

HOW CAN WE USE PHILOSOPHIES OF UNITY SUCH AS “UBUNTU” TO PROMOTE REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES FOR AFRICA?

Prof. Apollinaire Chishugi

Tangaza University College

Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract

Philosophies of Unity are behind time to promote regional Integration and Continental Unity in Africa. Despite the candid philosophical principles of the African Union and the firmness of its resolutions, it is regrettable to note that none of these initiatives has managed to establish the desired uninterrupted peace between states or citizens and neither in regional or continental integration. Instead of promoting the spirit of unity and peace, African leaders are victims of tribal inclinations and imperialist ambitions who continue to sow division and terror. Plans to redraw the geographic map of Africa are no longer taboo and are used to justify certain civil wars. This problem has negatively impacted African populations and their socio-economic development. Hundreds of thousands of people have been slaughtered in several conflicts and civil wars. Millions are displaced, economic infrastructure has been destroyed, and regional integration processes interrupted. A possible cause of this problem is the forgetfulness of the spirit of Bandung and the non-consideration of Ubuntu as a source of political inspiration. This paper aims at revisiting the Spirit of Bandung in the light of the African political philosophy of Ubuntu. We are convinced that the solution to the problem of unity and peace in Africa cannot do without the universal principles of cosmopolitanism advocated by the Kantian criticism.

Key words: Ubuntu, spirit of Bandung, Regional integration, Perpetual peace, cosmopolitanism

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the effectiveness of traditional African ethics (Ubuntu) strategy to influence and support the political integration of the Africa Union. This objective seeks to determine the expected opportunities from the new regional integration process of EAC at the dawn of the reception of the DRC as a new member. We shall therefore, analyse the conditions of the possibility of the effectiveness of the new EAC through the

influence of traditional African ethics (Ubuntu) to promote peace, freedom, human dignity and the development of the people of the Region.

Significance of the study

This paper is significant and relevant as a means of developing a warning system in the political integration of the people in Africa, which could assist African countries, and particularly the EAC, incorporating African traditional ethics (Ubuntu) in the promotion of peace, freedom, unity, human dignity and development. Regional integration *per se* is very important to the African continent, and particularly the Eastern Region of Africa, to ensure and promote a better life.

Theoretical Framework

The Spirit of Bandung and the Regional Integration of the EAC

By the spirit of Bandung, we mean the “insight which guided leaders of the 29 newly independent countries of Asia and Africa under the chairmanship of Indonesian leader Sukarno, to affirm their desire for independence and their non-alignment with world powers. Opposing colonialism, they encouraged peoples that were still colonized to fight for their independence and claim: a) The decolonization and emancipation of the peoples of Africa and Asia, b) Peaceful coexistence and economic development; and c) - Non-interference in internal affairs”¹.

The fragility of the peace agreements between countries in East Africa and the impossibility of updating the potential development of the region explain the persistence of ethnic conflicts and the cohort of miseries experienced by our populations. Elbadawi (2001) indicates that cultural diversity makes it possible to have a “bargaining equilibrium” that is more than capable of helping and not hindering the creation of “stable development-promoting coalition”; and that “formalization of ethnic affiliation into the political process might enhance the efficiency and credibility of political governance institutions in Africa” (Elbadawi 2001: 54-55).²

¹ Heloise Weber & Poppy Winanti (2016) The ‘Bandung spirit’ and solidarist internationalism, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 70:4, 391-406. Abdulgani, R (1981). *The Asia-Africa conference in Bandung in 1955*. Gunung Agung: Singapore.

² Elbadawi, Ibrahim A. (2001), “Social Cohesion, Conflict Management and Economic Growth in Africa,” Chapter 2 in T. Assefa, . S.M. Rugumamu and A.G.M. Ahmed, eds. *Globalization, Democracy and Development in Africa: Challenges and Prospects*, Addis Ababa: OSSREA.

The imperialist tendencies of some local political leaders and the global geopolitical alliances of others fueled by xenophobia and ethnic-racial complexes continue to pollute the spirit of Bandung. Being part of an ethnic group or as a citizen has its own consequences, and its own strength in conflict or otherwise that goes into the formation of a nation. As such, there is a need for different levels of analysis to try and understand ethnicity; its origins, magnitudes, and the patterns of particular ethnic conflicts.³

Indeed, the fathers of African independence gathered with their Asian peers wanted to promote an integration of African unity according to a spirit of promoting the equality of all in rights and dignity, a spirit of promoting the self-determination of peoples while respecting their sovereignty, a spirit of adoption of legal pacifism as a sacrosanct principle of conflict resolution and a spirit of mutualization of projects of common interest as a principle of regional socio-economic development. To understand ethnic conflict in Africa, we must situate it in the broader context of the democracy and development project on the continent, connected with or state-formation process, involving hegemonic-directed competition, cooperation and conflict, under conditions of scarcity, about who should control the state and direct its core functions of authoritative regulation, allocation, and distribution through its presumed monopoly of physical force and policy directives.⁴

It is therefore urgent at the advent of this new phase of regional integration of the EAC to assess the state of the Bandung Spirit in the current regional integration policies and to verify whether Ubuntu would be the new African ethical principle capable of bringing renewal into our socio-political integration initiatives.

What is UBUNTU?

Ubuntu is a Nguni Bantu term which means “humanity”. It is based on the African anthropological assumption that every individual has the potential of interacting with others and ensure that human dignity is at the core of their

³ L. Adele Jinadu, 2007, *Explaining & Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Towards a Cultural Theory of Democracy*, DPCR, NAI. P.6.

⁴ L. Adele Jinadu, 2007, *Explaining & Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Towards a Cultural Theory of Democracy*, DPCR, NAI. P.3.

actions, thought and deeds⁵. It is however, not enough to be born human to live according to the principles of Ubuntu. It is not an innate value. It is a value that has to be actualized; to be conquered through education and merit. Thus, at the first glance Ubuntu is a possibility of humanity that is lived instinctively as part of our animality. It is harmony and compassion that is observed in many Africa societies based on family, clan, tribal, ethnic ties etc. These kinds of natural virtues do not make us more noble than the animals in the herd or the bees in the hive. The nobility of Ubuntu is gained when the individual goes beyond the intuitive motivations raised by similarities based on biological sameness, and recognizes the ontological sameness of his humanity in others. Such an epistemological qualitative jump can only be achieved through rationality. Thus, the authenticity of Ubuntu is verified outside of natural communities such as family, tribe, ethnicity, race etc. Ubuntu can only take shape in the political community. It is a public responsibility. Not all men or women are worthy and those who are worthy do not have the same intuitive level of Ubuntu.

For Aristotle, "the political community is a community of citizens. It is not only constituted by the present interest of stakeholders or by their historical past, but by their future common project since it is it that decides on the common law that makes community lives by constantly discussing that project". Thus, as a socio-political principle, Ubuntu is a commitment to make humanity together. Citizens must therefore harmonize their conduct to this dignity otherwise they can lose it. It is a question of engaging with others to constitute a collectivity based on intersubjectivity and national solidarity that reduces unintentional inequalities.

Ubuntu and Identity Crisis

The crisis of national identity

The notion of citizenship rethought in the light of the ethical concept of Ubuntu requires us to believe that the bond that unites citizens within the State transcends tribal or ethnical empiricism. The State is not a family but an association of citizens committed to "making humanity together" despite the plurality of their instinctual affiliations. On one hand, the family, clan, ethnicity or tribe presuppose inevitable and unbreakable natural ties. They do not require any choice and do not allow any freedom on the part of the members. On the

⁵ Enslin, P & Horsthemke, K 2004, 'Can Ubuntu provide a model for citizenship education in African Democracies?', *Comparative Education*, vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 545-558.

other hand, citizenship or national identity presupposes belonging to an intersubjectivity that transcends the law of nature and is maintained by the will of individuals. Unlike a tribal identity that is closed and unwavering, the citizen identity is open and suspended by the will of the subject⁶.

The crisis is raised when “some ethnic groups are excluded from enjoying the benefits of common citizenship on an equal basis with more favored ethnic groups”⁷. For example, Chad, Ethiopia and Sudan, Niger, and Nigeria, are examples of the demand of oppressed ethnic minorities for greater socioeconomic and infrastructural development, self-government in their ethnic heartlands, short of secession from the state. For Chad, the ethno-political conflict has, as in the case of the Sudan, been on an ethno-racialized north/south division.⁸ Felt as an attempt against human rights, these victims assume the force of micro-nationalist ideology and choose to wage ethno-political conflicts.

This is a plausible explanation for the many identity claims observed in the conflicts of “Rwandophones” in Great Lakes Africa. Adele Jijadu puts it so well: “The indigenous peoples were further sub-divided or differentiated by the colonial administration into ‘advantaged’ or ‘disadvantaged,’ ‘favored’ or ‘unfavored’ ethnic groups, based on the differential diffusion of westernization, on “colonial evaluations of imputed group character” among them (Horowitz 1985: 160). These ethnic groups were, moreover, and as a matter of administrative convenience or arbitrariness, sometimes invented— constructed or deconstructed—by colonial administrators, under the influence of colonial stereotypes of African ethnic group”⁹.

The crisis of regional integration

The extremist demands of nationalist and identity movements have undermined regional integration efforts in Africa, and especially the East African Community (EAC). This is as a result of these movements strong appeal to the natural response of people to want to belong to an intuitive group that forms a People, or

⁶ Metz, T. 2007(c), ‘Ubuntu as a Moral Theory: Reply to Four Critics’, South African Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 26(4), pp. 370-387

⁷ L. Adele Jinadu, 2007, Explaining & Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Towards a Cultural Theory of Democracy, DPCR, NAI. P.14.

⁸ ⁸ L. Adele Jinadu, 2007, Explaining & Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Towards a Cultural Theory of Democracy, DPCR, NAI. P.14.

⁹ L. Adele Jinadu, 2007, Explaining & Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Towards a Cultural Theory of Democracy, DPCR, NAI. P.15.” This much is clear from the post-colonial histories of Angola, Burundi, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda”.

a Nation. This has consequently led to each state asserting itself as an unwavering natural unit where the duty of every patriot ensures its impermeability to diverse pollution of other persons. Because of this, the East African Region is divided into homelands of peoples that are naturally divided by their varied history.

The purpose of any attempt to foster any alliance or cooperation between these peoples is automatically suspected of imperialist goals in the tribal sense of the term. Unfortunately, in such a scenario, the Ubuntu that brings humanity together across from their diverse natural ethnic or tribal boundaries becomes a taboo or even a betrayal.

The crisis of Cosmopolitical integration

Cosmopolitical integration presupposes a political organization of the world that allows every person to move and feel at home on any point of the globe. This global integration is only possible if the borders between States allow the free movement of peoples and goods.

Today we observe the fact that Cosmopolitical laws applicable to only people in whom their Ubuntu is recognized¹⁰. The criteria for that recognition remains arbitrary and discriminatory. Some people gain or lose their Ubuntu because of their competence or because of their natural skills. Some have Ubuntu dignity by inheritance or social conditions of their birth, while others do not. Nonetheless, each state establishes a hierarchy of degrees of Ubuntu according to assets or social appreciation of behavior.

Ubuntu as a Political Ethic in Times of Crisis

Ethics of a Citizen Identity

Within the philosophy of Ubuntu, it is not only ethical to be the one who is committed to expressing humanity to others. A good citizen is the one who makes it his duty to extend this Ubuntu to all the dimensions of all humans. There is no place for discrimination in his belonging to a State because the more one is in harmony with others the more, he fulfils his identity as a person. This

¹⁰ Metz, T. 2007(c), 'Ubuntu as a Moral Theory: Reply to Four Critics', South African Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 26(4), pp. 370-387

means that to be a person is to be with others¹¹. This means that in Ubuntu ethics, citizenship is the commitment to a shared process of freeing oneself from the contingencies of nature that are linked to the mutual origins and ideologies of humans borne by history¹². It is a permanent becoming that takes place in solidarity with one's fellow human beings. Consequently, as a sociopolitical component, Ubuntu can be lost by a citizen depending on his behavior or his social conditions¹³.

Ethics of Regional Integration

A State corresponds to the ethical ideal of Ubuntu insofar as its citizens are engaged in the trans-natural and rational project of making humanity together. In that condition, they renounce to the use of their instinctual belonging to the family, clan, tribe or ethnicity to promote the common good. Promoting States whose constitutions are inspired by Ubuntu ethics then becomes a condition for the possibility of the ethical and sustainable political regional integration.¹⁴ As a result, Ubuntu as a moral concept endorses an open conception of the state. In that sense a State is worthy Ubuntu dignity only if it is able to remain open to all humanity present at its borders. It goes without saying that once adopted by all the constituent States, regional integration should logically follow.

There is no place for discrimination in belonging to a Regional Alliance of States, because the more one is in alliance with others the more, he fulfils his identity as a State. Otherwise, to be a State is to be with other similar States. It is not a question of extending the adoption of ethnic values beyond the borders of states, but rather of recognizing the fraternal dignity and equality of others in order to promote each other¹⁵.

¹¹ Gyekye, K 1998, 'Person and Community in African Thought', *The African Philosophy Reader*, Coetzee, PH and Roux, APJ (eds)., pp. 317-335. Enslin, P & Horsthemke, K 2004, 'Can Ubuntu provide a model for citizenship education in African Democracies?', *Comparative Education*, vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 545-558.

¹² Cornell, D 2009, 'Is There a Difference That Makes a Difference Between Ubuntu and Dignity?', *Is This Seat Taken? Conversations at the Bar, The Bench & The Academy*, 5 November 2009.

¹³ Cornell, D 2010, 'A Call for a Nuanced Jurisprudence: Ubuntu, Dignity and Reconciliation' in *Ubuntu and the Law in South Africa*, Cornell, D & Muvangua, N, eds., Forthcoming (2010), Fordham University Press.

¹⁴ Iroanya, RO 2005, 'Citizenship-Indigeneship Contradictions and Resource Control in Africa: A Case for the African Tradition of Ubuntu', 7 th Annual Africa Day Conference University of South Africa, Pretoria, pp. 1-11

¹⁵ Le Roux, J 2000, 'The concept of 'ubuntu': Africa's most important contribution to multicultural education?', *Multicultural Teaching*, 18(2), 43-46. Thaddeus Metz, *Ubuntu as a moral theory and human rights in South Africa*, *Afr. hum. rights law j.* vol.11 n.2 Pretoria 2011

Ethics of a humanist cosmopolitanism

As a universalist ethical concept, Ubuntu is an ideal theory that can transform the world in

a politically organized space that peacefully shelters the diversity of instinctual groups of peoples and nations¹⁶. Individuals identify the world as their homeland that transcends local commitments. Their belonging to humanity explains their openness and tolerance towards the diversity of values in the public space.

The EAC will be a cosmopolitan community when citizens from different states enter into relationships of mutual respect despite their divergent ethnical and cultural belongings. The purpose of the EAC is to build a political and economic community where all citizen form one cohesive and united community. This citizenship supposes an education which shapes peoples as individuals who “freely cross the borders of different countries, cultures and political communities considering the highest values to be freedom and equality of all the people inhabiting the planet”¹⁷.

The conditions for the possibility of the process of continuous humanization of the world are numerous. They include but are not limited to:

- The will of States to build their constitution on the values of Ubuntu and to keep open the notion of their citizenship¹⁸. The EAC should therefore promote “cultural exchange and provide people of one culture with the opportunity to learn from others”.
- Flexibility in border management to allow Ubuntu, the humanity lived together, to deploy unhindered. The EAC should therefore encourage each member state to approve a political system which explores the application of norms and values of democracy at the transnational level.
 - International Governmental Organizations (IGOs), which can provide member states with a forum for conflict resolution.
 - Financial market regulation which aims at simplifying the process of trading across the borders of the East African Community’s partner states.

¹⁶ van Binsbergen, W 2001, ‘Ubuntu and the Globalisation of Southern African Thought and Society’, *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy*, vol. XV, no. 1-2, African Renaissance and Ubuntu Philosophy Special Issue, pp. 53-90.

¹⁷ A. Chishugi, *La paix par le droit*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 2009, p.169.

¹⁸ Kleingeld, Pauline. 2012. *Kant and Cosmopolitanism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)¹⁹ without borders which can provide higher efficiency and increased transparency in the use of funds. “A Public Private Partnership is an agreement between the public sector and the private sector for the purpose of designing, planning, financing, constructing, and/or operating projects that would traditionally be regarded as falling within the remit of the public sector”²⁰.
- Socio-Cultural Alliances Without Borders ²¹ : This refers to organizations that coordinate the performance of transnational EAC citizens, facilitate cooperation, resolve disputes, and alleviate collective action problems.

Research Methodology

This will be desktop research which will involve examining materials that can help illuminate the issue of the philosophies Ubuntu and integration. This will be juxtaposed with Conflict Resolution Strategies. The results will be generally applied to the African continent and specifically to the nations that form the EAC in their pursuit to promote peace, freedom, human dignity and the development of the people of the Region. We shall investigate the effectiveness of African Union ideals within its real-life context, using the EAC as a qualitative case study. The findings will then follow in descriptive narrative. We expect that the results will also answer the thorny issue of how the African conflict can lead to transformation, political integration and sustainable development, and provide the basis for the application of our findings

Conclusion

The proposed cosmopolitanism emphasizes the direct linkages across international boundaries of the EAC member states and rationalize the relationship between ethnicity, the crisis of citizenship or civil war in the region.

¹⁹ Lukamba Muhiya Tshombe , Thekiso Molokwane , Alex Nduhura, Innocent Nuwagaba³, An Analysis of Public-Private Partnerships in East Africa, Research in World Economy Vol. 11, No. 5; Special Issue, 2020

²⁰ Ibidem

²¹ Lee Boon-Thong, Tengck Shamsul Bahrin, 2019, *Vanishing Borders: The New International Order of the 21st Century*, Routledge, NY. Kant, Immanuel. 1996a. *The Metaphysics of Morals. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ———. 1996b. *Toward Perpetual Peace. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ———. 1996c. *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

It is the opportunity given to member states to fulfil the dream of Kant in which nationalism and the crisis of regional integration, xenophobia and under-development are taken in charge by a cosmopolitan world where armies are abolished and citizen are governed under a representative EAC institution²².

The results are expected to address the following questions and indicate suggestions as to what need to be done:

- To build a transnational identity²³ as mean of solving the crisis of national identity; “Activities of political transnationalism can range from immigrants remaining active in the politics of their native country, including voting, to actually running for office. A modern example is the growing number of native-born American citizens who choose to live in Mexico for family, business, or economic reasons”. “In terms of the categories of social and individual forms of belonging, transnational citizens are marked by multiple identities and allegiances, and often travel between two or more countries, all in which they have created sizeable networks of differing functions”.
- To reinforce the transnational trade and corporation as mean of inter-state pacification ²⁴ ; “Transnational corporations (TNCs) or multinational corporations (MNCs) are companies that operate in more than one country. Unilever, McDonalds and Apple are all examples of TNCs. TNCs tend to have offices and headquarters located in the developed world”.
- To establish cosmopolitanism as the political model of regional integration²⁵. “Transnationalism creates a greater degree of connection between individuals, communities and societies across borders, bringing about changes in the social, cultural, economic and political landscapes of

²² Kant, Immanuel. 1996a. *The Metaphysics of Morals. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ———. 1996b. *Toward Perpetual Peace. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Today, international politics rely on transnationalism to make transnational trade grow smoothly.

²³ In this sense, transnational identity means recognizing the multi-geographical nature of immigrants who are from one particular country but live out their lives in another (Esteban-Guitart et al., 2013, Portes, 1997). Ong, A. (1999). *Flexible citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

²⁴ “Transnationalism refers to the diffusion and extension of social, political, economic processes in between and beyond the sovereign jurisdictional boundaries of nation-states. International processes are increasingly governed by non-state actors and international organizations”.

²⁵ Kleingeld, Pauline. 2012. *Kant and Cosmopolitanism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Levitt, P. (2001). *The transnational villagers.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

societies of origin and destination”. “Transnationalism has been defined in anthropology as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement”.

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