

Compatibility Analysis of African Ubuntu Political Thought and China's "Common Prosperity"

Yonghao Li*

Department of Political and Legal Education, Shandong Academy of Governance, Jinan, Shandong, 250103, China

**Corresponding author: yhanlee666@gmail.com*

Keywords: Ubuntu; political thought; common prosperity; compatibility

Abstract: Since the 1990s, the South African government has continuously promoted Ubuntu's political ideas, and Ubuntu has gradually exerted a wide influence in sub-Saharan Africa and even the world. This paper intends to study the political and ideological compatibility between Ubuntu and China's hotly discussed "common prosperity" in recent years, which is the basic principle of government governance and foreign policy in major African countries. Understanding Ubuntu Thought is of great significance for China to carry out diplomacy, economy and trade, and mutual learning of civilizations with African countries. At present, China is accelerating the development of China-Africa relations and promoting the construction of a "China-Africa community with a shared future." However, so far, China's domestic academic circles have lacked specialized research on Ubuntu Thought, which has a core political and ideological status in many African countries. This article intends to explain the main connotation and value system of the African Ubuntu thought, explore the compatibility with the idea of "common prosperity", and then analyze the prospects for the development of Sino-African relations.

1. Introduction

"Ubuntu" originated from the Xhosa and Zulu cultures in southern Africa. It is a vocabulary that exists in tribal cultures in sub-Saharan Africa. It is a set of values that appear in daily life, relying on indigenous. It has been handed down from generation to generation by the residents. Even the Bantu people of Africa, who speak different languages, share this idea, which is the traditional political thought of the African continent.

Ubuntu was originally an idea derived from social and cultural changes over a long period of time. However, due to the special history of Africa, no clear definition and analysis can be found in historical records or ancient books, or even in the study of ancient African studies. It wasn't until the second half of the 19th century that "Ubuntu" began to be gradually cited in the records of related texts about European colonization. Through the elaboration of different authors, it covers topics including "humanity", "equality", "compassion", "Kindness", "sharing", "love" and other different meanings [1]. In recent years, through further research by Tutu et al., the Zulu motto "umuntungumuntunungabantu" was translated as "a man becomes a man through others" Or "I am in you, and you are in me". Ubuntu is known to most people. The original meaning of "Ubuntu spirit"

is that my existence is because of the existence of everyone. This value emphasizes the individuality of each individual. Existence is established on the existence of the collective, and the relationship between the individual and the collective is a relationship of prosperity and loss [2]. In African culture, it is the nature of human beings to show mercy, respect, help and be kind, Only in this way can we build and maintain a society that is fair, just and happy to unite.

Ubuntu's political value system has been applied to African law, education, society, foreign policy, etc., and has played a guiding role in the politics of African countries [3]. Rather than saying that African countries are governing the country according to the Ubuntu ideology, it is better to say that African politicians use the Ubuntu ideology to try to construct a new system of modern national governance that is full of African local historical and cultural characteristics [4]. In the long history of Africa in the past, Ubuntu is not a value in the sense of political philosophy. But looking at the current African countries, it has become the origin of political values. Of course, this is not only due to the objective needs of a country's construction, but also the subjective result of politicians' strategic considerations. The most important goal is to erase the colonial culture that I don't want to mention again, and establish a consciousness that is truly rooted in Africa and belongs to Africa cultural and political thought.

In recent years, scholars from all over the world have continuously explored and enriched the connotation of Ubuntu from multiple perspectives such as politics, society, and economy. Taking Ubuntu thought as a starting point, they traced African cultural traditions and carried out policy analysis, and gradually focused Ubuntu thought on people, The relationship between society and the world is based on the transformation from a pure social morality to a political philosophy that can be used by the people and the government [5].

2. The Political Value System of Ubuntu Thought

Ubuntu focuses on the idea of loyalty and connection between people, and it is a person's inherent obligation to help his partners and communities. Ubuntu thought advocates that only when an individual harmoniously integrates into his own community can he become a noble person. The process of integrating into the community is largely completed by direct face-to-face and active interaction with his partners.

2.1 The view of primitive religion

First, Ubuntu thought values the worship of nature and the sacredness of the land. Africans believe that the land is spiritual, and the worship of natural forces infects people's emotions for the African land, so people must be careful when they are in sacred places. Do not kill animals without the permission of nature. Even if you hunt, you must be very devoutly grateful for this gift of nature. Second, Ubuntu thought emphasizes the strong continuity between the life of an individual and its ancestors. It is generally agreed that the ancestors will continue to exist in their lives in the form of souls, and always maintain a spiritual connection with God. When in danger, the soul will be touched, and the ancestors will protect them from the danger for the gods. Third, it is hoped that individuals can be recognized in the community, reflect a strong sense of belonging, pay more attention to the interests and glory of the collective, and relatively weaken the needs of the self.

2.2 Philosophy and ethics

This is the cornerstone of Ubuntu's thinking. The philosophical view of Ubuntu thought advocates the equality and connection between individual lives in social life. That is, equal enjoyment of rights and resources and fulfillment of corresponding obligations. The social life among each tribe is in a

closely interactive relationship, and the focus of people's production and life is always in the tribe; the content of Ubuntu's ethics is mainly how to deal with the relationship with others, emphasizing "Love", "Compassion", "Loyalty" and "Sharing". No matter what kind of tribe they are in, people must first abide by the laws of nature, secondly abide by the internal tribal culture and rules, and respect the members who have been associated with themselves. Finally, they must be loyal to their companions and tribes, and know how to share everything they get, so as to help stabilize the relationship between tribal groups [6].

2.3 Political philosophy

After the end of the apartheid system led by South Africa, African countries have undergone a series of economic and social transformations. Under the guidance of Ubuntu's political ideology, those in power know how to remember the hard-won present and the past that cannot be looked back. History is the further expansion of philosophy and social cooperation in the political field, and the core of its thought is compromise, tolerance and reconciliation. People want to forget the tragic history, because this will help to let go of the bad feelings in their hearts and develop a new future for Africa.

3. Overview of the Thought of "Common Prosperity"

It was put forward in the political report of the latest Chinese government guidelines. "Chinese-style modernization is the modernization of common prosperity for all people. Common prosperity is the essential requirement of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and it is also a long-term historical process. We insist on realizing the people's yearning for a better life as the starting point and goal of modernization, and focus on Maintain and promote social fairness and justice, focus on promoting the common prosperity of all people, and resolutely prevent polarization." Earlier, the "Resolution of the Central Committee of China on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the core's Centennial Struggle" passed by the Sixth Plenary Session of the Nineteenth Central Committee of China stated that [7], the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics is "an era in which the people of all ethnic groups in the country work together to create a better life and gradually realize the common prosperity of all people". The Chinese president of China, attached great importance to the issue of common prosperity, and published a series of important expositions on common prosperity, which profoundly answered major questions such as why common prosperity should be achieved in the new era, what kind of common prosperity should be achieved, and how to achieve common prosperity[7], which greatly promoted the innovation and development of the idea of common prosperity, formed the idea of common prosperity in the new era, and opened up a new ideological realm of the theory of common prosperity [8].

China's development is moving towards a brand-new development path. After winning an all-round victory in building a well-off society in an all-round way and fighting against poverty, China's development is making great strides towards all-round high-quality development under the banner of the concept of "common prosperity" [9]. Briefly talk about the central purpose of the concept of "common prosperity" is to promote the overall development of China's economy, society and culture, thereby reducing the growing social and economic inequality in Chinese society. Through the realization of socialist common prosperity, China will explore a more equitable economic development path guided by socialist moral values and people's actual actions. But in the final analysis, socialist common prosperity is to create sufficient conditions for each individual among the 1.4 billion people in China, so that they can develop and achieve something in the field of their own choice, so as to make their own contributions to the overall development of the country due contribution.

4. Compatibility comparison between the two

Africa's Ubuntu culture and China's vision of "common prosperity" have many similarities in historical process and cultural roots. First of all, Africa is currently facing economic and social difficulties such as inequality, poverty and corruption. The principles of collectivity, respect, compassion, reciprocity, unity, morality, and social justice in Ubuntu's thinking are also promoted by the idea of "common prosperity". Metz, a professor at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa, believes that taking Confucianism as an example, Confucianism values friendship, tolerance, win-win cooperation, respect for differences, fairness and justice, and sharing, emphasizing the harmonious development of individuals and groups. All of these can echo with Ubuntu's ideas and concepts, and thus give a lot of room for dialogue between African and Chinese philosophies. He said: "There are strong conceptual similarities between the 'benevolence' of Confucianism in China and Ubuntu in South Africa. Both require us to empathize with others. This helps us bridge barriers and differences. Collaborate and face the future together', this is exactly what our era needs" [10].

The source analysis of the so-called "Pan-Africanism" concept advocated by academic circles in recent years is a moral and ideological standard, and it is also the political basis of African society guided by Ubuntu thought for a long time [11]. Ubuntu's political philosophy criticizes the collection of ill-gotten gains as excessive unfairness and justice to society, and at the same time tries to promote fair distribution and balanced use of public resources to the entire society. Nyerere, the former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, once said: "The development of the capitalist market economy has led to excessive inequality, which is actually caused by exploitation, which is morally unfounded" [12]. In contrast, China's socialist path of "common prosperity" and the political philosophy of Ubuntu are both distributive welfare programs aimed at improving the status of and protecting the poor.

Second, both concepts promote and highlight the spirit and value of hard work. Just as the story Yan Zi Chunqiu · Inner Chapter Wen Upper recorded "the right to have or not, both rich and poor, not to cultivate desire", and just as Nyerere once said, unearned socialism does not exist. Social safety nets and welfare programs are part of Ubuntu's philosophy and the idea of "common prosperity", not a substitute for work. Every member of society must make unremitting efforts to make a living, and the social system should create a sufficient environment so that people can see considerable returns for their efforts. Through the realization of free and conscious labor, the future society will greatly promote the freer and more comprehensive development of human beings, and finally achieve the goal of common prosperity. Therefore, the values of collectivism and compassion are an important part of China's concept of "common prosperity" and Africa's Ubuntu philosophy.

Finally, both philosophies are wary of the Western free market system. Different from the blind advocacy of individual freedom in the Western world, the concept of participation and sharing advocated in Ubuntu's political philosophy is the essence of human beings, this natural actor. At present, some Western ideas are gradually bringing society into the intergenerational relay of "winners forever" and "elite perpetuity". If social capital has gradually penetrated into a country's power sector, then is there any chance of achieving true harmony and equality in such a social environment? Bantu philosophy is also critical of individualistic and profit-driven free market systems that thrive on exploitation and greed, in favor of collective ownership based on moral and ethical principles. At the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation last year, both China and Africa had great expectations for building a China-Africa community with a shared future. China's concept of "common prosperity" is compatible with Africa's Ubuntu culture, providing a common basis for a stronger China-Africa relationship. The idea of "prosperity for all" offers Africa and the world an opportunity to change direction from liberal capitalism.

5. Enlightenment and Prospect of China-Africa Relations

As the application of Ubuntu's political thought in the governance of African countries matures, it also provides African countries with new concepts different from the Western discourse system for their diplomacy. Under the guidance of Ubuntu's idea of emphasizing equality, justice and interdependence among countries, for example, South Africa established the value identity of African countries and improved its leadership by promoting the idea of Ubuntu. As a "BRICS country" with a relatively complete industrial foundation in Africa, South Africa actively supports the reform of the UN Security Council, attaches importance to cooperation with other international organizations, and attaches importance to cooperation with Asian countries. It has a strong desire to become a representative and leader of African countries. Based on the spirit of mutual benefit and win-win of Ubuntu thought, the primary goal of economic diplomacy of African countries is to seek to establish a fair and just international trade system, so that the international community can provide developing countries with relevant guidance on economic development and markets to ensure the interests of developing countries, to create a fair and just competition in the international environment. At the same time, African countries are promoting the construction of the "African Community" and are committed to the joint efforts of African countries to achieve the great development and prosperity of Africa as a whole. In recent years, the Chinese government has begun to notice the impact of Ubuntu on domestic politics and foreign relations in Africa. The Ubuntu Thought also coincides with some concepts of China's current proposals to jointly build a "community with a shared future for mankind" and the "Belt and Road" initiative [13].

China proposed the "Belt and Road" initiative in 2013, and more than 70 countries around the world have joined it until now. Under the framework of the initiative, China cooperates with partner countries to design and implement large-scale infrastructure projects. Infrastructure is the cornerstone of development and investment, and it is also one of the most important needs for Africa to realize its full potential. With the launch of the African Free Trade Area, the ability to interconnect will be central and decisive to the success of the initiative. BRI projects in Africa echo and amplify the Ubuntu idea, which aims to connect Africa with the rest of the world through accelerated infrastructure investment. The "Belt and Road" initiative is not only an economic development initiative, but also a channel aimed at promoting mutual exchanges and learning among different civilizations, and it is a concrete manifestation of the concept of "a community with a shared future for mankind" [14]. It is an open and inclusive process that neither targets nor excludes any political guideline, country, or people, but helps China and other countries in the world seize opportunities and pursue common development, avoiding ideological boundaries, zero-sum games, or any "political conflicts." trap". The "Belt and Road" initiative is by no means based on geopolitical considerations, let alone a military alliance, but to promote economic cooperation and common development. Facts have proved that China is an open and enthusiastic partner of the entire African continent on development issues, and now more than ever we need to pay attention to who our historical friends are. We need to leverage the Belt and Road Initiative to enable AFCFTA to achieve meaningful, sustainable development and shared prosperity.

In April 2017, the "China-South Africa High-end Thought Dialogue" was held in Pretoria, South Africa, with the theme of "Ubuntu and the Community of Human Destiny" [15]. Former State Councilor Liu Yandong pointed out in his opening speech that ideological dialogue is an important guide for economic, trade and people-to-people exchanges between China and African countries, and that building a community with a shared future for mankind is the core element of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics in the new era. Compared with Ubuntu's political philosophy, the two have many similarities in their value connotations. They both emphasize friendship and tolerance, emphasize the harmonious development of individuals and collectives, emphasize the close

connection of destiny and development, share and work together, and advocate cooperation. Universal values such as win-win, respect for differences, fairness and justice. In terms of achievement expectations, this inclusive and friendly ideological connotation determines that the political thoughts of emerging developing countries do not challenge and deny the West, but only try to supplement and update the shortcomings of Western political and ideological systems. In terms of spiritual essence, the two focus on building a local political and ideological system, surpassing the original Western discourse power, and thus enhancing their influence in the international community. The concept of Ubuntu has subtly exerted influence on the world. The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind and the idea of Ubuntu represented by Mandela have been reflected in the speeches of leaders of many countries and United Nations documents [16]. The rise of political thought in emerging powers is both culturally original and politically inclusive. Even if the current international situation is developing toward diversification, there will be no clash of civilizations, but only mutual learning among civilizations. I believe that China and African countries can achieve the "big changes unseen in a century" with Uzbekistan. Starting with Bantu Thought and China's diplomatic guiding ideology in the new era, try to make Ubuntu Thought compatible with China's "common prosperity" construction, contribute Chinese power and Chinese solutions to African government governance and economic and social development, and jointly build a new era of "China Not a community of destiny".

References

- [1] Zhou Xinyu. (2018). *Ubuntu Thought in South Africa and the Rise of Local Political Thought in Emerging Powers*. [J]. *Modern International Relations*, (02), 56-62+67.
- [2] Chen Lijuan & Shu Zhan. (2021). *The logical direction and practical Approach of Collective Assistance poverty alleviation mechanism in Rwanda*. [J]. *West Asia and Africa*, (06), 63-83+158.
- [3] Rwanda Governance Board: "Ubudehe"[Z]. <http://rwandapedia.rw/explore/ubudehe>, 2019-03-07.
- [4] Yan Fei. (1999). *Novel and Unique Perspective -- Comments on reading African Political Development from Multi-Dimensional Perspective*. [J]. *West Asia and Africa*, (05), 74-75.
- [5] Christian BN Gade, "The Historical Development of the Written Discourses on Ubuntu", [Z]. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 2011, p. 318.
- [6] [South Africa] Desmond Tutu, translated by Jiang Hong: "No Future Without Forgiveness", [Z]. p. 199.
- [7] *Compilation of Documents of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China* [J]. *Journal of Shandong Cadre Correspondence University (Theoretical study)*, 2022, No.470 (11): 64.
- [8] Wang Keyuan, Song Meiqi. *The Central Economic Work Conference was held in Beijing* [Z]. *People's Daily*, 2021-12-11(01). <http://dangjian.people.com.cn/n1/2021/1213/c117092-32306430.html>
- [9] Zhang Zhanbin, Bi Zhaoqing. *The logical advance path, core essence and spiritual essence of the thought of common prosperity in the new era* [J]. *Journal of Beijing University of Technology: Social Sciences Edition*, 2022, 22 (5): 31-44
- [10] Thaddeus Metz: "I want to be a communicator of Nanzhong philosophy" [Z]. 2019-08-18. <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2019/0818/c1002-31301448.html>
- [11] David Monyaa: "China's concept of common prosperity provides a new development agenda for Africa" [Z]. 2022-02-09. <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1724284194735557899&wfr=spider&for=pc>
- [12] Omar Shahabudin McDoom, *Rwanda's Exit Pathway from Violence: A Strategic Assessment*, [Z]. 2011, pp. 4-5.
- [13] Zheng Shangzhi, Chang Jing. *A Marxist Political Economics Analysis of the New Development Pattern of "Double Cycles"*[J]. *Contemporary Economic Management*, 2021, 43(12):1-11.
- [14] Lei Huojian. *On the Distinctive Features of Xi's Thought on Religious Work in the New Era* [J]. *Journal of the Central Institute of Socialism*, 2020(05):172-180.
- [15] Zhao Xi. *Liu Yandong attended the opening ceremony of China-South Africa High-end Thought Dialogue*[Z]. http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2017-04/26/c_1120873364.htm
- [16] Luo Zheng. *Chinese and foreign scholars talk about Chinese civilization and world civilization*[Z]. *China Youth Daily*, September 28th, 2017. http://news.cyol.com/content/2017-09/28/content_16538398.htm