

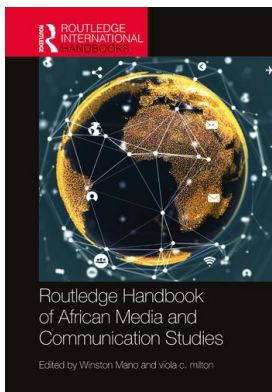
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Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

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## **Routledge Handbook of African Media and Communication Studies**

Winston Mano, viola c. milton

### **Rethinking African strategic communication**

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781351273206-4>

Colin Chasi

**Published online on: 12 Feb 2021**

**How to cite :-** Colin Chasi. 12 Feb 2021, *Rethinking African strategic communication from*: Routledge Handbook of African Media and Communication Studies Routledge

Accessed on: 08 Dec 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781351273206-4>

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# Rethinking African strategic communication

## Towards a new violence

*Colin Chasi*

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### Introduction

With just over a billion people and significant growth prospects, Africa is an exciting frontier for those interested in investing in emerging markets. However, beyond narrow claims that Africans value harmony and therefore also reconciliation – even in business – little is known about what an African strategic approach entails. This chapter asks: If strategic communication cannot be separated from violence and warfare, what are the implications for African strategic practice?

It is evident that Africans are not all followers of the same moral philosophy. Less obvious is that there are many different thematic variations to interpretation of ubuntu. However, it is widely held that it is possible and useful to speak of ubuntu as an African moral philosophy – others such as Metz (2007) and Kamwangamulu (1999) have made this point elsewhere. Gade (2011) has located indigenous and scholarly discourses on ubuntu in historical developments in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

In this chapter I present new insights on how the many Bantu language-speaking Africans who live in sub-Saharan Africa and who articulate the moral philosophy of ubuntu may approach the violence of strategic communication. The intention is not to refute the idea that Africans value harmony. It is to advance new insights into ubuntu that take into account the fact of violence in the world. In this way, I hope to extend rather than reduce the conceptual appeal of ubuntu, i.e. I hope to advance an avenue for thinking about this quintessentially African moral philosophy that reveals ubuntu to be even more capacious than may have been otherwise thought – because it even has valuable things to say about strategic practices that are associated with violence and war.

I do this in the understanding that communication is violent (Vince and Mazen 2014; Zizek 2008; Burke 1969, 19–23), human existence is characterised by violence (Schopenhauer 2004; Benatar 2006) and that strategy is hence inextricably violent. Strangely, as far as I can tell from extensive reading of the literature, Africans have been described as peoples who value harmony but without consideration of the inherence of violence in their existence. This chapter addresses this omission by drawing out some implications for strategy that arise from the study of how the quintessentially African moral philosophy of ubuntu may be acted out with violent communication in a violent world. The idea is to conclude with a new perspective on ubuntu and

the African perspective that says (1) for Africans there is nothing alien about using violence and warfare; and (2) the challenge is to strategically use violence and warfare to advance development and democracy.

### Human communication is violent

The world is violent. It is not fundamentally harmonious as some scholars of ubuntu have rendered it (Ramose 1999). Acknowledging this violence, some pessimists have gone so far as to say that there is so much pain and harm in the world that it is better to never have been born (Schopenhauer 2004; Benatar 2006). Consistent with this pessimistic view, which describes the harsh realities of how people seek meaningfulness and pleasure amidst inevitable lack, suffering and death – this chapter takes the perspective that the communication that expresses human modes of existence in the world is fundamentally violent; it is about warfare in various guises and modalities (Sonderling 2013).

Human communication is rooted in the unique ability to use and respond to linguistic signs in ways that induce cooperation (Burke 1969, 43; Tomasello 2010). Use of communication introduces a violent process that denies that the self and the other have unique biographically determined perspectives (Schutz 1971, 323). This is to say that attempts to co-substantially act together are inherently characterised by identification and conflict. The “human substances” involved in communication are fundamentally separate and distinct in such ways that any efforts at co-substantiation involve violent contestations for space, autonomy and integrity (Burke 1969, 19–23). Often the violent acts of domination and symbolic violence by which individual and collective identities are achieved are removed from scrutiny by acts of fantasy and other such forms of violent innocence that sustain practical attitudes (Vince and Mazen 2014; Zizek 2008).

Even the shared intentionality that characterises human communication and cooperation is achieved with violence. Attainment of shared meaning, cooperation, organisation and harmony involves symbolic processes that inevitably crush, distort and harm what those who partake in them would grasp. Communication entails colonising or otherwise manufacturing conceptual grounds on which meanings and cultures are shared and formed. It involves changing the states of being of those who receive the meaning of intended communicators (Grice 1957; Sperber and Wilson 1995). Even the qualities of promoting shared meaning, cooperation, organisation and harmony with which communication is associated can be understood as mechanisms by which people have waged war against nature and each other in order to create colonies in which they hope to live well. Where human cultures, organisations and civilisation have formed, this has been done with various degrees of violence inflicted to control nature and people, while denying individual humans the capacity to maximise gains in all instances (Bastiat 2001; Foucault 2004; Freud 1950; Coase 1937).

In nature, some animals are stronger or physically more dangerous than *Homo sapiens*. To overcome and control dangers posed by nature, humans have evolved cooperative strategies that enable them to survive and thrive as arguably the top predators on earth. This same human capacity for cooperative action is the basis for the formation of companies. The words “company” and “cooperation” invite recognition of how those involved in the formation of these bodies come together co-substantially in what Goffman (1959) has enabled us to term “everyday strategic communicative” acts to cultivate a “firm” with its common consensual grounds for human cooperative action. Strategy is an important means by which companies seek to maximise their chances of survival in a dangerous world (Henderson 1989).

*Prima facie* the view that Africans have developed a moral philosophy which values and normalises harmony (Metz 2007; Ramose 1999; Shutte 2001; Mbigi 2005) conflicts with the

understanding that strategic communication entails violence and warfare. I ask: If strategic communication cannot be separated from violence and warfare, what are the implications for African organisational practice? I proceed by first discussing organisational strategy and in particular corporate communication strategy as practices that are intrinsically and variously violent.

### Strategy – that old military term

The continued dominance in contemporary business scholarship of that old military term “strategy” (Audebrand 2010) reveals how companies are commonly conceptualised as being involved in the business of fighting for resources, markets and survival (Henderson 1989; Kim and Mauborgne 2009; Ghemawat 2002; Klein 1999); this often entails colonising the life-worlds of people (Deetz 1992; Boyle 2003).

Etymologically, “strategy” (from the Greek word *strategos* – the art of the general) speaks of an art and of an actor whose mode of expression cannot be separated from the business of violence. In this “military” sense, strategy implies an idea of planning and acting towards victory in what are generally win-lose situations in which actors often fearsomely use all means available to achieve intended goals, even in situations of general uncertainty. Strategic communication involves violence and warfare to secure the firm grounds on which business corporations take root. A primary requirement for strategic organisational action is to regiment people in such ways that individuals work to their prescribed roles. Strategic communication practices are machinations of the warfare by which organisations seek to deny individual difference and uniqueness in order to control individuals (MacIntyre 1999; Nord and Fox 1996), or to generally manufacture the consent of others (Herman and Chomsky 1988; Carey 1995) by colonising their life-worlds (Deetz 1992) as a management function that aims to intentionally and rationally make decisions and take actions towards the achievement of organisational goals (Verčič and Grunig 2000; Sandhu 2009; Swerling and Sen 2009; Grunig and Grunig 2008). Thus construed, strategic communication deploys innumerable means of war to ensure that organisations achieve their goals, with orchestrators being mindful of both fathomable and unfathomable risks posed not only by today’s competitors but also by customers, suppliers, potential entrants and substitute products (Porter 1996, 25).

Organisational strategists ask: “What is our business and what will it be in the future?” Alternatively: “What is our mission and what is our vision?” (Puth 2002, 183). They often ask this while scanning through what Kim and Mauborgne (2002, 78) call a muddle of engrossing and often conflicting masses of data that are incapable of giving certainty to strategic action. In these conditions of fundamental uncertainty (Simon 1993, 134) strategists are lauded for developing powerful and decisive missions and visions (Machiavelli 1925, 136–138) with due regard to alternatives.

While strategists repeatedly refer to the past with pride, the rationality of their actions is only indicative of the retrospective valorisation of their actions that is fought for, won and lost in organisational sense-making processes. Strategic thinkers are always involved in a fight to gain and maintain legitimation. Good strategic planning enables the actor to review experiences so that each such plan determines how one views the past (Weick 1969, 102).

Judgements about the quality of a strategic plan are ultimately dependent on stories dumped upon society by those who control the means to tell the dominant stories. Given that patterns of dominance and processing of acquisition and deployment of news are variable, it is worth observing that what you get out of an organisation depends on what has been put in and also upon the specific time and place you reach into the “garbage can” (Marion 1999,

170–213; Cohen et al. 1972). Knowing this, organisations have increasingly come to prioritise the recruitment of individuals who are able to learn and to create knowledge. Such individuals are able to make the discretionary decisions that organisations need to make, in order not to live in the past and despite past memories (Ballard and Seibold 2003), but also so that they can thrive in the here and now. These and all other individuals have to recognise that institutional facts and practices are increasingly so fluid that for years now it has become common to observe that for managers the “greatest problem with rules is that organisations and their environments change faster than the rules. Most bad rules were once good, designed for a situation that no longer exists” (Perrow 1986, 26). In this flux, *strategy is constantly evaluated and reviewed to orchestrate effective and efficient social arrangements and practices aimed at the putative raison d’être of the organisation*. Yet it has long been known that organisations seemingly often take on goals of their own (Etzioni 1964, 5); organisations are battlefields in which multiple competing goals of individuals and collectives are negotiated, put down, pulled up, cut apart and variously wielded (Ahrne 1990).

Marshalling strategic organisational action is at best an inexact art of managing risk (Bernstein 1998; Machiavelli 1925, 154–155) where it is a creative challenge to even formulate the problem itself (Hatchuel 2001, 262). This is to say that in the face of the limited information available for decision making, organisational strategists inevitably act with discretion acquired from prior experiences when they choose courses of action (Perrow 1986, 22–23; March and Simon 1965, 148). The violent, discretionary character of strategic decision making is easily brushed aside in favour of rationalistic normative assertions.

Strategic communication management of risks associated with arbitrary individual action seeks to deny individuals the agency to “do arbitrary things”. Strategy represents a distinctly management voice, the violence-laced silencing of discordant voices and the denial of the individual (Deetz 1992) who tends, in fact, to disappear in organisational study (Nord and Fox 1996). The organisational capacity to control rules, individuals and resources is implied by the idea that strategy involves the drawing up of strategic plans which are then to be implemented by members. There is a close relationship between “what legislators do and what managers do. Both groups construct reality through authority acts. When people enact laws, they take undefined space, time and action and draw lines, establish categories, and coin labels that create new features of the environment that did not exist before” (Weick 1995, 30–31). What is significant is that just as any application of the law involves violent acts that limit people’s freedom of expression (Bastiat 2001), so, too, the application of organisational legal authority and the associated imposition of organisation rules involve the diminution of individual freedoms of expression, even if the organisations that are thus formed are thereby enabled to be more powerful and sustainable bodies (Coase 1960, 1937).

Communication functions in corporations to organise the behaviors of individuals towards achievement of outcomes: “The ultimate goal of the communicator is to alter his hearer’s thoughts, and that is why he engages in communication at all” (Tanaka 1994, 18). In this specific sense the communicator is a coloniser who precisely aims to cut himself apart, take ownership of a territory and remake others in his image (Van Rinsum 2001). This raises ethical concerns regarding the choice and freedom of who are “communicated to”. As a consequence, being strategic involves designing or coming up with solutions for problems that are impermanently and contingently dependent upon people’s ends and the strategic means devised to achieve them. Purely strategic individuals are limited to focusing on strategic goals in such ways that they are constrained from being concerned with all other issues that legitimately bear upon or otherwise concern them. As such a strategist has no real relations with others; her relations are limited and determined by calculations of their use-value so that,

ironically, such a person is lost also to herself because, subjectively, the way to the experience of self is lost to her (Buber 1987, 68).

In the context of the strategic organisation, the aim of identifying oneself and others is not to get to know the worker; rather the aim is to achieve a kind of domination of the organisational battleground to attain management's goals (Weick 1995; Deetz 1992). Carey's (1995) critique of the "manufacturing of consent" exposes the ongoing role of communication professionals in taking the risk out of democracy, by denying the individual choice and freedom of those who are managed. A norm is produced which supports the system of dominance construction. Strategic communication serves a conservative agenda in that it is constructed on models or knowledges which prioritise an underlying logic of large numbers, prioritising what is known in such ways it is claimed that the future is driven to repeat the known norm in ways that advantage those who have previously lost while disadvantaging those who have previously won (Bernstein 1998, 335).

Strategic communication is always marked with the possibility of creating master/slave and other such systems of relations built on difference, separation, "other-ing" and control, domination, violence and warfare (Olivier 2004, 85; Tomkins et al. 1975; Grunig and Grunig 2008). In the organisation, the hierarchy sets management apart from workers; the manager does not work but rather manages. Yet it is in the practice of managing that the manager localises and becomes indispensable to the description of the workplace and to the prescription of work.

When two men collaborate in an enterprise to which they contribute different kinds of services and from which they derive different amounts and kinds of profit, who is to say just where "cooperation" ends and a partner's "exploitation" of the other begins? (Burke 1969, 25).

What is curious is that organisational "hierarchy is complete only when each rank accepts the *principle of gradation itself*" (Burke 1969, 138; emphasis in original). This unusual state of affairs is achieved by means of myths that blame the victim through mythically apportioning guilt to those who are mysteriously located at the bottom of social hierarchies. According to Burke, mystery is, in this case, the "corresponding condition" of hierarchy, as mysteries arise socially "from different modes of life. The king will be a mystery to the peasant, and vice versa" (Tomkins et al. 1975, 136). In this case mystery has the quality of making the abnormal hierarchical organisational division of privileges and burdens justifiable and strangely normal. In the grips of the mysterious communion by which organisational roles and positions "occupy" people, there is *strange* estrangement (Tomkins et al. 1975, 137) that enables people to inflict harm bureaucratically, routinely and even as though it were a virtue (MacIntyre 1999).

## Ubuntu and the vital force of the African strategist

It has been said that strategic communication cannot be separated from violence and warfare. It is now useful to go further and argue that the African moral philosophy of ubuntu, which values and normalises harmony (Metz 2007; Ramose, 1999; Shutte, 2001; Mbigi, 2005), can be reconciled with the understanding that strategic communication entails violence and warfare. This can be argued by pointing out that African cosmology values the vital force of individuals. This vital force cannot be understood without addressing the irrepressible possibility of violence in human existence.

Unfortunately, scientific racialism has laid the groundwork for claims that Africans are a form of *Homo sapiens* less capable of rational planning, learning and, controlling nature by forming civilised and generally forming culturally sophisticated societies (Dubow, 1995, 1993). In this context, many Africans have taken on the view that Africans value community and the well-being of others in ways that are inimical of Western competitiveness and its violence (Murove

2008). Drawing on the understanding that a person can only be a person through others, it is widely said that African leadership values human solidarity and interdependence, aiming at persuading and encouraging self-disciplining behaviours that involve empathic practices, listening and healing (Mbigi 2005, 218–219).

However, there are dissenting voices that point out that Africans are stereotyped when they are presented as incapable of finding, giving and extracting value from individual independence and even from tension in relations with others. One of these, Ngũgĩ (2009, 50), has tellingly argued that the isiZulu aphorism most associated with ubuntu, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (a person is a person with other persons), should not be read as a mere proverb. He contends it is not just a common expression of truths shared by a community. Rather, this saying reflexively engages with the non-viability of human existence without others and poses a complex antinomy; a thesis, antithesis and synthesis to elucidate that without others a person cannot be a person with the vital force to achieve a meaningful life. To reduce this complex aphorism to a mere proverb is to deny the complexity of African moral cultures and to deny that for Africans who often live in the harshest of circumstances, as for all humans “culture is struggle” (Ngũgĩ 2009, 52).

Africans cannot avoid fighting since because human practices are characterised by violence. African cosmology finds that human beings are fundamentally characterised by vital force and by agency which is an expression of power. This power impacts violently upon the world – for the good as well as for the bad. In African cosmology, agency is what is often described as the vital force that humans and other forms of existence embody in different measure (Tempels 1959). In African religious cosmology this vital force is said to have been distributed in varying measures when God created a hierarchical world of beings and things. The concern among Africans is not so much to avoid the use of force, but to the use of force towards destructive ends.

It is not new to say that Africans have traditionally expressed interest in ensuring that vital force is used well. For example, there is much interest among Africans in the relationship between witches and the mysterious beasts called familiars, which carry out their horrid deeds. From research conducted in South Africa, Niehaus (1995, 515) says: “Witches are identified with familiars, have the attributes of animals, and actually metamorph into familiars. This duality lies at the heart of the conception of witchcraft as a dangerous, superhuman, power”. His broad suggestion is that witchcraft happens in liminal spaces between human community (human settlements) and nature (forests), threatening the distinction between the two. I have no interest in questions regarding the mystical power ascribed to witchcraft. My point is that Africans have historically been interested in how vital force can be used in ways that preserve and advance human community from the harms that nature can inflict. From this, I wish to draw attention to the important observation that when African interest in how power is used or misused is not well theorised, practices that are unjust are likely to proliferate with punishing consequences for development. This is well documented in widespread attacks on women who are often unjustly accused of witchcraft when they challenge male patriarchal orders, with negative implications for development, particularly among women (Federici 2008).

Africans are not the only ones who have recognised that things in the world possess agency. French sociologist Bruno Latour (2000) has famously observed that contexts, in multifarious forms, also possess agency. The tools, buildings and other structural matter that define contexts are curiously identified agents that Latour (2000) has wonderfully addressed as “the silent masses” because their agentic roles are so often neglected. Latour’s case for saying the context has agency involves suggesting that tools display intentionality. In contrast, Giddens’s (1986) structuration approach makes intentionality unnecessary to the enunciation of agency. In saying

this, the context itself is understood to be produced and reproduced through, in and by the intended and unintended consequences of the actions of human agents.

With vital force, people display the agency to act upon the world, to organise or to refrain from doing so with varying degrees of success and failure. Decoupling human agency from intentionality distinguishes it from classical considerations of rationality according to which the actions of the individual would have needed to be demonstrated as directed towards a goal before the agentic character of the act could be given. This decoupling makes possible an ethical standpoint according to which the capacity of the human being to act is itself respected. A key consequence is that people are granted dignity merely because of their “privileged ontological status as creator[s], maintainer[s] and destroyer[s] of worlds . . . in this fundamental way that is beyond our intention, human . . .” (Christians 1997, 13).

Tempels (1959) finds that Africans traditionally believe that people are imbued with more vital force than other forms of existence and that the closer one gets to God the more vital force one has. For example, elders and ancestors are understood to be imbued with greater amounts of vital force than younger people and those still living, respectively. This African notion of vital force does not depend on ascription of intention for one to be considered as having agency.

Without seeking to challenge the religious view of African vital force, I assume a secular view in terms of which human agency creatively and violently crafts social life. In doing this, I hold that people and other beings variously express vital force in all the ways in which they communicate.

Human beings are social actors who know a great deal about their conditions and the consequences of what they do; they know that they can change things and also that their agency is bounded (Banks and Riley 1993, 171). To the extent that this is so, it is viable to argue that the moral philosophy of ubuntu raises questions that arise because Africans recognise that social forms, culture and organisational structures are – as observed by scholars such as McPhee (1985, 164), Giddens (1986, 24), and Banks and Riley (1993, 173) – recursively achieved in social systems which are instantiated, coordinated and made sense of by agents whose actions are in turn enacted in time and space. More broadly, it also suggests that African moral thought is concerned with the view – which is well articulated by Tomasello (2010, 2009) – that people are unique among other animals in the world because we communicate and cooperate. Indeed, that Africans are cooperative beings is often addressed by speaking of Africans valuing collective or communal relations (Ikuenobe 2006; Ramose 1999). However, a more fundamental and much less noted point is that Africans recognise that living with others is a problem that requires the exercising of moral thought and guidance (Menkiti 2002).

It is widely noted that Africans value harmony in community relations (Ikuenobe 2006; Ramose 1999; Shutte 2001; Metz 2007). This has led many to erroneously conclude that Africans do not value individuals (Diagne 2009; Eze, 2008) even though human co-substantiality is inherently based on denial of the fact that human individuals are different or unique one from another (Burke, 1969, 19–23). The great enterprise of human culture that is enabled by communication is a falsehood that masks human selfishness, aggression and violence (Becker, 1973; Elias, 1978).

To understand why Africans cooperate requires recognising the utilitarian motivations or incentives that people have for doing so (Connell, 2007; Césaire, 2000; Kenyatta 1953). People, including Africans, organise, establish laws, norms, social contracts and morals in order to reduce what Nobel laureate Ronald Coase (1960, 1937) refers to as marketing or transaction costs related to organising. However, this requires that people acquiesce to getting only what their social contracts and related mores dictate. This acquiescence entails that people are in some sense violently denied rational maximum economic gains that are available in transactions



(Coase 1960, 1937). The altruism on the basis of which individuals, including Africans, sacrifice such gains is foundational to how people orchestrate cultures that productively reduce transaction costs so that over time humans have ratcheted up their advantage over other animals lacking this attribute (Tomasello 2009).

Human culture, civility and the related notions of productivity are founded on violent control and denial of the most violent and selfish interests of individuals. This may be illustrated with reference to Elias (1978), whose study of the birth of manners shows that violence is never abolished in human affairs: the strategic choices that peoples make to avoid external violence merely lead to internalisation in various symbolic forms. In pre-colonial Africa, it has been said that societal forms and societal laws regulating communal ownership of land, for example, illustrate how violent contestation and conquest were never far off and how the law and notions of morality were deployed to enforce order and peace (Kenyatta 1953). The law is a form of violence that has been repressed, internalised and otherwise appropriated to control and harness societal violence for the gain of those impose the law (Bastiat 2001; Foucault 2004; Freud 1950). In appreciation of this, performances of African moral philosophies of law are geared towards attainment of a living African law which seeks to overcome these limitations, and perpetuate and restore justice rather than to merely pursue what is defined as legal (Woodman 2011).

The strategic choices that individuals make in crafting their performances of self are strategic (Goffman 1959). Human beings take up different roles and also act differently, depending on the situation and the goals at stake. Interactions are variously well mannered or obscene and overtly violent depending upon these contingencies (Elias 1978); it is therefore not necessarily true that Africans are always convivial in their interactions, as Nyamnjoh (2009) may be misinterpreted to infer. Nyamnjoh (2010, 80) is cognisant of the fact that societies which aspire for very narrowly conceived notions of belonging and democracy are bound to implode as the human concern to be humane in relations with others and material or utilitarian concerns rather favour those who perfect the arts of using interdependence and conviviality for one's own good and for the good of others. People act in generally tactful ways in order to minimise the existential anxiety and other such factors which may otherwise compromise productive cooperative interaction (Giddens 1986, 156). The dramaturgical role-apparent nature of human strategic interaction violently levels everything to an obscene sameness when people's life circumstances, perspectives and performances are ever unique (Goffman 1959, 254–255).

The problem is not that human action should cease to be strategic. It is rather that people should be enjoined to be concerned about the issues that bear on them (Gordon 1995, 19) and to act with the fullness of their consciousness. I say this in the realisation that, as an example, ubuntu has often been misused to legitimate claims that Africans are conformists and communalists who can be easily led for nationalistic purposes, making it suitable for the purposes of many African dictatorships (Marx 2002) and also realising that ubuntu has been abused as a cognitive map to blunt the moral sensitivities of individuals in communities that have on occasion been whipped up to brutally kill those deemed to be “traitors” (Blankenberg 1999).

Too often people have been misanthropically made into zombies with no viable concerns of their own, nullifying achievable possibilities for productive social life (Nyamnjoh 2005) and even for democracy itself (Mbembe 1992). The point is that if the freedom and capacities associated with development are to be gained (Sen 2010) person by person, Africans must be encouraged to break free from the yoke of what Fanon (2004, 145) labelled “relative obscurity” in order to discover and fulfil the mission of being the most that each can be.

Nowhere are people totally free. Notwithstanding the efforts of demagogues, dictators and others intent on controlling others, ubuntu remains to a great extent an oral and fluid moral philosophy which gains meaning in action contexts where those involved in relevant practices

are charged with the responsibility to find and enact the good. Because ubuntu has not historically had strong, immutable written prescripts, its performance remains to a great extent available for improvisation and contestation. Those who care for making ubuntu a moral philosophy which frees Africans to communicate strategically in ways that manage violence should be willing to fight for it.

## Conclusion

Africans know a great deal about violence. In its various guises, it is an inordinate feature of African existence. It would be strange to think that it is not important for Africans to think about violence, about how to overcome its negative consequences and how to make the good, great and beautiful with it. In the manner that *Homo sapiens* grapples with energy in all its guises, understanding it can occasion harm and that it is fundamental to achieving the desirable.

In much the same way that one who would use fire wisely has to appreciate the fundamentally harm-inflicting potential of fire, one must appreciate the potential harms associated with the vital force of each person and of human cooperative interaction if one is to invest in using this force well. We miss a vital insight if our discussions of African cooperative action simply overlook the role of thinking about avoiding harmful violence and using violence towards the attainment of (all things considered) desirable outcomes, by (all things considered) desirable means (since violence cannot be avoided).

The essence of *good* strategic thinking is precisely that it attempts to account for all stakeholders from a wide scope of bottom lines, recognizing that it is not possible to avoid violence. This key essence can be traced in contemporary fields of study, including just war (DiMeglio 2005), ethical business practices (Brewer 1997; Menestrel et al. 2002) and ethical strategic communication (Muhr and Rehn 2014). This lesson of *good* strategic thinking is lost to Africans to the extent that violence is not adequately thought about. This chapter is a bold step in this direction.

Given that the world is violent, the moral philosophies of peoples are an expression of how they value the cultivation of cultures by which they may flourish. African cosmology shows concern for how people use their vital force. Attainment of community, organisational and other such forms of strategic cooperation can enable each individual to make the most of her vital force. At the same time, in the never-ending war against the many hazards that characterise human existence, failure to invest in cooperation is likely to leave individuals defenceless and vulnerable.

A consequence of the arguments I have presented is that we can say that to have a culture is to fight. Africans fight. The moral questions that arise concern why, for what, where, with whom and how they should fight. I have not attempted to address all these moral questions. Instead I have been content to speak to the first philosophical preposition that human, and hence African existence, is characterised by violence.

Among the consequences of recognising that human existence is characterised by violence is that we can see that even cooperation comes with impositions. In other words, those who choose to cooperate in a bid for the fruits of cooperation take on obligations and constraints that are not necessarily chosen and that can hence be described as evincing violence. This is well described by the Shona saying: *kuwanda kwakanaka. Kwakangoshatira pupedza muto* (getting people together is good. It is only problematic in that the multitudes need to be fed). Indeed, the formation of communities requires the establishment of vital systems that ensure their sustenance. The quality of life of a society can to a large extent be understood in terms of the ways in which they put in place strategic arrangements to enable and regulate communal practices

that yield the proverbial bread required for survival. What we do know is that such measures should address the requirements for enabling children to grow into responsible adulthood while advancing freedoms and reducing barriers to the self-expression by which people can make the most of their vital force.

There is nothing alien to Africans about organisational practices, rules and strategies to garner and harness resources, energies or forces to produce productive orders. Africans who act in freedom to enact economically competitive recurrent structures arise as warriors for development and democracy. Even when playing sport with all the ubuntu one can imagine, there is nothing alien about Africans fighting for gold!

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