

From Commodity to Community: A Reparative Audit of Ghana's Diaspora Engagement Policy

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Abstract

This article critically evaluates Ghana's Diaspora Engagement Policy (DEP), arguing that it commodifies the repatriation experience by reducing the sacred, communal act of return to a transactional framework of cultural capitalism. While Ghana presents itself as a symbolic homeland for the global African diaspora, the DEP positions repatriates as resources to be "harnessed" for national development, thereby commodifying identity and belonging. Using Akan hospitality protocols—Agoo, Akɔaba, Nkyea, recounting of one's mission, and the Shared Meal—as a conceptual framework, the study evaluates whether the policy aligns with indigenous ethics of kinship and communal integration. Our analysis reveals that each stage is undermined: ancestral clearance becomes bureaucratic, restorative welcome is reduced to economic extraction, mutual recognition is commodified, historical truth is sanitised, and reintegration is contingent on investment. Drawing on the concept of African indigenous communitarianism theorised by scholars such as Ifeanyi Menkiti, Kwame Gyekye, Kwasi Wiredu, and Obádélé Kambon; Homi K. Bhabha's "Third Space"; Stuart Hall's identity theory; and Pierre Bourdieu's social capital, the paper contends that sustainable integration requires treating repatriates as kin rather than commodified assets, and as such, the DEP fails to prioritise the spiritual and communal essence of the very people it is meant to integrate.

Keywords: African indigenous communitarianism; Akan hospitality protocols; cultural capitalism; Ghana Diaspora Engagement Policy; reparation; repatriation

Introduction

The global landscape of the twenty-first century has been increasingly defined by a profound "scattering of the people" that, in recent decades, has also produced intensified efforts at gathering and reattachment. Within this context of transnational mobility, Ghana has emerged as a major destination for members of the global African diaspora seeking not merely a visit or a temporary return, but repatriation in the fuller sense of settling, belonging, and being restored within a communal whole. This distinction matters. "Return" is vague and can easily be construed as temporary, symbolic, or touristic, whereas repatriation signals a more durable process of restoration, reattachment, and reintegration. It is that deeper process that this paper examines through an interrogation of the state-led mechanisms designed to facilitate homecoming. Within the Ghanaian context of homecoming, a troubling discrepancy exists between the spiritual significance of repatriation and the administrative logic that governs it. We argue that Ghana's

Diaspora Engagement Policy (DEP) functions through a structure of cultural capitalism that reduces a sacred act of communal restoration to a transactional process of resource extraction.

Nevertheless, to understand the importance of what we view as a *reparative audit* of the DEP, one must first recognise the historical trajectory of the return and engagement initiatives in Ghana. The vision of Ghana as a “Mecca” for the African diaspora has deep political roots, extending from the early “Back-to-Africa” movements to the Pan-Africanist ambitions of Edward Wilmot Blyden, W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Kwame Nkrumah (Adu-Ampong & Dillette, 2024; Eyeh, 2019). Blyden’s concept of the “African Personality”, co-opted by Kwame Nkrumah, envisioned an African unity that bridged the gap between those at home and those in the diaspora for the sake of total liberation (Government of Ghana, 2020). However, since the neoliberal turn of the late twentieth century, this vision has shifted toward what scholars such as Adu-Ampong and Dillette identify as the “eventification and festivalisation” of slavery heritage, where traumatic history is packaged for touristic consumption (Adu-Ampong & Dillette, 2024, p.120). This shift, for all intents and purposes, is codified in the Diaspora Engagement Policy (DEP), which explicitly defines its purpose as “harnessing the human and material resources of the diaspora for the socio-economic transformation of Ghana” (Government of Ghana, 2020, p. v). Furthermore, this framing reduces the repatriate from a “lost kinsman” to a harnessable resource, a transition that prompts a rigorous interrogation.

The conceptualisation of this reparative critique is grounded in indigenous ethics, specifically Akan hospitality protocols. However, to apply this framework holistically to the context of “homecoming”, we must first understand the repatriate’s journey. In this regard, the article draws on Homi K. Bhabha’s (1994) concept of the “Third Space”. The diaspora repatriate exists in a hybrid, liminal state, a “moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity...” (Bhabha, 1994, p.1). Repatriates are not merely migrants to be readmitted via administrative protocols; they are subjects navigating a complex performance of identity. Stuart Hall (1990) further aids this understanding by positing that cultural identity is not a fixed essence but a positioning that is always in process. The DEP, however, treats identity as a static commodity that the state can tap for development (Government of Ghana, 2020).

To understand the repatriate’s journey, we utilise Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of capital to highlight the policy’s inherent economism in the experience of the repatriates in Ghana. Bourdieu argues that economic capital often disguises itself as immaterial cultural or social capital to gain legitimacy. This theoretical framing is crucial to this audit as the paper seeks to highlight how the DEP utilises “Symbolic Nation Building”—including the repackaging of traditional festivals like the Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST) and Emancipation Day—as a form of “social honeytrap” to convert the diaspora’s spiritual nostalgia into economic capital (Government of Ghana, 2020; Bourdieu, 1986). While the state dangles the “400-year” anniversary narrative to frame this return as a historical milestone (Asare, 2023), this framing is controversial. Extensive research by scholars such as Obádélé Kambon et al. (2023) has interrogated the “400-year” narrative, proving it to be a historically inaccurate myth that risks flattening the diverse nature and much longer histories of the global African experience, thereby erasing ancestors enslaved long before 1619 (Kambon et al., 2023). By anchoring the DEP in this contested temporal tapestry, this article highlights how the state prioritises a monetised return over serious spiritual and communal reconnection and remembrance of a dismembered continent, undermining the diaspora integration

experience. Our aim is to fundamentally challenge the DEP's current policy structure. To begin with, the DEP acknowledges its guidance from Alan Gamlen's framework, a Western model whose underlying logic centres on utility, transfer, and extraction through skills, remittances, and resources. Our audit is grounded directly in indigenous categories of reality, belonging, order, and restoration to interrogate the assumptions of the DEP.

The study's reparative audit lies in its application of Akan hospitality protocols—interpreted in the context of diasporic “homecoming”. These protocols represent a “social contract” designed to appease and bond people together, reducing the anxiety and suspicion inherent in social contact (Agyekum, 2008). However, the study applies these protocols to the context of Black diaspora repatriation, helping readers easily see how indigenous ethos can interact with a modern phenomenon. This conceptual move is, in some sense, inspired by “An Essay on African Philosophical Thought” by Kwame Gyekye (1987), which conceptualises being within the Akan. To realise this correlation, the study conducts a linguistic and philosophical analysis of these protocols, re-examining them not as mere polite gestures but as a moral framework for full communal integration (Agyekum, 2008). By translating these indigenous linguistic routines into philosophical benchmarks, the paper will show how the state's current model of “harnessing” and “tapping” (Government of Ghana, 2020) fails to reflect traditional standards of kinship and belonging. While we recognise the limitations of using an indigenous framework to address a post-modern state problem, it is imperative to explore this approach to identify alternative ways of structuring this policy.

To be sure, this study contributes to Ghana's contemporary socio-economic and political discourses. It seeks to bridge the gap between the state's developmentalist goals and the diaspora's search for “historical reclamation and spiritual healing” (Morrison, 2020). Full integration, we argue, ultimately benefits the government by fostering more stable and committed communal ties and cannot be achieved through capital-incentivised structures. It requires infrastructures of belonging that recognise the repatriate's ancestral right to a “spiritual seat”, regardless of their economic background or prospects. In the rest of the article, we will first detail the conceptual framework and the methodology for interpreting these hospitality protocols through the lens of indigenous communal ethics. This is followed by the audit itself, which directly assesses excerpts from official Government of Ghana documents on the Diaspora Engagement Policy to illustrate how its language and structure remain fundamentally at odds with African communal ethics and spiritual rhythms.

Conceptual Framework

We utilise the Akan hospitality protocols as a diagnostic framework to conduct a reparative audit of Ghana's Diaspora Engagement Policy (DEP). These protocols are not merely linguistic “etiquette”; they constitute a profound socio-cultural contract designed to appease anxiety and create social bonds (Agyekum, 2008). By re-examining these indigenous linguistic interactional routines, the study provides a moral litmus test to evaluate whether the DEP's administrative logic aligns with the spiritual and communal reception expected by the global African family, or merely mimics extractive colonial structures.

The multi-stage protocols of traditional Akan hospitality include:

Agoo: An “attention getter” and access-gaining routine used as a request for entry into a space (Agyekum, 2008, p. 495).

Akɔaba: A sociocultural obligation for the host to provide a restorative welcome, literally implying “has gone and has come” (Agyekum, 2008, pp. 498–499).

Nkyea (The Greeting/Handshake): A ritualised handshake and verbal exchange used to negotiate status and establish social relationships (Agyekum, 2008, pp. 497, 504).

Recounting of one’s mission: A critical stage of mutual disclosure where the traveller recounts their mission and the host provides the “news” of the home (Agyekum, 2008, p. 495).

The Shared Meal: A final act symbolising family ties and the visitor’s successful incorporation into the communal body (Agyekum, 2008, p. 506).

This paper uses the spiritual and communal essence of these protocols to test Ghana’s Diaspora Engagement Policy (DEP). The DEP frames the diaspora as a “resource to be harnessed” (Government of Ghana, 2020). We analyse whether this framing meets African moral standards of homecoming. However, using these protocols as a framework requires two major caveats. First, we note a deep gap in the “recounting of one’s mission” ritual, which requires high linguistic and cultural literacy. This indigenous protocol relies on deep proverbs and specific cultural codes. These codes can exclude repatriates who perform a “hybrid identity” (Hall, 1990) and lack fluent language skills. As a result, the community may treat them as perpetual guests rather than true kin. Furthermore, hospitality can be ambivalent and conditional. Hosting often reinforces the host’s privilege rather than dismantling it (Bhabha, 1994). The welcome (Akɔaba) – usually connoting a symbolic “seat” offered – might come with an implicit “pressure to reciprocate” through economic capital, mirroring the DEP’s goal of “obtaining obligations” (Government of Ghana, 2020, p. 14). Reintegration, therefore, becomes a negotiated process in which family (host-nation) expectations for financial support can cause social tension rather than unity (Setrana & Tonah, 2014).

Finally, we seek to avoid the glaring risk of essentialism that assumes a monolithic Akan or Black diaspora identity within the contemporary Ghanaian social set-up. The hospitality protocols of one ethnic group – the Akan – even though they are the majority in Ghana, do not provide a complete representation of an indigenous framework that captures the country’s communal ethos. In addition, the diaspora is heterogeneous (Government of Ghana, 2020, p. 58), and globalisation continually reshapes these traditional practices in modern Ghana (Agyekum, 2008). However, Akan hospitality protocols remain a crucial analytical tool, as this paper uses them as a moral litmus test for belonging. Furthermore, the DEP explicitly aims to promote belonging and attachment to the homeland (Government of Ghana, 2020, pp. vi, xxi). Since belonging is a socially negotiated construct, it must be measured against the host society’s indigenous standards, thereby transforming the Akan hospitality protocols from mere etiquette into a necessary moral litmus test (Arhin-Sam, 2019). More than this, the DEP’s structural dependency on the Gamlenian framework (2006, 2008), which typifies state-diaspora relations through a triad of institutional capacity-building, rights extension, and obligation extraction, reveals a deeper problem. By adopting this institutionalised, state-centric blueprint, the DEP uncritically imports Eurocentric assumptions of transactional migration governance. This reliance constitutes what Kwasi Wiredu conceptualises

as “conceptual inertia”, which operates counter-intuitively to the foundations of African thought, resulting in a conceptual lockdown (Wiredu, 2002; Kambon, 2026a). As a result, deploying indigenous hospitality protocols to audit this policy fulfils Kwasi Wiredu’s counterapproach to negate conceptual inertia through conceptual decolonisation (Wiredu, 2002). Wiredu (2002) describes conceptual decolonisation as a process of ridding African thought of undue influences emanating from our colonial past. In alignment with Wiredu’s approach, our conceptual framework moves beyond linear frameworks and centres indigenous thought to envision a reality rooted in restoration and reciprocity (Ma’at) (Kambon, 2026a).

With these caveats in mind, this study uses an Africa-centred framework as a diagnostic tool. We measure how the DEP fails to prioritise the communal handshake over the economic meal (Asare, 2023). Our goal is reparation—specifically, to repair the DEP itself. This framework serves as a philosophical mirror, not a replacement for the current administrative structure. It suggests that true integration requires an infrastructure of belonging. This infrastructure must recognise ancestral rights regardless of wealth or social status (Asare, 2023).

Methodology

This audit uses linguistic and philosophical analysis of Akan hospitality protocols to interrogate the structural foundations, operational language, and conceptual assumptions of Ghana’s Diaspora Engagement Policy (DEP). This approach is grounded in the ethnography of communication, which examines how language operates as a microcosmic lens for viewing social practices and worldviews (Agyekum, 2008). However, this study redirects this lens specifically toward the interactional routines between the Ghanaian state and Black diaspora repatriates. We interpret these protocols not merely as traditional etiquette, but as a dynamic stage for identity performance and cultural translation (Bhabha, 1994). Nonetheless, we must emphasise that these linguistic and philosophical translations are not the only ones possible. Instead, they offer a plausible interpretive framework. This framework treats the protocols as a moral litmus test and a philosophical mirror. We translate the Akan hospitality framework through the ideas of cultural translation and identity performance. By doing this, we shift our focus from a simple duty of hospitality to a complex negotiation of belonging (Hall, 1990). In this view, traditional steps of hospitality become tools. The government and repatriates use these tools to perform their heritage. They translate their identities into a local community context. This context should welcome the return of kin, not just the admission of guests.

Below are the protocols and the study’s linguistic and philosophical interpretations of them within the context of the Black diaspora return:

Agoo (The Ancestral Knock): Linguistically, Agoo is an “access-gaining routine” (Agyekum, 2008, p. 495). Philosophically, we interpret this as the repatriate’s initial request for ancestral and spiritual clearance. It is the moment when the “lost kin” knocks on the door of the motherland, seeking not just a visa or right of abode but a recognition of their historical right to enter. A policy that replaces this social contract with expensive, complicated citizenship processes fails this first test of entry (Asare, 2023; Kambon, 2026b).

Akɔaba (The Restorative Reception): In Akan, *Akɔaba* literally implies “you have gone, and you have come” (Agyekum, 2008, p. 498). This is a sociocultural obligation of restoration. It is the stage where the host (the state and community) acknowledges that a limb that was “severed” has now returned for reattachment. *Akɔaba* is a declaration of community identity; if the state uses it merely as a brand to attract US\$1.9 billion in revenue, it has stripped the word of its restorative power (Adu-Ampong & Dillette, 2024).

Nkyea (The Communal Handshake): This protocol is a ritualised exchange used to negotiate status and establish social relationships (Agyekum, 2008, pp. 497, 504). This is the recognition of mutual humanity. It is the performative moment where the repatriate and the host shake hands as equals.

Recounting of one’s mission (The Truth of the Dismembered Continent) (Armah, 2010; Le Gall, 2019): The recounting of one’s mission is the stage of “mutual disclosure” where the traveller and host exchange news (Agyekum, 2008). This is a truth and reconciliation mechanism. It functions as a “Third Space” (Bhabha, 1994) where the diaspora tells the “news” of the Middle Passage and oppression at the destination, and the host tells the “news” of continental oppression and struggle.

The Shared Meal (Commensal Reintegration): The final act is an invitation to eat, symbolising family ties and total acceptance (Agyekum, 2008, p. 507). This is the final translation of identity from guest to kin. It is the point where the repatriate is no longer a foreign “asset” but a rightful member of the community.

This methodology shows that the DEP operates as a tone-deaf administrative policy. It completely ignores these spiritual and communal stages of performance and integration. Our linguistic analysis proves that the current model is alien to indigenous hospitality frameworks. As a result, the policy fails to meet the standards of communal restoration that true repatriation requires.

Auditing Repatriation and Indigenous Restoration

The DEP architecture is a byproduct of Western bureaucratic structures. These structures prioritise cultural capitalism over communal and spiritual restoration. The state presents this policy to the global *Abibifo* (Black people) family as a bridge to the homeland. Yet, its structural reliance on Gamlen’s framework and external development logic remains deeply suspicious. This flaw is clear, starting with the failed *Agoo*. Linguistically, *Agoo* is an attention-getter and an access-gaining routine. It serves as a conventional opening before greeting a crowd (Agyekum, 2008, p. 495). The repatriate’s initial request for ancestral and spiritual clearance to re-enter the motherland implies a temporary “guest” status (Government of Ghana, 2020, pp. 46, 48). Here again, terminology matters. The policy’s conflation of “return” with readmission and reintegration is analytically weak. “Return” can mean temporary movement, a brief visit, or a purely symbolic homecoming. Repatriation is a more precise term. It foregrounds durable resettlement, belonging, and restoration. Once the policy reduces this process to the readmission of professionally useful migrants, the sacred knock of *Agoo* becomes a mere bureaucratic filter.

Secondly, the *Akɔaba* stage equally fails. *Akɔaba*, as we have noted, is a sociocultural obligation for the host to provide a restorative welcome, literally meaning “has gone and has come” (Agyekum, 2008, p. 498). This study interprets *Akɔaba* as the offering of a spiritual seat that

validates the repatriate's belonging. The DEP, however, transmogrifies this cultural meaning and uses *Akwaba* as a brand for extraction. Its stated purpose is to "harness the human and material resources of the diaspora for the socio-economic transformation of Ghana" (Government of Ghana, 2020, p. xv). Through Bourdieu's (1986) lens, this framing is a clear example of economism. It reduces the entire universe of social exchanges to mercantile value. Under this policy, the host does not offer the repatriate a seat as a family member. Instead, the policy presents them as a resource to be "tapped" or "drawn upon" (Government of Ghana, 2020, p. 5). This wording ultimately reduces a restorative welcome to a mutual economic transaction between the state and the repatriate (p. xvii). It strips the ritual of its spiritual reciprocity, replacing it with a state-enforced pressure to invest.

Thirdly, the failed Nkyea, or Communal Handshake/Greeting, is called into question: the greeting is a ritualised handshake and verbal exchange used to negotiate status and establish social relationships (Agyekum, 2008, pp. 497, 504). We contend that this is the performative moment in which the returnee and host recognise each other's shared humanity. However, the DEP's wording relegates this mutual recognition of an intimate bond in favour of a commodification of enslavement heritage (Adu-Ampong & Dillette, 2024). For instance, Section 4.1.1.1 of the policy explicitly states that one of its primary goals is to "promote the rich festivals and cultural heritage of Ghana to promote the tourism potential of the country for increased revenue" (Government of Ghana, 2020, p. 28). In support of this, the policy promotes festivals such as PANAFEST and Emancipation Day as vital instruments for increasing revenue (Government of Ghana, 2020, pp. v, 28). As Asare (2023) argues, these are "zombie jamborees" and fancy dinners that monetise ancestral trauma while charging returnees high fees to enter the very dungeons that dismembered their lineages. Excerpts from the policy, as stated in this paragraph, support what Asare (2023) asserts. This study argues that this results in a failed greeting, or Nkyea, because the state appears to be shaking the hand of a tourist for the cameras (celebrity co-production & festivals) rather than shaking the hand of a kinsman to build an "infrastructure of respect" (Asare, 2023, pp. 4–5, 15).

The "Recounting of one's mission" equally fails at that stage. Linguistically, the recounting of one's mission is a stage of mutual disclosure (Agyekum, 2008, pp. 495, 502). Philosophically, we interpret this as a truth-and-reconciliation mechanism. The DEP, however, anchors its "news" in a historically inaccurate narrative—the 400-year myth that starts in 1619 (Kambon et al., 2023). By centring the return on an Anglocentric "timeline" that erases ancestors enslaved long before that date, the state engages in savvy marketing that sacrifices historical truth for a sellable anniversary, treating diasporans as a "cash cow" (Kambon et al., 2023). Unfortunately, this sanitisation feeds negatively into the "Africans sold Africans" debate and only worsens the fractures between the repatriates and indigenous Ghanaians. As Engmann (2023) notes, silencing internal slave-trading histories among groups like the Akan allows a sanitised identity that, in reality, avoids the difficult "recounting of one's mission" required for true healing. Candid disclosure would require the host society to listen to the diaspora's news about historical misorientation (Kambon et al., 2023) rather than providing "comforting fairy tales" designed to increase revenue. Without a mechanism for an open and candid dialogue, the "Right of Abode" remains a hollow legalism.

Finally, the failed shared meal stage reveals the extent to which the policy neglects the communal and spiritual needs of repatriation. The Shared Meal is the final act of total acceptance, depicting "family ties" by joining the host at the table (Agyekum, 2008, p. 506). We interpret this as the final

translation of identity from “guest” to “kin”. The DEP’s meal, however, is strictly for those who can pay (Ministry of Interior, 2026). It aims to produce “state-centric diaspora communities” (Government of Ghana, 2020, p. xix), inviting repatriates to the table only if they provide Foreign Direct Investment (Government of Ghana, 2020, p. 34). This ignores the repatriate’s hybrid identity (Bhabha, 1994) and produces what Arhin-Sam (2019) describes as the local perception of returnees as sources of hard currency to be melted into the local economy. The returnee is essentially a source of wealth rather than a sibling (Arhin-Sam, 2019).

This audit reveals that the DEP functions as an administrative monologue that fails to meet the moral standards of indigenous communal ethics, as viewed through the lens of Akan hospitality protocols. By prioritising extractive and utilitarian objectives, the state has essentially created a model that views the diaspora as a commodity rather than a community that acknowledges the “Third Space”. Because the policy’s framework is influenced by Western frameworks, it unfortunately denies the existence of a community seeking to restore its soul, a phenomenon reminiscent of colonial parasitic machinery.

African Communal Ethics and the DEP

In this section, we further audit the Diaspora Engagement Policy (DEP), with a view to repair through indigenous communal ethics embedded in African hospitality protocols, such as those of the Akan and the Wolof of Senegal (terànga). By examining the foundations of Akan communitarianism and spirituality, we show that the DEP’s prioritising of economic extraction ignores the primary ethical requirement for a sustainable homecoming: the spiritual well-being of the communal body.

We draw on the concept of African indigenous communal personhood, theorised by scholars such as Ifeanyi Menkiti, John Mbiti, and Kwame Gyekye, among others. Gyekye describes the relationship between the *Okra* (soul), *Sunsum* (spirit), and *Honam* (body) in Akan conceptualisation (Gyekye, 1995). He explains that within the Akan ethos, a person is not merely a “bag of flesh and bones” but a spiritual entity whose very existence is identical with life and destiny, and hence the community (Gyekye, 1995, p. 56). Writing in Afro-communitarian social ethics, Wiredu emphasises the harmonious adjustment of interests as the primary justification for morality (Wiredu, 1995, pp. 17, 45). Within the Akan conceptual schema, this view places the source of morality in human relations rather than the gods or ancestors. This position challenges popular narratives about the roots of African moral frameworks. Essentially, Wiredu frames morality as an interdependent relationship between the individual and the community, grounding social and political rules in mutual well-being.

Similarly, Gyekye’s concept of co-constitutive personhood aligns with Wiredu’s ethics. Both thinkers highlight a reality where individual well-being is inextricably linked to communal health. Therefore, to serve the Ghanaian community, a policy must fulfil individual and communal needs in tandem. This relational theorisation we invoke extends beyond Akan thought. Ifeanyi Menkiti, exploring personhood in Igbo indigenous thought, argues that becoming a person is an ontological achievement (Menkiti, 2004, p. 326). He describes personhood as a journey. The individual must reach specific communal milestones to become a “true person” or a “moral being” (Menkiti, 2004, pp. 325–326). This journey requires a community before a person can fully realise themselves.

This requirement locks the individual and the community into a cyclical, co-constitutive relationship that mirrors the arguments of Gyekye (1995) and Wiredu (1995).

Finally, delving further into classical African thought, Kambon (2023) theorises the concept of Ma'at in Ancient Kmt. He posits that Ma'at is not merely an abstract concept. Instead, it is a lived practice that embodies truth, balance, order, and reciprocity (Kambon, 2023, p. 4). These ideals promote cosmic, communal, and individual well-being within a cyclical temporal reality that directly contrasts with Western linear frameworks. All these conceptualisations of community and personhood within Africa, spanning from Ancient Kmt to the Akan of Ghana, establish that for a restorative and reparative repatriation to occur in a way that fulfils its true purpose – communal and spiritual healing – it must adhere to indigenous frameworks that embody the ethics that have ensured the existence of the African person across time and space.

This study therefore argues that the arrival of a kinsman (repatriate) is not the addition of a human resource, but the return of a soul separated from the collective whole. In the Akan hospitality protocol framework, restorative interaction must precede any business discussion. These are social contracts designed to create harmony and reduce the anxiety and suspicion inherent in social contact (Agyekum, 2008). The DEP violates these protocols by jumping straight to “Leveraging Investment” and “Mobilizing Remittances” (Government of Ghana, 2020, pp. 34, 43). This ignores the foundational indigenous African ethics on which communities are built. In alignment, Kwame Gyekye posits that the individual exists in a necessary social tandem with other persons, which he emphasises with the Akan maxim: “when a person descends from the heavens, he descends in a human society (onipa firi soro besi aa, obesi nipa kurom) (Wiredu & Gyekye, 1992, p. 105). By not prioritising the communal integration of the repatriate through primarily framing the diaspora as a “resource to be harnessed” (Government of Ghana, 2020, p. xv), the DEP reduces the communal essence of the kinsman to an economic unit, failing to perform the reparative and restorative duty embedded in Ma'at, and operating in juxtaposition to African thought and well-being. Also, by treating ancestral dungeons as commercial ventures for increased revenue, the state introduces a form of spiritual commodification that desecrates and violates the soul of the departed ancestors, as the memory of these ancestors no longer serves the purpose of communal consecration and well-being, but rather the economic interests of a nation-state that systematically commodifies and siphons from its very own (repatriates).

Philosophically, when we hold up the Akan hospitality protocols to the DEP, the contrast is stark. For instance, the protocols demand bidirectionality such as the “exchange of news”, where the host also discloses its “news”—in this case, Ghana—including its struggles with colonialism and post-independence neo-imperialism and historical accountability. The DEP, by contrast, is a unidirectional administrative monologue that asks the diaspora to return and give back without the state offering a spiritual seat that recognises their ancestral right to belong. This extractive logic is codified in its conceptual framework, which explicitly focuses on “obtaining obligations from the diaspora,” including measures to ensure they “transfer their skills, resources, and remittances back home” (Government of Ghana, 2020, p.14, pp. xix, 14). By reducing the sacred act of return to a search for increased revenue and the promotion of tourism potential (Government of Ghana, 2020, pp.14, 28), the policy fails to offer the repatriate a “spiritual seat” that recognises their ancestral right to belong. The DEP’s unidirectional approach is embedded in its adoption of the Gamlen framework as its foundation. Indigenous African communal existence, as established in the early

part of this section, suggests that the indigenous conception of reality does not operate in a linear trajectory but rather a cyclical and reciprocal one, and, as such, all aspects of their being are reflected in this reality: morality, eschatology, personhood, *Ma'at*, etc. (Mbiti, 1969; Wiredu, 1995, 1992; Gyekye, 1995; Menkiti, 2004; Kambon, 2023).

By operating within an extractive framework, the state ignores the co-constitutive nature of the person and community. The harmonious adjustment between the individual and the collective is bypassed in favour of the “economic harnessing” of a select group of repatriates. Consequently, through the commodification of their beings, repatriates are denied the assistive communal integration necessary for attaining personhood and belonging. Thus, *Ma'at*—representing order, truth, balance, and reciprocity—is substituted with *Isfet* (Kambon, 2023). In this context, *Isfet* manifests as the chaos that extractive policies leave in their wake, forcing local communities and repatriates to navigate a system devoid of structures rooted in indigenous communal ethics.

Arhin-Sam (2019) describes reintegration as a “two-way process of adaptation” or a “meeting point” where both the repatriate and the host society play critical roles. By contrast, the state’s unidirectional approach forgoes this crucial dimension of the African experience. While African communal ethics dictate that individuals must contribute to the well-being and survival of the collective, the Diaspora Engagement Policy (DEP) misses an important alternative: prioritising the communal integration of repatriates. This integration would naturally foster their inherent commitment to the well-being of the Ghanaian community, economically or otherwise. Therefore, this paper contends that the African communal ethos is a prerequisite for any form of economic utilitarianism to thrive.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this paper argues that Ghana’s Diaspora Engagement Policy (DEP) functions as a unidirectional administrative monologue. It has commodified the communal and spiritual healing of the return, reducing it to an extractive framework of cultural capitalism. By framing the diaspora strictly as a harnessable resource, the state fails to provide the communal structures necessary to restore the lost kin—the repatriate. This study reached these insights by using Akan hospitality protocols as a moral litmus test to audit the policy. From the bureaucratic filter of *Ago* to the sanitised historical truth of the 400-year narrative during the “recounting of one’s mission” stage, the policy is consistently undermined by its own extractive logic.

Despite the Ghanaian state’s genuine efforts to make the return a reality for the African continent, it must confront a critical choice. Unless the government intentionally wishes to maintain a purely utilitarian stance toward the Black diaspora, it must take this philosophical mirror seriously to foster a long-overdue homecoming. If the goal is truly “sustainable development,” the state must recognise that the most valuable asset the diaspora brings is not financial remittances. Instead, it is their social and cultural capital—the communal ties and spiritual heritage that define who we are as a people. By ignoring indigenous ethics in favour of a Westernised model of extraction, the DEP risks creating a permanent fracture between the Black diaspora and local Ghanaian communities.

Consequently, this paper recommends replacing the current extractive-centred model with an institutionalised, reparative framework embedded in African communal ethics. This approach recognises the ancestral rights of repatriates, regardless of their financial capital or economic prospects. Ultimately, this framework for hospitality and belonging within the Black diaspora return project can serve as a bedrock for future state policies across the contemporary African socio-political landscape. Only through this radical shift can any goal of total Black liberation be achieved.

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