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Cultural diversity and minority rights in post-colonial Africa: an ubuntuist intervention

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Abstract

Ought post-colonial democratic states in Africa care about people's cultural differences and disadvantages? This paper addresses this normative question of why post-colonial states in Africa ought to urgently respond to the challenges of cultural diversity and the increasing agitations for minority rights. Roughly, the recognition of minority rights (and voices) and policy initiatives on cultural differences are two instructive ways by which state-actors in liberal democracies respond to the challenges posed by diversity. The extent to which these strategies have proved effective is questionable in the African context; thus, raising concerns about the philosophical rationale and implementation of such measures. While liberalism, multiculturalism and liberal-multi-culturalism are the dominant theories and individualistic approaches grounding governance of diversity in Western philosophical scholarship, those theoretical frameworks have implicitly underpinned the governance of cultural diversity in Africa. This paper challenges these extant frameworks and proposes taking seriously an interpretation of socio-political ethic of Ubuntu in guiding the policies of states in post-colonial Africa in matters of diversity governance. It establishes that an ubuntuist normative intervention is more promising in showing how the values of justice, dignity, reconciliation, harmony, and consensus obligate postcolonial African states in respecting people's cultural differences and culturally induced disadvantages.

Diversité culturelle et droits des minorités en Afrique postcoloniale : une intervention Ubuntuiste

Résumés

Les États démocratiques postcoloniaux en Afrique devraient-ils se soucier des différences culturelles et des désavantages des gens ? Cet article aborde cette question normative de savoir pourquoi les États postcoloniaux en Afrique devraient répondre de toute urgence aux défis de la diversité culturelle et aux agitations croissantes pour les droits des minorités. En gros, la reconnaissance des droits (et des voix) des minorités et les initiatives politiques sur les différences culturelles sont deux manières instructives par lesquelles les acteurs étatiques des démocraties libérales répondent aux défis posés par la diversité. La mesure dans laquelle ces stratégies se sont avérées efficaces est discutable dans le contexte africain ; ainsi, soulevant des inquiétudes quant à la justification philosophique et à la mise en œuvre de telles mesures. Alors que le libéralisme, le multiculturalisme et le multiculturalisme libéral sont les théories dominantes et les approches individualistes qui fondent la gouvernance de la diversité dans la recherche philosophique occidentale, ces cadres théoriques ont implicitement sous-tendu la gouvernance de la diversité culturelle en Afrique. Cet article remet en cause ces cadres existants et propose de prendre au sérieux une interprétation de l'éthique socio-politique d'Ubuntu dans l'orientation des politiques des États de l'Afrique postcoloniale en matière de gouvernance de la diversité. Il établit qu'une intervention normative ubuntuiste est plus prometteuse pour montrer comment les valeurs de justice, de dignité, de

réconciliation, d'harmonie et de consensus obligent les États africains postcoloniaux à respecter les différences culturelles et les désavantages induits par la culture.

Introduction

Post-colonial African states face serious conceptual, normative, and practical challenge of how best to address the challenges of cultural diversity and minority rights. As multitude of cultures and people of ethno-culturally diverse population interact with one another, it becomes more urgent to address the multi-layered question of how to achieve inclusive representation and participation in matters that affect all; how to avoid incessant domination of some politically and numerically advantageous groups, while protecting the interests of historically disadvantaged population in the ethno-cultural minority groups. The problem of managing diversity in an increasingly culturally polygot world-order is not unique to Africa as it is a troubling concern in Western democratic states. However, what makes the case of Africa worthy of attention is the 1884 historical Berlin Conference that led to the arbitrary fusion of different ethnic and sub-ethnic nationalities in Africa for colonial administrative conveniences, and resources exploration. More fundamental is how it seemingly appears that there are no other alternatives to the Western options of responding to the challenges posed by diversity.

Roughly, the recognition of minority rights (and voices) and policy initiatives on cultural differences are two instructive ways, among others, by which state-actors in liberal democracies respond to the challenges posed by diversity. The extent to which these strategies have proved effective is questionable in the African context; thus, raising concerns about the philosophical rationale and implementation of such measures. This paper is concerned with the normative question of the cultural diversity and minority debate. This paper does not intend to discuss minority rights in the inclusive context of national minorities and immigrant minorities; the scope of minority rights as used in this paper is limited to national stateless minorities and indigenous communities. As cultural diversity can either be at the international level involving nation-states or at the infra-national level consisting heterogenous cultures in a spatial multicultural societal context, this paper shall focus on the latter while discussing the challenges of cultural diversity in post-colonial Africa. The core questions are: Ought post-colonial democratic states in Africa care about people's cultural differences and disadvantages? Are liberalism, multiculturalism and liberal-multi-culturalism, which are the dominant theories and individualistic approaches grounding governance of diversity in Western philosophical scholarship the only alternative in the African context? Or is another ethical insight possible and plausible in the African context while also revealing beyond its provenance?

This paper answers the foregoing questions in the affirmative by proposing an interpretation of socio-political ethic of Ubuntu in guiding the policies of states in post-colonial Africa in matters of diversity governance and minority rights. Though Ubuntu ethic is well theorized and applied to different issues, it is underexplored in matters relating to minority rights. While political philosophers in Western intellectual culture have extensively engaged the question of minority rights in the African political philosophical space, the debate over minority indigenous rights and cultural diversity is marginally taking shape. The need for searching for a complementary framework to the existing Western explanations on minority is necessitated by the inadequacies of the Western frameworks in ensuring justice in the relations between dominant groups and members of minorities, and in addressing ethno-cultural conflicts in post-colonial Africa.

This paper shall expose such inadequacies while establishing that the state has a duty of respecting people's cultural differences and culturally induced disadvantages. Core to the Ubuntu ethic defended in this paper are values of justice, dignity, reconciliation, harmony and consensus. Broadly interpreted, an Ubuntu political ethical theory is a normative framework and a non-individualistic approach that holds cogent implications for polycentric governance and policies on equitable allocation of resources; it accounts for minority and culturally differentiated rights.

This paper is organised in six sections. In providing an operational understanding of the key-terms of the paper, the first section is a synoptic conceptual analysis of cultural diversity and minority. A descriptive overview of the challenges of cultural diversity and minority rights in post-colonial Africa is presented in the second section. Next is a discussion of the theoretical perspectives in Western political philosophy on diversity governance and minority rights. Against the inadequacies of the mainstream perspectives, section four of this paper exposes the socio-political ethic of Ubuntu. Following this, section five argues the imports of Ubuntu Socio-Political Ethic for cultural diversity and minority rights in post-colonial Africa. While hypothesising the possible objections to this proposal, this paper articulates how such Ubuntu grounded minority rights square with and illuminate the United Nations sustainable development goals. Suggestions for future research are provided with concluding remarks in the last part of the essay.

Conceptual Framework: Cultural Diversity and Minority Rights

Cultural diversity can be defined from both descriptive and idealistic senses. In the descriptive sense, it is a statement about what cultural diversity entails as a matter of fact. In this sense, it is opposed to monoculture; cultural diversity largely refers to the existence of groups different from the majority groups in a state, where such groups have different ethnic origin and history, different racial profiling, different cultural traditions and value orientations, different religious practices, different artistic expressions and languages. Roughly and broadly construed, cultural diversities are characterized by differences in ethnic backgrounds, dressing, languages, traditions, religious beliefs, origins, norms and other aspects of culture culminating in numerically and politically dominant population and the less dominant minorities, respectively.

In the idealistic sense, cultural diversity is not a state of affair, but a process conceived to be ideal. It is a "dynamic process whereby cultures change while remaining themselves, in a state of permanent openness to one another. It is about dialoguing with other's differences and having multiple and mutable identities that transcend primordial differences and identifiers. Understood as such, cultural diversity is not "an asset to be preserved but a resource to be promoted" and a process to continuously explore in order to enhance human and group capacity of being vectors of dynamism, tolerance and intercultural dialogue.

Minority right is a broad category of rights recognizing, accommodating, and protecting the identities, interests, needs and agitations of disempowered groups. Such groups, including gender and sexual orientation such as the LGBT, religious and ethnic cultural groups, have been traditionally less empowered compared to other groups. Minority rights are claims of compensation for unfair disadvantages, marginalization and undue discriminations against numerically less and politically weak ethno-cultural groups in power relations and power structures. Such rights are not the same with the "familiar set of common civil and political rights of individual citizenship that are protected in all liberal democracies." Essentially, minority rights are responses to the existential experiences of ethno-cultural

injustices including non-recognition of groups' identity and language, as well as an undue stereotypical portrayal of a group in the media and educational curricular. Minority rights could be in the form of public policies, multicultural induced constitutional provisions or exemptions or legal rights.

Minority rights can focus on either of two objectives: to achieve internal restrictions or to realize external protections. While the former "involves the right of a group designed to protect the group from the destabilizing impact of internal dissent, [the second type] "involves the right of a group against the larger society, designed to protect the group from the impact of external pressures." Often, minority rights agitation in Western liberal systems is in the form of external protection and safeguarding of the viability of minority groups against all vulnerabilities. In the Global South, the resonance of ethno-cultural minority rights is high involving both the internal conflicts and external pressures.

The challenges of cultural diversity in post-colonial Africa
Cultural diversity in Africa is a topical issue central to social order, political and economic development. Cultural diversity is a global phenomenon that poses some challenges. Nikolaos Hlepas points that surveys suggest its negative impact on government policies, economic performance, social cohesion and generally, human development. The deterrence of development becomes in this sense inevitable as there is a strong sense of competition between ethnic groups for the provision of public goods and resources. This also results in avoidable conflicts, massive consumption and misappropriation by the government.

Cultural diversity is often seen as the main source of regional and intra-state conflicts in Africa as it promotes the struggles over resources through social exclusion and ethnic violence. While the relationship between conflict and cultural diversity is complex, not all conflicts are motivated by cultural diversity. Arguably, some mono-cultural groups even experience conflict and some with non-similar cultures have resolved ways of coexisting peacefully. "Post-colonial states in Africa have largely been defined by ethnic politics, religious factionalism and the struggles of minority groups for inclusion, representation or self-determination." Though political independence of many states in Africa is yet to significantly change the political marginalization of some groups having root in arbitrary boundary mapping of colonial era, what is more apparent today is the intensified domination and marginalization of minority groups in the struggle for political power and resource control. As cultural diversity induced conflicts hamper development prospects, the poor political and economic performance of Sub-Saharan Africa has been ascribed to high ethno-linguistic diversity.

The Sub-Saharan population has 20 percent of its people living in countries at war within themselves. Indeed, many of the conflicts that have resulted in state collapse, genocide and xenophobia, human rights violations, increasing number of internally displaced people, refugees and much more are often associated with ethno-cultural diversity. Despite these challenges, there are perspectives that emphasize the maximization of the reality of cultural diversity such that instead of being a source of conflict, it becomes a means for its resolution, and for peace-making. The reality of cultural diversity especially in Africa is inescapable and deserving an embrace rather than neglect. Taking cognizance of the interests of present and future generations, some scholars argue that we must in fact embrace it as a source of exchange, innovation and creativity. More so, some scholars argue that the traditional conflict resolution and the cross-balanced negotiations that diversity is capable of producing can deliver more sustainable peace than the western approaches. We are indeed faced with the puzzling question of how many African societies have been able to adapt effectively, such liberal and other measures to

cope with the challenges of cultural diversity; there seems a massive struggle on this front, as success reports of conflict resolution, peace-making and development processes are very rare.

Rwanda experienced ethnic conflicts that gravitated eventually in 1994, into a genocide that lay the country in ruins. According to Colin Waugh, this genocide which resulted from ethnic conflicts and intolerance resulted in hundreds of thousands of Rwandans being killed in their homes, fields and villages. Many attempted to flee from the wave of death that engulfed the country. While scholars note the improvement of Rwanda preceding the genocide, credit is not given to liberalism at all, but indeed what seems to be its opposite, the concept of benevolent dictatorship. The effectiveness of the dictatorship in Rwanda has spurred many debates on the possibility of other African states to follow suit. Shawn Russell says that although Rwanda lacks some of the basic freedoms and civil rights that are often considered essential to a nation, especially by western democratic powers, Rwanda works. There are numerous challenges to despotism even if it lights itself as enlightened; these consist of its tendency to deteriorate into dictatorship, characterized by disregard for civil liberties and individual rights.

The adverse effects of cultural diversity continue to manifest itself in many African countries such as South Africa and even Zambia notably experiencing the endemic of Afrophobia and xenophobia. Xenophobia is regarded as hatred or fear of that which is perceived to be alien while Afrophobia is hatred expressions and aversion against African nationalities immigrant around the world. It often manifests itself in the suspicion of the actions of others and desire to be rid of their presence to preserve what is presumed to be an ethnic identity or purity of race. Series of attacks in some of these countries have come to be more of Afrophobic than xenophobic. Such irrational fear of immigrants, who are in the minority, is often fueled by the belief that foreigners are taking up all the employment and business opportunities at the expense of residents in the majority. Roughly, many post-colonial African states have not been faring well in terms of dealing with cultural diversity and this calls for serious and immediate concern.

Consider the state of cultural diversity and the agitations for minority rights in Nigeria. Ethnic and cultural diversity in Nigeria is a function of the forced amalgamation of different originally independent ethnic groups by the colonial regime. The 1884 Berlin Conference arbitrarily created a fusion of diverse ethnic and sub-ethnic nationalities resulting in artificial states in Africa for the purpose of driving imperialism. "Colonial politics and economic policies tended to benefit the elites of dominant groups at the expense of less influential ethnic minority groups." Thus, "post-colonial expressions of "marginalization and domination of minority ethnic, religious and cultural groups are often a continuation of the ethnic, class and caste hierarchies established under colonial rule."

While there are three major ethnic groups in Nigeria - Hausa/Fulani consisting of 27.4 percent of the population, Yoruba - 21 percent and Igbo- 14 percent, Nigeria is home to over 250 ethnic groups with over 500 languages. These ethnic groups are in the majority population wise and more politically influential than other ethnic groups and they spread across different regions and states such that one ethnic group may be found in many cases, in more than one state. This massive heterogenous cultures, languages and multiple identities result in difficult challenges in public policies on allocation of resources. The struggle for public offices, agitations of minority groups about being marginalized, Federal job opportunities and many more are issues surrounding cultural diversity politics in Nigeria.

"The minority question continues to threaten the legitimacy and viability of the Nigerian state. Minority rights agitation in the Niger Delta, for example, has centred on the resource demands of what has been

described as the "oil minorities." "The Ogoni people, a minority group in the political Niger Delta region of Nigeria, were revealed to have been exposed to the despoliation and degradation of their land. These included water, soil and air contaminations with consequential health challenges, denial of the right to clean and health environment as well as depriving the people a right to having fair share and control of the resources within their locales. Sequel to the series of agitation by the Ogoni people, many armed militancy groups have emerged in the Niger Delta Region. "Like other minority groups, the oil minorities of the Niger Delta have historically felt shortchanged by the revenue allocation model of the federal structure, which has left their communities exploited and undeveloped, even as they bear the burdens of environmental degradation due to oil production."

Minority rights issues, as emerging from an ethnically diverse state, have been evident in the Nigerian political sphere right from the events leading to independence till date. Lexington Izuagie observes that ethnic criteria in 1950s determined the development of political parties, which complicated the polarization of national politics. Izuagie also observes that upon noticing that independence was imminent, regional leaders demanded for their different states or at least constitutional safeguards to protect them against the dominant ethnic groups in the would be independent Nigeria. Upon observing the facts, the colonial government, convoking the Willink Commission, rejected the former in place of the latter; recommending instead that a Bill of Rights be incorporated in the independent constitution to protect the minority groups.

One of the strategic policies developed to deal with ethnic and racially induced challenges in Nigeria was the Federal character principle which gave rise to a quota system aimed at addressing the issues of ethnic representation in the public and other sectors. While the intention was presumably to solve the challenges of marginalization and inequality in the general allocation of resources, to improve inter-ethnic unity and social cohesion, critics see it as a fraud designed to stagnate the economy. This agitation is also seen in the inclusion of the quota system into the educational sector, as critics argue that it creates major obstacles to the advancement of learning in Nigeria, one by discriminating citizens in their own country, amongst other things. In the political arena, one major challenge of the quota system is that it promotes mediocrity and disperses expertise. Rather than putting capable hands in sensitive political offices, the quota system would rather reserve such positions to many times incapable individuals simply owing to their emerging from particular regions or state. Also, many of the mainstream institutions are explicitly biased towards the interests and identities of major ethnic groups. A case in point is the military, police, air force and Naval institutions that are largely dominated through strategic historical design by the Hausas and the Fulani ethno-cultural groups.

Other significant challenges facing the Nigerian polity, not specifically under the umbrella of minority right issues, but emanating from the reality of ethnic diversity include the agitations of the Igbos to become an independent state and recent attempts of the government to allow the Hausa/Fulani own cattle settlements in every part of the country including lands that are home to other ethnic groups. Under the umbrella of Biafra, the Igbo ethnic group has long agitated for secession from the Nigeria State, dated back to the mid-1960s. Up until recent times, Nigeria still experiences seasonal mob agitations for an independent state of Biafra.

The Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlements planned for implementation under the Buhari-led administration presumably aimed at resolving the recurring conflict between farmers and nomadic herders, has been one of the most recent major controversies of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. Due to the

recurring killings of farm owners allegedly by the Fulani herdsmen, the settlements sought to give lands in all parts of the country to herders as the Federal Government believes this will be beneficial to everyone. Most ethnic groups have expressed gross repugnance towards this scheme as many state traditional leaders have risen against it. However, reports show that the Federal Government is insistent on making the scheme a success through another plan called National Livestock Transformation Plan. The scheme is seen by critics as a calculated attempt to ensure the dominance of the Fulani ethnic group by spreading their reach across all parts of the country as thus gradually establishing political strongholds. Ethnic conflicts, as products of cultural diversity and minority right issues in Nigeria, continue to be an enduring problem.

Diversity Governance and Minority Rights in Western Philosophical Scholarship

The normative question of minority rights is topical in contemporary political philosophical scholarship. Political philosophers are concerned with the moral arguments justifying such rights and how such rights relate or depart from the foundational principle of liberal democracy. Some of the fundamental socio-historic conditions necessitating the salience of the minority rights debate in contemporary scholarship include the increasing rise in ethnic identity fuelled by issues of marginalization of minority groups in the political space, the historical and contemporaneous agitations for secession in many liberal democracies, and the xenophobic tensions created by the nativist-immigrants relations in contemporary societies. More fundamental to the evolution of the current debate is the reality of ethno-cultural diversity and the consequent political mobilization and agitations of indigenous minority groups in many liberal democracies.

Liberalism, multiculturalism and liberal-multi-culturalism are the dominant theories and individualistic approaches grounding governance of diversity in Western philosophical scholarship. The early debate on minority right is a fall-out of the liberal-communitarian controversies on whether priority should be given to the individual or the community in the conception of life goods, obligations, rights and social organization. While liberals defend individual freedom and the irreducibility of the interests of the individual to those of the community, communitarians deny autonomous conception of the individual and defend that the community provides and defines the good life of an individual.

Liberalism is a meta-ideology that embraces a broad range of rival values and beliefs. As a political doctrine with possible different interpretations of some of the competing values, fundamental to liberalism is the view that it challenges absolutism and totalitarian tendencies in governance. Liberalism allows political pluralism, tolerance of a wide range of contending beliefs, and the existence of conflicting social philosophies and rival political movements and parties. Today, the issue of minority rights is a debating point for many nation-states because of the increasing and diverse cultural compositions of the state's social and economic life. Cultural diversity often throws challenges to liberal democratic governments. Communitarian thinkers are critical about liberal theory for its emphasis on individualism. Communitarianism asserts the importance of the community in which the individual lives. In contrast to liberalism's apparent prioritization of the individual and her freedom to choose her own conception of the good, communitarians deny the primacy of the individual over the community; the community is important to the extent that it contributes to the well-being of the individual.

This communitarian-liberal contention has implications for the minority right debate. For one, "defending minority rights entail endorsing the communitarian position that supports cohesive and communally-minded minority groups in need of protection." The supposition here is that minority rights

are group-focused and claimed by a given group; by implication, such rights are collective rights. For the other, the liberals see ethno-cultural minority rights as an unnecessary encroachment on the ideals of moral individualism, individual autonomy and individual rights. A fundamental flaw in the communitarian understanding of minority rights, as Will Kymlicka rightly points out, is that "not all group-specific minority rights are 'collective' rights and even those that are 'collective' rights in one or another sense of that term are not necessarily evidence of collectivism."

In addition to the conception of minority rights as communitarianism, some scholars have domiciled the discussion of minority rights within the liberal framework. In this sense, it is argued that given the deep commitment to liberal values and the wide spread of liberalism in modern societies, it is inevitable to place and locate minority rights within the liberal framework. The claim here is that in multi-ethnic societies, the language, nationality, practices and ethnic identities of minority groups deserve public recognition and are consistent with such liberal democratic principles as individual autonomy. The concern of this perspective is whether minorities in liberal democracies who presumably share and enjoy liberal principles underpinning mainstream rights of citizenship still need additional rights under the rubric of minority rights.

Many liberal thinkers such as Kymlicka, David Miller, Jeff Spinner, Yael Tamir and Frank Lovett are of the view that in promoting freedom seeking citizens, recognition of cultural membership and respect of ethnic nationalities are instructive. In what is called the 'liberal culturalist position', some liberal thinkers argue that culture, identity and agitations for minority rights are "fully consistent with liberal principles of freedom and equality, which justify granting special rights to minorities." Lovett, for example, "explores the implications of the value of freedom from domination for questions of multicultural accommodation." His argument is that freedom from domination is a human good and humans have a prima facie obligation to reduce domination. Given the salience of freedom from domination is a priority, Lovett concludes that regardless of its potential value for a selected few, the normative ideal of accommodation is permissible but not necessarily required. The concern for minority rights and individual rights of citizens in general is a liberal means of minimizing sectarian domination while also promoting a culture of tolerance and a proper functioning of democracy.

A fundamental challenge with the liberal culturalist thesis is how to negotiate the tension between possible minority rights that undermine and restrict individual rights. It is not the case that all minority rights would supplement and complement individual autonomy. In such cases, which of the rights justifiably deserve more priority?

"Multiculturalism arises out of the communitarian critique of liberalism. Liberals tend to be ethical individualists; they insist that individuals should be free to choose and pursue their own conceptions of the good life. They give primacy to individual rights and liberties over community life and collective goods." The positive approach to cultural diversity some have termed multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is "a divergent set of normative ideals and policy programmes that promote (in different ways and by different means) the incorporation and participation of immigrants and ethnic minorities into state and society, taking into account their modes of ethnic and religious difference." As a policy framework, "multiculturalism has been advanced to ensure equality in diversity and the promotion of tolerance and respect for cultural diversity." As a normative prescription, it is based on a philosophy of saying 'yes' to the fact of diversity in order to have multicultural citizenship. Multicultural citizenship is "a set of rights and duties that takes into account the cultural, ethnic and religious diversity of the groups that make

part of a state and integrates their needs appropriately into an existing set of rights and duties that follow their citizenship."

Will Kymlicka observes two broad ways in which multicultural societies emerge. One comes from unification or an incorporation of two or more cultures that were originally self-governing, having concentrated territories or homeland, distinct languages and cultures. This process could occur through conquest, colonization or in very rare cases, voluntary decision to unify. The second way Kymlicka observes is the voluntarily (or sometimes, refugees having no choice) immigration of individuals and families to another society, and such immigration according to Kymlicka coalesces into ethnic groups (independent self-governing nation) who eventually desire to be integrated fully as members of the state, not as a distinct governing body, but recognized and treated in like manner as the larger ethnic groups.

To Patrick Loobuyck, multiculturalism is a normative response to the fact of diversity while multiculturality simply refers to the descriptive fact of existence of diverse cultural groups with their distinctive identities in a society. Multiculturalism has come under severe attacks. To the extent that multiculturalism has the potential of enhancing social unity and cohesion, claims have been made on how multiculturalism can contradict the liberal ideals of individualism and meritocracy; how it can be a cause of conflict through an essentialist group stereotyping, segregation and separation. In practice, multiculturalism has often led to "ethnization of cultural values, resulting in a dependency on State largesse in political relations with minorities and an 'overemphasis' on cultural identity to the detriment of overcoming general inequality."

In showing the possibility of a thriving multicultural society, Loobuyck develops a 'liberal multicultural measure'; one that shows the relationship between liberalism and multiculturalism. Loobuyck argues that the egalitarian liberal perspective has more multicultural potential than is generally accepted. What Loobuyck implies is, despite the reality of cultural diversity, we can find liberal measures to engender peace, one that does this without giving special treatment to minority groups, but is characterized by an approach emerging from the practical application of general liberalism to valid citizenship rights. This approach advocates a kind of liberalism that strives for 'pluralistic sphere', by demanding neutrality where essential as opposed to a liberalism that strives towards neutral public sphere, which to Loobuyck leaves less room for multiculturalism.

Some fundamental arguments have been advanced against the above rationalization of cultural diversity and its strategic management through schemes of minority rights. Arguably, in the African context, despite agitations for minority rights, and the concerns about the individualist and capitalist tendencies of liberalism, skepticism has been expressed with respect to the unconscious acceptance of foreign conceptual category in the explanation and governance of diversity in contemporary Africa. Such concepts as liberalism, multiculturalism, liberal-multiculturalism are said to be foreign to the African political mindset; hence should be rejected.

While guiding against such external influences evinced above, it has been argued that minority rights are "corrosive of long-term political unity and social stability…[This is because] minority rights involve the politicization of ethnicity, and any measures that heighten the salience of ethnicity in public life are divisive. Overtime they create a spiral of competition, mistrust, and antagonism between ethnic groups."

In the light of the concern about harmonious relationship among nation-states, and the potential of minority rights policies of eroding shared sense of multicultural nationalism and solidarity, suggestions have been made on abandoning minority-rights policies. In the absence of empirical evidence that establishes the veracity of the foregoing it is plausibly arguable as a competing hypothesis that when minority rights are promoted, the bond of civic solidarity would improve with social unity and political stability. "There is no reason to assume in advance [and in the absence of conclusive and compelling evidence] that there is any inherent contradiction between minority rights and democratic stability."

Socio-political ethic of Ubuntu

Broadly interpreted, Ubuntu is a worldview about humanness and a moral term "often used to capture morality among Zulu, Xhosa and Ndebele speakers and others in the Southern African region." In the sense of a moral worldview, Ubuntu refers to "a human being who has attained a status of being a person." A common maxim in many sub-Saharan societies roughly translates as "a person is a person through other people." This presupposes the idea that one is not in full actualization of his personhood if such a person does not relationally recognize his individuality through that of others around him. The maxim of "a person is a person through other people, is an affirmation of one's humanity through the recognition of an "other" in his or her own uniqueness and difference." Thus, humanity is not embedded in my person solely as an individual; humanity is substantively bestowed upon the other and me. Achieving personhood is a matter of relating virtuously and positively to others.

In recent scholarship, Ubuntu has been developed as an ethical theory having socio-political implications. As a socio-political theory, it is a normative framework and a non-individualistic approach that holds cogent justice, dignity, reconciliation, harmony and consensus building values in the conception of how to achieve an ideal society. At the level of ethical theory, Ubuntu is an other-regarding relational ethics; it is a theory of right action which considers an action morally good when it promotes positive relationships of both identity and solidarity. "To identify with each other is largely for people to think of themselves as members of the same group – that is, to conceive of themselves as a 'we', to engage in joint projects, coordinating their behaviour to realize common ends, and to be emotionally invested in the group's doing, e.g., with regard to pride and shame." Besides sharing a way of life which identity suggests, the solidarity dimension of Ubuntu entails caring for each other's quality of life through engaging in mutual aid activities, being sympathetic to the other's concerns for their own sake and being positively oriented toward other's good.

Ubuntu, as a virtue ethics, expresses the capacity of the African individual to exhibits traits of virtuous character such as care, humanness, hospitality, reciprocal sympathies, peace and unity. As Kwame Gyekye rightly notes, "the ideal and moral virtues include generosity, kindness, compassion, benevolence, respect and concern for others." "These traits are embedded in communitarian ethos where the individual is mostly construed as not independent of his community; the individual self-realization is through the other person. Thus, the main moral goal [in Ubuntu] is self-realisation which is achievable by fulfilling other-regarding duties.

Writing on the role of the community in determining the duties and virtues that define moral personhood in African societies, Ifeanyi Menkiti claims:

> It is the community which defines the person as person, not some isolated static quality of rationality, till, or memory … in the African understanding human community plays a crucial role in the individual's acquisition of full personhood.

Though every individual is born human, the formation of humanness comes through the process of socialization. In this regard, Ng' Weshemi asserts that "for the Africans, one is not human simply by birth. Rather, one becomes human through a progressive process of integration into the society." What this implies is that one cannot speak of Ubuntu outside of communal context. The African individual is bounded in a network of relationship that constitutes his personhood and dignity. Human beings have "dignity on grounds of community by virtue of being the sort of individual naturally capable of communal relationships with others."

Perhaps to illustrate, an argument against the apartheid, Ubuntu does not just recognize this interconnectedness amongst people of same origin, color or race, but amongst everyone who is regarded as a person. Understood in this sense, Ubuntu's essence is the capacity for empathy with another person, to connect with others and be moved by them. Essentially, Ubuntu is often associated with the quest for identity and human dignity. It is the capacity for communal relationship of identity and solidarity that confers dignity on humans in sub-Saharan moral thought. As a principle in African ethics, therefore, what is good is what promotes peace and togetherness. I can achieve my personhood and dignity by my peaceful relation, respect and tolerance for others. According to Bernard Matolino, Ubuntu is mostly conceived as an "authentic ethical principal, a way of life, an authentic mode of being African, an individual ideal and the appropriate public spirit."

The main point about Ubuntu ethic is that it expresses the interdependency of human beings; the idea that a human being is a complete person to the extent that the society gives him or her recognition as a person and allows him or her to realize the full potential and benefits of being a human being." At the heart of Ubuntu is the moral norm of what the ideal society and individual ought to be, ought to behave, ought to be governed. Ubuntu ethics emphasizes the need to promote and pursue a common good in order to enhance co-operation and promote our social native as human beings. It is also an attempt to cultivate in people or the society certain character such as kindness, compassion, respect for human dignity, unity, and value for the human person.

Ubuntu urges us to seek the opinion and thoughts of others, realizing that everyone does not share the same core values, beliefs or way of life. So, we also give others a chance to articulate their opinions, to foster interaction and accommodate others. This in Ubuntu is often described as tolerance for the other. Further expatiation of this view can be seen in Desmond Tutu's definition of Ubuntu in his "No Future without Forgiveness:"

A person who has Ubuntu is open, and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good...knowing that he or she belongs to a greater whole.

Ubuntu is the recognition that we are bound in a way together and we can achieve personhood because we help others to do so. As an African Ethical principle, Ubuntu rests on core values such as humanness, caring, sharing, respect and compassion. These set of values provides the opportunity for human belongs to lure according to certain human and humane principles such as peaceful relacim, emphasis on human dignity, the value of human life as well as consensus, tolerance and mutual respect. In the words of Dandala, "Ubuntu is about what qualifies a person to be a person; it is a process of becoming an ethical human being in the community." Considering that in the African tradition, "every member is expected to consider himself or herself an integral part of the whole and co-play in appropriate role towards achieving the good of all," Ubuntu therefore as an ethical principle, has as its basis an ethic

that takes relationship to be the fundamental unit of moral behavior and an attitude of oneness, compassion and empathy.

In addition to the conception of Ubuntu as a worldview and a moral quality of a person, some scholars have construed it broadly as a phenomenon, a socio-political-ethic according to which the organisation of a society can be normatively structured on the ideal of interconnectedness. When we talk of the term Ubuntu, a communalist oriented kind of political organizational ideals is evoked. This understanding of political arrangement is often referred as Afro-communitarianism - a philosophy that emphasizes such virtues as unity, harmony, compassion, tolerance and togetherness. "African moral-political thought is generally represented in terms of communitarianism understood as a normative inquiry into what constitutes a good society." Ubuntu is the "communitarian philosophy that stresses the importance of inter-personal relationship and values such as harmony and care."

The foregoing complementary senses of Ubuntu shall be explored in the next section in the articulation of how best to address the challenges of cultural diversity and minority rights in post-colonial African states.

Imports of Ubuntu socio-political ethic for cultural diversity and minority rights
Although Ubuntu has a deep rated meaning and history in the African society and life, it is believed that the search for a post-colonial African identity and ethical principle led to the popularity of the concept of Ubuntu. In the light of the currency of decoloniality in contemporary intellectual discourses in sub-Saharan Africa, it would be interesting to know what alternative, supplementary or complementary insights can be gained from an African perspective on the issues of diversity and minority rights in Africa. In this section, I argue taking seriously an interpretation of socio-political ethic of Ubuntu in guiding the policies of states in post-colonial Africa in matters of diversity governance.

Right is an entitlement that a right-holder can claim, assert, and demand; rights engender and focus on duties owed to the right-holder. Given this understanding of rights, minority rights are set of claims with normative, sometimes legal and strategic force, demanding the fulfilments of duties to the traditionally disempowered groups. The question is: in the light of Ubuntu socio-political ethic, ought post-colonial democratic states in Africa care about people's cultural differences and disadvantages that have traditionally placed some? Put different, what arguments establish the protection of minority rights in an Ubuntu socio-political context and how are such explanations different from the dominant perspectives in Western discourses?

An orientation in Ubuntu scholarship, which I call the 'group rights-duties incompatibility school', would argue that given the nature of Ubuntu socio-political ethic as a relational ethic with emphasis on the duties to the 'other' there cannot be seamless transitioning from the realm of duties to the sphere of rights. Molefe, Wingo and Metz defend this position in different ways. For Molefe, Ubuntu cannot provide a prescription about minority rights because the communitarian logic is not in consonance with the logic of rights. While noting that there is a "fundamental clash of rights being self-oriented and duties being other-oriented," Molefe argues that the idea of rights will "subvert the purely other-regarding duties to secure the well-being of others." Though without a clear articulation of the scope of the 'other', Molefe tends to mean a greater concern for the common good of the larger society rather than a marginalised group. In his words, "It is this good of a wider society that takes priority. It is for this reason that ultimately rights will be sacrificed when they clash with duties to promote and secure the well-being of all." Just as Molefe sees rights (minority inclusive) as secondary and duties to others as

primary, Wingo maintains that Ubuntu ethic evinces securing the interests of all cooperation rather than focusing on the rights orientation with its emphasis on autonomy and individual welfare. Metz doubted the idea of minority (group or communal human) rights as he thinks groups are not the ultimate bearer of rights but the individual; human rights has to do with "an individual bearer" and it is a contradiction in terms to speak of a communal (group or minority) right. Metz grants that it is natural to discuss the duties to minorities; however, extending rights to the group is questionable as "rights are grounded on the dignity of individuals." Working within the Ubuntu ethical framework, Metz interpreted individuals as having dignity insofar as thy are capable of community, understood as "being capable of identifying with others and exhibiting solidarity toward them."

While I agree with Metz's conception of dignity grounded on an interpretation of Ubuntu, I do not jibe with the 'group rights-duties incompatibility' orientation in Ubuntu socio-political ethic. Understandably, Metz is right in pointing out that dignity and equality of individual human beings anchored on a capacity to commune are preconditional to any discussions of group rights. However, besides individualism, holism is another valid explanatory model of explaining social reality. Within a communitarian frame, it is arguable that group's rights cohere in a harmonious way with individual rights. Respecting minority rights entails in some sense observing the earlier generations of rights such as civil, political and economic.

The second orientation, represented by Edwin Etieyibo, Anke Graness, Michael O. Eze and Mogobe B. Ramose, defended, by inference, the compatibility thesis of rights (cosmopolitan duties and rights in specific) with the Afro-communitarian socio-political ethic of Ubuntu. In different ways, these scholars have explored the potential of Ubuntu ontology and ethic for an alternative and better understanding of cosmopolitanism to the extant, fragmented, reductive and elitist explanations of cosmopolitanism in Western literature. I hope to draw relevant insights from their perspectives as well as Metz's moderate Afro-communitarian defense of human rights in articulating that the state has a duty of respecting people's cultural differences and culturally induced disadvantages. In the light of the currency of decoloniality in contemporary intellectual discourses in the sub-Sahara, I would be discussing the plausible complementary insights that can be gained from Ubuntuism on the issues of diversity and minority rights in Africa.

Given Mignolo's decoloniality discourse, minority rights can no longer be articulated in "a mono-logic discourse" with liberalist or multiculturalist benevolent form of control. Discourses about minority rights must emerge from the various spatial and historical locations of the colonial difference which in the first instance was arbitrarily created to fester coloniality of power. Deconstructing the epistemology of colonial difference is an urgent task requiring being skeptical of the supposed 'globalist epistemology' that has produced, reproduced political ideas including liberalism, multiculturalism and liberal-multi-culturalism as theoretical templates for maintaining and determining the global order till present.

Locating minority rights in Ubuntuism suggests an opportunity to extend the relational nature of humans beyond a limited and exclusionary scope of community in the primordial forms of immediacy such as ethnic background or religious association (as it was the case in pre-colonial sub-Sahara) to 'post-multiculturalist' framing where individuality and universality, groups' power positionality and historical disadvantages are regarded as superficial but important differences. What would be more fundamental in Ubuntuism framework is the sameness of humanity with emerging cultural diversities, fluid degrees of actualisation of dignity even when everyone has the potential of attaining it through

positive communal relations. In this understanding, categories such as nations, ethnicities, religions and other forms of differentiations are not to be denied but to be accepted as secondary to the humanness which is primarily and fundamentally a universal category. Eze underscores, aptly, the cosmopolitan framing of Ubutuism:

Our contexts may be dissimilar; our history different and our culture antagonistic, yet it is this distinctive, unique and peculiar historicity that constitutes our creative cultural energy. Culture for its part becomes a location of self-transcendence and inclusive admission of the foreigner, including the barbarian [the dominant groups as well the marginalised groups]. Everyone is equal by nature and not only by law, reason, custom, tradition or convention. The human person and his dignity thereof, is what defines the character of our social and political lives.

The above fidelity of Ubutuism to all humanity has some worthy imports on minority and culturally differentiated rights. To the extent that minority rights are historical necessities that would continue to emerge with agitations insofar as there are injustices in the global hegemonic relational order, the tensions they raise can be optimally addressed when seen in a complementary relationship of human beings whose humanity is inter-connected with a recognition of the humanity of others. The humanness and humanity dimension of Ubutuism is not a claim of cultural homogenousity; rather it is a conversational space and context of discovering the intersubjective conditions of human existence. "It is only when we get to know the other [and recognise our identity differences even when they are more of artificial constructs] that empathy becomes a possibility; that humanism can be legitimately evoked."

In Ubutuism, the minority symbolized as the 'other', is not defined in isolation from the dominantly empowered groups. Through the human interactive and relational procedures of Ubutuism, "the 'other' is taken as an embedded gift that enriches my humanity." Such recognition presupposes an accommodation of secondary differences guided by the socio-politico-ethical values definitive of Ubutuism. Such values include respect of secondary differences, unconditional promotion of relational based conception of human dignity, and exercise of tolerance in seemingly irreconcilable differences; showing of generosity, caring, and compassion for the sake of the other and not merely as a means to negative ends; fostering a 'post-modernist cosmopolitan' (or what Mignolo calls 'critical cosmopolitanism') sense of identity belonging; and projecting existence as a process of becoming deserving both recognition of rights and observance of duties owed to others.

Ubuntu has much to offer post-colonial Africa. Values of friendliness, hospitability, empathy, generosity and compassionateness cannot go out of fashion, more so, they are indispensable values to hold together societies that are culturally diverse. It is in fact the very absence of such attributes that results in most of the multifaceted challenges faced by post-colonial African states today. A society that is constantly at war with itself would always find it a herculean task to make any meaningful policy aimed at any form of development. The reality of the so much culturally diverse Africa, though seemingly a vice, can be a vehicle for appreciating diversity as a source of exchange and creativity for the advancement of the economic and political space if Ubutuism receives an utmost attention in praxis.

One import of Ubuntuism on stemming the challenges of cultural diversity is its potential in helping to address negative stereotypes and identities through its promotion of egalitarian tolerance. Though to tolerate other diverse groups in multiculturalist societies does not necessarily mean respecting, accepting and negotiating the terms of harmonious existence, it does sometimes serve as a politically correct measure in managing cultural diversities. Unlike liberal tolerance that operates under the non-

harm, non-interference and strict individual autonomy as principles of social management, Ubutuism is instructive in facilitating accommodation of diversities through harnessing harmonious platforms for minorities to express themselves, without an attenuation of conversing with the majority group. The practice and principle of consensus elemental to Ubuntuism could lead to better understanding and negotiation of the grey areas fueling crises in the dominant and minority groups encounters.

In the light of the foregoing, Ubuntuism is a normative framework and a non-individualistic approach that holds cogent implications for polycentric governance and policies on equitable allocation of resources. Economic structure and sharing of state's resources is one of the salient forces fueling conflicts in culturally diverse and polycentric nation-states. Many post-colonial African states are organised around skewed distribution of political power and economic resources that foster inequality and marginalisation of certain groups. Ubuntuism "would support the principle of natural resource redistribution according to which all humans (whether they are our fellow state-citizens, compatriots, locals or not) fall within the scope of justice and the principles of distributive justice." Economic and political marginalisations of minority groups are unjust within the Ubuntu value system to the extent that such arrangements undermine and degrade the capacity of the marginalised for reciprocal communal relationship of identity and solidarity in the nation-state. Ubutuism entails an egalitarian political arrangement that makes obligatory the proportional sharing of resources and liabilities of the State among the nation-states. Since Ubutuism is grounded in humanness and in the reciprocal relational way of communing amongst all humans, the bifurcation of rights along liberalist and minority lines is complementary in so far as such treats a being with dignity respectfully. Whether minority rights or liberal first, second or third generation rights, Ubutuism supports mutual recognition of the dominant groups and minority groups in ways that the humanity (majority groups) of one is necessarily involved and entangled in the humanness expressed toward the 'other' (minority groups).

Fundamentally, the liberal and minority rights evince in Ubutuism both square within and illuminate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, which call for concerted efforts by all States, include broadly: ending extreme poverty by 2030, achieving food security through sustainable agricultural practices, promoting well-being for all across age brackets, ensuring inclusive quality education and learning for all, instituting gender equality and empowerment, making clean water and sanitation a common reach, facilitating access to affordable clean energy, working towards sustainable economic growth, building resilient infrastructure through responsible innovations, reducing inequalities in international relations among states, instituting urban and cities sustainability, advocating a culture of responsible consumption and production, taking pragmatic actions in respect of the challenges of climate change, adopting conservative strategies in the management of marine resources, halting biodiversity loss, building strong institutions of peace and justice, and strengthening global partnership for sustainable development.

At the core of the SDGs is partnership and urge for cooperative network of relationships among different States and regions of the world in meeting the strategic goals. None of the goal-focused problems of the SDGs is particularistic and isolatory in dimension; from the environment to poverty, health to education, there are some subtle elements of interconnectedness of each goal. Ubutuism, as a normative force, enjoins the fundamentality of our communal nature with emphasis on identifying with the 'global other' and exhibiting solidarity with the 'global other' both in terms of successes and failures. The values of Ubutuism such as togetherness, mutual support, bonding, inclusion, and being-in-the-making connect to the tenets of the SDGs. In achieving the SDGs, conscientious, collective and

supportive efforts by all States through sharing and partnership are sacrosanct. Unlike the liberalist prescription of non-interference, Ubuntuism is useful by motivating collective struggle rather than autonomous struggle towards the realization of the SDGs. Analogically, as the maxim "I am because we are, and we are because I am" is core to Ubutuism, so revealing is the popular African proverb that "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." By implication, in optimally achieving the SDGs, a collective, interconnected, and participative empathy requisite of Ubutuism is instructive.

Conclusion

In concluding this paper, it must be pointed out at this juncture that Ubutuism is not a theory cast in iron. As such, it might not resonate with all aspects of the SDGs. An example in this regard is the sustainable environmental component of the SDGs. Ubutuism as a socio-political ethic centered on humanity might "not fully account for human-nonhuman relationships as it takes the flourishing of nonhumans (animals, trees, and ecosystems) as a secondary concern. In this regard, it becomes difficult how it might fully address the question of sustainable biodiversity. For example, it is difficult to see how humans can "share identity" or engage in "participative empathy" with desert beetles and sea urchins." As important as biodiversity is, cultural diversity is essential as well.

Having argued in this essay the invaluable import of Ubutuism in addressing cultural diversity and minority rights in Post-colonial African States, some critics might perhaps argue further that Ubuntu socio-ethic does not offer any prospect and alternative explanation to how best to manage cultural diversity in a contemporary liberal democratic order, especially, since we do not live any longer in what we presumed to be a communitarian society. Indeed, it might be argued further that Ubuntu is a pretentious claim to the categories and qualities of humaneness, care, sharing, respect and compassion as these ideals failed to be exhibited even in its South African provenance with the recent waves of xeno (Afro)phobia. These are fundamental hypothetical objections to the cogency of Ubutuism.

However, to the extent that it can be argued that there is no reason to believe that those values core to Ubuntu should only be restricted to pre-industrial and small-scale settings, post-colonial African states and beyond can still learn some of the salient values Ubuntu historically represents. Even when, the ideals of Ubutuism are being corrupted with political exigencies in recent times, Ubutuism can still be rationally defended.

This paper argues that despite the few limitations that Ubutuism might seem to have, it still deserves being taken seriously in guiding the policies of States in post-colonial Africa in matters of cultural diversity governance. Essentially, the state has a duty of respecting people's cultural differences and culturally (and artificially) induced disadvantages. In addressing the tensions that might inevitably arise because of cultural diversity and the under-empowerment and recognition of minority groups, the salient values of justice, dignity, reconciliation, harmony and consensus elemental to Ubutuism are instructive for unified cohesion of minority rights and liberal rights.

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