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Doctoral Dissertation Review

Doreen Basemera, MA

Entitled *Ubuntu Philosophy: An Approach for Conflict Management in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement in Uganda*

Under Supervision of Prof. Dr. Jacek Sroka

Formal Remarks

The subject of the review is the doctoral dissertation submitted by Ms Doreen Basemera, entitled *Ubuntu Philosophy: An Approach for Conflict Management in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement in Uganda*, written under the academic supervision of Professor Jacek Sroka, PhD, DSc. The formal basis for preparing this doctoral dissertation review is the resolution adopted by the Council of the Discipline of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of the Commission of National Education in Kraków, dated October 5, 2026, appointing me as a reviewer. The dissertation has been prepared within the **field of social sciences, in the discipline of Political Science and Public Administration**.

Assessment of the Dissertation Topic and Its Academic Significance

The doctoral dissertation submitted for review addresses the use of Ubuntu philosophy as an approach to conflict management in the Rwamwanja refugee settlement in Uganda. The Author's main research focus is an analysis of how the principles of philosophy are understood, practiced and institutionally recognized in the context of conflict management within an environment characterized by considerable cultural, social and institutional diversity.

The subject matter is significant from both academic and socio-political perspectives. Contemporary migration and refugee crises constitute one of the major challenges facing public policies, international protection systems and mechanisms for managing social relations. In this context, particular importance is attached to the question of how conflicts can be resolved within refugee communities, especially under conditions of limited resources, cultural diversity,

social inequalities and tensions between formal institutional regulations and everyday social practices.

The choice of Ubuntu philosophy as the primary analytical perspective deserves particular recognition. This approach, rooted in African philosophical and ethical traditions, emphasises the communal dimension of humanity, mutual responsibility, solidarity, dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation. Applying this perspective to the analysis of conflict management mechanisms within a refugee community opens up an interesting research perspective, allowing the discussion to move beyond conventional institutional and procedural understandings of conflict management.

An important starting point for the Author is the identification of discrepancies between the formal assumptions of Uganda's refugee protection system and the actual practices characterizing the functioning of the Rwamwanja settlement. Despite the declared objectives of promoting protection, integration, self-reliance and peaceful coexistence, conflicts arise within the settlement concerning, among other things, access to land and resources, livelihoods, cultural differences, family relationships and the functioning of institutions. The Author treats this discrepancy as a significant research problem, exploring the potential of local social practices and Ubuntu philosophy to complement formal conflict management mechanisms.

Both the choice of research topic and the attempt to combine philosophical, social and institutional perspectives deserve a positive assessment. The dissertation contributes to current debates on local models of conflict management, restorative justice, social integration and the importance of local cultural resources in shaping public policies.

The submitted doctoral dissertation fit in the discipline of Political Science and Public Administration, both in terms of its research subject and its adopted analytical perspective and the nature of the conclusions formulated. The fundamental research problem involves analyzing conflict management mechanisms within the refugee community in Rwamwanja, Uganda, with particular emphasis on the relationship between formal institutional arrangements, public policy and informal, culturally embedded social practices based on presented philosophy. From the perspective of Political Science and Public Administration, the examination of refugee policy and its implementation in a specific local context is of particular significance. The Author analyses not only the assumptions underlying Uganda's formal refugee protection system but, above all, the tensions between the declared objectives of public policy and the actual practices through which it is implemented. Thus, the dissertation addresses one of the important issues in contemporary research on public administration and public policy, namely the relationship

between policy formulation, implementation and the social consequences of institutional arrangements.

Another important dimension of the dissertation is the analysis of relationships between formal and informal structures of power and the governance of collective life. The Author examines the role of public institutions, organizations working on behalf of refugees, local leaders and communities in conflict resolution processes. The analysis therefore addresses mechanisms of cooperation between various social and institutional actors, their competencies, their respective responsibilities and their capacity to influence conflict management processes. These issues are directly related to governance, multilevel governance, social participation and the institutionalisation of public management practices.

Particular attention should be given to the Author's application of a neo-institutionalist perspective, which makes it possible to examine the significance of formal rules, norms and organizational structures in relation to actual social practices. From this perspective, Ubuntu philosophy is not analyzed merely as a system of cultural or ethical values, but also as a potential institutional resource capable of influencing the organization of social relations, conflict resolution and the functioning of governance mechanisms within a refugee community. The reviewed dissertation therefore addresses issues of considerable relevance to contemporary research on public administration, particularly institutional effectiveness, the coordination of activities undertaken by different entities, the social embeddedness of institutions and the potential use of local cultural resources in public governance processes. **At the same time, it contributes to the field of political science research on social conflicts, mechanisms of conflict transformation, social security management and the role of institutions and non-state actors in shaping social order.** Consequently, it should be concluded that the dissertation's central research problem, analytical framework and the direction of its conclusions firmly situate it within the discipline of Political Science and Public Administration.

Assessment of the Structure and Organisation of the Dissertation

The dissertation comprises 300 pages and consists of five chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and appendices. Its structure can generally be considered appropriate and consistent with the standards applicable to empirical doctoral dissertations. The Author maintains a logical sequence in presenting the subject matter: from the research problem and theoretical foundations, through a literature review and methodological discussion, to the presentation of research findings, their interpretation and the formulation of practical

implications. The bibliography includes significant publications in political science as well as other social sciences, particularly sociology and economics. This demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of the research topic.

Chapter One serves as an introduction and provides essential information concerning the research subject and its social and institutional context. The Author begins by presenting the paradox of protection and conflict occurring in the Rwamwanja refugee settlement. The essence of this paradox lies in the tension between the formal assumptions of refugee policy and actual social experiences and practices. The subsequent sections present the global context of forced displacement, Uganda's refugee protection system, tensions between policy and practice, and the characteristics of the Rwamwanja settlement. The Author also introduces Ubuntu philosophy, which constitutes the principal point of reference for the research. An important element of this chapter is the formulation of the research problem, namely the analysis of an approach to conflict management in the Rwamwanja refugee settlement. The chapter then presents the main theoretical orientations, referring to conflict transformation theory, neo-institutional theory and Johan Galtung's ABC model. It also discusses the interpretivist paradigm and the adopted research design.

Chapter Two is devoted to a review of the relevant literature. The Author focuses on Ubuntu philosophy, its theoretical foundations and its potential applications in conflict management. The subsequent sections present empirical studies concerning this philosophy, the historical context of forced displacement and conflicts in Uganda, as well as Uganda's public policy framework for refugee protection. This chapter attempts to situate the research problem within existing academic literature and to identify the context in which the research should be be analyzed.

Chapter Three presents the research design and methodology employed. The Author discusses the main research paradigms, including positivism, critical theory and interpretivism, and subsequently justifies the adopted methodological approach. The study was designed as a qualitative case study incorporating ethnographic elements. The study involved 45 participants selected through purposive sampling. Empirical data were collected through individual in-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group interviews (FGIs), participant observation and document analysis.

Chapter Four presents the empirical research findings, organized according to the identified themes and research questions. The manner in which the empirical material is presented deserves a positive assessment, including the use of tables that facilitate the identification of particular categories, comparison of respondents' statements and identification

of the main patterns emerging from the collected material. The empirical findings indicate that Ubuntu philosophy is understood by the participants primarily as a moral and social language of shared humanity, mutual assistance, dialogue, forgiveness, hospitality and peaceful coexistence. The Author identifies practical manifestations of these principles in neighborhood assistance, community mediation, interventions by elders, family interventions and reconciliation processes.

Chapter Five is devoted to the interpretation and discussion of the empirical research findings. It constitutes an important part of the dissertation, as the Author attempts to move beyond the presentation of empirical material towards explaining it within the context of the adopted theoretical assumptions. In this section, the research findings are related to Ubuntu philosophy, conflict management mechanisms and the relationship between local social practices and formal institutional structures. Particular attention should be given to Section 5.11, in which the Author interprets the findings through the application of neo-institutional theory and conflict transformation theory. This is an important element of the dissertation, allowing the empirical findings to be situated within a broader theoretical context.

An important outcome of the research is the development of the *Ubuntu-Centred Hybrid Conflict Management Model*, which assumes the integration of community-based restorative justice practices with formal administrative, protection, policing and legal mechanisms. The dissertation concludes with a final chapter in which the Author presents the main findings, public policy recommendations and proposals for further research.

Substantive Assessment and Scientific Contribution of the Dissertation

The greatest strength of the dissertation lies in its attempt to empirically investigate Ubuntu philosophy not merely as a system of values and social norms, but also as a practical resource employed in everyday conflict management. In doing so, the Author addresses the relationship between culturally embedded conflict resolution mechanisms and formal institutional arrangements.

The application of a qualitative case study deserves particular recognition, as it enabled the phenomenon to be examined within its actual social context. Conducting individual and group interviews, participant observation and document analysis made it possible to incorporate different perspectives of actors involved in the social and institutional life of the settlement. This is particularly important in research on refugee communities, where formal regulations do not always reflect the actual ways in which collective life is organised and social problems are addressed.

The attempt to connect the local perspective with the broader context of refugee policy in Uganda should also be positively assessed. The Author does not limit the analysis to a description of social practices but also examines the institutional conditions that influence their application, restrict their effectiveness or create opportunities for their formal recognition.

The findings concerning the limited degree of institutionalisation of practices based on Ubuntu philosophy are particularly interesting. The research indicates that these principles are recognized and applied in everyday social relationships; however, their use within formal conflict management structures remains uneven. The Author thus identifies a significant difference between the social recognition of particular values and the capacity of institutions to employ them systematically.

Another important research finding is the identification of the limitations of applying Ubuntu. The Author rightly observes that community-based practices cannot replace formal legal protection mechanisms, particularly in cases involving serious crimes and human rights violations. This position makes it possible to avoid idealising local traditions or treating them as universal solutions to social problems.

In my opinion, the most important element of the Author's original contribution is the development of the Ubuntu-Centred Hybrid Conflict Management Model. Its fundamental premise is an attempt to combine two distinct domains: the community-based domain, founded on dialogue, mediation, reconciliation and restorative justice, and the formal domain, encompassing public administration, protection institutions, the police and the legal system. The model represents an attempt to translate empirical findings into a practical and institutional solution. Its principal value lies in recognizing the complementary nature of different conflict management mechanisms while maintaining clearly defined boundaries of competence for the respective institutions.

Critical Remarks and Issues Requiring Clarification

Despite the positive assessment of the dissertation's fundamental assumptions and findings, its examination gives rise to several critical remarks, primarily concerning the structure of the academic argument, the presentation of its theoretical foundations and the relationship between the adopted research paradigm and the theories employed.

First, repetition of content and the organization of the academic narrative. One noticeable problem in the dissertation is the frequent repetition of content relating to the same issues. The Author repeatedly returns to particular themes, both within individual chapters and across different chapters. This applies primarily to the description of Ubuntu philosophy, the context

of forced displacement in Uganda, conflict management and the relationship between formal policy and social practice.

Naturally, a certain degree of repetition in a doctoral dissertation is justified by the need to maintain argumentative coherence and recall fundamental assumptions. In the dissertation under review, however, this phenomenon occasionally reaches an excessive scale, resulting in some passages failing to introduce new analytical content and instead revisiting issues that have already been discussed. In my assessment, a more consistent differentiation of the functions of individual chapters would have improved the clarity of the argument. The introductory chapter should primarily define the research problem, its context, objectives and research questions. The literature review should focus on a critical analysis of existing academic scholarship, while the theoretical chapter should explain the concepts and mechanisms subsequently used in the interpretation of the research findings.

Second, the way in which fundamental concepts are defined. Some reservations concern the inclusion in the introductory chapter of extensive explanations of basic concepts such as Ubuntu, conflict, conflict management, conflict transformation, institutionalisation and refugee. These definitions are presented in a relatively autonomous manner, without sufficient reference to the relevant literature, and the same issues subsequently reappear in other parts of the dissertation. It would seem more appropriate to introduce these concepts within the literature review and theoretical discussion, clearly identifying their academic origins and relevance to the analysis undertaken. This would help avoid repetition and, above all, ensure greater conceptual precision.

Third, the relationship between the interpretivist paradigm and the adopted theories has not been fully explained. The Author declares an interpretivist orientation, which is understandable given the nature of the research subject. Analyzing how Ubuntu is understood and practised requires taking into account the meanings attributed to particular actions by participants in social life. However, interpretivism appears primarily as a declaration concerning the adopted research paradigm, without sufficiently elaborating its theoretical and epistemological implications. A more explicit explanation is lacking of how the adopted perspective influences the understanding of social reality, the process of constructing analytical categories and the interpretation of respondents' statements. In particular, it would be worth explaining how an interpretive approach to investigating the meanings and experiences of participants relates to the application of neo-institutional theory and conflict transformation theory. These represent different levels of analysis that require appropriate justification and an explanation of their interrelationships.

Fourth, insufficient justification for the selection and integration of theoretical perspectives. One of the more significant reservations concerning the dissertation relates to the presentation of its theoretical foundations. The Author refers to several theoretical orientations, particularly conflict transformation theory, neo-institutional theory and Johan Galtung's ABC model. In the subsequent part of the dissertation, Robert K. Merton's middle-range theory is also introduced, although it was neither adequately anticipated nor justified in the introductory chapter and is applied analytically only to a very limited extent. It is not entirely clear why these particular concepts were selected as the dissertation's principal theoretical frameworks, what analytical functions each of them serves and how they complement one another.

Fifth, the relationship between theory and the interpretation of empirical findings. Chapter Five attempts to interpret the research findings through the application of selected theoretical perspectives. This is undoubtedly an important part of the dissertation. However, one may get the impression that the integration of theory and empirical material takes place primarily at the stage of interpreting the findings, rather than constituting a consistently developed assumption underlying the entire research project. It would therefore be worthwhile to demonstrate more clearly how individual theories influenced the formulation of research questions, the selection of analytical categories, the coding of empirical material and the interpretation of the identified themes. This issue is particularly important in the context of the declared interpretivist paradigm and the qualitative nature of the research. Such an approach would also provide a stronger justification for the academic foundations of the proposed hybrid model.

Questions and Discussion

In view of the remarks presented above, several issues deserve attention as potential subjects for discussion during the public defense of the dissertation.

First, it is worth considering the universality and contextual nature of Ubuntu philosophy. Can the principles of Ubuntu be applied in refugee communities characterized by considerable cultural and linguistic diversity? Second, the institutionalisation of Ubuntu-based practices should be discussed, particularly in terms of the following question: What organizational, political and social conditions must be met for practices based on Ubuntu to be incorporated into formal conflict management mechanisms? Third, it is worth considering the possibility of applying the proposed model in other contexts. To what extent can the Ubuntu-Centred Hybrid Conflict Management Model be used in other refugee settlements in Uganda,

and to what extent is its applicability limited by the specific social and institutional characteristics of Rwamwanja?

Final Assessment

In conclusion, the doctoral dissertation submitted for review addresses an important and timely research problem concerning the potential application of Ubuntu philosophy in conflict management within a refugee community. Its principal value lies in combining theoretical reflection with empirical research conducted within a specific social and institutional context. The choice of a qualitative case study, the use of diverse data collection techniques and the attempt to interpret the findings in relation to the broader context of refugee policy in Uganda deserve a positive assessment. The Author, Doreen Basemera, MA, demonstrates the ability to conduct empirical research and analyze complex social phenomena. Another significant achievement is the development of the Ubuntu-Centred Hybrid Conflict Management Model, which represents an attempt to translate research findings into a practical and institutional solution.

The critical remarks raised primarily concern the structure of the academic argument, the occurrence of repetitions, the organisation of the literature review and the insufficiently explained relationships between the adopted research paradigm and the theories employed. In my assessment, however, these issues do not undermine either the scholarly value of the research conducted or the Author's fundamental contribution to the analysis of conflict management in refugee communities.

The dissertation constitutes an independent study of an important research problem, and its findings may prove valuable both for further academic research and for the practical management of refugee communities.

In conclusion, I hereby state that the submitted doctoral dissertation Ms Doreen Basemera, entitled *Ubuntu Philosophy: An Approach for Conflict Management in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement in Uganda* meets the fundamental requirements established for doctoral dissertations, in particular those specified in Article 187 of the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science.

In view of the above, I recommend that the Doctoral Candidate be admitted to the subsequent stages of the proceedings for the award of the doctoral degree in social sciences in the discipline of Political Science and Administration.

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