

## **AN APPRAISAL OF THE CONCEPT OF UJAMA AS AN IDEOLOGY TOWARDS GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA.**

**BY**

**Okoloye, Andrew Onyekachi**

Department of Philosophy

Faculty of Arts

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

### **Abstract**

Due to amalgamation of different nationalities called Nigeria and the imposition of foreign traditions which influenced Nigeria's socio-political, cultural, religious and philosophical background, the Nigerian Nation is faced with the problem of ethnic distrust, religious fanaticism and inequality and because of that, a greater number of Nigerian population live in abject poverty despite its rich human and abundant mineral resources. The Ujamaa ideology is adopted to achieve a reconstruction of an imaginary relationship among the different nationalities such that Nigeria would be a kind of nation where service provision would help to ensure the well-being of all the sections of population, where equal opportunities, rights and freedom are given to all tribes and where all the religions are considered unimportant in terms of political opportunity. This can play a role in fostering more inclusive, legitimate and stable institution.

### **Introduction**

The origin of Ujamaa was from ethos derived from the communitarian nature of African societies which characterized itself with participation, inclusion, sharing, care for one another and cooperation, as well as communal ownership of property. After the independence of Tanzania

from the colonists, Nyerere adopted the Ujamaa ideology as an official policy of the nation to replace the negative effects of colonialism which introduced individualism, capitalism, class and disappearance of attitude of brotherhood in the country. Nyerere believed that before the arrival of colonists, Africans were communitarian in nature, especially in their way of thinking and living as members of a genuine community: He then adopted it into the state generally as an ideology to achieve a reconstruction of an imaginary relationship of individuals at the level of the state and this ideology should be reinstated as family-hood, brotherhood of all state members irrespective of tribe, religion and status and which is rooted in the concept of equality, rights, dignity and right to democracy. This ideology was elaborated in the sense that everybody in the country would be considered a brother or sister. A process which Nyerere intended to make entire population of Tanzania to be one big extended family. A group of people who lived together in one country and worked together for the common good, even though, they didn't share one ancestry or come from one tribe or religious background and he achieved this aim by making the Ujamaa ideology a foundational/official policy of the Tanzanika African National union (TANU), a mass party founded by Julius Nyerere in 1922 which was prior to the date of the nation's independence 1961.' The state of the Nigerian nation deserves the Ujamaa ideology to ameliorate the inequality, ethnic distrust and religious influences bedeviling the nation. They should see themselves as one extended family because all human beings are the same, for they possess the same humanity.

### **Ujamaa: Family-hood or Brother-hood.**

In Ujamaa: essays on socialism, Nyerere argued for a specific conception of socialism. Nyerere depicted Ujamaa as "an attitude of mind ... which is needed to ensure that people care for each other's welfare."<sup>2</sup> This is the attitude of "brotherhood or familyhood."<sup>3</sup> He admitted that there is a very close link between caring for one another and the attitude of brotherhood or family hood. Care for one another can only be guaranteed if people view each other as brothers and sisters or as members of the same family.

This was what Nyerere meant when he concluded thus: "Ujamaa; then or family-hood' describes our society" and that the foundation of the

Ujamaa is to be based on African Cultural Traditions."<sup>4</sup> It was not only this expression of African foundation that led Nyerere to believe that Ujamaa differed from other strands of socialism. He cited two further reasons. Firstly, Ujamaa was "opposed to capitalism,"<sup>5</sup> which according to him, seeks to build a happy society on the basis of the exploitation of man by man. Secondly, Ujamaa was also "opposed to doctrinaire socialism,"<sup>6</sup> which he saw as a form of socialism that "seek to build a happy society on the philosophy of inevitable conflict between man and man."<sup>7</sup> Nyerere's Ujamaa was opposed to scientific socialism or Marxism on the ground that Marxism legitimizes class conflicts.

In conclusion, the foundation and objective of African socialism is the extended family-hood and the true socialist does not form alliance with brethren for the extermination of non-brethren, he rather regards all men as his brethren, a member of his ever extending family. This is what Nyerere propounded as one human brotherhood and the unity of Africa.

### **Nature of extended Family and its Foundation in Africa**

Anthropologists have shown that Traditional African Societies were composed of many groups of various sizes, the basic unit or group was the extended family. The clan was bigger and consisted of more than two extended families. Tribe was a bigger still as it were composed of numerous clans but biggest was ethnic group comprising many tribes. All members of an ethnic group were linked by common ancestry.

Extended families are usually made up of a "large number of people related by descent in one line from a living or recently dead common ancestors."<sup>8</sup> There are two types of extended families." The first is a type where status and property is inherited through the paternal line while the second is the one in which status and property is inherited through the maternal line."<sup>9</sup> But paternal family prevailed in Africa. Nyerere referred community as a group of people who live together and work together for the common good of all.<sup>10</sup>

The ties that unite people is that they are relatives bound by common ancestry. There are functions that are being carried out by the extended families which are of great influence in Ujamaa. The task of Ujamaa

was socialization. It was an institution where a person was born, raised, socialized and educated. It was in extended family that an African child was indoctrinated.<sup>11</sup>

The role of extended family was also to protect life in a sense of defending its members from dangerous situations that can threaten life such as uncertainties of whether, sickness, the depredations of wild animals and cycles of life and death.<sup>12</sup> It was impossible for individuals to survive alone. Another task of extended family was to produce material goods. In traditional societies, productive activities were related to an ethnic group.

The basic unit of production in traditional Africa was the extended family, they were self-contained economic and social unit because they depended on their own labour force and on their own resources.<sup>13</sup> Their basic goods of land were food, land and cattle, they lived together, they worked together and the result of their joint labour was the property of the family as a whole.

### **Ujamaas a Political Ideology**

Ujamaa as a political ideology was formulated as a policy governing the state and it was more concerned with political, social and economic organizations of the state. The purpose of formulating this Ujamaa ideology was to create unity in the state, to establish a classless society and to build a new work ethic. This ideology was formulated to curb the situation of divisions in the state such as class conflict and laziness. There are three main sources of division in Tanzania, these are tribalism, religious fanaticism and racism which is the off-shoot of inequality.

**Tribalism:** It is a practice of segregating people on the basis of their tribes. During colonialism, all tribes were united in the quest for independence but as soon as it was achieved, unity between them began to crumble. This was learnt from colonist that some tribes with most educated members or the other with more population thought they deserve more privilege and power in government than others. An ideological function of Ujamaa regarding this particular division was to eradicate tribalism/ethnicism.

Government took measures to do this. The first was to abolish chieftaincy title, diverting allegiance away from tribe to the nation, adoption of one language to be used as an official language. The ideology of Ujamaa proclaimed that all human beings and all Tanzanians in particular were equal irrespective of tribe. The only tribe in the country is Tanzanianism. And this means the nationalization of Ujamaa. These Tanzanians belong to one country, Tanzania, where they were all equal members of the society with equal right, duties and opportunities. In universalization, Ujamaa was also idealized as brotherhood of man such that a true socialist is one who "regards all men as his brethren, as his ever extending family."<sup>14</sup>

In order to build unity among people of different religions, Nyerere preferred ideological tactics rather than violence. One is religious tolerance which provided all religions with freedom of others, in doing this; he secularized it from public offices. "Every citizen has the right to freedom of ... religious belief."<sup>15</sup> Racism was also traced back to time of colonialism and the concept did not disappear immediately after independence, rather Africans started segregating foreigners as a form of revenge.

On the ideological plane, racism was rejected. Nyerere rejected racism by positing that "socialism is not racism."<sup>16</sup> This means that socialism has nothing to do with racism. The ideology of ujamaa was a belief in the equality and in the family-hood of all human beings. All humans whether red, white, black or yellow are all equal members of society, with equal rights and duties, therefore, race does not exist. The removal of evidence of class domination in society was also one of functions of ideology of ujamaa. First step was the denial of its existence and second was to nationalize the major means of production. The third was the establishment of leadership code of ethics and the last was creation of ujamaa villages.

### **The Problems Facing Nigerian Democratic Governance.**

Here, this work identifies some of the fundamental problems in the way of the nation's political development. These include problems of ethnicity, inequality, religious fanaticism and dictatorial political practice. We are to focus on inequality, ethnicity and religious fanaticism in Nigeria. Democracy may be defined as a political

arrangement in which political power is vested in the majority of the citizens<sup>17</sup> it is a system of governance whereby the citizens of the country choose who become their leaders through periodic, free and fair election. The leader so elected is expected to use the power and authority vested in him to preside, manage and distribute functions, responsibilities and manage the resources and wealth of the society as enshrined in the constitution for the benefit of all the citizenry. In spite of Nigeria's rich human and abundant mineral resources, a disproportionately high number of its population live in abject poverty. The rising inequality has become the defining challenge of the country. Inequality is complex and highly contested and comes in different forms, thus inequality before the law in terms of basic political and socio-economic rights and freedoms, inequality of access and opportunity, inequality of distribution of resources, distribution of power and social standing. Kelly observed it that:

Inequality is an individual as well as a collective phenomenon; it exists between individuals and household as well as between social groups. It is thus economic, political, social and cultural in nature. It is between state and society over the distribution of power and resources. Patterns of inequality and social exclusion are entrenched in the underlying institutional arrangements and rules of the game that underpin a given social and political system ... perpetuated when certain groups are systematically excluded, discriminated against and disempowered on the basis of defined economic, social, political, cultural, territorial and other characteristics or share identity.<sup>18</sup>

The Nigerian democratic inequality is sustained, reinforced and reproduced over time through economic structures, social and cultural attitude by the Hausa/Fulani in Nigeria. How the nation's wealth is distributed across the zones as well as political opportunity affect fundamentally the quality of democratic governance in Nigeria. The Nigerian nation is also suffering from the problem of ethnicity or tribalism. The origin and sustenance of our country's political problem derive from the complete absence of trust among the respective nationalities that make up Nigeria. By nationalities, we mean different peoples with different languages and cultures. Nigeria as a nation came into being as a consequence of British colonial policy. The

problem of ethnic nationalism in Nigeria came with the advent of colonialism. Aluko and Ajamaa observe thus;

This happened when disparate autonomous heterogeneous and sub-national group were merged together to form a nation. Again, the colonists created structural imbalances within the nation in terms of socio-economic projects, social development and establishment of administrative centres. These imbalances deepened the antipathies between the various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.<sup>19</sup>

Following this colonialist attitude, Nigerian political actors have overplayed event that tend to emphasize our diversity and those things that separate us rather than emphasizing things that unite us. Aluko and Ajamaa also saw, as the problem, the nature of dividedness of multi-ethnic nations with respect to their religious, ideological, linguistic, cultural lies. They are virtually made up of separate sub-societies each with its own political party, language and religion. In these societies, flexibility necessary for popular democracy will be lacking. Under this condition, as it is the case in Nigeria, majority rule is not only undemocratic but dangerous because the minorities who are constantly denied access to power, like Igbo of Nigeria, would feel excluded and would demonstrate their grievances through civil disobedience.<sup>20</sup>

Nigeria is a heterogeneous society with diverse ethnic and religious groups. The Othman Danfodio Jihad of 1884 and the advent of European missionaries changed the religious landscape of Nigeria from traditional institutions and the birth of extreme practice of Islam and Christianity ushered in a serious problem to the act of governance.<sup>21</sup> Ethnicity and religion move hand in hand in Nigeria but religion is more of a unifier of groups than ethnicity because it generates sympathy, mass participation, involvement and tends to compete with the state in the act of governance and policy formulations. You can see in some states of Nigeria where a Christian is never allowed to lead them as a governor as well as discrimination among citizens on ground of religion. Religion has contributed immensely in the several violent conflicts in the country. The habit of this Nigeria combining the act of governance with the practice of religion has constituted a serious threat to the nation and its

constitution. The colonists also was alleged to be responsible for the imposition of state religion in Nigeria because they institutionalized religious practices in government business, using chiefs and Emirs to achieve their political interests and the Chiefs and Emirs who stood as religious leaders, also operated as political leaders. The colonial method of governance called indirect rule in which every religion came with its symbols, beliefs, practices, institutions, policies and organizations, also bent certain situations to accommodate economic and political ambitions of the colonialists and that of few Nigerians. Each religion from north to south set up an organization to defend their position in the socio-political order such as "Christian Association of Nigeria" (CAN) and "Jamatu Nasril Islam" (JNI). They have grown into such strong association as religious tools over the years that they are able to defend their religions, which the Nigerian 1999 constitution, section 10 clearly guarantees through freedom of association.<sup>23</sup> With these developments, it is realized that most of the country's socio-political problems were due to inequality, religious fanaticism, ethnic rivalry and mutual suspicion.

### **The idea of Ujamaa, a means to ameliorate the Problems of Nigerian Democratic Governance.**

The purpose of formulating Ujamaa ideology was to create unity and trust in the state by eradicating ethnicity, religious fanaticism and inequality. Nyerere proclaimed that all human beings and all Tanzanians in particular were equal irrespective of tribe and religion, the only tribe in the country is Tanzanian, which he described as the nationalization of Ujamaa. Tanzanians belong to one country, Tanzania, where they were all equal members of the society with equal rights, duties and opportunities. All men should be regarded as brethren, as ever extending family members in order to build unity among people of different religion and ethnicity.<sup>24</sup>

The idea of Ujamaa was a belief in the equality and in the family-hood of all human beings. Nyerere declared that every citizen was an integral part of the nation irrespective of religion or ethnicity and had the right to take an equal part in government at local, regional and national levels. Having interpreted the word "equality" to mean human dignity, and having described dignity in terms of right, Nyerere elaborated the right of equality as interpreted in a variety of ways: first,



the right to dignity and respect, the right to equal participation in government, the right to freedom of expression, movement, belief and association, the right to life and property and the right to receive government wage.<sup>25</sup>

This idea of equality in Ujamaa should be applied into the Nigerian democratic institution. In practice, there is inequality in Nigeria which affects currently, the extent to which democratic norms and values, including basic rights and freedoms, representation, accountability, equality and participation are uphold.<sup>26</sup>This is the situation in Nigeria. Inequality in Nigeria has led to increase of the power of the wealthy and privileged and undermined the well-being of the marginalized people, exclude groups of society from political processes, biases the provision of education, health and other services, engendered distrust, created a feeling of alienation and threatened the legitimacy of government. It has increased polarization and resentments. Inequality has as well, created several violent and triggered conflicts and wars in Nigeria.

This idea of equality in Ujamma should be applied to the Nigerian democratic institution, a kind of equality where service provision helps to ensure the well-being of all the sections of population in the country regardless of their tribe and religion, where equal opportunities, rights and freedoms are given to all ethnic nationalities in the country and where all the tribes and religions are considered unimportant interns of political opportunity etc. This can play an important role in fostering more inclusive, legitimate and stable institution.

On the concept of ethnicity, Nyerere, opined that unity should be restored among the tribes in the country through the idea of Ujamaa. He said that all men were equal irrespective of their ethnic base, irrespective of their different indigenous languages. There was only one tribe 'Tanzanianism' and all citizens of Tanzania whether from any tribe were described first and foremost as Tanzanians and these Tanzanians belongs to one country, Tanzania, where they were all equal members of the society with equal rights, duties and opportunities. Nigeria and Nigerians should love their country and themselves as one people rather than loving their tribes to the detriment of their Nigerian nation. Political parties should not be formed along

ethnic lines as had been the case since the first republic when the three predominant parties, Northern People's Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG) and The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) stood for the three dominant ethnic nationalities, Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo respectively. Today, parties are still ethnically based and thereby allowing the pursuit of ethnic agenda. It is not in the interest of the Nigerian nation, that the Northerners are not comfortable that power is not in their hands, with the propaganda that Southerners have always been in control of economic power and to balance the equation, north must hold on to the political power.

This has accompanied the cries of marginalization from other tribes. It is clear that in Nigeria, any tribe that monopolizes power at the centre controls resources and any ethnic group that loses at the centre, has lost it all. Power has been used to pursue ethnic interest and this has led to threat to political stability, cries of marginalization and the impossibility of the nation to consolidate democracy. The predominance of the spirit of ethnic nationalism also gives rise to the emergence of ethnic militias all over the country. The common ones are Boko Haram from the north, IPOB (indigenous people of Biafra) from the Igbo and OPC from the Yoruba. These ethnic militias have increased the level of political violence, riots and conflict.<sup>28</sup> There should be a forum where all the various ethnic nationalities would come together to address the national question. The conference is inevitable, if the government sincerely desires an end to the crisis. Some form of power rotation or sharing must be institutionalized and entrenched in the constitution for it is absolutely ridiculous for any section in the country to have sole control of power while other ethnic nationalities remain in servitude. It is sad that the northern oligarchy have seen power as their inalienable right. Power should rotate among the various ethnic nationalities.

Little wonder why the Ojaneze-Ndi-Igbo on Monday, May 21, 2018, approved a resolution for the enactment of a new constitution to replace the oppressive 1999 constitution. Among the core demands of the Igbo nation for restructuring of the Nigerian polity is to provide for rotation of the office of president among the six geo-political zones, that the six geo-political zones be recognized as federating centres with the power of regional constitution, that each region should have an equal number of states and there should be created an additional state

in the south-south, South-East to be at the same number with other regions. There shall be a position for six vice presidents, each from a region, other than that of the president with two ministerial responsibilities. States are to be vested with power to control mineral resources in their territories, 50 percent would be theirs, 20 percent for regions, 30 percent for federal and there shall be a two tier of police force, federal and regional and they will co-exist.<sup>29</sup>

Ndi Igbo just asked for a just, fair and equitable federation and this will reduce the power of the President which is almost the same with the power of monarch. It is also important that population of the states be used in the distribution of resources and not the land mass or geographical space. This paper also suggests that two party systems would be the best option for Nigeria because the party formation in Nigeria was ethnically based and if two party systems is entrenched in the constitution, it will prevent the various ethnic nationalities from hijacking any of the two parties and this will reduce the impact of ethnicity in Nigerian politics. The best way is the convocation of a national conference in which the various ethnic nationalities will state categorically those things that will make them shift their allegiance, loyalty and patriotism from the level of their ethnic nationalities to that of the nation at large. This may be slow and difficult but the logic of it is that ethnic identities are not fixed but can change over time through a slow process of political manipulation with social and economic transformation.

On the concept of religious fanaticism, Nyerere prepared ideological tactics to create and build unity among people of different religions in Tanzania. The ideological reaction to the religious division was religious tolerance which provided all religions with freedom of worship and the right to conduct their affairs without state interference so far they did not infringe on the freedom of others. Ujamaa ideology also attempted to eradicate religious dominations by believing ideologically that religion did not exist and he made sure that the state and its apparatus such as Army, Police, Prisons, executive and others like educational institutions, media, parties etc, were not affiliated to any religion.

Although, individual members of these institutions were believers of one religion or the other, none of their religious belief was made to

have influence upon any policies and functions of the institutions. In this way, no religion could claim to have influence on the state because its policies were secular. All Tanzanians were made to know that they were equal brothers and sisters irrespective of their religions.<sup>30</sup> the combination of governance with religious practices have constituted a serious threat to the Nigerian state and its constitution.

Despite the essence of secularization in the Nigerian constitution which was to promote unity, balances and the superiority of the state over other institutions in the state, there is still a negligence of the position and place of secularism in the Nigerian constitution and dominance of religion in the act of governance. Secularism only appears in a written form and does not exist in practice.<sup>31</sup> The penetration of religion in Nigerian politics and the extreme practice of religion among citizens paved ways for societal menaces such as ethno-religious conflicts, discrimination among citizens and religious sentiments.

Secularism means non-involvement in religious or spiritual affairs and exclusion of religion from public affairs. A state that removes religious dominance from its public institution is called a secular state, that is, a state where citizens are allowed to practice whatever kind of religion they want but the law of the state which is enforceable through the constitution exceeds the religion. The place and position of religion has continued to compete with the state in Nigeria and the outcome is the violent conflict. In the preamble of the Nigerian constitution, the state is secular and it enthused:

We the people of the federal republic of Nigeria: Having solemnly resolved to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation under God, to provide for our self a constitution for the purpose of promoting the good government and welfare of all persons in our country on the principle of freedom, equality and justice.

And in section 1(1) and section 2(1), the constitution also enthused: The constitution is supreme and its provision shall have binding force on all authorities and persons throughout the federal republic of Nigeria.<sup>32</sup> Nigeria as it is seen now is a confused and a failed state with a constitution that is loose and only applicable to the poor. The

country's populace is wallowing in abject poverty while government is busy channeling funds to support religious institutions which have continued to be a threat to state cohesion and peaceful coexistence of the country. The country's non-productive ventures and the menaces of poverty shall be giving serious attention rather than funding religious functions that often raises its head and compete with the state machinery.

## **Conclusion**

The idea of Ujamaa which Nyerere conceived as an attitude of mind needed to ensure people's welfare and care for each other as was the case during the ancient time of African cultural tradition, was adopted as the ideology of the foundation of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), a mass party founded by Nyerere in 1922 with a view to restoring the nature of African brotherhood which colonialism distorted by disintegrating people on the basis of tribe, religion and political opportunity. The ideology was formulated to curb the situations of inequality, ethnic bigotry and religious influences in the state. This paper hereby thought it wise to adopt this Ujamaa ideology into the Nigerian polity with a view to solving the perennial problems of inequality, ethnic destruct and religious influences in Nigeria.

Nyerere posited that the idea of Ujamaa was a belief in the equality and in the family hood of all human beings. Everybody, irrespective of tribe or religion shall be given his or her political, legal, social and economic right in the nation and this would allow for the sustenance of democracy that could improve good governance, greater inclusion and equality in Nigeria. Having examined the position of the state and the challenges of religious influences on the state cohesion, the study recommends that the content and dictates of Nigeria Constitution should strictly be applied, practiced and utilized as provided because this will go a long way to empowering the strength of the act of governance. Government should desist from interfering into religious affairs such as funding pilgrimage and tittening of religious groups. Neutrality and non-involvement of government in religious activities should be the dictate of every state; rather religious activity should be regulated.

The entrenchment and institutionalization of ethnic nationalism in Nigeria has affected the process of development in Nigeria. The Nigerian government still institutionalized ethnic identities that divide the population of the majority of Nigerian people. It is the opinion of this paper that the Federal Government of Nigeria convoc a national conference to address the multi-dimensional problems facing Nigeria as a nation. Some form of power rotation or sharing must be institutionalized and entrenched in the constitution in such a way that the various ethnic nationalities would have opportunity to serve the nation. Two party system is suggested as the best for the country to avoid misuse of our diversity to cause trouble and ethnicise our political life. It is important that Nigeria should remain a secular state otherwise, there may be no end to ethnic-religious violence. Nigeria needs to practice true federalism for peace and tranquility to prevail. There must be a constitutional provision that gives less power to the centre because the too much power on the centre, amounts to dictatorship hence,unhealthy competition for the occupation of the centre among the various nationalities in Nigeria.

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