JÜRGEN HABERMAS THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION AND THE QUEST FOR PEACE BUILDING IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The quest for peace building and the authentic means of attaining it have been a subject of intense philosophical speculation right from ancient era. The important of peace in any society cannot be over emphasis. This implies that for there to be a development in any society, peace is sacrosanct and the consequence of the absence of peace in any society usually lead to a state of unrest, just as we have in many African countries today.

Jürgen Habermas, a German thinker and philosopher, put forward his ideas of 'communicative action' and 'consensus through deliberation and reasoning', which have been adapted to form a basis for argument for this article. In his theory of communicative action, Habermas introduces the concept of 'crisis'. According to Habermas, crisis comes when modern society fails to meet individual needs and when institutions in society manipulate individuals. He explains that people interact to respond to this crisis and he calls this interaction "communicative action".Habermasasserts that rationality must be dialogical or 'communicative', through which participants advance arguments and counterarguments. His defense of communicative reason is forthright when he argues that communicative rationality is the consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech. He asserts that only the force of the better argument reaches consensual decisions, so that, at the end of deliberative process, all concerned are convinced by the decisions reached and accept them as reasonable. My task in this work is to apply this to Africa situation. Because an attempt to understand the impact of peace on our societies in Africa had become a phenomenal mirage as many of our leaders are selfish and are also bereft of ideas to lead human societies.

The trust of this work will be to examine impact of peace building on the type of society we supposed to have through the prism of JurgenHabermas theory of communicative action. The intent we be to engender harmony, trust and normalcy in African societies.

Keywords: *Africa, Communicative, Consensual, philosophical, speculation. Word Count 322*

INTRODUCTION

The question of peace building has been a subject of intense speculations right from the ancient era.

Peace is sacrosanct to the development of any society and the consequences of absent of peace are counterproductive. An attempt to understand the impact of peace in many countries in Africa had become a phenomenon mirage, as many of our leaders are selfish and also lack the idea to lead human society.

In this work, I intend to use Jürgen Habermas theory of communicative action as a parameter to explain how peace building can be possible in Africa

Jürgen Habermas communicative action theory

Jürgen Habermas, a German philosopher and thinker, proposed the concepts of "communicative action" and "consensus through debate and argumentation" in 1996. Habermas defines communicative action as the establishment of social interactions between two or more social actors with the goal of mutual understanding and agreement.

According to him, it involves a call to action using everyday language, such as saying or writing. The simplest acts might be gestures with meaning, such as shaking hands or greeting someone.

These gestures serve to initiate or maintain a dialogue between two or more people (Edgar 2006:21).Habermas (1998) identified three types of communicative action: transferring of information, establishing relations with others and enabling for expressing ourselves. More precisely, communicative action is cognitive, interactive and expressive. Indicating that it can be between individual or group.

Individual communication is the most crucial component of society's structure. It is impossible to comprehend society without first comprehending individual communication. Habermas analyzes societal growth, as well as societal conflict, in modern society, relying on communicative action to provide the critical features of his opinion about society. He introduces the concept of 'crisis in his communicative action theory. Crisis occurs, according to him, when modern society fails to meet individual wants and when social institutions influence individuals. He argues that people engage in order to respond to the crisis, which he refers to as "communicative action."

Rational communication

According to Habermas (1996), rationality must be dialogical or 'communicative,' with participants advancing arguments and counterarguments. When he claims that communicative rationality is the power that brings argumentative speech to a consensus, he is straightforward in his justification of communicative reason. He claims that only the strength of the better argument can lead to consensus conclusions and that at the end of the deliberative process, all parties involved are convinced of the decisions reached and accepts them as rational.

Johnson, Pete, and Du Plessis (2001:235) support Habermas by claiming that language is a tool of rational communication. Their communicative action theory focuses on how language is utilized to promote mutual understanding through speech actions, or linguistic communication in which the speaker performs an action. Participants can only arrive to the truth, according to Habermas, when language enables mutual comprehension through effective communicative action.

Truthfulness arises, according to Habermas (1976:49), "with regard to the general pragmatic functions of the establishment of interpersonal relations on the one hand, and the portrayal of facts on the other." To put it another way, truth

can emerge when both interpersonal relationships and agreed-upon facts are conveyed. His notion of rational debate and democratic procedure is based on his belief in the possibility of truth through communicative action. The democratic process, and by extension the legitimacy of the political system, will fail, according to Habermas, if there are no public dialogues in which fundamental concerns and demands are mutually understood.

Effective communication is at the heart of this approach to political democracy. The "public sphere," according to Habermas, is a discursive place where citizens participate and act through discourse and debate. He argues for a procedural model of democracy in his discursive elements of the public domain, believing that in order to foster public engagement and widen or deepen democracy, politics must be understood as a public dialogue guided by legitimizing procedures and reason.

Roederer and Moelendorf (2004:430) agree with Habermas that rationality is essential for establishing a procedural model of politics in order for democratic participation to be successful. Democratic deliberation, according to Habermas, constitutes communicative reason. He claims that, whereas strategic action coordinates social interaction through external influence or force, communicative reason does so through 'consent,' which entails arriving at an agreement that is justifiable solely on the basis of the relevant parties' generalisable interests through argumentative communication (Habermas, 1976).

Argumentative communication

According to Habermas, participation must always lead to agreement. He contends that consensus should be exposed to discussion and reflection through argumentative communication. To put it another way, he believes that agreement should not be a precondition for discussion, but rather should reflect the democratic discourse of informed thought and reflection in response to the needs of an engaged populace (Habermas, 1996:299). He claims that people's rights to participate in deliberation are legally protected, and that no one is excluded (Habermas, 1996:147).

For him, the success of communicative action depends on the institutionalization of the corresponding procedures and communication circumstances that would allow citizens to debate in informal public forums, rather than on

a collectively acting citizenry. In the deliberative process, Habermas argues that everyone has "an equal opportunity to be heard." Elster (1998), who believes that deliberation refers either to a particular type of discussion — one that involves the careful and serious weighing of reasons for and against some proposition— or to an inferior process by which an individual weighs reasons for and against courses of action, supports Habermas' concept of deliberation.(Elster, 1998:63).

Elster (1998:63) also claims that deliberative democracy theorists like Habermas are engaged in encouraging public deliberation - a specific type of conversation — rather than just private or 'interior' deliberation. To explain this, Habermas recognizes that a discourse theoretic interpretation insists on the fact that democratic will-formation draws its legitimizing force from both communicative presuppositions that allow better arguments to come into play in various forms of deliberation and procedures that ensure fair bargaining processes (Habermas, 1996:24).

Cohen (1989:33) backs up Habermas' thesis by claiming that the goal of discussion is to reach a rationally motivated agreement in order to identify reasons that are persuasive to everybody. Cohen claims that deliberation can lead to a reasoned conclusion and can also help to explain why decisions are made or not taken. Furthermore, these factors may influence how the decision is implemented and how the government acts.

The positive aspects of modernity, according to Habermas, are expressions of reason (rationality), such as the acknowledgement of human rights and the establishment of general rules (Johnson et al., 2001:235).

This means that, in a deliberative democracy, public reasoning is at the heart of political legitimacy. This concept of justification through public reasoning can be reflected in an idealized procedure of political debate, built to capture the communicative ideals of freedom, equality, and reasoning. According to Habermas, the positive characteristics of modernity include expressions of reason (rationality), such as the recognition of human rights and the construction of basic standards (Johnsonet al., 2001:235). This means that public reasoning is at the heart of political legitimacy in a deliberative democracy. This concept of public thinking might be mirrored in an idealized technique of political debate, which is designed to encapsulate the communication principles of freedom, equality, and rationality.

These viewpoints are consistent with African peace building efforts, which call for not only discussion but also safe and unrestricted expression. The right to freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of the person are among the other basic liberties enshrined in Africa's peace building efforts. The key to cultivating a culture of communication and participation in decision-making is to reach consensus and comprehend differences through discourse. However, given the African scenario, it appears to be unrealistic.

The Situation in Africa

Due to the failure to radically reform the inherited post-colonial state, society, and politics, peace building in Africa has had minimal success. The neocolonial environment hampered the development of long-term peace. Because, the failure to radically restructure inherited neocolonial African society obstructs decolonial peacemaking. Africans' long history of structural violence, which manifests itself in intra- and inter-state warfare, demonstrates the need for a more basic peace than is currently the international norm. To achieve decolonialpeace; it is necessary for transition to a peace paradigm that encourages the continuous decolonisation of the African state and society.

Furthermore, their peace building efforts have a fundamental flaw because they were established through violent processes of conquest, colonization, and dominance; they envision peace without decommissioning coloniality's and its underlying logics and its support for perpetual and repeated violence. As a result, there were low changeable and weak progresses in peacebuilding, as the legacy of structural violence persists under neocolonial institutions since independence.

More so, the concept of African solutions to African problems loses all relevance, because African problems do not create or perpetuate themselves. As a result, solutions will necessitate the decommissioning of the colonial institutions that underlay African problems, mechanisms that are inherently global.

For example, African ongoing struggle is not solely about what African political players do or do not do, but also about African's connection with their former colonial designs, which persist despite independence of many African countries. The entire idea of the African striving to govern their own destiny involves a rebellion against colonial structures that reinforce colonial

circumstances of dependency, violence, divisions, illusions, and other aspects in the conflict. Perhaps it is idealistic to hope for a completely reformed society, but Africa can make significant progress toward a decolonial peace in which the colonial condition is substantially altered.

Ali Mazrui considers Africa today to be plagued by the Berlin curse, referring to the 1884–5 European partitioning of Africa into unviable nations, which buried the paradigm of violence at the very root of African statehood, a paradigm Africa is still grappling with (Mazrui 2010:23). This resulted in what NgugiwaThiong'o refers to as "deep disintegration," which has thwarted long-term efforts at unity, peace, and development (WaThiong'o 2009).This, according to him, is partly due to the fact that the new African elite were raised in the same Euro-North American modernity that shaped the current African situation. As a result, efforts at peace, development, and emancipation at various levels in Africa have only provided short relief rather than long-term answers.

Another noticeable problem is politics of identity which is prone to unequal distribution of wealth which most time aggravate political crisis. One section of the country providing about 90% of the annual total revenue of a country and the other parts are contributing insignificant percentages. The contributing sections were and still remained undeveloped, while all other parts remain constantly developing and beautifying every day. This situation is generating a lot of crisis in many countries in Africa today. This has been responsible for the militias' activities in the Niger Delta in Nigeria.

This situation is worrisome. Should the purpose of one ethnic, social, political and economic group be done at the ruins of others? Will it not be of mere service to the country development, if all others ethnic groups are develop as well, more so when the bulk of the revenue come from the region. According to Ajah (206) national integration in many African countries after independence was and still is not a choice rather it is a necessity.

The role of elite in many African countries also affected her political system. According to Adesiyan and Segun (2013), those elites are willing to violate the rules of democratic gain and overstep normal bound of authority. Higley, claimed that; elite are "persons who, by virtue of their strategic locations in large or otherwise pivotal organizations and movements, are able to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially". This theory was popularized by Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941), Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), and Robert Michels (1876-1936). This theory explains the power dynamics and social relations surrounding the acquisition and preservation of state power within the democratic framework. It reveals the fundamental characters and realities of representative democracy, where the country is structure into powerless majority and powerful minority. The powerful minority are the elite that control the state power while the powerless majorities are governed by the elites. In every societies elites are considered to have the capacity to possessed organizational competence and verse political knowledge necessary for steering the political statecraft in a democratic dispensation but they represent a negation of the key democratic principle of mass ownership of the governance process. This has made it almost impossible for the enthronement of democracy in many African states.

Furthermore, the reliance on former colonial powers and other external forces for financial and technical resources jeopardizes peacebuilding efforts. The African saying that "borrowed waters do not quench one's thirst" emphasizes the pan-African ideal of self-reliance. As a result, relying on outside funding for peacebuilding violates the fundamental aim of the effort. The attempt is based on African renaissance and decolonization ideas; however, these objectives cannot be realized while Western countries have free reign to influence what Africa thinks and does in this regard. The failure to fund its programs in general, as well as the inability of many of its member nations to fund their regular budgets, is a major threat to Africa's second decolonization and its goal of completing the continent's incomplete liberation process. This resource dilemma reveals a basic flaw in the post-colonial African situation, and it plays a significant role in the post-colonial realities of shattered expectations, deferred dreams, and illusions of transformation. Because of the excessive reliance on rich European Union money and other external donors, peacebuilding is not sustainable and cannot be termed truly sovereign and African. Leadership deficit is another important dilemma of African. BabangidaAliyu (2012) opines that leadership deficit has over the years exposed many countries in Africa to high-level of corruption, bad governance, political instability and a

cyclical legitimacy crisis. In an ideal society, leaders are expected to be role model. But the problem with many African leader has remained the issue of bad leadership. Our leaders lack discipline and the citizens are following suit. Many African leaders have always been known for not obeying the constitution, since the constitution itself lacks merit. The colonialists have already set in place a bad example of governance, but Africa lack good leadership that will confront this dilemma and thus take Africa out of its debilitating condition (Afolayan. 2009). Leadership is observed to be the most critical, such that many depict the continent as "a faraway place where good people go hungry, bad people run government, and chaos and anarchy are the norm" (Thomson. 2009) . More so, it has been rightly observed that under "the various oppressive authoritarian regimes which Africa countries have had the misfortune to chafe under for the greater part of its post-colonial history, Africans have been treated to a bastardization of constitutionalism and growing impotence of the judiciary in the face of countless acts of impunity, executive lawlessness and economic brigandage by praetorian guards that had imposed themselves on the political landscape of the nation" (Oyebode. 2005) . The dearth of good leadership in postcolonial Africa is inversely proportional to the widespread poverty, not only of ideas about running the societies and states, but also the impoverishment of the populace (Afolayan. 2009). Consequently, national development has been slow and the political environment uncertain, the enthronement of constitutional democratic governance remained a mirage, peace building fails continuously. More so, structural conflict is a serious social unrest that forces the existing system to radically change or modify to accommodate the alienated and dissatisfied ones. With particular reference to Nigeria, Obiora C. Okafor (2003: 6) argues that the structural crisis is experienced in the persistent social conflicts that have continued to threaten national harmony in relation to the challenges of unfair distribution of resources and some of the factors such as poverty, corruption, ethno-religious upheavals, political instability and boundary disputes, to mention but a few that encourage and exacerbate conflicts in the country. According to Johan Galtung (1990: 27), the kernel of the concept is that conflicts are structured into the society like"…political and economic exclusion, injustice, poverty, disease, exploitation, inequity etc., as sources of conflict". They are entrenched in the structure of the society and can lead to adverse consequences because they are politically and economically repressive in form of exclusionary and discriminatory policies against certain groups (Ademola, 2006: 41).

Oka for contends that Nigeria(African countries) is faced with extremely serious structural crisis as evident in the intensity of the conflicts and conflagrations that have attended the country's post-independence social interactions.

These are manifested in the form of perceived lack of true federalism and regional autonomy; resource control; the national revenue allocation formula; the establishment of the state police forces; the institution of shariah criminal law in some states; and the calls for a national conference as evidence of the existence of structural conflicts in the country (Oka for, 2003: 6).

The relevance of Habermas theory to Peace building in Africa

Habermas' argument will be about how to enhance democratic involvement and decision-making without inhibiting socio-cultural differences in the context of peacebuilding. To put it another way, his debates will center on how to democratically reflect difference without sanctioning unfairness and intolerance among stakeholders. For African states, the discussant's preferences will be modified by active interchange of ideas, which includes not just stating thoughts, but also listening, because discussants can be convinced and their thinking transformed through the act of interacting and listening. This combination will enable debaters to comprehend and agree with one another, as well as to devise plans for joint action to help Africans. With reference to Habermas' notion of discursive democracy for governance, his account could be particularly useful, because all discussants must engage in thought and reflection to persuade one another of their points of view, particularly during meetings for the sake of a better argument. Adopting Habermas' concept of consensus through debate and reasoning could help to include all participants. Discussants on peacebuilding could benefit from his (Habermas) viewpoints in the sense that they could focus on how to promote peacebuilding in Africa without infringing on socio-cultural differences, which appear to be obstructing development in Africa's governance structure at the moment. The concept of communicative action, according to Habermas, is a sort of action in which all human modes of thinking, as

well as language, are employed. This combination could enable all participants to comprehend and agree with one another, as well as establish strategies for the common benefit on the topic at hand. This is exactly what the governance structure requires, as discussants must think and act rationally in order to develop superior arguments. Discussants would be able to freely communicate opinions using this method. They would not only express their thoughts, but also listen to the viewpoints of others. Participants may be convinced and their thinking modified as a result of the act of interacting and listening. Consensus-building for peace would be achieved via deliberation and reasoning involving all participants. Peacebuilding in Africa could be achieved through the ability of discussants to forward arguments and counterarguments. Deliberative arguments could allow participants, to freely express their viewpoints and discuss issues that are important to their society's common good.

Condition for Dialogue

What method of debate or discussion will be used to enable the development of an acceptable choice in which all participants' perspectives on African peacebuilding are heard? Any attempt to control decisions at this time will make cooperation on peacebuilding impossible, because democracy allows for diversity and differences of opinion. Deliberation is widely understood to mean that claims for or against collective decisions must be justified to one another in such a way that, given the opportunity to consider, these individuals can accept the decision reached. The question is: what are the dialogue conditions that will allow participants to reach a decision not by determining which preferences have the most numerical support, but by determining which proposals are supported by the best reason, as opposed to determining which preferences have the most numerical support? Political inclusion is one of the prerequisites of discussion that must be met in order for participants to arrive at rational judgments. On this basis, a democratic decision is only legitimate if people who will be affected are included in the discussion and decision-making process. This is because if individuals are not included in decisions that affect their life, they will be considered as tools if they are expected to follow rules and policies or alter their activities in accordance with decisions made without their input. To borrow wiredu's terms, inclusion refers to the smoothing of edges or the sorting out of discrepancies to

arrive at what Ali Mazrui refers to as shared images (1990:399). When inclusiveness is achieved as a political goal, it enables for the clear expression of viewpoints pertinent to the issues for which they seek answers. Apart from the foregoing, democracy also has a component that expresses political equality. As a normative ideal, those who are impacted by political actions should not only be involved in the discussion and decision-making process, but should be included on an equal footing. Everyone has an equal opportunity to speak up, question established ideals, and be open to criticism. In the midst of the week's suppression, such an opportunity cannot exist. This means that in a democratic setting, there is no such thing as a privileged viewpoint. In other words, "conversation cannot be reduced to an act of one side depositing concept in another," as Paulo Freire puts it. (1970:61). Dialogue is a state of responsible persons acting in a free arena. It is an act that denounces the relationship of dominance.

In addition to the foregoing, communication as a shared task of overcoming differences is impossible to achieve without humility. This is to suggest that if a party believes it is superior to others, or that it has a monopoly on information or truth, it is engaging in dominance. "How can there be discourse if I am tortured and worried by the prospect of being displaced, or if I am close to- and even insulted by the input of others?" (Ebijuwa. 2003).To put it another way, in a dialogue, we must tolerate each other's points of view. As a result, there are "neither absolute ignoramuses nor perfect sages" in a discussion environment; "they are merely guys who are seeking, collectively, to learn more than they presently know" ((Ebijuwa. 2003). In other words, "What is required for dialogue...is openness to various points of view, a willingness to investigate, and empathy for the relative truth of each point of view". However, a discussion among positions will eventually reveal that many desperate ideas are in fact interconnected, not by reference to an absolute, comprehensive image, but by the fact that debate participants will have certain shared worries (Mannskhani, 2002:189).To put it another way, communication necessitates a high level of trust in one another. There can be no communication without the initial belief in our ability to overcome our differences. Simply said, communication requires faith in one another; the dialogical man believes in other men even before meeting them face to face

(Ebijuwa. 2003). This is an achievement that isn't possible in a domineering environment. To put it another way, the viability of discussion is determined not by the patience and persuasiveness of the dialoguers, but rather by the reality that no single individual or organization continuously places anyone or any group in a minority position. Having faith in one another means being willing to change our minds or interests because we've been convinced that our initial viewpoints or ideas are no longer relevant to the larger issues at hand. Those who follow this line of thinking "are willing to submit to the epistemic habits of change required to demand people's commitment to a life of continuous inquiry" (sustain. 2003: 110).

CONCLUSION

I've claimed that Habermas' argument of 'communicative action' and 'consensus' would hinge on how to encourage democratic involvement and decision-making in peace building in Africa. Habermas' method, with his concept of discursive democracy, may be useful if African leaders choose to engage in deliberation and reflection for inclusive governance. I have recommended communicative action, which is based on democratic ideas. This option is based on the premise that if an interchange of viewpoints should be unrestricted, then no individual or group of individuals can legally exclude others from debating on issues that they care about.

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