

# Ubuntu Worldview as a Condition of Possibility for National Unity

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## Abstract

The spirit of Bandung can be summarized in the aspiration that the fate of Asian and African countries was neither to be determined by the Cold War divide, nor decided by the great metropolises of the world. Asia and Africa, 68 years later, have followed different paths. The Asian-African solidarity did not survive. The reason for this could be the fact that there was a difference between the *Ubuntu* solidarity and the many ideologies as well as influences that prevailed at the conference. This backdrop explains why the conference has not had a significant resonance in Africa, mainly in terms of national unity, which remains an aspiration. An examination of what was at play at Bandung indicates a few factors that could have made that aspiration achievable, even though such factors were either sidelined or overlooked. Using V. Y. Mudimbe and Kwasi Wiredu's perspectives on African solidarity, this paper explores the different influences that carried the day at the conference. The aim is to show how the principle of solidarity derived from "*Ubuntu*" worldview as a condition of possibility for national unity was overlooked, yet it is the one needed for true nation-building. The conclusion of the paper demonstrates why the Bandung Conference, by inscribing itself in the line of global policy and international conferences underlying such policy, embraced the limitations that come from all globalizing attempts. Those attempts are bound to fail because of ignoring local values. Finally, the conclusion sketches the typically African values that happen to be, in reality, universal and, as such, might be the pillars of a battle against new forms of colonization hidden in global policies.

**Keywords:** Ubuntu; solidarity; Pan-Africanism; colonization; global policies; conferences

# 1. Introduction

Franklin B. Weinstein, in 1965, asked the question as to why ten whole years had passed without a second conference as a sequel of the Bandung 1955 one (Weinstein, 1965, p. 359). Indeed, expectations of a certain level of continuity for this historic conference had built up around it. However, as has been written many times, while there was a consensus in considering colonialism and imperialism as the common enemy for participants, there also was an awareness of diverging interests that carried, in themselves, seeds of disagreement in pursuing what was started in 1955. Some saw a second conference as the opportunity that would build solidarity among African and Asian countries, as well as a venue for reconceiving the relations between those countries, in a rapidly evolving context, not only on each continent, but also elsewhere in the world (Weinstein, 1965, p. 362). At this stage in the history of the conference, pervasive divisions among participating countries had put to test the very idea of solidarity among them.

This situation suggests that, though Bandung sought to embrace common principles, the so called “Bandung Spirit” was not clear. Sixty-five years later, it is legitimate to consider that it was, at best, ambiguous. The ambiguity leads us to legitimately ask what the “Bandung Spirit” really was. The term is not often defined. What is clear is that it hinged on the claim of bringing together, in solidarity, a great diversity of people and cultures; as well as on the hope of building an order determined by standards forged by the struggle for the emancipation of African and Asian countries (Weinstein, 1965, p. 362). The effort resulted into what is considered a legacy of the conference: the Third World as a political entity which, according to Weber and Winanti, weaved together “a solidarist internationalist outlook and perspective on world order” (Weber & Winanti, 2016, p. 392). This project, meant to disrupt the colonial stranglehold, was characterized by an intent to push for restitutive justice as a driver of the pursuit of development goals, responding to expectations of previously colonized peoples. While every colonized people agreed with such an aim, it does not seem to qualify as an inspirational spirit that could hold all of them in a tangible and stable unity, once individual countries’ interests would be felt. If a stable unity was not so clear from within the conference, the tense international order of the day would prove another challenge to it, once again posing the question of whether there was such a thing as the “Bandung Spirit”.

Jason Parker, in his review of Kweku Ampiah’s book titled “*The political and moral imperatives of the Bandung Conference of 1955: The reactions of the United States, The United Kingdom and Japan*”, asks the question of whether the confer-

ence was “an episode in the post-war race revolution or a venue for cross-cutting agendas and regional dynamics” (Parker, 2010, p. 758). On one hand, this can only show another angle to the ambiguity of aims at the conference, hinting at the persisting skepticism in relation to its spirit. On the other hand, the conference was meant to show that the newly independent countries had something to offer to the world, based upon the five principles of mutual respect, non-aggression, non-interference, equality and mutual benefit, as well as peaceful co-existence (Wilson, 1967, p. 105). What is interesting is that these principles seemed to be what is referred to as the Bandung Spirit. However, these principles, in all appearances, originate from the five principles of the Indonesian state’s independence. They also appear to be the basis upon which the non-aligned movement would be formed (Grimal, 1978, p. 190). If this should be considered the Bandung Spirit, it has a history that could be directly related to Asian countries, but not so much to African countries.

In reality, some have come to agree that, though the conference was such a historic achievement, it did not mean the same thing for everybody. This is the case for Tarling (1992, p. 74), who says that it meant many different things to different people. For Indonesia, it was an occasion to settle some domestic politics and carve a role in international relations; for India, it was about demonstrating its influence, though the conference also showed its limits; for China it offered a platform for developing a foreign policy, to name but a few (Tarling, 1992, p. 75). Definitely, a difficulty in mobilizing the spirit of so many different interests arises. A difficulty that can be turned into a question of what the prevailing worldviews actually were at the conference. Should they be identified, one could find out if any African worldview was represented there to shape the conference in a way that would be meaningful for the continent.

## 2. Worldviews at Bandung

It could be more accurate to title this section thus: “apparent lack of convergent worldviews at Bandung”. Worldview here is understood as a philosophy of life, which includes also one’s beliefs about fundamental dimensions of reality. Some have suggested that the political perspectives at present in Bandung were neutralism and non-alignment, though these two could not really be identified in exact terms at that early stage (Parker, 2010, p. 759). However, given the fact that the conference’s delegates, in 1955, were coming from a divided world, it was easy to at least assume that they could not share the same beliefs that make up a nation.

In relation to Africa, most African countries, at that point in history, were not independent just as yet, while some were still charting their way in wrestling their independence from the colonial masters. Dipesh Chakrabarty is of the view that “they were not of the same mind on questions of international politics, nor did they have a same understanding of what constituted imperialism” (Chakrabarty, 2005, p. 4813). It seems that even one of the organizers of the conference, the Indonesian diplomat Roselan Abdulgani, was aware that there were competing currents at the conference (Abdulgani, 1981, p. 26). In Chakrabarty’s assessment (Chakrabarty, 2010, p. 4813), the diversity, the competing interests, and simply little knowledge of some realities in different countries meant that, apart from the lack of trust and respect, the unity of the conference relied only upon its opposition to imperialism, without a working definition of it. He attributes such a situation to the fact that the differences between the countries represented were at once profound, discordant, or incompatible (Chakrabarty, 2010, p. 4814).

## 2.1 Absence of Shared Philosophy at Bandung

There was, obviously, a challenge of distinguishing a philosophical framework at the conference, or any semblance of a unifying philosophical belief beyond a common anti-colonialism. A case in point is shown, for example, in the position of the prime minister of Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), who was of the view that Soviet colonialism over Eastern European countries should be opposed as much as Western imperialism (Abdulgani, 1981, pp. 115-117). According to Chakrabarty, this position “reveals the shallow intellectual unity upon which the conference was based” (Chakrabarty, 2010, p. 4814). It is then fair to agree that, in terms of ideas, in the words of a participant, “not much that is significantly new can be found in the Bandung Declaration. It did help newly independent states to become part of the United Nations’ system” (Appadorai, 1955, p. 29). The absence of a shared worldview at the conference emerges at every turn when trying to understand how the conference would make a difference for specific people. The question that persists is whether seeking to end Western supremacy was enough of an idea to cement strong common action for the future of Asian and African peoples. A question that leads to another one: could Bandung generate a strong movement, beyond the liberal and conservative categories, unifying people from such diversity in terms of race, culture and religion?

The problem of identifying the different worldviews at Bandung indicates that it was even harder to glimpse the possibility of any religious beliefs at play. From the religious point of view, it is prudent to go by Sukarno’s mention of it in his famous opening speech:

*“Religion is of dominating importance particularly in this part of the world. There are perhaps more religions here than in other regions of this globe. However, again, our countries were the birthplaces of religions. Must we be divided by the multiformity of our religious life? It is true, each religion has its own history, its own individuality, its own “raison d’être”, its special pride in its own beliefs, its own mission, its special truths which it desires to propagate. Unless we realize that all great religions are one in their message of tolerance and in their insistence on the observance of the principle of “Live and let live”, unless the followers of each religion are prepared to give the same consideration to the rights of others everywhere, unless every State does its duty to ensure that the same rights are given to the followers of all faiths – unless these things are done, religion is debased, and its true purpose perverted” (Sukarno, 1955).*

The position on religion in the above extract shows why faith had no significant impact on the conference. It is because religion is assigned the insufficient meaning of tolerance called “live and let live”. This lack of clarity together with the absence of a unifying worldview was not a priority in Bandung. The shared focus against imperialism and development framed the conference. It determined the selection of leading voices at the forum, hence the not-so-noticeable contribution from Africa. It seems that, from Bandung, Africa drew little energy for its emancipating foundation. This is why the contribution of the conference to nation building in Africa remains a challenge.

## 2.2 Pan-African Movement Loss at Bandung

Joseph Hongoh writes that the political solidarity of the early Pan-African movement “was lost when the context of realizing its goals shifted from continental and transnational spheres to the self-contained nationalist and sovereign territorial spheres of the nation-state” (Hongoh, 2016, p. 375). The assumption is that it was unavoidable because Africa was focused on becoming free to build sovereign nations. Christopher Lee’s view follows this line since the race for sovereign nationhood and the subsequent adoption of the Bandung principles implied that Pan-Africanist solidarity was encouraged but subordinated to national pursuits and interests (Lee, 2010). Priorities could not be otherwise, considering the stage in the process of independence at which African countries stood in 1955.

Instead of any common values, scholars of this momentous conference have found that, in terms of diplomacy, the existing international order was affirmed, not challenged, in substance because of ideological influences that met there. Joseph Hongoh finds that “at Bandung, anti-colonial and anti-imperial sentiments ran side

by side with nationalistic alliances with cold war powers, the pursuit of regional hegemony and interpersonal rivalries. Crucially, such a level of conformity and commitment to the existing structure of the international order prevailed despite the abundance of revolutionary politics and ideological dynamism in the global south” (Hongoh, 2016, p. 375).

The reality was that countries had to build themselves domestically first. The risk of ideological influence from international spheres in shaping them was real. In many instances, it proved to be detrimental, because it showed itself to be another form of domination. A striking example could be the role of the United Nations in the Congolese crisis, then and now. Hongoh describes the push and pull continentally, and at the international level, as “intra-continental polarity and international fragility” (Hongoh, 2016, p. 375), blaming it for continued European colonization on the continent. The double polarity makes it possible to argue that the different influences at play in Bandung could not reconcile the African countries’ quest for much-needed sovereignty and a political type of solidarity promoted by a global policy.

Such a reality is a proof that global policy carries within itself intrinsic limits in terms of nation-building. It is still difficult to let go of the imperialist narrative, despite the contributions of movements such as *Négritude*, *Ubuntu* and pan-Africanism. It could even be a sufficient reason explaining the inconclusive consequences of the Bandung Conference in that regard. Such limits have accompanied the idea of solidarity as seen in the African-American context in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as in movements such as the “*Négritude*”, a movement propounded by Afro-Caribbean writers of the same period. Anthony Bogues notes, among them, a form of internationalism in which human solidarity, derived from freedom and equality, would be the foundation of international relations (Bogues, 2011, p. 197), but would weaken the formation of strong sovereign nations.

Apart from Global South influences at Bandung, there was also the inevitable communist influence. This particular aspect indicates the sole area of interest Bandung elicited from powers like Britain and the United States. For instance, Nicholas Tarling is of the view that, “ever since the Second World War, a main aim of [the British] foreign policy had been to ensure stability in the underdeveloped, and to avoid it being dominated by Communism” (Tarling, 1992, p. 74). It would seem that Britain’s approach was two-pronged: to influence the framework by mobilizing those who would want to collaborate, without antagonizing; and avoiding any divisiveness that would risk exposing participating countries to the opportunity of opening up easily to the communist ideology. Britain did not

also want to compromise its image as an empire engaged in decolonizing but “it distrusted international movements that might take a momentum of their own, chiefly, communism” (Tarling, 1992, p. 75).

### 2.3 Imperialists’ Strategy at Bandung

In all appearances, Britain wanted to, at least, demonstrate to Commonwealth countries that it was willing to help them combat communism. Such a position reveals the awareness that the active presence of Communist China, not yet admitted to the United Nations, was another ideological force influencing proceedings at the conference. About China, David Wilson (1967, p. 96) notes that Bandung was an occasion for its diplomatic contact with other countries. The conference would serve as “a mutual educative process for both communist and anti-communist participants which would both enlighten the Chinese as to the realities of their international environment and to educate leaders of non-communist Asian and African states on the actual attitudes of Peking’s leaders toward both non-communist Asia and the West” (Wilson, 1997, p. 96).

The description above explains why a great deal was at stake for Britain, especially in relation to Africa, where in their estimation they were doing progressive work they did not wish to see disrupted by the conference’s proceedings, which they considered a “demagoguery” (Tarling, 1992, p. 81). Britain feared that African countries would either be lured by China’s communism or India’s neutralism. They wanted to side with participants who thought their style of colonialism was dying, and the communist type of colonialism was rising, and that the latter would be worse than theirs (Tarling, 1992, p. 87). Tarling argues that, behind the scenes, Britain sought to cause maximum confusion at Bandung (Tarling, 1992, p. 88). The confusion suggests that the ideological influences were much stronger than the conference’s rhetoric could wish. It was meant to avoid the formation of a strong Asia-Africa bloc, stressing the fact that Africans and Asians were no more going to be saviors of Africa than the Western imperialists had been.

It must have been difficult to prevent the conference from deteriorating relations between West and East, since that would play into the hands of China, and probably the Soviet Union by extension, who were seeking their own role in shaping new countries. Tarling reports that, to a certain extent, the British could foresee how China would accentuate the differences between East and West, and they felt that there would be a real split between totalitarian states and democracies (Tarling, 1992, p. 99).

Britain’s covert participation brings out more clarity about the ideological lines at Bandung. It also shows how these lines determined outcomes that were never

meant to be lasting, both because of the historical moment and because of the lack of common beliefs among participants. This fact underscores that the focus of the conference sidelined completely not only faith but also the basic tenets of nation-building. Indeed, an international forum with such diverging interests and ideologies would not shape sovereign nations. Later, the diverging developmental paths followed so differently by Asian and African countries remain the reason why this conference is still reflected upon. The advance in Asia denotes the fact that they definitely shared values and beliefs. The question remains as to whether African participants had any philosophy, values or/and beliefs to propose for strong nation building at Bandung. This question could be re-actualized and reformulated and thus be addressed, at least, for Sub-Saharan countries. Attempts at finding answers should start from the idea of *Ubuntu*, commonly understood to be an African worldview by Africans themselves.

### 3. Ubuntu and African Values

#### 3.1 From Valentin Yoka Mudimbe's Perspective

The Bandung Conference thrust African participants into the wider debate about epistemological claims underlying the question of African rationality. Masolo, an interpreter of Mudimbe, states that Western historical and anthropological studies have had a negative influence on self-identity among Africans. He affirms that “victim and product of this influence, African intellectual history unveils in itself a consistent rupture from its harshly negated past. In the humanities and social sciences in general, and philosophy and religion in particular, African intellectual continue to define their world on the basis of Western epistemological standards” (Masolo, 1991, p. 998). This assessment portrays a valid application of the situation under which the African leaders found themselves in the early to mid-1950s. The control of foreign powers was still strong. For example, due to Ghana's independence negotiations, the British prevented Kwame Nkrumah from a direct participation in the Bandung Conference (Adebajo, 2008, p. 109). Woods reports that “the Colonial Secretary claimed rather dismissively that Asians were not competent to pronounce on the affairs and destinies of Africa” (Wood, 2012, p. 524).

#### 3.1.1 Potential Sphere of Complementarity

The bias might have affected African delegates into letting others define their role at the conference, which explains why little impact of the forum resonated in Africa. As a result, no trace of the conference's outcomes in shaping nation-building on

the continent can be evidenced. The persistence of this bias makes modern Africa appear to be a construct by others. Even educated Africans in international fora cannot be exempted from being considered agents and victims of the alienation affecting them and, by extension, their society. In this regards, the Africa expected to have emerged from Bandung would have been another construct, using the leadership present there.

Africa's delegates at Bandung fall under the category of the intellectuals Mudimbe accuses of being quite far removed from the masses they claimed to develop (Masolo, 1991, p. 998). They no longer speak the same language as those masses, and most probably do not use the same knowledge, and hence, the same values. As Masolo puts it, "there exist a system of power which blocks, prohibits, and invalidates this discourse and this knowledge, a power not only found in the manifest authority of censorship, but one that profoundly and subtly penetrates an entire social network. Intellectuals are themselves agents of this system of power (...)" (Masolo, 1991, p. 1003). If one understands that at Bandung there was another system of power and social control attempting to be built, at least judging by the different ideologies and interests, some of them conflicting, then an explanation of why no echo of the conference persists in Africa begins to emerge.

The deficit affecting African delegates at Bandung was a consciousness regarding the values that characterize the historicity of any given people: its philosophy, culture and religion. Mudimbe considers these three as expressions of the human mind (Smith, 1991, p. 971). These are the pillars of a society upon which every development of people can be structured. Without them, colonialism subdued civilizations, making development an illusion. These pillars are behind the spectacular modernization of Asian countries: China, India, Indonesia, and Japan.

### 3.1.2 Exploring Cultural Dynamics

For Africa, Ubuntu as a philosophy is taken to encapsulate the worldview that is apt to create conditions for an African polity. Without it, it would be practically impossible understand cultural dynamics and the tenets of how Africa understands itself as a community. Ubuntu has the merit of being a combination of philosophy and anthropology. For the purpose of this paper, Ubuntu is understood in relation to the values it entails to show how they are interwoven in the natural structures that underline a polity, whose legitimacy depends precisely on those natural structures.

Among Ubuntu values, when it comes to religion, there is a difficulty of delimitation of what it means. That is why the belief-centered idea of religion will be avoided, to focus on the awareness of the spiritual nature of the human being,

and an awareness of spiritual communication in African cultures (Kress, 2005, p. 5). Another premise that must also be stated is that Western epistemological standards applied to African realities should be corrected, or at least be considered in complementarity with Ubuntu's worldview. One such case should be precisely the area of knowledge and development. Development as discussed in Bandung was defined within western parameters exclusively, without this complementarity. Mudimbe's view is that such complementarity can be achieved through an interdisciplinary perspective that goes beyond both African ethno-philosophies and adaptations of Western or Eastern philosophies to Africa (Kress, 2005, p. 7). What this means is that investigation into the order of knowledge in African contexts in their diversity is still possible, and it is such investigations that can generate conceptual and practical application of Ubuntu values to the unfinished double tasks of nation-building and development.

## 3.2 African Values From Kwasi Wiredu's Perspective

### 3.2.1 Ubuntu and the Principle of Solidarity

For Kwasi Wiredu, it is difficult to systematize the values of Ubuntu as a worldview that structures cohesion in a polity, using Western standards (Wiredu, 2009, p. 10). One of the most important dimensions of it, he explains, is the morality of politics that shuns individual interests because of the risk they pose to the achievement of the common good. He illustrates this in a description of a common art pattern in the following terms: "My own favorite among the art motifs I have found in the Akan culture is that depicting a crocodile with one stomach but two heads locked up in a fight over food. I think this symbol captures both the most fundamental problem of ethics and its solution. The problem is that, although we all as individuals have own legitimate interests (symbolized by the two heads), excessive fixation upon those interests could lead us to lose sight of the fact that, ultimately, we all share the same interest, mainly our common well-being (symbolized by the common stomach)" (Wiredu, 2009, p. 10). He suggests that it is the loss of such a necessary perspective that becomes a determinant of conflicts. The restoration of such an approach is what can create the conditions for a social agreement on sharing, recognizing everyone's participation in the common good. The fact that the African worldview is transmitted in symbols does not mean that it not sufficiently accurate. It only means that it is what Wiredu calls a "non-conforming way of thinking" (Wiredu, 2009, p. 11).

This understanding of the difference and the correct interconnection between individual interest and the common good stems from the idea of humanity or being

human from which the term Ubuntu is derived. It is the same understanding of the deep-rooted concept of solidarity in Africa's traditional communities that still persists today. While the humanism and solidarity underlying Ubuntu are clear in African ontology, they did not find their way into the Bandung Conference. Maybe this is because the initiative of the conference was inspired by another type of solidarity, as will be demonstrated. Indeed, the idea of personhood that constructs the idea of the common good clashes with the modern individualistic culture embraced at Bandung. Modernity as it appears today, and indeed in the last century, is informed by the dichotomy or even dualism inherited from rationalism that divorced the spiritual nature from the material dimension of man. Such a position explains why the so-called modernization of Africa is always formulated in material terms only, hence its complete disregard for the intangible spiritual values of Ubuntu that bind human beings in their shared life and destiny.

Oyekan Owomoyela (1987, p. 89) reminds Africans that cultures tend to put more emphasis on personal ties, with such emphasis playing an important role in social structures, in the transmission of their knowledge and values, though not in writing. Even some of the fierce critiques of traditional Africa have acknowledged that, going all the way back in time, "pre-colonial Africa had undoubtedly amassed a wealth of true knowledge, of effective techniques, (...) to ensure the livelihood of a large part of the population in the countryside and cities" (Owomoyela, 1987, p. 91). Wiredu also recognized the existence of the principle of rationality in Africa, pointing to the application of agricultural knowledge and techniques, weather patterns, as well as the structure and preservation of communities' harmonious relations through concrete ways of investigating and solving conflicts (Wiredu, 1984, p. 153). All these different elements appear, in similar fashion, in the most diverse communities in Africa stressing the fact that, if people do not suffer cultural amnesia, they can acknowledge that solidarity, mutual commensality and natural sociability are part of African identity, leading philosophers to explain Ubuntu in that disconcertingly simple expression of "I am because you are".

It is not clear how the Bandung Conference could have captured such an important element of African society's identity. Without featuring it, there is no way the conference would have significantly contributed to building the newly independent states into true nations. Partly, the cause of the problem is the mis-education suffered by Africans themselves. It would seem that, in some way, even in some parts of Asia, there is still a hypnotic attraction towards Westernism. In Owomoyela's words: "it will take a different type of education to cure the new African of the hypnotic impulsion towards Westernism and almost pathological

conviction that African ways are important only as illustrations of things from which to distance oneself” (Owomoyela, 1987, p. 94).

### 3.2.2 Ubuntu Solidarity and Bandung Solidarist Internationalism

The operative ethos of African societies is an intrinsic sense of community based on solidarity, also called Ubuntu. Some feel compelled to call it communalism, which is quite inaccurate since it is not an ideology. It forms, together with the principle of hospitality, an authentic organizing directive of the community in terms of aims and means. Wiredu explains it in detail in this way: “This is a kind of social formation in which kinship relations are of last consequence. People are brought up early in life to develop a sense of bonding with large kinship circles. This solidarity starts from the household and radiates outward to the lineage and, with some diminution of intensity, to the clan, at large” (Wiredu, 2009, p. 15). This relationship is balanced by rights and duties of the individual in relation to the others and vice-versa. The reciprocity involved in these normative bonds is the source of the human connectedness called solidarity.

Wiredu argues that this sense of human connectedness was a sense of what is human – “Ubuntu” – rather than just kinship, for the potential mutual benefits of the wider relationships (Wiredu, 2009, p. 16). They could not be lost on those brought up on kinship reciprocities. This is how African solidarity is concerned with the pursuit of the common good, rather than just individual interests.

Ubuntu solidarity stands in sharp contrast with the so-called solidarist internationalism that permeated the Bandung Conference. The solidarist internationalism is understood as opposed to liberal internationalism. In the words of Weber and Winanti, liberal internationalism refers to a certain outlook on development based upon a capitalist framework, meant to further liberal capitalist market economies (Weber & Winanti, 2016, p. 394). The solidarist internationalism followed in the footsteps of the general idea of the socialist international response to the plight of the impoverished and marginalized. However, under the supremacy of development policies of the 1970s-1980s, even the solidarist internationalism perspective of Bandung could not provide conditions for nation-building in Africa. This is because the idea of developing the newly-independent countries, instead of starting from the pluralism of typically African principles derived from Ubuntu, was geared towards copying the former colonial powers’ model of development only. By that, all African tenets of society building were disqualified, ignored or suppressed, even by Africans themselves.

Internationalism at the conference, whether socialist or capitalist, was bound to clash with the demands of national development, creating, in the process, contra-

ditory logics. In this sense, Bandung was bound to prioritize international policies to the detriment of national urgent needs for development, with no particular incentives for African countries who could not find in such endeavor values in harmony with their own. This led to the fact that the apparently shared political project forged at Bandung ended up lending itself, to some extent, to ambivalence in implementation. After these many years, it can be demonstrated that there were undeniable differences in terms of values; there were non-negligible structural inequalities, all of which would, with time, prove that African nations could not build themselves on the basis of this historic conference.

## 4. Conclusion

Bandung failed to have a lasting positive impact on Africa. The failure of the Bandung Conference in producing a significant difference for African peoples is due to inherent limitations of global policies at national level on the one hand. On the other hand, it is due to the ineffectiveness of international conferences, in solving real people's problems. It does not matter how much such conferences are praised, especially since with the structure of the United Nations' system and the expansion of the world of Non-Governmental Organizations they are still ineffective, at least for Africa. These two systems, moreover, have proved to be channels of a new model of colonization. It is not even clear that it is a new model of colonization; there is an argument to be made that it is the same one only disguised in new garb.

It is true that, in 1955, nations were allowed to dream of an alternative international order where Africa and Asia could play a decisive role. Africans might have hoped that the changing international order, which saw the arising of Pan-African leaders in the post-war period, could make room for the shaping of new forms of human solidarity between emerging polities. Opportunities to mobilize numbers around anti-colonial sentiments were ripe. However, wasn't there a sign of hypocrisy in touting solidarity at Bandung when the Pan-African movement was not given a presence? Homer Jack, an attendee at the conference, rightly noted that "Africa was very much a junior partner in the Afro-Asia solidarity" (Homer, 1955, p. 45). This puts in context the concept of solidarity proposed at the conference, which is completely different from the solidarity derived from the Ubuntu worldview.

#### 4.1 Limitation of Global Policies

The first conclusion then is that the main limitation of global policy to further nation-building and development in Africa, even as early as 1955, is that it is always foreign to the principles that bind African societies together. Not only is it foreign but it is also built upon a covert, or sometimes open, rejection of those same principles, judging them as primitive. For instance, it is reported that even Gamal Abdel Nasser, at Bandung, had “a patronizing view of Africa. He not only endorsed the imperialist framing of Africa as a dark continent, but also signaled Egypt’s duty of ensuring the spread of enlightenment and civilization to the remotest depths of the jungle” (Vitalis, 2013, p. 275).

#### 4.2 Ineffectiveness of International Conferences

The second conclusion is that the ineffectiveness of international conferences, or their failure for that matter, to birth true nationhood in Sub-Saharan Africa is due to their dependency on global policy and funding, always motivated by foreign interests, mostly irreconcilable with local needs, and, much less, with the principles that shape local African communities. As demonstrated earlier, those principles are an integral part of the peoples’ identities as well as the structure of their polities. No nation building can happen without integrating them in the process as a condition of viability, not only of transitions but also of development into transformed polities. For instance, a conference based on Ubuntu orientations would feature and herald a recovery of African principles of identities. The onus is on Africans themselves to revisit what is meant by Ubuntu orientations and rescue from there the most meaningful idea of nationhood, which is what makes people into a common “we”, ready to live with each other, assuming the natural solidarities that make neighbors support each other. While these kind of solidarities have had religious connotation across civilizations, they are mostly natural. They are determined by the fact of living on the same land and sharing the same history and, by that very fact, also sharing the same destiny. It is such orientations that would be localized to rebuild values that characterize Africa first. While such values would not be imposed on the international level, it would nevertheless give Africans grounding to cement their own positions without being forced to embrace foreign values that are not aligned with true progress for such peoples.

#### 4.3 Solidarity and Hospitality as Ubuntu’s Main Tenets

The third and last conclusion is that the African worldview called Ubuntu, in its foundational values of solidarity and hospitality which build the cohesion of a polity from within, remains the only worldview that can build the elusive nation-

hood that global policies prevent from taking root. This is essential, not because of an unhealthy focus on nationalism, but because it is part of personal and social identity. Unless one knows who they are, they cannot even enter into dialogue with others. The quest for harmonious collaboration between countries cannot happen by destroying or ignoring others' identity and values. As Wiredu puts it, seeing oneself as part of an ordered community whose organizing principle of order is precisely the ethics of the community, those same ethics become criteria of self-identity (Wiredu, 2009, p. 17).

The normative perception of personal and social identity is primordial in moral self-understanding, and it also illustrates how Ubuntu might prove to be a foundation to a social and political philosophy. The project of studying it from such a perspective is worth undertaking. It should start from an empirical point of view towards building a stronger theorization of its principles. The study would trace the foundation of what can be considered civic values of African society, which happen to be so close to what moral philosophers call virtues. Ufuoma Omoyibo considers them as basic African values: peace, charity, temperance, faith, honesty, trust, objectivity, discipline, humility and cooperation, among others (Omoyibo, 2016, p. 14). Is this a reaction to the colonial view that thinks in terms of superiority and inferiority? Most probably. The formation of civic virtues in traditional Africa takes a long time. "It is given to children from a tender age so that these habits can take progressively shape in their behaviour by acquiring attitudes, skills and beliefs that enable a human being to fit into a community" (Omoyibo, 2016, p. 15). The above implications of Ubuntu as a worldview were definitely not represented at the Bandung Conference. They are also absent in many other international conferences. Global endeavors and the policies inspired by them do not create room for such values; this means that the African society should recover them by itself, restore them and create opportunities for others to acknowledge them and the cross-fertilization they could inject into the discourse on self-determination and true development.

One could say, definitely, that the beacons for Africans and their national unity, each in their own way, have not only changed, but in most case have been lost. It is sad to hear in ordinary conversations people say we no longer have the Nkrumahs, the Lumumbas and the Sankaras, to name but a few. The reason why these names still resonate with people, is precisely because they were in themselves those beacons of Ubuntu, but also championed an agenda inspired by such principles. It is as if referents for national unity are no longer to be found in ideas or faiths. They have been replaced by political parties with shallow ideologies, or tenets from globalism, which could be everything *but* drivers of national unity.

Unfortunately, party ideologies brought more divisions, which, coupled with the tribal lines shaped by colonial systems and perpetuated later, undermined the possibility of nationhood very quickly. Moreover, these new tenets actively tended to create group thinking whose uniformity carries more influence than the risk of uniformity posed by Ubuntu thinking, against which Hountondji warned. In fact, it is not certain that Ubuntu could give rise to any uniformity because of its scope that has always included a great diversity of communities and peoples. Globalism's group thinking drowns out critical voices that could arise from Ubuntu's ideas; it even seriously threatens the freedom of speech. Globalism demonstrates that the colonial drama is not over. It keeps finding new and more subtle forms that need to be interrogated with more research.

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