

Capitalism: Ubuntu's Kryptonite and The Advent of Xenophobia in Africa

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Abstract

This article takes a keen look on how capitalism has impacted the ethos of Ubuntu across Africa. It reveals how economic strife has strained Ubuntu's core tenets of communal well-being. The Ubuntu philosophy, built on collective welfare and human interconnectedness, is at loggerheads with capitalism's focus on individual success and profit. This tension has sparked cultural and social unrest within African societies. Globalization has exacerbated this tension, with the inducement of Western values that prize individualism. The ubiquitous media blitz and consumer culture that have become mainstream features elevate personal success and material wealth, displacing Ubuntu's principles of communal care.

Urbanization has also rattled Ubuntu's communal spirit. Johannesburg and Lagos, two of Africa's popular cities have witnessed fierce conflicts over houses, land, and jobs. This perceived resource scarcity has bred xenophobia, and weakened Ubuntu's call for cooperation. In these urban settings, competition for resources has displaced Ubuntu's ethic of shared duty to fellow humans. This article recommends hybrid economic models as a viable remedy. Social enterprises such as cooperatives that mix pursuit of profit with social welfare reinforce community values. Such models will allow capitalistic pursuits and Ubuntu to coexist, fostering economic growth that aligns with collective well-being.

In wrestling with these challenges, the article stresses the necessity of interlacing economic ambition with cultural preservation. Ubuntu's principles—empathy, shared responsibility, and mutual respect—offer a powerful force for challenging the inequalities that capitalism has occasioned. The article includes a call to action for African leaders and community advocates to cultivate a framework where economic and social progress flourish side by side, without erasing Africa's vibrant cultural heritage. Through this balanced outlook, Ubuntu and capitalism can mutually enrich one another, shaping a future where growth elevates all members of society.

Governments can adopt social welfare initiatives, universal healthcare, and educational reforms that cultivate communal values to revive Ubuntu. Such policies temper capitalism's isolating effects, embedding Ubuntu's principles at a structural level. Community leaders and civil society are an important element in blending capitalism and Ubuntu.

The article concludes that African societies can successfully harmonize economic growth with cultural integrity. By adopting hybrid models, enacting supportive policies, and encouraging community-led initiatives, African nations can advance prosperity while preserving Ubuntu's spirit of shared humanity. This balanced approach offers a pathway for sustainable development that creates room for both economic progress and preservation of cultural identity.

Introduction

Ubuntu pulses at the heart of African cultures. It embodies a belief in shared humanity. Rooted in communalism, Ubuntu insists on empathy, interdependence, and mutual reverence. In this

worldview, one's well-being breathes through the well-being of others. Ubuntu dismantles individualism, embracing instead a collective ethos where one's humanity is ignited by the humanity of others (Tutu, 2000). Far from being an abstract notion, Ubuntu infuses African customs and norms, dismantling individualism, exalting interdependence and a duty of mutual care. Communities uplift each other, and shared resources nourish the common good (Mbiti, 1969). Ubuntu's strength radiates from its devotion to relational harmony and responsibility toward others (Ramose, 1999).

Yet, this ethos now grapples with a profound antagonist. The spread of capitalism has rippled through African societies, stretching social fabrics thin. Capitalism, a system wired for individual profit, has surged across Africa over recent decades. In the wake of colonialism, African states embraced capitalism as a route to prosperity (Fanon, 1963). Capitalism dangled promises of growth, jobs, and global participation. For post-colonial African leaders, these promises mesmerized. They pursued rapid economic transformation, with capitalism as the conduit. African markets opened to foreign investment, encouraging industrialization and integration into a global economy where competition, not cooperation, governs (Ake, 1981). This new economic order prizes individual success and wealth amassment. In its wake, collective well-being and social cohesion falter (Amin, 1978).

Capitalism's fervor for individual gain collides with Ubuntu's principles. Where Ubuntu

cultivates sharing, capitalism hoards. Ubuntu fosters mutual responsibility, but capitalism spurs personal ambition. In African societies, this pivot has frayed

communal bonds. People's focus has drifted to self-interest, navigating survival within competitive markets. This shift disrupts the Ubuntu-centered social fabric that once bolstered African communities. Economic landscapes are now strewn with inequality and social fracture (Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999). The wealthy claim resources, while the poor struggle to hold on. This disparity stirs social tensions (Rodney, 2018).

One vivid consequence is xenophobia. Economic scarcity and competition ferment resentment. Migrants and foreign workers are cast as rivals, not neighbors. This is glaringly evident in South Africa. In recent years, anti-foreigner violence has spiked. Many locals perceive foreign workers as drains on limited jobs and resources (Landau, 2011). Capitalist pressures amplify these fears, transmuting economic strain into xenophobic hostility. Xenophobia arises as a result of deep-seated socio-economic distress (Neocosmos, 2008). Given that capitalism prioritizes individualism over collective welfare and common good, communities no longer perceive each other through Ubuntu's lens of shared humanity. What follows is that these differences morph into sources of division and open hostility.

This article enders to show the nexus between capitalism and xenophobia in Africa. It argues that the ascendance of capitalism has diluted Ubuntu's influence. By analyzing the process of Ubuntu's decline, this article reveals capitalism's role in fragmenting and undermining African communalism (Dussel, 2020). It maps the arc of the rise of capitalism across Africa and its effects on social cohesion that is a hallmark of African societies. The analysis highlights how commodification and consumerism have eclipsed have overshadowed Ubuntu's communal ethos.

The article also discussed the role of globalization in reshaping African culture and values. Global economic pressures and the foreign cultures that come with it have hastened Ubuntu's decline. Individualism, a value that dominates the Western world, has gradually seeped into most societies in Africa. Consumerism and the media promote capitalist values and make communal values and practices seem antiquated and irrelevant (Nkrumah, 1965). Globalization hasn't only transformed economies; it has reconfigured cultural identities. This shift, paired with economic scarcity, intensifies xenophobic undercurrents across Africa. The article will draw on recent events in South Africa to elucidate these dynamics. By examining anti-foreigner violence, it seeks to untangle how capitalism and xenophobia intersect (Crush & Ramachandran, 2013).

Finally, this article will propose avenues to mend this divide. It will outline strategies to harmonize economic growth with Ubuntu's tenets. African leaders confront a choice between unchecked capitalism and a balanced approach. The aim is to advocate for a model where progress enfolds, rather than estranges, Ubuntu. Such a model upholds social cohesion and cultural integrity alongside economic growth. It promotes policies that honor both human dignity and economic needs (Gyekye, 1997). In conclusion, the article envisions a future for Africa. It calls for an economic system that cherishes African values. Ubuntu, a philosophy of shared humanity, resonates powerfully—even in an age of capitalism.

Literature Review

Ubuntu, an African philosophy rooted in communal values, has captured significant scholarly attention. Central to Ubuntu, as put forward by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a renowned anti-apartheid figure in South Africa, is the concept of shared humanity, often summarized by "I am because we are". This philosophy rejects individualism, emphasizing interconnectedness, empathy, and collective well-being. (Tutu, 2000) further describes Ubuntu as an ethical framework that prioritizes communal bonds over individual gain, providing a moral basis for

African social life. (Mbiti, 1969) adds to this discourse by opining that Ubuntu encourages reciprocity and mutual respect, elements essential for social harmony. Ramose (2002) reinforces this argument, by asserting that Ubuntu is a foundational principle shaping African communities and that it offers a viable alternative to Western individualistic ideals.

(Gyekye, 1997) brings in the perspective of the cultural reach of Ubuntu, which he terms as being vast. He argues that Ubuntu fosters the use of shared resources, links individual achievements to collective prosperity, and guides traditional justice, social support, and family roles. In traditional African settings, Ubuntu seeded systems of mutual aid and community trust. (Ramose, 1999) juxtaposes these values to the present-day reality by observing that as capitalism has taken root, Ubuntu's once-deep foundations have eroded, pushing indigenous philosophies to the margins.

The arrival of capitalism in Africa finds its origins in the colonial era. Colonial powers imposed economic systems built to exploit resources and funnel wealth back to Europe, unsettling traditional economies and sowing dependence on Western markets (Rodney, 2018). After independence, many African nations were lured by capitalism's promise of prosperity, adopting it as a vehicle for modernization and advancement of the African way of life (Ake, 1981). (Fanon, 1963) cautions against this move, warning that adopting Western economic models without scrutiny risks perpetuating colonial structures that we should be working to get rid of in the first place. (Amin, 1978) lends his voice to this discourse and posits that capitalism in its advent promoted individual success, consumerism, and competition—values that sharply differ and are always clashing with Ubuntu's communal ideals.

This capitalist embrace has had a mixed legacy in Africa. (Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999) argue that the drive for growth through capitalist policies created striking inequality, weakening social cohesion. Wealth clustered around urban elites, while rural regions slipped into neglect. Ake (1981) asserts that

capitalism's focus on profit over people tramples on communal systems, leaving traditional safety nets in tatters. As individualism seeped into social structures, communal values waned, and economic divides fractured society, amplifying tensions and marginalizing Ubuntu's influence.

Xenophobia has surged as one of the starkest and deadly by-products of these economic shifts towards capitalism. In South Africa, waves of anti-foreigner violence have been experienced in diverse periods in the last decade. (Neocosmos, 2008) attributes these violent xenophobic outbursts to socio-economic strain and fierce competition for scant resources. Xenophobia, he argues, is intensified by a fear of losing economic footholds, with foreign workers from other parts of the African continent seen as threats to scarce jobs. Landau (2011) observes and argues that these tensions often serve as outlets for broader frustrations with poverty and structural inequalities. (Crush & Ramachandran, 2013) point a finger to the neoliberal policies driving Africa's capitalist development. These policies have failed to relieve deep social grievances, fueling hostility toward outsiders. Xenophobia thus emerges and becomes apparent as an economic phobia where Ubuntu's ethic of human interconnectedness is supplanted by the struggle for self-preservation.

This economic tension is not specific to South Africa but rather a common theme in the world economy. In the aftermath, migrants and foreign workers are met with hostility especially in regions that experience high levels of unemployment and economic instability. Neocosmos (2008) points out that xenophobic sentiments arise where competition is fierce and jobs are few. Under these conditions, economic survival demands a focus on self-preservation over community, sidelining Ubuntu's ethos. As capitalism takes deeper root, the focus on individual survival and primal self-preservation overshadows Ubuntu's principles of shared humanity, worsening social divides.

Globalization, on the other hand, amplifies the cultural transformations that are already emerging. With the integration of African countries into the

global economy, there is growing influence of Western norms on African culture. (Nkrumah, 1965) directly addresses this development by arguing that globalization puts in place western values thereby diminishing the real and genuine African identity largely captured by Ubuntu. He stresses that a global economy-based consumerism and individualism does not accommodate Ubuntu. (Ake, 1981) observes that in its attention to individualism, personal accumulation of wealth, and consumerism, global media sends a message that Ubuntu's communal philosophy has no place in modernity.

As noted by (Crush & Ramachandran, 2013), globalization has therefore altered the perception that African societies have towards themselves. The increased exposure to the western media and education curricula that are in tune with the western education system therefore makes the younger generations in African societies regard Ubuntu as nothing but a mere relic of the past. The global consumer culture promotes individual success and the accumulation of wealth, which is in contrast to Ubuntu. Shifts to individualism portray people as rivals rather than sharers, and in such a world, Ubuntu may appear to be irrelevant. Personal gain becomes the ultimate goal disregarding the welfare of the community

making Ubuntu more of a relic in the contemporary African society.

These forces of capitalism, globalization, as well as the burdening socio-economic strain hit Ubuntu hard at its core, demolishing the pillars that were so firmly built. As changes occur within the African countries, the conventional ethical standards that were an essential aspect of African cultures are diminished due to the emergence of individualism and market orientation in the economic reform and community development. (Fanon, 1963) also points out that these changes must be critically assessed by African societies to avoid replication of colonialism patterns. (Ake, 1981) challenges African leaders to look for new economic paradigms that incorporate culture and development.

Different scholarly studies that have examined Ubuntu show the complex dynamics between Ubuntu, capital, and globalization. Ubuntu, which was central to African cultures, has succumbed to the intrusive forces of capitalism. Capitalism, derived from the exploitative colonial economies, undermines commonality, unravels the social fabric, and widens the gap between the haves and have nots. Xenophobia emerges in response to socio-economic pressure, compounded by struggles for resource availability. Globalization exacerbates these cultural changes, planting western values that erode Ubuntu's solidarity. Taken as a whole, these works reveal the price that has to be paid to integrate African economies into the neoliberal world economy. The decreasing value of Ubuntu implies an imperative for the reconstruction of development paradigms that respect cultural preservation and social solidarity. A vigorous clasp of these capitalistic paradigms binds Africa's hip to all the vices associated with capitalism and as such the light of Ubuntu and all the principles it advocates for has been slowly fading.

Theoretical Perspectives and Frameworks

Theoretical frameworks offer a rich context within which one can unpack how capitalism has reshaped social relations in Africa. Structural Violence Theory and Social Identity Theory illuminate the mechanisms fueling xenophobia in economic contexts. These two theories reveal how capitalist frameworks have sowed inequality, ultimately stoking division and violent hostility.

Structural Violence Theory

Structural Violence Theory contends that systemic inequalities wound and tear apart communities from within. Proposed by Johan Galtung, this theory defines structural violence as harm embedded within social structures. Unlike direct violence, where aggressors are visible, structural violence is masked by the fabric of society itself (Farmer, 2004). Capitalism, with its mechanisms of unequal resource allocation, sows and sustains these inequalities.

(Harvey, 2007) opines that capitalism's hunger for profit ignites structural divides. Resources pool in the hands of a few, while many are left scrambling. Such disparities brand capitalism as an architect of structural violence. This entrenched inequality fractures social cohesion, as wealth amasses around elites and others grapple with limited access (Amin, 1978). According to an argument by (Rodney, 2018), the legacy of capitalism in Africa is woven into a tapestry of economic rifts and generational poverty.

In this landscape, foreign workers emerge as scapegoats. Locals, struggling under the weight of scarce resources, often see foreigners as intruders in their economic survival (Crush & Ramachandran, 2015). Structural violence thus isn't wielded by individuals but by systems, creating fault lines where marginalized groups clash. The disadvantaged witness foreigners seemingly thrive amid their hardship, sowing seeds of resentment. Xenophobia then bursts forth as frustration finds a fissure to gush out from, an outlet to let off the pressure from.

Economic policies favoring elites inflame these tensions further. Neoliberal agendas focus on corporate gain, often sidestepping the social wreckage left behind (Harvey, 2005). As resources privatize, basic necessities drift out of reach. These neoliberal policies brew structural violence, locking vulnerable populations into cycles of poverty. The ripple effect of such economic schemes expands, stoking anger and intensifying local-foreigner conflicts.

Global capitalism steers people toward relentless competition. This scarcity-driven race erodes community bonds, fragmenting society's solidarity (Fanon, 1961). Anti-foreign sentiment thus blooms, as foreigners become easy targets of frustration. Structural violence not only devastates economically; it gnaws away at social cohesion.

In Africa, structural violence magnifies social rifts between locals and foreign workers. (Neocosmos, 2008) argues that with limited resources, xenophobia surfaces as a defensive response. Structural violence acts as a hidden force, silently stoking these tensions,

casting foreign workers as competitors in a survivalist struggle.

Structural Violence Theory exposes capitalism as a driver of inequality and discord. It clarifies why marginalized communities turn their frustrations toward foreign workers. Capitalism, through structural violence, not only entrenches economic gaps but fractures societies. This invisible violence ferments xenophobia by positioning foreign workers as rivals in a constrained economy.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory dives into the mechanics of in-group and out-group dynamics. (Tajfel, 1979) formulated the theory to explain why people categorize themselves against others. These categorizations spur fierce loyalty and rivalry. Individuals identify with groups bound by common identities, such as nationality or ethnicity. Social Identity Theory illuminates why people circle the wagons when faced with “outsiders.”

Under capitalism, economic strain sharpens group tensions. Locals increasingly perceive foreigners as competitors in the economic arena (Turner & Reynolds, 2001). This perception fuels xenophobia since people believe foreigners are claiming the few resources available. According to Social Identity Theory, economic difficulties enhance in-group identification and out-group distrust.

From these psychological fault lines, xenophobic violence emerged most notably in South Africa. In this view, locals brandish foreigners as an out-group that poses a threat to their survival, as argued by (Neocosmos, 2008). This division portrays those outside as the ‘other’ that is an economic threat to the locals. When resources are scarce, aggression is directed towards the ‘enemy’. The divide between the two groups of ‘us’ and ‘them’ becomes more pronounced, encouraging acts of rejection and aggression.

Through the lens of the Social Identity Theory, it becomes clear how economic pressure strengthens group affiliations. A sense of competition comes with

scarcity, making people become more protective of their in-group, in order to secure the available resources (Turner & Reynolds, 2003). This protective stance exacerbates social dichotomy since people begin seeing themselves as defending their turf against the encroaching invader.

Economic rivalry also leads to prejudice, and thus, adds to the fire. People in the country tend to view foreigners as competitors who take their jobs or as a nuisance (Landau, 2011). These stereotypes entrench out-group categorization, rationalizing exclusion. According to the theory, stereotyping fuels the building of social walls and perpetuates prejudice against the out-group. This bias provokes locals to justify hatred towards foreigners, who they portray as ruining their economic prospects. Globalization exacerbates these dynamics by increasing the flow of foreign employees. When migration increases, the locals are likely to feel that their social space is being threatened (Crush & Ramachandran, 2013). This leads to the feeling of the loss of control over resources and the presence of foreigners. In this context, foreigners act as a representation of an impending economic competitor, resulting in in-group cohesion against the foreigners.

Triangulating Structural Violence and Social Identity

Both theories are relevant in Africa in explaining xenophobic violence and social relations between foreigners and a native population. Economic inequity establishes structural violence in the capitalistic context and social identities emerge to define defensive group behavior. These frameworks explain why locals construct foreigners as enemies and not partners. Economic suffering is intensified by structural issues, while social categorizations channel resentment.

Together, the Structural Violence Theory and the Social Identity Theory cast light on xenophobia’s roots. The Structural Violence signifies how capitalist inequality sows the wind and reaps the whirlwind. In this way, through the creation of competition for resources, capitalism traps

communities into a cycle of hardship. This, according to Social Identity Theory, leads people to strengthen their loyalty to their own group and be prejudiced against others in the outside group. These frameworks paint xenophobia as something more than simple discrimination; it is a manifestation of institutions and societies.

The fight against xenophobia entails a recalibration of these structural and social dynamics. Policies must aim at addressing the economic disparities while at the same time fostering non-discriminatory and inclusive identities. Ending structural violence requires promoting equitable policies and advocating for the marginalized (Farmer, 2004). Combating xenophobic attitudes entails developing economic relationships and creating harmony within and between various groups.

Historical Context: Post-Colonial Africa and the Economic Shift

Colonialism reshaped Africa's economies and tore through its social systems. European powers carved out economic structures designed for resource extraction and profit, uprooting African communities' traditional economies (Rodney, 2018). Colonial economies siphoned wealth to Europe, disrupting local economies and dismantling communal ownership (Amin, 1978). African societies, once grounded in collective resource-sharing, saw these systems dismantled. The colonial model prized exploitation over community, draining resources and stripping Ubuntu, Africa's communal philosophy, of its power (Mbiti, 1969).

Colonial rule systematically crushed African traditional economies. Pre-colonial African societies were marked by communal land ownership, cooperative labor, and resource-sharing, all of which aligned with Ubuntu's values of unity and mutual support (Gyekye, 1997). But colonial forces replaced communal land systems with private ownership, forcing local economies to generate foreign profit for them (Rodney, 2018). These shifts unraveled Ubuntu's social fabric, dismantling the community

bonds that had sustained African societies for generations.

Ubuntu's erosion deepened as colonial rule imposed rigid social hierarchies. Indigenous leaders lost authority as colonial administrators ruled over new western-styled systems. Traditional support networks that held African communities together disintegrated, leaving community structures weakened. Colonial authorities prioritized individual profit and labor exploitation, steadily eroding Ubuntu's communal essence. Colonialism left behind a legacy of social and economic fractures.

After independence, African leaders looked to capitalism for development and conform to the new world system. Capitalism held the promise of growth, modernity, and global integration. To many African nations, capitalism seemed the doorway to economic progress. Leaders adopted policies to attract foreign investment, amplify exports, and build infrastructure. They envisioned a future of prosperity, hoping capitalist systems would uplift African societies, bringing the benefits of the modern world while retaining the core of their identity as Africans. However, this shift marked a dramatic departure from the economic values that were rooted in Ubuntu.

As African states embraced capitalism, Ubuntu's influence weakened further. Capitalism's focus on individual success and competition clashed with Ubuntu's ethic of collective well-being (Harvey, 2007). Open markets and foreign investment drew societies toward personal gain. The drive for profit overtook Ubuntu's support systems, once the backbone of African communities. Urban migration and economic divides deepened, corroding bonds of community and mutual aid.

In the new capitalist post-colonial African economies, wealth gravitated toward cities, creating stark divides. Rural areas, where communal values had deeper roots, faced neglect. Traditional roles and support systems frayed as capitalist values took center stage (Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999). The pursuit of wealth created social fragmentation, with

Ubuntu's principles of shared humanity and empathy slipping into the background.

Globalization has both intensified and augmented capitalism's grip on African societies. As global markets spread out, African economies became intertwined into a system that greatly rewards individual success. Among the youth population, western consumer ideals ignited a shift in values through the appeal of consumerism (Nkrumah, 1965). The allure of comfort goods, and the gain of personal achievement completely overshadowed the values of shared humanity. Ubuntu's emphasis on shared lives began to seem outdated, having been outpaced by modern and capitalist definitions of what it means to be successful.

The economic shift witnessed in post-colonial Africa became a cultural departure from Ubuntu. Economic growth and success became the holy grail, leaving collective or communal welfare as an afterthought. This shift laid bare the shortcomings of capitalism as a preserver of African cultural and social cohesion.

Colonialism and the capitalist economies that came with it greatly disrupted Africa's social and economic roots. Colonial rule ripped apart traditional economies, with western-style capitalism widening the fracture. This shift had the unintended consequence of splintering once-united communities, and the legacy thereof has been the challenge of balancing economic growth in the modern world with cultural resilience.

A Tale of Two Cities: Violent Xenophobia in Johannesburg and Lagos

Johannesburg and Lagos have been ground zero of fierce xenophobic violence in recent years. In Johannesburg, the violence targeted fellow African migrants mainly from Nigeria but also other African countries, while in Lagos, retaliatory attacks against South Africans were carried out in response to the violence in Johannesburg meted out on Nigerians. These events expose the effects of rapid urbanization, land pressures, and fierce competition over resources, coming together to form a deadly spart

that has ignited xenophobic tensions into overt violence.

Johannesburg, South Africa's economic center, has endured multiple waves of anti-foreigner violence. In 2008, 2015, and 2019, attacks against African migrants erupted across the city, targeting workers from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Mozambique, and other African nations. The city's allure for work opportunities drives a constant influx of migrants, putting strain on its resources (Landau, 2011). The crush of urbanization intensifies demand for housing, land, and jobs, stoking embers of competition that have flared into fires of violence and loss of life. Foreign workers, in particular, are often blamed for job scarcity and overcrowding, feeding resentment among locals (Crush & Ramachandran, 2013).

Land grabs and informal settlements worsen Johannesburg's tensions. Many migrants settle in informal areas that suffer from overcrowding and poor sanitation. These settlements lack basic services, amplifying resource scarcity (Klopp, 2000). Nearby wealthier neighborhoods retain solid services, underscoring the city's glaring inequalities. As land competition tightens, resentment against "outsiders" intensifies. Many locals see migrants as rivals for already scarce resources, sparking exclusionary attitudes and, at times, violence against foreign nationals (Landau, 2011).

Economic divides fan these flames even more. In Johannesburg, many locals argue that foreign nationals undercut wages and squeeze opportunities in the informal economy. This perception fuels xenophobic sentiments, particularly in times of economic hardship. (Crush & Ramachandran, 2013) observe that hostility often targets migrants perceived as thriving, making them scapegoats for underlying socio-economic frustrations. The interplay between rapid urbanization, resource scarcity, and xenophobia reveals these deep-seated fractures.

The violence in Johannesburg rippled far beyond South Africa's borders. In Lagos, Nigeria, retaliatory attacks surged in 2019 as Nigerian citizens responded

to the violence against Nigerians and other African migrants in Johannesburg. Nigerian youths directed anger at South African-owned businesses, including retail stores and telecommunication outlets. In Lagos, these companies became symbols of the injustices Nigerian migrants faced in South Africa (Akinola & Bjarnesen, 2024)

Like Johannesburg, Lagos is marked by swift urbanization and competition for resources. As Nigeria's largest city, Lagos pulls migrants from across the country. The city's explosive growth has fueled competition over land, housing, and employment. Wealth disparities loom large, with elite neighborhoods enjoying access to resources that informal settlements lack (Agunbiade & Olajide, 2015). These stark inequalities aggravate tensions when locals feel that foreign-owned businesses profit while Nigerian citizens face hardships abroad.

The retaliatory violence in Lagos underscores the potent effects of resource conflicts on xenophobia. For Nigerians, South African businesses became symbols of exploitation, channeling frustrations at foreign-owned properties. (Akinola & Bjarnesen, 2024) explain that these attacks reflect broader grievances over economic inequality and marginalization. Xenophobic violence in Johannesburg thus sparked a retaliatory cycle, with one city's socio-economic challenges reinforcing the other's tensions.

Both Johannesburg and Lagos reveal the dangers of rapid urbanization without equitable resources. Surging urban growth stretches land, housing, and services to their limits, fueling bitter competition. In Johannesburg, migrants bear the blame, leading to violent clashes. In Lagos, anger is redirected toward foreign businesses, illustrating how resource battles intensify xenophobia. Xenophobic violence in Johannesburg and Lagos exposes the deep roots of resource scarcity and inequality. Urbanization and land pressures strain already limited resources, sparking social tensions. As competition for resources tightens, both locals and migrants find themselves caught in a cycle of hostility that exacerbates social divisions.

Globalization, Cultural Influence, and Ubuntu's Decline

African societies have not been spared from the effects of Globalization. One of the outcomes is the blending local cultures with Western norms and shifting shared values. This process has ushered in capitalist principles that continue to upend African communal traditions. Ubuntu, a philosophy rooted in collective well-being, now loses ground to individualism. Media, consumer culture, and foreign influence have torn down Ubuntu's influence, reshaping African identities and social values. Globalization has stripped away much of Ubuntu's influence in African societies. Western values, media, and consumer culture have promoted individualism over communal care. This shift has transformed African identities, altering their values and aspirations. While the economic benefits of globalization cannot be denied, one spin-off effect is the threat of erasure of foundational cultural values like Ubuntu. The future of Ubuntu hinges on striking a balance, ensuring that Africa's communal spirit can survive amid the pressures of a globalized world.

Western Cultural Influence

Globalization has exported Western values that permeate every corner of the globe, including Africa. Western ideals, steeped in capitalism, prioritize individualism and wealth. These values clash with Ubuntu's focus on community and interdependence (Gyekye, 1997). Ubuntu rests on collective responsibility and interconnectedness, promoting cooperation over competition.

Western values arrived through trade, colonialism, and global institutions. Economic globalization opened African markets to Western goods and lifestyles. Multinational corporations imported not only products but new mindsets and social norms. Through advertising, Western companies endorse self-reliance and personal success. These campaigns often celebrate status, wealth, and personal ambition as the yardsticks of a modern society (Nkrumah, 1965).

The arrival and assimilation of these ideals into Africa's everyday life eroded Ubuntu's core values, which emphasize shared prosperity. Western capitalism frames success as personal wealth and individual autonomy. Ubuntu, in contrast, defines success through contributions to one's community. As capitalist values penetrate deeper, Ubuntu's communal principles fade, replaced by the drive for personal achievement (Ake, 1981). African societies increasingly prize individual success, sidelining traditional communal obligations.

Western-style education has also redefined African priorities. In many African countries, curricula mimic Western educational systems. As these education systems took root, the designers left out Ubuntu as a core principle that is taught as part of these curricula. These models further emphasize economic competition over community values (Rodney, 2018). The result is that African schools end up teaching their students to aspire to Western ideals of individual achievement, often overshadowing Ubuntu's values. In this environment, youth gravitate toward Western values, which shape their identity and dreams.

Media and Consumer Culture

Media plays a central role in spreading Western ideals across borders. Global media giants and Hollywood entertainment content flood African screens with a plethora of scenes on western lifestyles that are championed as the ideal way of life that one should aspire to. These media platforms promote lifestyles focused on personal freedom, material success, and self-expression (Hall, 2004). Media has shaped cultural aspirations, replacing Ubuntu's collective spirit with individualism.

Advertising, in particular, frames consumption as the key to happiness. Consumer culture normalizes individualism, pulling focus from community to self. Advertisements and movies show material success as the ultimate goal, sidelining communal care. In this context, Ubuntu's values of shared responsibility rarely appear. Media-driven consumer culture urges

Africans to pursue self-interest, not communal support for one another.

Social media amplifies this influence. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook celebrate images of wealth, luxury, and individual success. These platforms prize self-promotion, fostering a culture that glorifies individual visibility over communal good. In this environment, Ubuntu's principles of humility and interconnectedness rarely find a place. Instead, success is framed as personal wealth and prominence (Mbembe, 2001).

Global consumer culture also reshapes African aesthetics and practices. Traditional clothing, food, and ceremonies lose their significance amid global trends. Western fashion and lifestyle brands dominate African cities, spreading a style steeped in individualism. These brands set new cultural norms, marginalizing traditional practices rooted in community (Appadurai, 1996).

As consumer culture expands, Ubuntu's influence fades even further. Africans increasingly equate success with consumption and wealth rather than service to one's community. Ubuntu's values of empathy and shared humanity struggle to survive in societies reshaped by consumer ideals.

Loss of Cultural Identity

Globalization has accelerated the erosion of African cultural identity. Foreign influence saturates daily life, reshaping perceptions of success and identity. Traditional African values like Ubuntu become less visible, overtaken by Western ideals. African youth, exposed to global media, aspire to Western lifestyles that overshadow communal values (Nyamnjoh, 2000).

African identity splinters as Western culture seeps into everyday life. Traditional practices that once fortified Ubuntu now struggle to endure. Ceremonies, languages, and social roles grounded in communal values are fading. Western norms reshape family dynamics, weakening the extended family networks that embody Ubuntu. In urban centers, nuclear households have largely replaced

multigenerational families, disrupting community support systems (Gyekye, 1997).

Language shifts also reflect this cultural shift. English and French, remnants of colonial influence, dominate African media, education, and business. Indigenous languages, which carry Ubuntu's values, face decline. This shift creates a cultural disconnect as African youth grow distant from Ubuntu's worldview (Bodomo, 1996). Language loss drains access to traditional knowledge, separating younger generations from Ubuntu's guiding principles.

Urban migration further weakens traditional values. Young Africans flock to cities for economic opportunities, leaving rural communities behind. Urban life, shaped by Western norms, promotes independence and self-sufficiency. In this setting, Ubuntu's communal care system struggles to endure. Youth adopt city lifestyles that prioritize self-interest, diverging from rural traditions that foster Ubuntu's ideals (Fanon, 1961).

The Cultural Consequences

The decline of Ubuntu mirrors deeper shifts in African society. Western influence has redefined Africa's social landscape, challenging traditional values. Ubuntu's communal focus on interdependence faces an uphill battle in a world that rewards individualism. African societies now juggle Western aspirations and traditional values, often feeling caught between the two.

The weakening of Ubuntu reveals a broader cultural disintegration. Ubuntu's principles of empathy, cooperation, and shared humanity now give way to global capitalism. This shift comes with societal costs, as communal bonds fray under the weight of individual pursuits. Ubuntu's decline marks more than a loss of tradition; it signals a shift toward social isolation and weaker community structures (Gyekye, 1997).

African leaders and educators face a difficult choice. Should they embrace Western models of development that prioritize economic growth, or should they shield communal values essential to

African identity? Striking this balance is no mean feat. Maintaining Ubuntu's values in a fast-globalizing international arena demands deliberate effort and policies that safeguard cultural preservation.

In the end, Ubuntu's survival depends on how African societies respond to the intense wave of globalization. African communities must adapt without losing their cultural integrity. Ubuntu's vision of shared humanity that can coexist with development, but will require intentional support to thrive.

Pathways Toward Reconciliation of Ubuntu and Capitalism

Reconciling capitalism with Ubuntu calls for innovative pathways that respect both economic progress and African communal values. Ubuntu, with its focus on shared well-being, often stands at odds with capitalism's individualistic thrust. Hybrid economic models, inclusive policies, and community initiatives offer avenues to balance these systems, fostering economic growth without undermining Ubuntu's communal foundation.

Hybrid Economic Models

Hybrid economic models carve paths to blend capitalism with Ubuntu. These approaches put social welfare and collective good at the heart of capitalist frameworks. Social enterprises, for instance, entwine profit with community impact, investing earnings back into local welfare (Sachs & Myers, 2005).

Cooperatives shine as a model here. By pooling resources, members share both profits and risks, echoing Ubuntu's emphasis on shared welfare. Unlike typical businesses, cooperatives diminish competition, turning attention to community well-being (Sánchez Bajo & Roelants, 2011). In South Africa, agricultural cooperatives sustain local farmers, pooling resources and distributing income in a way that strengthens communal ties (Birchall, 2004).

Social enterprises and cooperatives cultivate shared success. These models tackle issues like poverty and unemployment by offering local solutions within a capitalist framework. By embedding Ubuntu's communal spirit, such businesses root economic activities in community care.

Another promising hybrid is the "solidarity economy." This approach weaves markets with social values, prioritizing workers' rights, fair wages, and sustainable practices over profit maximization (Laville, 2010). In Kenya, small businesses have embraced solidarity principles, adopting fair practices and reinvesting profits into their communities. Such innovative economic ventures keep wealth within local community networks, cultivating a spirit of togetherness. The 'solidarity economy' aligns with Ubuntu's ethic of mutual respect, creating a version of capitalism that limits exploitation. This model offers a blueprint for development that cherishes both individual and communal welfare.

Reviving Ubuntu in Modern Policies

Revitalizing Ubuntu requires policies that integrate communal values into governance. Governments can adopt social welfare policies that echo Ubuntu's principles by centering collective welfare over individual profit.

Universal healthcare is one policy that embodies Ubuntu's ethos of collective well-being. In South Africa, the government has launched the National Health Insurance (NHI) plan, which seeks to make healthcare accessible to all citizens and reduce inequality (Ataguba & McIntyre, 2012). This initiative reflects Ubuntu's ethic of shared responsibility for health and well-being.

Education reform offers another route to rekindle Ubuntu. Schools can integrate Ubuntu into curricula, teaching students' empathy, cooperation, and communal care. Botswana, for example, has embedded Ubuntu principles in civic education, promoting respect and communal responsibility (Munyaka & Motlhabi, 2009). Through such

education, students can resist the individualistic tendencies that capitalism often encourages.

Social welfare programs like basic income grants also reinforce Ubuntu's ideals. These policies create a basic safety net for all, ensuring economic security and reducing competition for resources. Namibia, for instance, has piloted basic income grants to curb poverty and foster unity (Slater, 2001). By prioritizing shared welfare, these programs nurture Ubuntu in an evolving economic landscape.

Reviving Ubuntu in policy fights inequality and strengthens community. Policies that focus on collective well-being cultivate both economic growth and social cohesion. Initiatives like universal healthcare and education reform serve as practical means to weave Ubuntu's values into modern governance.

Role of Civil Society and Community Leaders

Civil society and community leaders stand as vital forces in bridging capitalism and Ubuntu. They spearhead initiatives that revive communal ties and curb social tensions, especially in urban areas where diversity and economic pressures create divides. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are instrumental in advocating Ubuntu through social justice work. By tackling issues like poverty, discrimination, and inequality, they amplify Ubuntu's call for shared humanity. Kenya's Ujamaa Center, for example, promotes economic justice and supports community welfare, addressing disparities that tear at Ubuntu's fabric (Nyamnjoh, 2000).

Community leaders also spearhead initiatives that counter capitalism's divisive effects. In South Africa, local leaders have organized community gardens in urban spaces. These projects ensure food security and foster community engagement. Urban farming cultivates Ubuntu's values of cooperation and shared resources, even within modern cities (Slater, 2001).

Mentorship programs also serve to revive Ubuntu's principles. Community elders can mentor youth, instilling Ubuntu values and nurturing a sense of belonging. In Nigeria, traditional leaders mentor

youth on respect and social responsibility, bridging generational divides (Adetula, 2011). Such programs deepen Ubuntu's reach, encouraging youth to value community care.

Civil society and community leaders nurture Ubuntu at the grassroots, rebuilding communal bonds weakened by capitalist pressures. Through initiatives like community gardening, economic justice work, and mentorship, they revitalize Ubuntu's ideals of empathy and shared respect.

The Importance of Policy Integration

Achieving balance between Ubuntu and capitalism requires embedding these approaches in national policy frameworks. Hybrid models, social policies, and community initiatives can only thrive with strong national support. Policymakers must craft systems that promote economic growth while honoring social welfare. National policy frameworks can ensure hybrid economic models align with Ubuntu's ideals. Governments can provide incentives for cooperatives and social enterprises, such as tax breaks or grants, to encourage businesses that invest in community welfare. By supporting these models, governments integrate Ubuntu's values into economic structures.

Social welfare policies also need robust national backing. Universal healthcare, basic income, and education reform demand political commitment and public support. Governments must prioritize collective good, building policies that secure equal access to resources. For instance, implementing universal healthcare in South Africa would require significant policy shifts and widespread support (Ataguba & McIntyre, 2012). Policy integration ensures Ubuntu principles take root across national systems. By embedding these values into economic and social policies, governments can create environments where capitalism and Ubuntu can thrive together.

The Path Forward

Ubuntu's future in a capitalist world hinges on adaptive strategies. Hybrid economic models, supportive policies, and grassroots leadership

provide pathways to harmony. Ubuntu's core of empathy and shared humanity need not clash with economic progress. By embedding Ubuntu's values into social and economic frameworks, African societies can nurture both community and prosperity.

To reconcile capitalism and Ubuntu, African societies need innovative approaches that honor cultural roots. Governments, civil society, and community leaders must work together to uphold communal values. Through hybrid economic models, inclusive policies and community-driven initiatives, African societies can preserve Ubuntu's essence in a modern world.

Reconciling capitalism with Ubuntu is complex yet achievable. Hybrid models such as cooperatives and solidarity economies offer frameworks that prioritize collective well-being. Reviving Ubuntu through policies like universal healthcare and education reform curtails capitalism's divisive effects. Community leaders and civil society nourish communal bonds, revitalizing Ubuntu at the grassroots.

These pathways allow Africa to foster economic growth while protecting Ubuntu's values. With committed effort, Africa can cultivate a model that harmonizes prosperity with shared humanity.

Conclusion

Capitalism's surge in Africa has reshaped Ubuntu at its core. Ubuntu, with its foundation in shared humanity and collective well-being, now finds itself contending with capitalism's thrust for individual success and profit. This shift reflects not only economic change but also a profound cultural transformation. Globalization has hastened the infusion of capitalist values, often eclipsing traditional African principles. Through Western media and consumer culture, individualism and material success are exalted, redrawing aspirations. For many African societies, these values undermine Ubuntu's ethic of communal care. Media's celebration of competition and self-interest has

distanced communities from Ubuntu's cooperative ideals, creating a new cultural landscape.

Urbanization and resource struggles have inflamed tensions, intensifying xenophobia in cities like Johannesburg and Lagos. As people flock to urban centers for economic opportunities, pressures on housing, land, and employment escalate. This scarcity drives social divisions and conflict. Amid these scarcities, Ubuntu's communal spirit grapples for relevance, facing resource-driven strife and competition. In response, hybrid economic models offer a bridge.

Cooperatives and social enterprises weave profit with social welfare, reinforcing shared success. These models anchor Ubuntu within capitalism, proving that both can thrive together. By emphasizing collective welfare, they ensure Ubuntu's values endure within a capitalist framework.

Revitalizing Ubuntu through policy is essential. Governments can integrate Ubuntu's principles with social welfare initiatives, universal healthcare, and inclusive education. Policies rooted in collective well-being breathe life into communal values, countering the isolating effects of individualist capitalism. Community leaders and civil society stand as pillars of Ubuntu's renewal. Through local initiatives, mentorship, and advocacy, they rekindle Ubuntu at the grassroots. Projects like urban gardens and mentorship programs reignite communal bonds and foster empathy, restoring Ubuntu's values in modern spaces.

The future lies in harmonizing capitalism with Ubuntu. Hybrid models, supportive policies, and community-based actions can weave both systems into a cohesive whole. With thoughtful adaptation, African societies can pursue growth while upholding Ubuntu's spirit of shared humanity.

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