Resolving the Crisis of Development in Africa

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Abstract

The most important problem facing African countries, especially, those in South of Sahara, is the problem of Development. This problem has remained intractable because development strategists and governments of African countries have only focused on external factors that affect African development. Governments of African countries have been using Western prescriptions like liberalisation, privatisation and the transference of investment from industrialised countries in their attempts to resolve the crisis. However, there are internal issues that are responsible for the failure of African governments to deliver the promise of development. Using the conceptual analytic method, this paper attempts to explore internal issues such as corruption, insecurity and ethnic conflicts, dishonesty, disobedience to laws and disregard for the opinion of experts. It is argued that these issues bother on the loss of certain African cultural values and lack of social responsibility on the part of those in government. The paper suggests that the reappropriation of African values of community, cooperation, reciprocity, brotherhood embedded in the South African concept of Ubuntu provides a framework for resolving the crisis of development rocking Africa. The relevance of this framework lies in the fact that, although borrowing from East and West in terms of development models has the propensity to nurture African development. The sustenance of the acquired development will be undermined if adequate attention is not paid to the values that can sustain it. And since these values are ethical in nature, we argue that development requires sense of ethics. It is the sense of the ethical that propels the individual to cultivate a sense of social responsibility that can help in the African development crisis.

Keywords: Development, Indigenous Values, Cooperation, Ethics, Ubuntu.
Introduction

It seems like the most important problem facing Africa now is the crisis of development, that is, the failure of African states to develop even after over 50 years of their independence. Over the years, Africa has been battling with the problem of high rate of poverty, lack of basic needs and infrastructural facilities, high rate of mortality, political instability, insecurity of lives and property and corruption. This is more problematic given the fact that there is abundant mineral and human resources and the fact that development has been on the agenda of the government of African states since independence to the extent that development seems to be the single, most obsessive agenda. It is hard to find any regime in post-independent Africa that has not set itself to achieve development objectives.

The notion of development we are working with is the one which sees development as the sustained elevation or transformation of an entire society and social system towards better and more humane life or, summarily, the good life. This notion of development embodies the core values of sustenance, self-esteem and freedom; and implies the improvement and uplifting of the quality of life of people to the extent that they are able attain their potentials, build and acquire self-confidence and manage to live lives of reasonable accomplishment and dignity. This shows that development involves both the material and non-material dimensions.

The Problem of African Development: Internal Issues

Some of the time, the crisis of development in Africa is blamed on the heritage of colonialism, but as Prah (2011) argues, Africans should take the responsibility for its woes since they have supposedly been in control of their own affairs since the end of the colonial era. However, he agrees that everything happening in Africa is not entirely under the control of Africans. He remarks that African governments do not control the prices of the commodities that are sold in global markets, nor do they have any real say in the setting of the prices at which commodities are bought from the developed world. Despite the endless propaganda trumpeted from the West about free markets, the reality for Africans is that most Western markets for the items, largely agricultural, which are produced cheaply and easily, are closed (Prah, 2011). In other words, there are global dynamics that tend to circumvent the development process in Africa. The implication of this remark is that the current development problem in Africa is a result of the combination of both internal and external forces. This is corroborated by Andreason who remarks that:

Implicit in all these arguments is the notion that African attempts at development have failed on a comprehensive range of issues, and on all ideological and political fronts. Negative influences of both external and domestic actors have undermined post-independence political systems and consequently also the possibilities for sustained economic development and democratization. Where genuine efforts have been made to promote development, by African governments themselves and in partnership with helpful international partners, they have in the face of the enormous obstacles created by social and political instability, patronage, authoritarianism and corruption fallen hopelessly short of what is needed (2010:79).

Our focus here will be on the internal issues and factors that have hindered the development of African nations. The reason is that we want to open the eyes of the African
leaders and masses to policy choices that place African themselves at the centre of their own development rather than focusing on the policy options that the West has to make.

Apart from the problems of colonialism and globalisation which have contributed to the problem of African development, another important problem is that of the prevalent value system in the continent. The values of any given society provide insight into how the attitudes and actions of individuals within that society affect development endeavours. Umez, in reference to Nigeria, remarks that the value system that contributed to her underdevelopment is the one that glorifies and endorses corrupt and illegal means as necessary, normal and sufficient means to ends (2000:53). The prevalent values include: embezzlement of public funds, a free-rider mentality, dishonesty, disobedience to laws and disregard for the opinion of experts. These values, according to Umez produce at the general level, a corrupt and inept leadership, which ultimately misappropriate public funds, thereby creating the problem of development.

The magnitude of corruption in most African countries is terrific and disheartening. Corruption by political leaders has been identified as one of the major causes of poverty, and the failure in the development of developing countries, particularly in Africa. The incidence of corruption remains one of the greatest challenges of democracy in the continent as virtually all democratic experiments are associated with reports of hyper-corrupt practices (Okafor 2004: 98). The embezzlement of public funds by unscrupulous and ineffective leaders of most African countries leads to poverty, high debts and other socio-economic associated problems in these countries. For instance, focusing exclusively on the top leadership, Transparency International estimates that Mobutu in Zaire and Abacha in Nigeria may have embezzled up to US $5 billion each (Azmi, 2005). According to Global Witness (Cited in Azmi, 2005), several current leaders in Africa are plundering their own treasuries. Among them are Angola’s President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, who it says keeps large sum in bank accounts abroad, and Equatorial Guinean President Teodoro Obiang, who calls oil revenues a ‘state secret’. The Mwai Kibaki government in Kenya, which ousted President Arap Moi in an election in 2003, is investigating embezzlement to the tune of $1billion by former officials, the notorious ‘African Big Man’ the late President G. Eyadema of Togo was very corrupt.

Campbell (2004) observes that Billions of pounds, enough to pay for the entire primary health and education needs of the world’s developing countries are being siphoned off through offshore companies and tax havens. Aid organisations are alarmed that money which should be used for building the infrastructure of the poorest countries is being hidden in the havens by corrupt politicians and multinational companies exploiting tax loopholes (Campbell, 2004). In 1999, The Economist estimates that African leaders had $20bn in Swiss bank accounts alone, twice the amount that Sub-Saharan Africa spends on servicing debts (cited in Azmi, 2005).

The call for good governance which is a call for responsible government where there is transparency, accountability, and equitable distribution of resources (Amuwo, 2002) is recognition of the failure of values that can sustain economic development. We may have state where there is high per capita income but in which the riches of the nation is in the hands of few. These few are people who circumvent equitable distribution of resources and who can make governance difficult for the leadership if the nation by occasioning tangled
web of conflict, mismanagement. Speaking to the ZANU-PF Central Committee in Harare in 2004, Zimbabwe’s president Robert Mugabe lashed out at those who subvert the cause of economic transformation and indigenization in an effort to enrich themselves. He said:

We have seen the effects of corruption and how it erodes and collapses [people’s] welfare because of ill-gotten affluence. We have all seen how riches that come easily through devious ways translate into arrogant flamboyance and wastefulness … [W]e thought these men were leading business luminaries of our country! They have cheated us and deserve their punishment … Some have sought to defeat [the government’s anticorruption] campaign by pleading the cause of indigenization. Let them remember that indigenization does not, and shall never, mean empowering crooks who cut business corners and thrive on dirty deals. Certainly, it does not mean putting your shameless indigenous finger into the national till. (Mugabe, 2004)

Another problem that has contributed to the development crisis in Africa is that the countries of Africa are a volatile mix of insecurity and conflict (Ikejiaku, 2009:16). This problem has been destabilising the peace of the continent. Analysing African peace and security, Solomon and Wart say that

Territorial disputes, armed conflict, civil wars, violence and the collapse of governments and ultimately the state have come to represent the greatest challenges to peace, security and stability. On the African continent, these threats have been much more pronounced and indeed have taken on a scale, intensity and frequency that have defied even the imagination of the greatest science fiction (2005: 4).

The issue is that whenever and wherever there is conflict, the development of the society is usually undermined because in the process, especially if it leads to war, human life which constitutes the human resource and capital for development, property and social infrastructures that have been acquired over the years are destroyed. For example, between 1998 and 2002, some four million people died in the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Report of the Commission for Africa (RCA), 2005: 107). Besides, once conflict occurs, scarce resources are inevitably diverted to the purchase of military equipment at the expense of socio-economic development. While many factors contribute to creating conflicts, our claim is that African conflicts are mainly as a result of the loss of the humanness and communal spirit that define African culture.

The problems examined above can be said to result from what Andreason refers to as some kind of alienations central to human existence in late modernity. He called them the alienation of man from nature and from one another (Andreason, 2010). The latter which concerns us most is said to be symptomatic of liberalism and social Darwinism which run counter to communitarian understanding of human nature which is embodied in the traditional African philosophy of Ubuntu. The alienation has led to what Mbeki refers to as rapacious and venal individualism which can only be resolved by a rediscovery of African identity and the building of African society that is new, not only in its economic arrangements, but also in terms of the value it upholds, namely, the Ubuntu value system (Mbeki, 2007:16-17). This supposition does not entail that economic development is not important, but that its sustenance within the African society requires a kind of philosophy that values cooperation, reciprocity and community development.
A communal effort at reinventing societal goals and aspirations by distinguishing novel considerations of development from previous scholarly work based on narrow assumptions of growth and accumulation is necessary for any fundamental socio-economic transformation to occur. A political economy approach alone does not allow for this reinventing; hence, the need for a conscious engagement with some core African values. This is part of envisioning a type of modernity and development. Modern development concerns deal with the issues of institutions, politics and economics and how they can be integrated in the development process, but fail to engage in any meaningful way with greater social debates on how human beings may aspire to a different kind of god life from the one prescribed by conventional development.

Ubuntu for African Development

African cultural values can contribute to African development and world consciousness. However, people in the West have misunderstood Africa for some reasons and that is why African values are being run down and Western values, in terms of socio-cultural, economics and politics, are being foisted on African people with the belief that such Western values constitute the best option in any thought about the way forward for African development. The first reason for this misunderstanding is that traditional African culture is inaccessible because most of it is oral rather than written and lived rather than being formalised and communicated in books or journals. For this reason, it is difficult to learn it from a distance. The second reason is that many African leaders betrayed the philosophical and humanitarian principles on which African culture is based. This betrayal seems to have led to the perception that nothing good can come out of Africa. The third reason is that people in the West, according to Nussbaum, for whatever reason, receive negative, limited information through the media; images of ethnic wars, dictatorship, famine, and AIDS predominate (2003: 21). The upshot of this is that the potential contribution of African cultural values is often not paid attention to.

Africans also have not helped themselves in the promotion of African values and using the values to validate their (Africans) potentials. In Anyanwu’s perspective, most experts and professionals in Nigeria do not have self-confidence in their beliefs, ideas, and activities unless they are endorsed by the European mind and, therefore, have not been able to make any cultural impact on their societies to prove their relevance (1983: 61). The significance of this point is that it reiterates the need for Africans to work within their own frame of mind and conceptions of reality. This is not to say that we have to do so romantically. There are aspects of our culture that may not enhance development. Neither does it also imply cultural insularity. Africans are free to borrow and adapt whatever they think in useful in other cultures.

Ubuntu is an underlying social philosophy of African culture. It is African worldview that talks of the collective consciousness of the people of Africa. This collective consciousness is manifested in the African people’s behaviour, expression and ideology in which values such as the universal brotherhood of Africans sharing and treating other people as human beings are concretised (Khoza, cited in Prinsloo, 2000: 276). It can be regarded as the capacity in African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interest of building and maintaining community. The basic point of departure
for *Ubuntu* is the view of man as a social being. Most *Ubuntu* thinkers formulate their views in terms of "a person is a person through other persons" (Makhudu, 1993) or "I am, because you are". This point of departure qualifies human dignity in terms of which people are to be treated. In essence, *Ubuntu* addresses human interconnectedness, common humanity and the responsibility to each other that flows from this perceived interconnection. As a philosophy, *Ubuntu* is borne out of the fundamental belief that community strength come from community support, and that dignity and identity are achieved through mutualism, empathy, generosity and community commitment (Swanson, 2007: 53-54).

One of the high points of *Ubuntu* is a selfless spirit of living for the betterment of a person’s environment and society by using all the talents he/she has and not resting easy knowing that that there are others that are in need. This is based on the understanding that any good (or evil) we do to another person or people, we are doing to ourselves. This puts the obligation to support others on everyone so that in whatever position or capacity one finds himself, he thinks not only of himself but also of the other members of his society. The culture of dictatorial governmental tendencies, embezzlement, ethnic intolerance which has led to wanton killings in ethnic conflicts and wars are signs indicating that the average African has lost touch with the *Ubuntu* tradition. No nation can truly develop or have competitive edge in the global market when these bad elements of culture are prevalent.

Let us consider the issue of ethnic conflict of which Nigeria, Sudan, Congo, Rwanda and Somalia, to mention a few, have been victims. The efforts and money that would have been used in the development of these nations have been channelled to rebuilding. Apart from these, the nations have been unattractive to foreign investment which would have been part of what would have helped these nations in developing, at least, economically. Global capital which is used in foreign investments always looks for conducive environment where there is cheap labour and relative peace.

*Ubuntu* finds expression in Senghor’s epistemology. When he says, “I feel the other, I dance the other, and therefore I am,” Senghor is talking of a very cultural experience of *Ubuntu*. That experience contests Rene Descartes’ cogito ergo sum. Senghor can be said to be referring to the strong interdependence of all existence, including human beings. A person is a person through other persons. He is saying that the humanity of one is inextricably caught-up or bound-up in the humanity of the other. That is, we do not come fully formed into the world; we need other human beings in order to be human. Desmond Tutu of South Africa describes *Ubuntu* in this way:

> Africans have this thing called *Ubuntu* . . . the essence of being human. It is part of the gift that Africans will give the world. It embraces hospitality, caring about others, willing to go the extra mile for the sake of others. We believe a person is person through another person that my humanity is caught up, bound up and inextricable in yours. When I dehumanize you I inexorably dehumanize myself. The solitary individual is a contradiction in terms and, therefore, you seek to work for the common good because your humanity comes into its own community, in belonging (199: 22).

The sociality which is constitutive of the African conception of man feature prominently in Hiedegger’s analysis of man. Man is a being-in-the-world as well as a being-with-others. In
the analysis of being, therefore, for Heidegger, it is impossible to understand it except as inhabiting a world it necessarily shares with others and his relationship with other beings who are co-inhabitants in the same world (Mulhall, 1996: 64). The others are important in the analysis of the being of other because, except those provided by nature, what he works with is produced by others and what he produces is destined for other. That is where he earns his living. It is noteworthy that Heidegger is not claiming that Dasein cannot be alone, isolated from all human company; whether or not that is the case is a purely existential question, having to do with a particular individual in a particular time and place. The claim that the Being of Dasein is Being-with is an ontological claim; it identifies an existential characteristic of Dasein which holds regardless of whether an Other is present. It therefore shows that aloneness or extreme individualism is a defiant mode of being. This seems to be the philosophy of Ubuntu. However, it should be noted that the being-with-other analysis provided by Heidegger does not imply a positive relationship between the individuals which is implied in the Ubuntu paradigm. Heidegger only makes an ontological and existential claim. Explaining Heidegger’s position Mulhall writes:

Dasein’s Being-with-Others as solicitude is an ontological claim: it does not deny that Dasein can be and often is indifferent or hostile to the well-being of others, but rather brings out the ontological underpinning of all specific existential relations to one’s fellow human beings, whether they be caring or aggressive (1996: 66).

Ubuntu is also an idea that projects a notion of transcendence, eliciting a borderless meaning yet encouraging and promoting mutual understanding between peoples, even though they come from different cultures. This is very important in the understanding of this cultural value. Africans see the interconnectedness as not only between the African but as extending to people of all cultures. So, the fellow-feeling among Africans is extended to other people in the world. This is a holistic conception of humanity. From the Ubuntu perspective there is no “Other” that is opposed to us that needs to be exploited. This is a challenge to the politics of otherness that is played by the West against the rest of the world. The African does not paint others any colour in order to assert his/her own colour.

Clearly, the emergence of Ubuntu is fundamental in the system through which a particular human community relates with itself and with other communities worldwide. In this context, it is seen as the quintessence of community and communality. Community and communality play an essential role in human consciousness and relationships. Community literally means togetherness, of existence; with oneness or unity; existing together as one. The idea of community basically involves a group of human beings. It entails that human beings commune with one another, sharing the same goals and aspirations in life. It encourages cooperation in various activities that are beneficial and meaningful to human existence and its sustainability. Cooperation enlivens the spirit of unity and harmony in human relationships.

Aside from community, Ubuntu also gives birth to communality. Communality entails a shared experience of any human activity. This communality brings out the idea of Ubuntu as universal. Communality literally aims for the common, public good of human beings. Ubuntu is communal in the sense that it elicits unselfish, collective responsibility as against the selfish, irresponsible individuality that some thinkers, scientists or even cultures have been trying to perpetuate. But the idea of Ubuntu is non-discriminating. Paradoxically,
discrimination has been part and parcel of many African citizens. This can be explained with reference to the influence of Western values. Unfortunately, discrimination seems to be subtly practiced by mostly unknown human individuals trying to dominate the world. The African continent has not escaped from this form of oppression. Perhaps the experience of discrimination has prompted other concerned thinkers, scientists, or even cultures to do away with the selfish, irresponsible ways of thinking and acting, by putting forward the idea of *Ubuntu* as something that is universal and at the same time universalizable, considering the nature of *Ubuntu* as promoting the “other” to be equal in dignity and value, most especially as human beings.

Inevitably, *Ubuntu* promotes responsibility and mutuality of good intentions or purpose. It supports a defragmentary mode of relationship with one’s own culture, including other cultures. It realises itself as a community co-existing with other communities. This realisation brings forth a kind of understanding of *Ubuntu* that upholds a shared vision of being human to others, reflective of the essence of its communality.

African socialism as it manifests in the philosophy of Nkrumah and Nyerere can be said to be based on the *Ubuntu* cultural value. The aim of African socialists is to develop Africa and remould African societies in such a manner that the quintessence of the humanist ethos of traditional is furthered in the modern society. The doctrine urges humane development in accordance with African humanism. For Nkrumah:

… socialism in Africa introduces a new social synthesis in which modern technology is reconciled with human values, in which the advanced technical society is realised without the staggering social malefactions and deep schisms of capitalist industrial society. For true economic and social development cannot be promoted without the real socialisation of productive and distributive processes (1970: 201).

For him, African socialism cannot be based on the false assumption that traditional African society was classless. Neither can it on a metaphysics of knowledge that disdains the rational and critical capacities of traditional Africa. The proper base is the communalistic social organisation of traditional African societies. The communalism is based on the philosophy of egalitarian humanism. This philosophy aimed at the reconciliation of the individual’s aspiration with group welfare. The underlying ethic of African socialism is the ontology of the human being as an integral part of the community. The individual is conceived, ontologically, to be an inalienable strand of the social fabric.

Nyerere’s African socialism was guided by three principles, namely, equality and respect for human dignity, sharing the resources which are produced by the efforts of all, and work by all in an agriculturally based economy without exploitation by anyone. This was sustained by the notion of *Familyhood* which conveys the same connotation as *Ubuntu* does. For Nyerere, *Ujamaa* practical expression of African socialism means first and foremost the building of modern African society on the traditional African value of family-hood. This is similar to the familism found in Asian culture. The idea of family-hood of familism in societies where they are rooted forbids all kinds of exploitation of fellow human being. It also forbids amassing of the wealth and resources that is meant for the whole community by few individuals.
One of the problems that bedevils Africa today is the exploitation of fellow human being by for selfish reasons and the desire by some to hold on to the power that belong to the people endlessly. For instance in Nigeria, some individuals have been instrumental in incapacitating the refinery system so that they could benefit in billions of Naira or Dollars from the importation of fuel. If African countries are to develop, and be free from the clutch of Western domination and exploitation, there is the need to put African resources together; not that some will be stingingly rich and others will be living in abject poverty. This is another way of saying that corruption has to be dealt with in the economy. Nyerere’s socialism in this vein, with its root in the humanist principle of Ubuntu, rejects capitalism. This is for the reason that capitalism seeks to build a society on the exploitation of man by man.

Nkrumah’s communalist thrust and Nyerere’s ethics of cooperation for the common good are two sides of the same coin of the humanist essence of African culture. The point of departure for this humanism is the abhorrence of unbridled capitalism as well as the subscription to the communalist ethos which, as noted above, prioritised human dignity and welfare. Accordingly, it recognises and reinforces the “otherness” of individuals. This is in sharp contrast to the economic doctrine driven by the ethics of competition. Such competition is believed to drive economic growth. It is this kind of logic that lies behind neo-liberals’ call for privatisation, liberalisation and deregulation. Neo-liberal theorists affirmed the central role of the free market system. The central claim is that the free market capitalist system is maximally effective in producing and equitably distributing the economic, social and political and intellectual necessities of the modern societies. The free market consists of atomistic rational individuals who know their needs and wants, and who are free to compete in order to satisfy them. It is believed that the state must, therefore, retreat from the management of the economy to allow free competition. But within the communalistic ethos, the competition which propels the individualist-capitalist contexts may be stiffened. The germane question now is: Can there be social, political and economic development without competition?

To our mind, competition is a veritable factor in both political and economic development. There has been silence on this issue in African scholarship by those who emphasised the need to base African development on African communalism. This silence can be predicated on the seeming impossibility of combining the spirit of competition with the sharing spirit of traditional Africa. Socialist theorists need to do a lot of rethinking in this respect. I am of the opinion that there is the need to develop a competitive spirit in order to foster African development suggest the imperative of synthesising the values of Ubuntu and African socialism with the positive values of Western capitalism.

However, we believe that the humanism of Ubuntu does not exclude competitive element. And even if it does, it is an element that must be introduced to it. While traditional African community encourage sharing and community spirit, the individual is still regarded as having inalienable rights: he has his own wife and children to take care of and has right to own property. And therefore, the system would allow some means of competition in acquiring certain basic needs. That is one of the reasons why parasitism is not tolerated. The philosophy behind African humanism guaranteed individual responsibility with communal relationship. For instance, active competition weakens the ability of any one interest or faction to dominate its own arena and to intrude unduly upon the workings of the other.
Moreover, citizens who have real economic and political alternatives will be less vulnerable to exploitation, and thus in a better position to resist corruption and respond effectively to it. Sustained political competition can create essential incentives for the effective oversight of bureaucrats by elected officials. But while competition must be genuine and vigorous, it must also be structured and orderly. Total laissez-faire in the economic realm is likely to enrich the few and impoverish the many. In the political sphere a free-for-all among twenty or thirty parties will not yield a stable democratic mandate for any of them; instead, it will likely produce a state of political insecurity in which politicians, unsure of their hold on power, enrich themselves as quickly as they can. Institutions guaranteeing orderly relationships between the political and economic realms are just as important as vigorous competition within them. There must be clear, and accepted, boundaries and distinctions between state and society; public and private roles and resources; personal and collective interests; and market, bureaucratic, and patrimonial modes of allocation. Where such boundaries exist, competition and free interaction within each realm are more secured: it will be more difficult for economic interests to buy political influence, and for government officials to plunder the economy. Citizens will be better able to live and interact freely in an active civil society, to form effective social norms, and to engage in self-organized social activity.

But the two spheres cannot and should not be utterly separate: there must be open and legitimate channels of access between them. Policies must be grounded in, and respond to, social and economic realities; social and economic behaviour must be subject to the effective rule of law. Property rights and the enforceability of contracts must be credible. People and groups in society must be able to communicate with, and influence, elected officials and bureaucrats; the latter must be able to gather information about society. Such linkages are essential for maintaining accountability, including not only the general accountability of state to society, but also the accountability of bureaucratic to elected officials. As with political and economic competition, completely unstructured interaction is not desirable. Both elected and appointed officials need enough autonomy to carry out their work in an uncompromised, authoritative way.

The central idea of Ubuntu and African socialism is a certain kind of self-assertion, which refuses to accept the Western ways as the only, or even the suitable path, in the pursuit of African post-independence development (Oladipo: 2009: 70). However, it should not be seen in this dimension alone. To see it that way will look like African theorists are just playing the politics of otherness for the sake of it. The projection of African cultural values for the development of Africa is based on the view that the socio-cultural context of African is different from that of the West and that what cultural and social policies that benefit the West may not necessarily be productive in the African context. The desire of the Africans should not just be the affirmation of cultural difference or that of freeing themselves from Western imperialism but that of suitable development direction. The value of Ubuntu and the principles based on it is that it is essentially an ideal of social organisation informed by the commitment to the values of justice and solidarity as the core ingredients of building and sustaining viable human communities. The basic problem with the socialist theorists in Africa was their attempt to legislate and enforce socialism and community rather than the use of consent and consensus.
In Fukuyama’s perspective, the charge that the Washington Consensus and its neo-liberal politics of open market and privatization has been a failure is inaccurate (2002: 24). For him the policies were successful in Poland, Estonia and Mexico. However, he remarks that the failure of the Washington Consensus was one of omission rather than that of policy. Its major problem was that it fails to take account of social capital in its development policies. He writes:

The ability to implement liberalizing policies presumed the existence of a competent, strong, and effective state, a series of institutions within which policy change could occur, and the proper cultural predispositions on the part of economic and political actors. Nevertheless, the Washington consensus was implemented as a blueprint for development in many countries lacking the proper political, institutional, and cultural preconditions to make liberalization effective. Eliminating capital controls, for example, can lead to serious financial instability if implemented, as in the case of Thailand and Korea, in countries without adequate regulation of the banking sector. Similarly, privatization of state assets can delegitimize the entire reform process if carried out by state agencies that are corrupt and prone to cronyism. What we have learned over the past decade, then, is not that liberalization does not work, but that economic policy by itself is not sufficient to induce development. Economic policy of any sort must be carried out by a state; one that is limited in scope but strong in its ability to enforce the rule of law, competent and transparent in the formulation of policy, and legitimate enough to have the authority to make painful economic decisions. The development agenda, in other words, cannot abstract from politics or from political institutions (Fukuyama, 2002: 24-25).

While many accept the importance of institution in the process of development, only few are convinced that cultural factors like social capital play a critical role as well. Fukuyama is among those fully convinced of the economic value of social capital. He argues that societies in which people are accustomed to cooperating and working together in large organisations are much more likely to develop strong and effective state institutions.

Fukuyama defines social capital as “shared norms or values that promote social cooperation, instantiated in actual social relationships” (2002: 28). Social capital is what permits individuals to band together to defend their interest and organise to support collective needs (2002: 26). Social capital in this view is a utilitarian way of looking at culture. Culture tends to be seen as an end in itself (which it is) or as a form of creative expression. However, it also plays a very important functional role in any society, being the means by which groups of individuals communicate and cooperate in a wide variety of activities. While it is difficult to quantify culture as an end in itself, the functionality of culture in economic terms is much more measurable. Not all norms and values, and hence not all cultures, are equally equipped to foster economic growth. Put it in another way, not all societies have equal stocks of social capital. A look at Ubuntu shows that it constitutes a stock of social capital for the Africans because of its potentials to generate trust, confidentiality and solidarity among the individuals in the community.

One of the important points to be considered in the consideration of the economic humanistic cooperative principle of African societies is the circle of social capital. Fukuyama uses “radius of trust” to explain this scope of social capital. Earlier, in Asia, business life remains only within the family and near kinsmen. The strongest and most reliable bond of trust was among family members, or else of relatively small circle of close personal friends. Social capital therefore resides primarily in kinship networks and in many respects such
networks are important social asset. If social capital is to foster economic growth, the radius of trust has to be extended beyond family unit. The implication of the radius of trust within a small circle is that it reduces the level of trust cooperation and coordination with strangers. The further implication is that family businesses will have trouble with growing into large conglomerates, into large impersonal professionally managed corporations with dispersed public ownership. The potential in *Ubuntu* is that the kind of social bond it generates is not limited to family members alone but extended even to the totality of human race. In other words, though *Ubuntu* philosophy is African in origin, it does not promote essentialisation of difference and social exclusion of “the other”. Attempts to justify social exclusion, as in some form of nationalism, are not congruent with a proper understanding and usage of *Ubuntu*. The reason is that it is not necessarily limited by biological ancestry, nationality or actual place of residence.

This value has significance for African development as it implies that the re-appropriation of the *Ubuntu* philosophy would encourage cooperation. This is not alien to traditional African societies. The tendency towards cooperation manifests in traditional African societies in concepts and practices such as *esusu* or *ajo*. This is a cooperative scheme among the Yoruba people of Western Nigeria that allows credit facility to be made available to individual member of the community who form part of the *esusu* group. The principle of *esusu* works in a way analogous to the revolving micro-credit schemes. Under these schemes, members contribute equal amounts on a periodic basis, and the whole pot is given to one member. The rate of default in these schemes is generally accepted to be very low because they operate through a mutual accountability network where sanctions are applied through peer pressure and each member submits to peer-review. This process continues until all the members benefit in terms of credit finance from the scheme. Since everyone, no matter how poor needed and used financial services all the time and since many could not afford the use of money lenders who charged high interest rates on loans, the scheme became very attractive.

In today’s Africa, the economic tradition embedded in *esusu* can be used to develop a new economic system in which those who lack credit facility can be assisted by cooperative groups. There is no doubt that this aspect of the African culture is still alive, it needs to be developed in such a way that the facility will be substantial enough to give the beneficiaries business breakthrough. When this happens women can benefit substantially from the empowerment it offers. Strengthening women’s financial base allows economic contributions to their families and communities. Earning more money through access to capital to start a small business can increase women’s confidence and empower them. This may even help them to be more active in politics.

The cooperative spirit in *Ubuntu* and also seen in the *esusu* scheme can also foster cooperation with other developed nation of the globe so that in working together they could take advantage of their expertise and what Africans lack especially in the area of science and technology. This was what Japan and China did at some points in their historical development. For instance, the Japanese government took a proactive stance in helping her indigenous technology that had plateau by sending the so-called Iwukara mission on a journey around the world to gather information on foreign education, technology, culture, military, social, and economic structures. Later on, it sent thousands of students abroad to do
the same and hired more than 2000 Westerners from 23 countries to teach modern science, mathematics, technology, and foreign languages. Due to the deeply rooted work ethic and strive for hard learning, this approach fell on fruitful grounds. This is however not to say that everything that is learnt will be useful within African socio-cultural environment.

The developmental imperative of Africa also demands the critical appropriation of *Ubuntu* in management. In the context of business management and leadership, *Ubuntu* would imply, according to Mbigi, participation and sharing. This has the capacity to bring about a situation in which worker in an organisation do not just see themselves as workers but also as owners. This allows greater cooperation within the organisation which can bring about expansion. Mbigi is of the opinion that African managers should transcend beyond Western management thinking by developing Afrocentric management ideas and management practices (Cited in Karsten, 200). As noted earlier, developing African style of anything whatever should not be based on racial politics of otherness. We are not just looking for an Africa difference, but what will work in our socio-political and cultural context. So, the suggestion for the use of *Ubuntu* philosophy as a management technique is predicated on its usefulness in terms of developing Africa. Karsten, talking about the value of Ubuntu, remarks that the promulgation of indigenous management concept is required in order to better understand African business practices and to enhance the improvement of knowledge transfer. The managing business resources through the *Ubuntu* style of management involves a departure from the hierarchically structured management relations, as well as the introduction of a cooperative and supportive form of management in which the collective solidarity of various groups employed is respected and enhanced. It is also a departure from the traditional management systems which, according to Mangaliso and Damane, are guided by misapplied economic assumptions about human nature: that self-interest is the ultimate determinant of behaviour and it is maximised when employees earn as much as possible from contributing as little as possible (2001: 24).

Our conviction is that no qualitative and meaningful economic, social and political transformation can take place without the generation of effective management paradigms. The relevance of *Ubuntu* management model for development in African has to do with the fact that it is a holistic model that ensures a high degree of harmony and continuity. The model focuses on the development of people, products, systems structures, markets productivity, quality and performance. The essence of this approach is a single-minded dedication to total development and transformation.

The participatory element involve in *Ubuntu* infuses collective consciousness into the mind of both the employer and the employee. This makes participatory decision making possible and this further allows the employee to have not only a sense of belonging but also a sense of ownership. When the people are made to own the vision of the establishment, whether it is private or public, they are able to work for the establishment with dedication. The long-run effect is that synergy is built in the organisation and corruption is also reduced. With this, the establishment can be more effective in its production or services. The establishment is therefore able to build competitive advantage.

For Etounga-Manguelle, the single most important characteristic of African culture is the subordination of the individual by the community (2000: 71). This is meant to be a
critique of the communitarian element of African culture which also finds expression in Ubuntu. The purpose of such domination, according to him, is to ensure equality in economic matters. The effects of this include the non-existence of the idea of individual responsibility, and the culture of silence. Others such as Okolo (1992) and Kochalumchuvattil (2010) have also provided similar critiques. Okolo, for instance, observes that the communitarian understanding of the society in which primacy is given to the community over the individual is bound to generate all sorts of problems with regards to the status of the individual as an independent subject (1992: 483). This leads Okolo to conclude that, “in African philosophy, self as a subject suffers; it is accounted for almost totally in terms of relation to others” (1992: 483). Kochalumchuvattil argues that, as a result, it is the case that the existential situation in most African communities is that there is little or no room for individual values such as personal initiative, responsibility, subjectivity, spontaneity and self-determination (2010:114). Kochalumchuvattil further argues that these values are essential in the exercise of personal freedom and autonomy for each individual person has an intrinsic dimension to his/her being. A person cannot be reduced to a mere set of extrinsic relations. A person is a subject, not simply an object; an end in himself/herself and not simply a means. Being an individual subject, he/she is self-determined and not merely other-determined, and therefore to ignore or treat inadequately such values as personal initiative, responsibility, subjectivity, and independence is to undermine the very roots of human freedom and autonomy (2010:114).

Most of those who criticise the communitarian element of the African culture do so on the assumption that culture is static and that there is a one-way causal relationship between culture and behaviour. Changing behaviours also cause changes in culture through feedback and reinforcement over time. Differences between the behaviours of younger and older generations contribute to the generation gap. Also, through years of contact with non-African cultures, the majority population has adapted social structures that derive from these non-African cultures. This has occasioned the differences between the cultural practices of urban and rural people, between college-educated and semiliterate people, and between migrant workers and middle-class people.

Apart from this, most critics are oblivious of the distinction made between radical and moderate communitarianism by Gyekye and the case he made for Moderate communitarianism. Although, Kochalumchuvattil refers to the moderate communitarian view of Gyekye, his opinion is that the individuality, freedom and autonomy which Gyekye says finds expression within the African communalistic framework are rarely exercised due to the authoritarian hierarchical structure and deep respect for tradition found within African culture.

For Gyekye, the descriptions of the communalistic element of African culture provided by Menkiti, Mbiti and African Socialists such as Nkrumah and Nyerere are misleading and overstated (1997: 37). The reason according to him is that their descriptions tend to present the individual as being completely at the mercy of the community. For Gyekye, in as much as this position does not “appear to have fully recognized the status and relevance of the individual rights” patently models “the notion of radical or unrestricted communitarianism” (1997: 38). Looking at the African culture, he thinks that this position is difficult to support. He argues that, as some Akan proverbs suggest, individuals are responsible for their situations in life and that individual efforts are necessary conditions for
fulfilling their needs and reaching their goals. And therefore, the espousal of communal values does not in any way involve the rejection of individualistic values. This position is Gyekye’s moderate communitarianism. Gyekye’s position does not give ontological primacy to the community as other scholars are wont. Rather, it holds that the attainment of personhood does not depend on the communal structure of the society alone. It accepts the reality of individual autonomy as well as the relational and communal character of an individual. This view gives equal moral standing to communality and individuality.

This integrative social philosophy by Gyekye is important because of its attempt not only to point our attention to the fact that communitarianism and individualism are not strangers to our culture but that if we integrate and adapt Western individualism and humanise it, it is congruent with a framework found in African culture.

**Conclusion**

The problem of African development is not intractable. It only require that we focus on necessities. We need to look within because finding a workable framework will require a conducive socio-political context that will make it work in African countries. Ubuntu can provide such socio-political environment. It is important to note that Ubuntu needs to, and can, be developed into an ideology that will serve as a regulative principle in our socio-political and economic dealings. When appropriate institutional framework is put in place to monitor this, African can develop and adapt whatever she borrows from other cultures for her interest. We need to recognise that the industrialised nations of the West, especially the U. S. are being driven by ideology – that of cultural dominance in the world. When we formulate an adequate socio-political and economic ideology, we also can be driven by it.
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