

## HABERMAS AND COMMUNICATIVE ACTION: AN APPRAISAL OF CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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### **Abstract**

*The implication of Habermas' argument is that universal human rights are grounded in the existential political conditions for human interrelationships and social order and from those conditions, he maintains that there are certain moral standards of human treatment which all democratic societies should respect. Habermas' theory of communicative action has both strengths and weaknesses. It aims at addressing the problem of social order and human rights. Although, his theory serves as a leitmotif test for the contemporary Nigerian society, his theory has not been able to grapple with the complexities facing our contemporary societies. Communicative action reflects the linguistic transparency of persons in their day to day activities. Today, our contemporary Nigerian society has been characterized by myriad of socio-political and economic problems. There has been the crises of social system and social structure due to the superimposition of money and power by the Nigerian politicians. The Nigerian leaders have distorted the Nigerian socio-political structures. The Nigerian political climates, market forces, the economic systems and structures have failed woefully due to the monetization of the society and the bureaucratization of power in Nigeria. This paper showcases the relevance of communicative action to the Nigerian contemporary society. This paper, therefore, concludes that communicative action reflects the transformational values of human conducts and organizational framework; that there ought to be the need for differences to flourish; that the theory of communicative action has a sustained and continued relevance to other climates like the contemporary Nigerian society and that the theory of communicative action has a moral element.*

**Keywords:** Communicative Action, Contemporary Nigerian Society, Social Order, Moral Consciousness, Human Rights

## **Introduction**

The starting point of our argument is Habermas's embedding of his theoretical account of communicative action within a far broader model of how we can contextually justify a political outlook, such as communicative justice, as politically legitimate to our starving world. Habermas's theoretical reconstruction of communicative action showcases the normative possibility of social order and the promulgation of human rights. The promotion of human rights, law and social order are far cry from the contemporary Nigerian reality. From the foregoing, it is clear that his conceptualization and contextual justification of communicative action presupposes the normative possibility of human emancipation and human sociality. Communicative action refers to the moral and socio-political character of linguistic communication and human emancipation. The philosophy of communicative action reflects the democratic state in the attainment of the moral objectives of human emancipation and sociality. This moral element which is generally articulated within the normative context of communicative action plays a crucial role in the indispensability of human dialogue and it helps in ascertaining the comprehensive conception of the good life of members as it concerns the contemporary Nigerian society. This theoretical discourse is concerned with the critical evaluation of Habermas's theory of communicative action examined in the light of the contemporary Nigerian society. This paper, therefore, reflects on using the Habermasian paradigm in analyzing the contemporary Nigerian paradox. The dignity of labour is no longer respected by our humanity. Habermas's work is a theoretical tool for national development, human emancipation, socio-economic and democratic liberalization. The focus of this paper is to determine the moral background culture or the ground for communicative action as a theoretical model to examine or assess the level of its relevance within the contemporary Nigerian contexts of the mismanagement of Nigeria's economic and socio-political resources for national development.

## **The Contemporary Legacy of Habermas's Communicative Action**

The paper envisages the philosophy of Habermas's conceptual analysis and theoretical framework of communicative action. His theory of communicative rationality is conversely speaking communicative justice. It presupposes understanding of rational consensus or orientation of human actions. According to Habermas, understanding rational orientations of action becomes the reference point for understanding all action orientations.<sup>1</sup> Habermas's theory places emphasis on the internal connection between the theory of rationality and social

theory. After the theory of communicative action, Habermas expands upon the theory of communicative action and a conceptualization of the social life world context that is tailored around the paradoxes of the scope for engineering the mass loyalty and it makes it easier to uncouple the political world. Habermas's attitude in the theory of communicative action or 'lifeworld' context and the paradoxes of the system-life-world or the political institutions then referred to the background resources of this intellectual discourse. Habermas reflects on the two track model of deliberative politics distinguishing the normative demands from the background consensus in which communicative action is embedded. Habermas's communicative action is a contemporary ideal of basic normative core of communicative interaction and may also be referred to as communicative justice, communicative association or constitutive of transformative association. The normative ideal of communicative interaction allows differences to flourish. According to Mackenzie:

The ideal of communicative interaction is precisely that which enables differences to flourish. A genuinely open conversation, undistorted by money and power, is the basic principle on which all varieties of social integration and democratic politics can be modelled. Not only does a rational exchange of views allow for all perspectives to be aired equally, it also undoubtedly requires that each participant transform their initial presumptions in light of the force of a better argument.<sup>2</sup>

His philosophy is that of socio-rational reconstruction and it presupposes the need to deconstruct our society. There are some measures of Derridian deconstructive philosophy in Habermas's philosophy. For Mackenzie:

Jacques Derrida ushered into the intellectual world the idea of deconstruction... it expresses a form of critical practice aimed at exposing the inevitable gaps or lacunae that both structure and de-structure any text; hence de-con-structure is both de-structuring the text to find how it is held together and constructing an interpretation of the text that shows how the structure holding it together is never watertight, on its own terms; that is, it has no essence. Just to ward off an obvious rejoinder, it is important to mention that the text that is deconstructed is not simply a written text or speech but any 'discursive practice'; patriarchal behavior, for example, is a social text that can be deconstructed.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, it reveals the fact that language from the Habermasian universal pragmatic perspective and ideal speech situation showcases rational discourse and language itself objectifies the human social world as exemplified by Wittgenstein. Habermas's theory of communicative action is hermeneutic dialogue and cultural humanism of some sort. Habermas advocates a radical nature of democracy that is called deliberative democracy and the contemporary Nigerian society can tap from this normative framework of Habermas's conceptualization of communicative justice. Communicative justice requires the need for human emancipation and the collective happiness of all in normative society. His theory of communicative action has been heralded by the whole of Western tradition. Habermas's theory of communicative action is social activity and his theoretical framework is traceable to the Greek philosophers namely Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates. Habermas envisages the need for irreducible otherness as advocated by Levinas and it heralds the human order and social structure. Habermas's concept of communicative action is moral ordering. His philosophy is a revision of Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Kant, Parson, Mead, Hegel, Wittgenstein, Marx, Durkheim, and Freud's philosophical traditions. In line with this argument, Mackenzie submits that; it is interesting to notice, as one reflects on who is on the conversation, that the contributions deemed to be of real lasting value, those made by the 'great' political philosophers (ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary), are ones that have fundamentally changed dominant habits of thought.<sup>4</sup> The conceptualization of the 'communicative action theory' is not just a theoretical acrobatic or abstraction but social interaction or discursive practice. The indispensability of dialogue in Habermas's philosophy is deeply rooted in conflict resolution. The contemporary Nigerian society can a clue from this conflict resolution mechanism. Habermas's conceptual framework or contextual justification of communicative action is an appeal to inter-subjectivity; that is, the philosophy of inter-subjectivity in Husserl's phenomenology of the life-world. Understanding the Habermasian picture should be the essence of dialogue and it reveals its sustained or continued relevance to contemporary society like Nigeria. We are rational beings and the sacredness of the human person is examined in the light of communication context. Habermas's subject matter of moral consciousness is implicit in his communicative action theory. It is a discursive ethics. The indispensability of dialogue in Habermas's theory of communicative action reveals its implication to global order. Philosophy has a great role to play here in making sure the contemporary relevance of dialogue remained particularly explicit in order to combat global terrorism in our democratic world. Our humanity is at crossroads due to the prevalence of terrorism and terror.

Accordingly, Borradori, in her book, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogue between Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, believes that dialogue plays a critical role in global terrorism.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, her book encapsulates the fact that the rejection of dialogue can necessarily lead to fundamentalism, and fundamentalism necessarily can lead to violence. Communicative action is a dialogical imperative of global interdependence and rational cognitive capacity or social activity of human persons. It is an appeal to moral autonomy, it is a discursive ethics of social cooperation or discursive practice and it showcases the synergy between the system and the life-world. The ideological distortion between the system and the life-world, Habermas opines must be removed through the intersubjective recognition of a systematically undistorted communication and how it can be averted in human practical everyday life which is feasible through reciprocal relationship. The Habermasian tradition immediately reveals the basic phenomenological, ethical, political, linguistic, existential and global imports of human interactions. It awakens in us to a moral consciousness that will enable, we humans to be rational or educative and to be able to make proper judgement. Habermas's theory of communicative action reveals purposive rational activity, cognitive capacity and the rationalization or the radicalization of communicative competence thus revealed that the anachronistic character of human senselessness can be corrected through educable sensibility or training and retraining processes. The concept of "communicative action" means attempt to express differently the unbridgeable distance among individuals which have anthropological, existential, moral and political dimensions.

Moreover, Habermas views religion as the transcendence within. Religion in contemporary Nigerian society has become a source of worries. Religion has divides us in Nigeria instead of uniting us. Religion that supposed to be a source of peace has now become a source of ethnic divide in Nigeria. Moral order is traceable to human order and this traceability brings to the foreground the creativity of individuals in society. This comprehensive theoretical acrobatic and contextual justification have its own relative, subordinate and objective truth especially with regards to the contemporary Nigerian society. The economic, political and social structural conditions of individuals in contemporary Nigerian situation is a onerous task. The indispensability of dialogical relation and practical everyday experience of social practice, social cooperation or interaction lie in the origin of discursive ethics, moral consciousness, normative ideal social order, social change, social/normative structures, equality, autonomy, communicative

justice and human rights. Similarly, Habermas's theoretical framework and contextual justification have watertight sorts of positive role if it remained aware of its dialogical and idyllic role with regards to the unprecedented systematically distorted communication Nigeria is currently facing. Habermas's philosophy talked about cultural humanism and critical social theory. Critical concern with the question of moral consciousness is invariably implicit and constituted the normative core or heart of contemporary Nigerian society. The idea of a closed society devoid of free and open communication keep modern society in a serious social, cultural, economic, political instability, moral crisis and epistemological quandary or confusion.

Nonetheless, it is germane to note here that by 'communicative action' Habermas did not mean a phenomenon of semantic analysis in abstraction but a mode of guaranteeing social order, human rights and communicative justice. Communicative action demands social order, social activity or purposive-rational activity and the web of social interaction devoid of symbolic violence. Violence used to disrupt the human project and it destabilizes the project of humanity. The contemporary Nigerian society is currently faced with all sorts of social vices and ethnic crises. Habermas believes that for effective communicative competence our dialogical relations with others must reflect purposive activity and normative structure. Moral consciousness is very crucial in Habermas's theory of communicative action. It constitutes a dimension of cultural identity which is prior to autonomy and human flourishing. Habermas's work is deeply rooted in politics and culture. According to Mackenzie, cultures are only important to the extent that they provide individuals with frameworks that enable autonomy to flourish.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, Habermas reiterates that moral consciousness in our purposive rational activity presupposes the demand of criticizable validity claims or truth claims and ego identity. The exposition of Habermas's theory of communicative action is a moral template of human social relations or action. For Barnes, communicative action, however, constitutes an independent and distinct type of social action.<sup>7</sup> Communicative action theory opens up the process for societal learning process and human emancipation. Accordingly, Barnes, argued that "however, in contrast to Weber, Habermas does not regard rationalization as a process that inevitably culminates in the loss of meaning and freedom in the world, but as an ambivalent process that also opens up a potential for societal learning and new levels of human emancipation."<sup>8</sup> Habermas's wide range of theorizing has been extraordinary and has a sustained and continued relevance to our contemporary Nigerian society. It covers epistemological debates, the dynamics of advanced

capitalist system and a thoroughgoing eclecticism of developments in social sciences and philosophy. According to David Jary and Julia Jary:

The range of Habermas's theorizing is extraordinary. He deals with most of the broad themes developed by earlier critical theorists, including epistemological questions and debate about the fundamental dynamics of advanced capitalist societies. In addition, he has sought to achieve a thoroughgoing synthesis of developments in social sciences and philosophy- including analytical philosophy, the philosophy of science, linguistics, political science, and systems theory- they are of relevance in exploring the basis for a rational reconstruction of society on socialist lines with the starting point of a critique of the 'scientization of politics' ... Habermas has endeavoured to re-establish social scientific and political debate as an arena of 'open discourse'.<sup>9</sup>

This canon of Habermasian tradition elucidates the normative character of true rationality any contemporary society must begin to imbibe by bracketing all prevailing prejudices, biases or preconceived ideas and ideological distortions. This theoretical framework and the contextual justification of the indispensability of dialogue in Habermas's philosophy can presupposed an 'ideal speech situation' and creating the platform for equal opportunities for contemporary Nigerian citizens to engage in a liberal dialogue and this marked the crux of this intellectual discourse. According to David Jary and Julia Jary:

True rationality can be seen to be achieved only when this emerges from condition which corresponds to an ideal speech situation, in which all parties have equal opportunities to engage in dialogue, without undue domination by one party, without restriction and without ideological distortion. This model states the conditions for a critical and truly 'emancipatory' social science. Even if there are difficulties in realizing the models, it establishes a benchmark in terms of which the ideological distortions involved in existing forms of social science can be gauged.<sup>10</sup>

In consequence, Habermas's intellectual contribution has been a regeneration of so many discourses in contemporary society like Nigeria. This canon of communicative reasoning and radical political consciousness revealed the import of normative ideal socio-political new world order. The Habermasian picture marked the crux of a humanistic/epistemological dimension and the

unprecedented concern for the social structural transformation or rational reconstruction of contemporary Nigerian society. Habermas, a German philosopher and social theorist, is perhaps best known for his wide-ranging defense of the modern public sphere and its related ideals of publicity and free public reason, but he has also made important contributions to theories of communication and informal argumentation, communicative ethics, the foundations and methodology of the social sciences.

Habermas locates the origins of the various political, economic and cultural crises confronting modern society in a one-sided process of rationalization steered more by the media of money and administrative power than by forms of collective decision-making based on consensually grounded norms and values. Habermas traced the emergence of a bourgeois public sphere which, at least for a time, offered the prospect of an arena that would mediate between state and society. Rooted in the social and economic conditions of liberal capitalism, the 'bourgeois public sphere' is being referred to those socio-cultural institutions that arose in the eighteenth century in opposition to the absolutist powers of the state private clubs and coffeehouses, learned societies and literary associations, publishing houses, journals, and newspaper. He referred to the 're-feudalization' of civil society during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Habermas traces the commercialization of civil society, the bureaucratization of power and non-political authority, monetization of human democratic society and the growth of a manipulative or propagandistic mass-media in his communicative action theory. A 're-politicized social sphere' eroded the real distinction between state and society that has been a necessary social structural condition for the bourgeois public sphere, and a society oriented to consumption and a politics based on the competition and bargaining between interest groups emerged in the place of a public sphere formed by an enlightened democratic citizenry. In the 1960s and 1970s, Habermas pursued a number of related issues. He sharply criticized the 'scientization of politics' and increase in 'technocratic consciousness' he discerned in contemporary societies. Habermas's conception of society is predicated on the philosophical significance of reasoned communication of human persons. This valid discourse attempts to elucidate or dovetail into the contemporary approaches to the problem of communicative rationality in contemporary Nigerian society. "Rationality" has been a preliminary specification and a contextual justification of new world order. The Habermasian tradition aims at some of the characteristics of the mythical and the modern ways of understanding of our contemporary Nigerian society. Contemporary democratic theory, advanced capitalist system and cosmopolitan political order are of Habermas's



theoretical concerns and objectives. Habermas's contemporary political philosophy takes historical precedence over the Aristotelian tradition of politics of the state and the freedom of the individual. Habermas's social and political philosophy is a domain of overlapping rational consensus and objective validity. Habermas's philosophy is geared toward the politics of difference, mutual recognition, human rights, human emancipation and an aesthetic appeal to intersubjectivity. Every society has made frantic efforts to get rid of undue restrictions to the freedom of the state and the individuals. The individuals and the state must fraternize in a harmonious atmosphere. But to understand Habermas's concept of deliberative democracy, we must bring to the fore the meaning of democracy as it affects contemporary Nigerian society. Today, democracy has failed woefully in contemporary Nigerian society. The Nigerian leaders are far away from the people. There is nothing like deliberative democracy in contemporary Nigerian society. The proclivity of economic and political corruption has become the order of the day in contemporary Nigerian society. Nigeria is currently experiencing social and communicative distortions. There are so many social crises in contemporary Nigerian society. Apart from social crises or communicative distortions Nigeria is also experiencing economic crises caused by ineffective leadership structure and poor governance. The Nigerian masses are at the receiving end. There is nothing like political participation in Nigeria but rigging of elections.

However, the idea of political participation simply suggests a full blown democratic setting, a kind of positive form of democratic structure and not a negative democratic setting. Democracy is a political ideology, a system of government and a form of government. It connotes three major fundamentals such as social, economic and political strands. Democratic structure is characterized by a political dimension that strategically think of safeguarding the basic rights of the masses with regards to politics, ensuring social justice and basic normative order and to distribute wealth equitably among the populace in society. Freedom is a driving and powerful concept. Liberty, majority rule, constitution, constitutionalism, human rights, political participation, accountability, are part and parcel of democratic question, normative structure and principle, and the democratic structure demands tranquillity. The democratic question is geared towards putting in place an ideal society, rational dialogue, reasoned communication that is undistorted. A peaceful society is anchored on normative orders or character of a rational human conduct, active participation in political affairs, religious tolerance, cognizance of human basic rights, an intelligent understanding of public affairs, the common good and undaunted devotion to

common interests of all. Habermas's work showcases the concepts of a good society and the intelligible network of social interaction. For Ritzer and Stepnisky, social interaction exists first within social groups and social structure emerges from social interaction but once this occurs, social structures have separate existence that affects the process of interaction.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Relevance of Habermas's Communicative Action to the Contemporary Nigerian Society**

Habermas's theory of communicative action should be examined from the Nigerian perspective or African standpoint. Nigeria's democratic setting has been characterized by socio-political and economic bastardization. The Nigerian social system and structure has been in a very bad situation. There is nothing like moral answerability, linguistic transparency, truth and action between the Nigerian leaders and the masses in general. The Nigerian democratic society is in a state of disarray. The Nigerian government is characterized by socio-political and economic uncertainties. The contemporary Nigerian society lacks normative possibility of social order, politico-economic structure and democratic liberalization. The contemporary Nigerian society is bedevilled by political and economic/executive corruption, poverty, kidnapping, armed robbery, hyperinflation, food crises, unemployment, ethno-religious crises, Islamic fundamentalism, hunger, lawlessness, violation of human rights, civil disobedience, incessant workers' strikes, etc. These fundamental challenges can be surmountable using the Habermasian paradigm in solving myriads of contemporary Nigeria's problems. The Nigeria's socio-economic and political problems can be solved by moral practical knowledge and that is, linguistic communication presupposes understanding and taking positions on criticizable validity claims.<sup>12</sup> One fundamental problems that has led to Nigeria's national insecurity, is that, we have failed as a people in our quest for social interactions vis-a-vis our everyday democratic speech. There is no longer sincerity or honesty of purpose or purity of intention on the parts of the Nigerian leadership and followership. For Habermas, the concept of communicative action refers to the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations whether by verbal or by extra verbal means.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, Habermas posits that communicative action reflects the normative possibility and a clearly demarcated sphere of good society.<sup>14</sup> A good society is only possible through descent human association. A good society is simply descent society. However, communicative action reflects the physical and psychological inquiry of persons or subjects and its real intention comes to light only when we view it in

relation to the positivist strategy of avoiding epistemological questions.<sup>15</sup> Communicative action reveals the normative possibility and visibility of psychoanalytic dialogue and it helps us to avoid the sophistic delusion that only assumes the appearance of self-reflection and the initiatives of radical reformism of human rational society.<sup>16</sup> Communicative action is deeply rooted in the objective context of truth, human action, and in the concept of reason active as critique of ideology, knowledge and the dialectical commitment to the sayability of truth.<sup>17</sup> Communicative action reveals the causal explanations of effects, truth and universal laws of truth and action.<sup>18</sup> In addition, linguistic communication reveals the category of actual spirits, interactions based on reciprocity and the institutionalization of mutual recognition.<sup>19</sup> According to Habermas, thus the relation of reciprocal recognition, on which interaction is based, is brought under norms by way of the institutionalization of the reciprocity established as such in the exchange of the product of labour. The contemporary Nigerian society does not respect the dignity of labour. What we are currently experiencing in the contemporary Nigerian society is exploitation. However, the institutionalization of ego-identity, the legally sanctioned self-consciousness, is understood as a result of both processes: that of labour and that of the struggle for recognition.<sup>20</sup> Habermas's theoretical reconstruction envisages the contemporary Nigerian paradox where many Nigerian politicians struggled for power and recognition at the detriment of the collective interests of the Nigerian democratic states. The contemporary Nigerian society has plunged into fundamental crises because the Nigerian peoples have failed to identify the fundamental issues facing the contemporary Nigerian situation. According to Habermas, a society does not plunge into crisis when, and only when, its members so identify the situation.<sup>21</sup> The anthropological balance of Habermas's communicative justice/ethics reflects the normative possibility of an optimistic assumptions of the contemporary Nigerian society. The communicative organization of human behaviour can become an obstacle to our complex decision making systems.<sup>22</sup> Communicative action reveals the motivations for actions; the process of socialization that takes place within structures of linguistic inter subjectivity that determines an organizational framework of human behaviour tied to norms that requires normative justification and to interpretive systems that secures ego identity in persons.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, Habermas's theory of communicative action is compatible with solving the enormity of contemporary Nigerian problems, which weighs down our country. The relevance of communicative action to the contemporary Nigerian paradox in a complementary perspective lies in the fact that the management and

mismanagement of our Nigerian human and natural resources lies in our deliberate human actions and democratic heritage. For Asouzu, the strength, weakness, success, and failure, indeed the greatness of Nigeria depends on how Nigerians manage or mismanage their heritage.<sup>24</sup> Habermas's communicative action reveals the need for tolerance and authenticity. For Asouzu, authentic living entails therefore having a very wide and accommodating horizon; it is a life of tolerance and devotion to one's calling and radical openness to the unexpected because life is more complex than logic...this would be the case where one lives in a relationship of reciprocal and comparative advantage in view of the ultimate common good.<sup>25</sup> Habermas's communicative action is deeply rooted in a pragmatic framework of human organizational structure or social cohesion or system. For Habermas, the concept of communicative action turns our attention to the binding energies of language, to the familiar background consensus, the reciprocal extension of trust and the more or less naive readiness for understanding on which we count in our everyday praxis. Pragmatism taught us to take common sense and the life world seriously.<sup>26</sup> The contemporary Nigerian society requires moral valuation or moral rebirth. Ethical issues require moral answers. Moral answers retain only the rationally motivating force of insights; communicative action requires the possibility of the prudent application of universal moral insights and support motivations. For translating insights into moral action.<sup>27</sup> The contemporary questions of current Nigerian politics reflect the fact that society still intends a relatively uniform status. Communicative action requires reliable citizens of the new democratic order.<sup>28</sup> Communicative action reveals the need for sociability. For Asekhauno, truly the essence of humanity...is inestimable rationality, unique physicality and sociability.<sup>29</sup> Communicative action is based on interactions and customs capable of continually reproducing at least those conditions essential for its own existence.<sup>30</sup> Communicative action as role playing is defined by the tenet of sociability and sayability. Habermas's philosophy demonstrates the pursuance of the perceived positive dimensions of the future of global society. His theory showcases the realization of the intrinsic worth of such values as truthfulness, solidarity and mutual dependability.<sup>31</sup> Habermas's theory of communicative action reflects the normative possibility of universal and eternal moral ordering; the end of state authority is the preservation of human life and property; it is the duty of the state to ensure human freedom and social justice. What justifies state authority is its conscious effort to administer social justice within the normative context of the due process of law.<sup>32</sup> The contemporary Nigerian society is bedeviled by destructive racism, ethnic chauvinism, the humiliation of neocolonialism and colonialism, the confusion of

political instability, self-leadership, the misery of economic crisis, the confusion of cultural and religious alienation and the debilitating effects of psychological trauma come together to define the present contemporary Nigerian situation.<sup>33</sup>The democratization process in Africa is still in want of a strong foundation in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Gambia, South Sudan, Somalia, and Algeria; the Nigerian democratic perspective entails a muzzling of individual initiative, and strangling political freedom.<sup>34</sup>The theory of communicative action could serve as a platform for resolving the fractured and fragile social order in many political communities like that of the contemporary Nigerian society. The theory of communicative action reflects the collectivistic and egalitarian values that promote social cohesion, human solidarity and community life; it reflects the superiority of individualism over competition and it fosters economic domination and class exploitation. Individualistic cultures emphasized self-reliance, independence, and morality; interpersonal relationships based on the exchange of the beneficial scheme of social cooperation. Habermas's philosophy reflects the need for the prevalence of social order. Social order is a relatively persistent system of institutions. Habermas's theory of communicative action presupposes the normative possibility of systems and methodology of addressing contemporary Nigerian society. For Asouzu, systems and methods are well crafted tools devised to penetrate reality in particular ways.<sup>35</sup> Habermas's philosophy relies solely on the usefulness in making predictions and effective social engineering in the organizational framework of society.<sup>36</sup> Habermas's philosophy reflects the normative possibility of democratic nationalism or democratic socialism as a model of total liberation of Africa. His theoretical reconstruction also showcases the cultural relevance of democratic existentialism to Africa.<sup>37</sup> Democratic socialism is upheld by its exponents as an alternative to capitalism and socialism and definitely a solution to the recurrent miasma of political and economic instability in Africa.<sup>38</sup> Habermas's theoretical reconstruction reveals the practical and concrete sense of political freedom as self-rule backed by self-determination articulated in words, theory and actions.<sup>39</sup>Broadly speaking, political freedom is not "self-rule" devoid of self-determination and ideological freedom.<sup>40</sup>The state is a very essential apparatus for the promotion of human rights and freedom. For Dukor, Habermas is aware of the pathologies, distortions and aporias of modernity and undertook to correct them within the modernity's framework through on expounded sphere of communicative rationality against the systematic imperative of the economy and the state.<sup>41</sup> For Habermas, a theory of rationalization requires an explanation of how categories and concepts are concretely embodied in social and cultural life.<sup>42</sup>Habermas's philosophy

demonstrates the socio-political ideology of democratic society. Habermas's work reflects the radical understanding of human nature, reason, culture, conscience and human conduct. According to Habermas, understanding human conduct is not only a causal endeavor, but it also consists of uncovering its intelligibility by relating it to the rules that constitute forms of life. The logical relations that constitute forms of life are epistemological.<sup>43</sup> Habermas's communicative rationality presupposes the abstractions of rational morality and science for society.<sup>44</sup> Habermas's communicative action reflects the problematic of understanding meaning not so much directly in terms of this transcendental logical framework, but rather on a methodological level that even positivist prejudices cannot eliminate in democratic society.<sup>45</sup> For Habermas, politics and mutual sympathy are important in any democratic society. Politics is concerned with the empirical rather than the moral questions (although implicit in Habermas's discussions) are moral claims and truth validity claims.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the existential imperative of moral claims and moral theory can be too demanding as the basic needs to feed the starving of the world of ours.<sup>47</sup> Habermas's communicative rationality reflects the moral consciousness of advancing the need for human rights and action. According to Hoffman and Graham, the growth in consciousness of human rights is one of the achievements of communicative rationality.<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, Habermas's communicative rationality is concerned about communicative justice, politics, culture, dialogue and human rights. For Hoffman and Graham, one way to address this problem of cultural dependence is to maintain that politics is a dialogue, in which people bring to bear their different cultural perspectives, such that what emerges from the dialogue is something pluralistic yet coherent. His theory is grounded in human autonomy; but that human autonomy itself has a collective dimension which must take into account cultural interpretations of human rights.<sup>49</sup>

The promotion of human rights in contemporary Nigerian society is a far cry from reality. Nigeria has been practicing extra-judicial killings of her innocent citizens without any legal sanctions on those perpetrators of extra-judicial killings in Nigeria. The Nigerian Police and the Nigerian Army are culpable of these heinous crimes.

### **Evaluation**

Nigeria as a country has become a viable ground for weak institutions to strive. We have virtually lost our sense of humanity, national security, law and order. There are no laws and orders in Nigeria. However, it has been observed that Nigeria is currently battling or grappling with myriad of fundamental problems

such as inequality, kidnapping, lack of due process, lawlessness, ritual killings, socio-political instability, poor economic system, food shortages, hyperinflation, farmers-herders clashes, Islamic fundamentalism, terror and terrorism, armed robbery, poor infrastructural facilities, poor health care system, corruption and looting of Nigeria's national treasuries, violence, ethnic sentimentalism and prebendalism, godfatherism, poor educational system, poor road networks, poor power supply, poor water supply, unemployment, hunger, low life expectancy, religious crises, poor leadership structure, crises of relevance and African identity. The Buhari's led administration has given the contemporary Nigerian society the worst hit due to his incompetency in addressing the fundamental challenges facing the contemporary Nigerian society. Worthy of note is that since the inception of the Buhari's led administration the level of poverty and hunger have increased astronomically in the contemporary Nigerian society. However, a lot needs to be done to change the narrative that is currently plaguing the contemporary Nigerian society. The Nigerian masses are seriously groaning in pains and are currently facing economic hardship and abject poverty due to failed Nigerian administration. The contemporary Nigerian democratic state has become a failed nation- state due to ineffective leadership, massive corruption and bad governance. The implication of Habermas's argument is that universal human rights are grounded in the existential political conditions for human interrelationships and social order and from those conditions, he maintains that there are certain moral standards of human treatment which all societies must follow. Jurgen Habermas offers the best contemporary statement of logical entailment.<sup>50</sup> Habermas's theoretical reconstruction demonstrates rational entailment argument whereby a liberal society should tolerate a descent society.<sup>51</sup> Habermas's philosophy reveals the existential imports, normative rightness and that validity claims are implicit in all human actions, that is, they are universal. This seems a promising basis for defending universal human rights against the challenge of cultural relativism.<sup>52</sup> Habermas's theoretical discourse showcases the rigorosity and precision on the fundamental questions of linguistic significance and transparency. Habermas's philosophy is simply critical social theory. For Wisniewski, one might respond by claiming that the rigor and precision brought to bear on questions of linguistic significance provide the point of departure required for any critical theory; to do this, it seems, is already to engage in critical theory and it is to step well beyond the confines of simple linguistic analysis.<sup>53</sup> Communicative exchange is aimed at the democracy of everyday speech.<sup>54</sup> Communicative action is Habermas's name for the residue of rationality built into our everyday exchange.<sup>55</sup> Habermas's work demonstrates the normative

possibility of an ethical discourse. For Boradori, Habermas makes the term "discourse" the cornerstone of his communicative approach to ethics and political philosophy.<sup>56</sup> Habermas's work showcases the spirit of democratic citizenship and social cooperation. For Russell, a sense of citizenship, of social cooperation, is therefore, more necessary than it used to be; but it remains important that this should be secured without too great a diminution of individual judgement and individual initiative.<sup>57</sup> Habermas's philosophy is built on the pre-conventional, conventional and post conventional stages of human societies. Habermas talks of societies being at the pre-conventional, conventional and post conventional stages of human development.<sup>58</sup> Habermas's philosophy encapsulates the central egalitarian dimension of the democratic ideal.<sup>59</sup> Habermas's work is a presuppositions of dialogical conception of human rationality and he describes conversation as that which is concerned to reach an understanding with one another as communicative action.<sup>60</sup> His work reveals the spirit of 'technocratic consciousness'. For Howie, this increasing tendency to define practical problems in such an instrumental way is what Habermas would describe as technocratic consciousness.<sup>61</sup> Habermas's theoretical framework of communicative action reflects an organic solidarity of human persons. For Ferrante, organic solidarity is social order based on interdependence and cooperation among people performing a wide range of diverse and specialized tasks.<sup>62</sup> Habermas's philosophy is an expression of a set of moral values or consciousness that determines the direction of a society, and affects not only the actions but the motivations and visions of the individuals and democratic communities that make up that society.<sup>63</sup> This paper critically examines the contemporary relevance of Habermas's theory of communicative action to the Nigerian democratization process. The contemporary Nigerian situation is an unhappy situation. According to Abati cited by Aghamelu:

The truth of the situation today is that the average Nigerian is unhappy with his personal lot, and the nation's circumstances. we are not a poor nation in spite of our wealth; Nigeria is one of the saddest places in which anyone can live in the world. the quality of life continues to depreciate daily as a number of macro-economic distortions. You would wake up one morning and your life would have been further devalued, on account of an illogical state policy, on which neither your opinion was sought nor your feelings considered. This is the situation vis-a-vis the question of good governance in Nigeria today and indeed has been for a long time.<sup>64</sup>

Habermas' work reflects contextual justification. For Thomas, contextual justification can extend to the relationship between a liberal theory and the moral



background culture of a society. His communicative framework presupposes a moral background culture that is internally pluralistic, of the kind associated with a typically modern society of ours.<sup>65</sup> Habermas's communicative framework reflects a contextualized form of justification of any democratic society. His contemporary political outlook is an autonomy based ethical liberalism.<sup>66</sup> His theory of communicative justice does place demands on the moral background culture of contemporary democratic modern society. The key point, however, is that Habermas's communicative justice is the presupposition of a liberal outlook that is geared towards guaranteeing the reasonable comprehensive conception of the good life.<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, the indispensability of dialogue in Habermas's theory of communicative action helps to create the platform to rectify the global ethical quandaries facing our humanity today. The social, political and economic distortions could only be resolved by the tenets of dialogical engagement. The models of collective decision making and collective rationality have become a contextual contemporary issues. However, solving the problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will require a coordinated rational action on a massive or global scale. The models of collective rationality require the idea of the institutional framework, social, political, cultural, linguistic and economic structures that will allow us to meet up with the fundamental challenges facing this century. Habermas's philosophy is anchored on the theory of the moralization of society, truth validity, communicative ethics, social order, social change, and the new world order. It is premised on moral ordering, free and open communication. We need to engage in a free and open communication in order to strengthen our democratic world. The core findings in this theoretical discourse is that Habermas's communicative rationality brings about an emancipated global society; it is fundamentally designed for moral order or global order, social change and human solidarity. Communication is an integral part of human democracy. Our Enlightenment democratic vision can engender social order and normative presupposition. Habermas's theory of communicative action and democratic society is the theory of social order and social order engenders social change or the radical transformation of democratic society. Rational dialogue brings about global change in our international system; reasoned communication requires global interconnectedness or international interaction. Moreover, Habermas's communicative, political action and freedom is deeply rooted in his ethical theory. Habermas's ethical theory is heralded by his political theory. He believes in the whole idea of politics. The ideal of politics has been overburdened by scholars and that distorted communication has been the fundamental problem of our

democratic world. Habermas was of the view that fundamentalism, terrorism and terror has been a dead-end and a global problem.

### **Conclusion**

Habermas's communicative action is the transformational values of human conduct, organizational framework, culture and the normative core of communicative association; it reveals that differences should be allowed to flourish and there ought to be the need for tolerance and moral rebirth or consciousness. For Habermas, philosophy is rational and a living discourse. The political relevance of the Habermasian perspective reveals liberal democracy of the cognitive capacity of the people. The indispensability of dialogue in Habermas's philosophy reflects a clarion call for moral rebirth in contemporary Nigerian society. The correlation between intersubjectivity and dialogue are crucial for the institutionalization of justice in contemporary Nigerian society. Habermas's philosophy has a great role to play here in making sure the continued relevance of dialogue remained sustained or explicit in order to combat terror and terrorism that is currently bedeviling contemporary Nigerian society. It is, however, germane to assert that understanding the Habermasian picture should be the essence of dialogue and it reveals its sustained or continued relevance to contemporary Nigerian society. The theory of communicative action as far as we are concerned has a moral element. The Habermasian perspective of communicative action is legally and fundamentally designed for human emancipation, and beneficial scheme of social cooperation. His conceptualization of communicative justice reawakens in us the spirit of moral consciousness and the promotion of human rights. Habermas's priority on human knowledge and collective interests is deeply rooted in the democratic existentialism of the human person. Habermas's communicative action is Western based but it is possible that his democratic ideals and thesis of ideal speech situation cuts across all race and cultures irrespective of its political structures. His theoretical postulation could be useful to other climates like the contemporary Nigerian democratic states. Habermas's theoretical constructs emphasizes the comprehensive conception of the good life, idea of the common good, justice, human rights, normative rightness, law and order. His theory could serve as a leitmotif test for ensuring the public happiness of all in African democratic societies especially in contemporary Nigerian society. Habermas's theoretical construct has an African standpoint or African existential dimension. The African person prioritizes collectivism over individualism, altruism over egoism, conscience over evil, and good over bad.

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