialism were overall the same. They both believed that African socialism was the manifestation of traditional communitarianism in modern society. Nkrumah advocates African individuality, which was an affirmation and inheritance of traditional village culture. His conception of African socialism was to build on the basis of the traditional village community, and to reflect the principles of humanitarianism and egalitarianism of the traditional African village community. At the same time, he needed tradition to adapt to the new order of the society, and the influence of traditional culture on Nkrumah and on Ghana as a whole was deeply rooted. He was also open to the influence of other civilizations, especially Western Catholic culture. He incorporated foreign civilizations into his own socialist construction as a tool of his political rule. Nkrumah understood that religious culture could contribute to the formation of a social cohesion, a moral resultant force, and promote the nationalization and national construction. This cultural diversity came from Nkrumah's growing environment and life experience since childhood.

Nyerere's socialist thought was also the realistic version of the African traditional village civilization and the Tanzanian version of the African village socialism. For the Tanzanian people, the realization of socialism meant the restoration and inheritance of the original natural characteristics of traditional society, the maintenance, repair and innovation of traditional society and African village civilization. For example, equality of all, common labour and egalitarianism had a great impact on Nyerere. He emphasized that the construction of African socialism could and should start from the historical heritage. Because of the affirmation and inheritance of the traditional value system, religion has also been retained and played as a factor of African socialism. Taking religion as one of the ideological bases of socialism, and believing that religion is the source of people's moral norms and codes of conduct, Nyerere's attempt to explain religious belief from the point of view of historical materialism became a major feature of his socialist thought. [11]

Above all, we could summarize the biggest difference between Nyerere's and Nkrumah's thoughts lied in their opinions about the relationship between nationalism and Pan-Africanism. In Nyerere's opinion, Pan-Africanism should be prior to the achievement of national independence. That is to say, the unity force brought by federation would enable Africa to maintain its hard-won independence, while nationalism would only make Africa even less united than it is now, and would reduce the desire for unity and the chances of achieving it. Independence would encourage division rather than unity. However, Nkrumah took the opposite attitude. He proposed that the realization of nationalism was the premise of Pan-Africanism and then took many measures to promote the development of pan-African movement. It was difficult to explore the underlying reasons for their difference in this point. But one obvious reason may have to do with the difference in their views towards socialism and political background. Nyerere saw socialism more as a state of mind, while Nkrumah saw it as a tool of political action. Perhaps for the purpose of maintaining his rule in Ghana, Nkrumah was prone to achieving national independence.

References

- [1] Kwame Shivji, "Nationalism and Pan-Africanism: decisive moments in Nyerere's intellectual and political thought", *Review of African Political Economy*, 39 (2012).
- [2] Deji Adesoye, "African socialism in Nyerere and Nkrumah", *Philosophy Pathways*, 216(2017).
- [3] K. Botwe-Asamoah, *Kwame Nkrumah's Politico-cultural Thought and Policies* (N.Y:Routledge).
- [4] J. Nyerere, "From Uhuru to Ujamaa", *Africa Today*, 21 (1974).
- [5] J. Nyerere, "Freedom and Unity", *Transition* 14 (1964).
- [6] Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Development*, Oxford University Press, 383.

- [7] Kwame Shivji, “Nationalism and pan-Africanism: decisive moments in Nyerere’s intellectual and political thought”, *Review of African Political Economy*, 39 (2012), 114.
- [8] Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Liberation*, Oxford University Press(T)Ltd,2011,259.
- [9] K. Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, 1963, 135.
- [10] Yuri Smertin, *Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: International Publishers, 1987),133.
- [11] Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity*, Oxford University Press, 1066, 172.