

Examining Forgiveness with Arendt Political Forgiveness and its Impact on Peacebuilding

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Abstract

Case Studies

The term forgiveness is common in the Holy Bible and the central message of Jesus Christ revolves around forgiveness and love for human kind. In fact, Christians are obligated to forgive one another as a prerequisite for their own prayers to be hearken to. As a matter of fact, the concept of forgiveness is a major theme in other religions sects. Beside the above, forgiveness is more often considered primarily as interpersonal experience, which exudes moral rejoinder to a wrongdoing that has specific effects on the personal relationship existing between both the one who is the victim and the wrongdoer. But over the years, forgiveness has been deployed by nation states in different political contexts since the end of the Second World War for the purpose of reconciliation and reconstruction. Thus, there have been attempt to defend a form of forgiveness, one that takes place in public and applies to a wider range of practices in a specific political context.

In this study the researcher deployed qualitative approach to explore the concept forgiveness with Arendt political forgiveness and its impact on peacebuilding in human society. This paper identifies that forgiveness is not generally accepted by some scholars beyond being family and relationship therapy, but not for violent confrontations and acts which has judicial and legal consequences.

Therefore, through exposition of the interplay of forgiveness, revenge, apology and reconciliation this paper contributes to the discourse among scholars globally and also argues that Hannah Arendt political forgiveness is very relevant today in conflict transformation and peacebuilding and why it should be completely integrated into peace and conflict resolution policies of nation states given its viability. And also, that the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOS) should apply forgiveness in peacemaking and peacebuilding in order to transform intractable conflicts.

Keywords: Role, Forgiveness, Apology, Revenge, Reconciliation and Peacebuilding.

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1. Introduction

Historically the idea of forgiveness can be traced to the Bible from the period of the Old Testament to the New Testament era which culminated in the birth of the Christian faith after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The earthly ministry of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ exemplified forgiveness as the main plank, of the message of salvation of human kind. The quest for humans to fulfill the preordained desire of God is central to forgiveness of sins, in order for reconciliation

between God and human kinds who have sinned in diverse ways starting from Adamic narrative, which was contrary to the ultimate will of God. Over the ages, the Prophets of the Old Testament era pointed to forgiveness and its place in the essence of existence. Examples can be found in Daniel 9:9 “The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him” (NIV). In Isaiah 43:25 “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more” (NIV). In Isaiah 1:18 “come now, let us settle the

matter,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.” In Jeremiah 31:34 “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Bible verses on forgiveness inspires Christian to forgive others and to remember that human kinds have been forgiven. Thanks to Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice on the cross. Forgiveness is a poignant reminder of the story of the death on the cross and human kind place in the whole essence. Today the overriding impacts of forgiveness on family, and the world political community, more often characterized with violent conflict cannot be downplayed. Thus, in modern times, forgiveness is seen in the light of its viability for conflict transformation in peacebuilding.

Thus, the advent of political forgiveness in our own time, that is, at the end of the Second World War and subsequently Cold War engendered cooperative interactions among nations and people of the Western societies which brought about apologies and forgiveness around the world. It is as a result of this proclivity that some scholars shifted attention to the idea of reconciliation, apology and forgiveness as an emerging trend; which reflects the spirit that pervades the new thinking and modern generation. Dwyer (2003) “As the last millennium drew a close, there appeared to be a global frenzy to balance moral ledgers.” Obviously, wide ranging study and research on religion and politics suggests that a novel method of conflict transformation based on religious peacebuilding is defining how conflict is resolve among communities previously enmeshed in violence (Appley, Scott 2000). Philosophers became interested in forgiveness and the German theologian and philosopher Hannah Arendt was the first who questioned, it non application in political setting and subsequently others interrogated the viability of forgiveness in politics with mixed feeling.

Moolakkattu (2010) one of the issues at the front burner about discourse on forgiveness is whether it is equal to forgetting and to espouse the approach of Eastern Europe which was premised on forgive and forget or integrate recollection as a significant

component of forgiveness. It is a common knowledge that to forgive you must have the ability to remember or acknowledge wrong done to one in the first place, thus not forgetting is a precondition to forgiving. When there is no ability to remember, forgiveness as a mindful performance is not feasible. “The slogan, therefore, is no longer forgive and forget, but remember and forgive.” Forgiving a wrong done in the past does not necessarily suggest not paying attention to or forgetting the harm or injury caused, rather it can be described as an act of humanity and virtue of Christianity and perhaps other religious tenets. Note that forgiveness is an act from the victim of hurt or injured unlike apology that is from the one who wrong or victimized the other. The sincerity of forgiveness or apology is also key to understanding its significance in resolving conflict and peacebuilding.

Philosopher Trudy Govier (1999) in his work titled: Forgiveness and Unforgiveable, asserts that, fundamentally, there is no one that cannot be forgiven irrespective of what he or she may have done, because to the contrary, to consider a situation unforgiveable due to heinous nature of offense is to overlook the innate capacity of human beings to make moral choice and transform themselves from bad to good which is at the root of human value and self-worth (Govier,1999). Govier (2002) argues that to forgive one must separate people from their deeds and that it is not the deeds that is forgiven, it is only the persons that is forgiven. She argues that deeds cannot be remorseful or apologize to seek for forgiveness or confront moral transformation and that the object of forgiveness is human beings. It is human beings that have the capacity to forgive and not to forgive. It is the capacity for moral transformation that distance humans from their actions hence deeds and doer can be separated and that is at the heart of the essence of forgiveness. Hence forgiveness requires courage needed to propel him to adopt non-violence approach to conflict and offers a veritable platform for wrongdoer to take responsibility for healing to take place. Arendt (1958) described forgiving as a singular response that is not just a reaction rather afresh, new and unpredictably, with no strings attached to what lead to it---“Without being forgiven, released from the

consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover; we would remain the victims of its consequences forever.

Therefore, ultimately this paper attempts to promote forgiveness as personal as well as political, by examining Hannah Arendt's account in *The Human Condition*. Thus, advocating forgiveness essentially in the collective political world, established based on the interrelatedness of the variety of human action, Arendt provides the latitude to come to term with the unity that lie beneath the seemingly incongruent settings wherein forgiveness is expressed. Highlen (2023) "Arendt accounts for both the role of forgiveness in private human relationships and the way in which this role is fundamentally political." In this paper, we examine the basis for objections to political forgiveness which can be attributed to the theoretical dependence on image of forgiveness, thus, this paper promotes forgiveness and Arendt political forgiveness for peacebuilding and conflict transformation in communities especially where destruction, killings and genocide are involved, espousing its application due to its effectiveness in a wide range of prevailing conflicts across the world political community through the democratic instruments.

2. Conceptual Discourse

2.1 The Concept Forgiveness

There is no consensus among researchers and scholars on the most accepted definition of forgiveness. Most definitely this is owing to numerous contexts of which forgiveness is used, as a result, meaning attributed are more often in specific context of its usage. Sometimes forgiveness has to do with self (Hall & Fincham, in press), in some cases about others (Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998), it also can be attributed to God (Exline, Yali, & Lobel, 1999), and it may involve families (DiBlasio & Proctor, 1993), or the whole societies and culture of the people (Sandage, Hill, & Vang, 2003). Considering the wide-ranging contexts in which the issue of forgiveness is applicable and the multi-plural factors inherent in it, a solitary all-inclusive definition of forgiveness is not easy to come by.

Thus, one is inclined to agree with the proposition of Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1991), who conceptualized "forgiveness as a multi-dimensional construct that contains dimensions of affect, behavior, and cognition."

Pingleton (1989: 27) defined forgiveness as an act of giving up one's right to revenge as a result of prior harm or injury meted. forgiveness: identifies, envisions and tries to alleviate in contrast to the *lex talionis*, or law of the talon – the human organism's universal, practically instinctive tendency for vengeance and payback for another who cause wound and agony at the hand of another. Therefore, implicitly forgiveness entails opposition to a seemingly natural law of every human being to naturally and probably react to harm and ill-treatment. The well-known explanation of forgiveness comprises of features of relief or let go in the course of time. Such that is predicated on "anger" (Davenport, 1991; Fitzgibbons, 1986), "revenge" (Clove, 1993), "shame" (Halling, 1994), "record of wrongs" (DiBlasio, 1992), and "resentment" (Enright and the Human Development Study Group, 1996; North, 1987).

The component of time or forgiveness as an unfolding process taking months and possibly years to achieve is a fundamental component emphasized by most scholars (Cunningham, 1985; Enright and the Human Development Study Group, 1996; Fitzgibbons, 1996; Hope, 1987; Hunter, 1978; Hargrave, 1994; Kaufman, 1984; Kirkup, 1993). Enright, and those associated with his research (Enright and the Human Development Study Group, 1992; Gassing, 1996; Hebl and Enright, 1993; Subkoviak, 1992) opined that the concept of forgiveness can be attributed to mercy. This is in line with North (1987), whose opinions about forgiveness is that it is a process of voluntarily letting go of one's right concerning offence and wrath as a result of harmful deed. Based on this, the one who is injured reaction to the one who caused the injury is compassion, though the injurious actions deserve hate and vengefulness (Lauritzen, 1987, DiBlasio and Benda 1991, and Cunningham, 1985). There is divergence of opinion about the connection between forgiveness and reconciliation. Enright et al (1992)

contend that, mercy and forgiveness is an act which takes place or exist on its own devoid of the apologetic or regretful activities of the one who caused injury.

2.2 The Concept Reconciliation

Reconciliation is seen as the process of two parties resolving differences. Forgiveness is described as a merciful, unconditional action controlled entirely by the injured. It is the means by which a hurt person breaks the sensation of hate/resentment with the hurter (Benson, 1992). Davenport (1991:142) differentiate act of forgiveness from capitulation. She promotes forgiveness which is not based on apologetic acts of the injurer. Nevertheless, she highlights that people ‘may choose to “forgive” their culprit, yet demand for behavioral change and share reverence instead of capitulate to constant cruelties. Whereas (Donnelly, 1984; Fitzgibbons, 1986; Worthington and DiBlasio, 1990) also integrate repentance view point, with a differing standpoint on the relationship between forgiveness and repentance. Furthermore, Donnelly opined that forgiveness is an act of mercy, and as ‘turning the other cheek,’ leading to repetition by the one who cause the injury. She anchored her position on theological standpoint in New Testament for act of forgiveness that is combative and is linked with change of behaviour by the injurer.

2.3 The Concept Apology

Apology can simply mean remorseful acknowledgement of wrongdoing or fiasco. Scott, E (2024) Apology is said to be out of sincerity and effective when it exudes honest empathy, repentance, and guilt with intent to realize short comings and wrong done. The reasons why apology is necessary when one hurt the other includes: “Acknowledge that you were wrong, discuss what is allowed and not allowed in your relationship, express your regret and remorse, learn from your mistakes and find new ways of dealing with difficult situations, open up a line of communication with the other person.

A sincere apology brings about relief, if there is feeling of guilt over actions whereas not doing so can

be destructive to personal and professional relationship. A fruitful apology authenticates that the other person hurt is truly upset, and recognizes concern (“you accept that your action caused the other person pain”). By so doing you express the fact that you are sincerely sorry and conscious of the feeling of the person you cause harm to, and you are ready to change your ways or manner, through efforts, shun such misadventures henceforth.... (Corliss, J 2023).

2.4 The Concept Revenge

It was the great philosopher Francis Bacon who asserts that, “A man that studied revenge, keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal, and do well.” Eric Jaffe (2011) in his work titled: The Complicated Psychology of Revenge, contend that in the recent years, psychological researches and studies suggests that, the expression of revenge has not satisfied those who sought it, in contrast to their expectations. The observation by behavioural scientist on revenge indicates that rather than appeasing the aggression, the distastefulness of the original wrongdoing persist this is because just harming the wrong doer does not satisfy the desire for revenge. It was also observed that instead of producing sense of justice, revenge generates sequence of reprisal, partly due to the fact that, “one person’s moral equilibrium rarely aligns with another’s” The consequences of these perceptions enhanced the sense of the quest for revenge which has lingered over the years, even though it has proven to produce sour taste than promoted.

2.5 The Concept Peacebuilding

Doyle, & Nicholas (2000) as cited by United Nations Peace Operation (2000) defines peacebuilding as: “activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war.” According to UN Secretary General Policy Committee, peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for

sustainable peace and sustainable development (Duffield, M.R. 2010). The method involves prevention of violence, management of conflict, resolution or transformation of conflict as well as post-conflict reconciliation or trauma healing prior, in the course of violence and after violence confrontation (Adhikari, M. 2021, Anderson, Ruben & Weigand, Florian, 2015, Autesserre, Severine 2014).

3. Literature Review

Arendt, Hannah (1958) The potency of forgiveness as a method for peacebuilding and conflict transformation find traction in the work of Hannah Arendt who argues that forgiveness creates the latitude for human's undesirable past to be put behind, for a better understanding of the future, bereft of resentment and tension. Arendt posited that, infringing on another is a common occurrence with constant nature of actions in relationships and in a cycle of relations, but it requires forgiving, in order to continually free people from what they have done unwittingly. It is only from relentless reciprocal relief from what they do, men remain free agents, through continuous willingness to the transformation of their minds and start again, the question is can they be trusted with so great a power to begin something new (Mundi, Amor 2013). They can be given the chance because the possibility of mind transformation to ethical behavior and positive values exists. Consequentially, altering the influence of power dynamics relationship among parties involved in conflict (victims and victimizer).

Torpey (2003) one of the factors responsible for discourse on forgiveness in recent years can be attributed to the awareness of holocaust. The whole gamut of restorative justice especially the revolution in criminal justice and mediation between victim-offender, taking cue from original justice system. Japan government presentation of a written apology to the President of South Korea, Kim Dae-jung for the harms it subjected the people of Korea to in its thirty-five-year occupation and the reinforcement of the Christian knowledge of forgiveness which is also common to other world religions has promoted

forgiveness in peacebuilding (BBC, 10 August, 2010).

The former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, pointed out that, forgiveness cannot take place without memory of the past, "South African people must remember their dreadful past in order to be able to deal with it, to forgive when it is necessary, but never to forget" Moolakkattu (2010). Similarly, the famous South African, Anglican Bishop, Archbishop Desmond Tutu states: "There is no future without forgiveness, but to forgive, one must know what happened. In order not to repeat what happened to others, we must remember" (Tutu, 1999). Gopin (2001) Honest act of forgiveness is not under compulsion and not based on any condition because it is not as a result -of duress from any other party, and not due to apology or acknowledgement of misconduct by the victimizer. Moolakkattu contend that independent actions, like that can be liken to profound confidence in the good nature of human beings and the shared humanity as members of the same human family which he attributed to as example of Ghandi's undying ethical values. And that the forgiver as well as the forgiven experience transformation in the processes of offering and accepting forgiveness.

There is a school of thought which holds that forgiveness is only private, personal, and spiritual in nature. Moreover, existing literature on conflict resolution focused on the methods for resolving conflicts but not much is said on how to restore broken relationships. Whereas apparently retentions of previous injuries are most likely to vanish when fundamental issues which borders on the past and root causes are frontally resolved. The fact that conflict resolution is chiefly concern about the foundational issues that brings about conflict limits its capacity to find solution to the breakdown of human relations. Inability to confront and mend disagreement could trigger conflict in the future. Apparently, the act of forgiveness can be useful in conflict resolution if the disputants agree with the fact that conflict is interpersonal in nature and it is due to break down of relationship and that both parties have a role to play in reconstructing a harmonious relationship and identities which

invariably meant restoration of common humanity among disputing parties (Hicks, 2002). Suffice to say that on relational ground, forgiveness has proven to be a useful virtue which help in resolving conflicts among husbands and wives, relatives, brothers and sisters, neighbors; thus, the application of forgiveness in resolving conflict between parties in communities, and nation states should not be seen as a gamble by some philosophers and scholars especially the realists' school of thought. Rather it should be seen as a viable tool for resolving intractable conflicts.

Fortunately, fifty years after Hannah Arendt raised the issue of non-existence of forgiveness in the political practice, a massive multidisciplinary literature on the politics of apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation has come to stay. Series of historical factors are responsible for this swift turn: the courage exhibited by former Soviet Bloc countries to admit to state espionage and other infringements on the citizenry thereby trampling on their rights; the founding of truth commissions in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile among others to investigate state authorized disappearances, kidnappings, rape and tortures etc. The most famous efforts include the, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of South Africa (Arendt, Hannah 1958; Andrew, 1999). In like manner, there were positive acts by parties involved in the Second World War on both side of the divides of the conflict to ask for forgiveness and mending of relationship due to numerous war crimes and violations, for instance, "settler societies like Canada, the USA and Australia have been called to task for past injustices by various members of their own citizenry: indigenous peoples, the descendants of former slaves, linguistic and ethnic minorities, and immigrant groups who have suffered from discrimination and exploitation" (Digeser, P. 2001).

However, the role of political forgiveness and theoretical explanation of what constitute a political forgiveness and what makes it different from the well-known act of forgiveness enunciated in Biblical teachings and the life of Jesus Christ is a thin line. Though some philosophers who devoted a great deal of time in studying political forgiveness are not comfortable with naïve promotion of forgiveness in

the political space, their argument is that it is capable of misrepresenting and demeaning forgiveness as a moral model and also disregarding injustice, accountability and the need to end harmful relationships. They are against looking at forgiveness from political standings and different contexts. Whereas they are philosophers who are engrossed with the idea of turning political forgiveness into something rationally impregnable on moral ideal.

In finding a ground in support of political forgiveness after examining the questions for or against, Maclachlan, Alice (2012) argued based on the following method. Firstly, she presented momentarily, multi-dimensional narratives about forgiveness. Ensuing, from the foregoing she looked at the best way to grasp forgiveness as political. And lastly Alice asked questions which borders on main disagreements to applying forgiveness to political settings, that: 1. "Political actors have no right to forgive on behalf of individual victims; 2. Forgiveness imports inappropriate and illiberal notions of deep, psychological change into politics. 3. Only persons, not collectivities, can forgive." Alice response to the above was that every of them was partly based on the multi-dimensional explanation of forgiveness which she promotes. Finally, Alice is of slightly contrary view over the opposition to political forgiveness. Based on the foregoing, Alice contends that, forgiveness is an individual response to unfair injury, forgiveness should not be seen as a political issue, given that: 4. Acts of political forgiveness should not be high and dry in the suitable types of motives. Alice disagrees based on the examination of some political reasons why forgiveness is tenable. She argued that unanswerable philosophical objections to forgiveness as a political concept do not exist. Alice reflected on some of the arrangements that political forgiveness is predicated upon. Apparently, the politics and meticulousness of reconciliation are huge: the chief reason for this conversation is to do away with some of the striking philosophical oppositions to political policies which uses the philological of forgiveness. Perhaps the language of forgiveness is not properly applied (contingent on the background of the political disagreement) to policies of "amnesty, pardon, or apology," as signs of

“reconciliation or restoration,” certainly instances abound on how each are proficient in the accomplishment of the work of forgiveness.

I agree with Alice that philosophical denunciation of political forgiveness is a misplaced priority, rather philosophers should contribute through scholarship on how political forgiveness can be more effective in curbing intractable conflicts. I believe that government and policy makers deploying forgiveness in the garb of pardon and amnesty for reconciliation more often forestall potential conflicts which could have linger when there is no political forgiveness. Thus, Hannah Arendt political forgiveness should be seen in the light of human nature and capacity to change for the better amidst previous offences. Obviously, the researcher findings in this study suggest that forgiveness as well as political forgiveness is indeed a useful tool for peace and conflict managers and experts among communities enmeshed in violent confrontation which is identity based like ethnicity or religion in order to accomplish workable peace. The fact remains that there must be forgiveness, apology and reconciliation to bring about social healing for conflict transformation.

4. Arendt's Political Forgiveness

According to Arendt (1958), the working of the universe and human society is determined by human work and human action, while human work offer a semi-permanent framework within which the later can take place. Action, in Arendt's view, is political action, and the world in which it takes place, and serves to constitute in the form of intersubjective narrative-making, is fundamentally a political world. It should perhaps come as no surprise; then, that Arendt is among the first to explicitly address the possibility of political forgiveness. In Arendt's theory of action, the discourse dwell in a dominant role in the theory of action, her examination of forgiveness is relevant and have been established in an extensive diversity of philosophical traditions, although with diverse emphases and understandings. Arendt is exceptional for her insistence that forgiveness is basically political, but also in reality exists as a “condition for the political world—the open space of meaningful action and speech—itself.”

Arendt analysis of forgiveness is particularly based on political phenomenon that serves as proactive solution to potential conflict and, hence defend the space, that is the political world. Forgiveness is a corrective to irreversibility, guaranteeing that conducts undertaken previously do not constitute as stumbling block to future opportunities as a consequence. Arendt put forward two dicta, which are the corrective of forgiveness, which salvages action from its past, with the parallel corrective of promise-making, which liberates one's action from the vagueness of its future. Collectively, they preserve the delicate political world in existence, given that the actual activity of this world—humans acting together—continuously looms to weaken its own prospect. Irreversibility is about the certainty that actions, once done, cannot be undone. This has important consequences, from the viewpoint of the issue of the action, and for the political world wherein actions are displayed. To begin with, on one hand, given that the import of action is at all times based on its interface with the actions of others and construed completely by others in the milieu of human dealings, its complete implication cannot be grasped unless after the fact. On the other hand, not like the outcome of work, actions taking in the past cannot be destroyed. Their fortitude is not only found in their effects, but the narratives that are produced by others in the political world, which ultimately is an integral part of that world. Conceivably, utmost prominently, actions are indicative of the character of their themes as stand-in beings; not with the awareness of the kind of people involved. Through people's actions they reveal who they are, a point that Arendt frequently accentuates. As a result of this identification of doer and deed, the issue remains connected with their actions, even when they go crooked. Without a freedom from the irreversibility of action, the human ability to act would “be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover” (Arendt 1998: 237).

An action necessitating forgiveness, the kind which can be forgiven, Arendt refers to trespass, while referencing the Greek hamartanein within the background of the gospel of Luke in the Bible. She observed that this term is interpreted often as “sin,” whereas its meaning is actually closer to “to miss” or

“to go astray.” A clearly diverse action is that symbolized by the Greek skandala, which is more corresponding to “offense.” (Arendt, 1998:240). The role of forgiveness is to provide freedom for a trespasser from a trespass, though not applicable to an offense, of which Arendt described as “crime and willed evil.” This last sort of action is not an appropriate article of forgiveness, and cascades in its place inside the horizon of retributive justice (Arendt 1998:240). Young-Bruehl observed that it is blurred for understanding if indeed Arendt contemplates that open crimes like murder should be forgiven (Young-Bruehi (2009:56-57). furthermore, Arendt maintains that what constitute “radical evil” should not be forgiven, or punished, but should be destroyed. This suggests that there is a resemblance amongst radical evil and offenses, however, radical evil is the highest class of willed evil, and a discrepancy, because it is not all offense that can be described as radical evil. The possibility of an explanation lies in the conversation of what is or is not pardonable starts to drive far ahead of the question, what is forgiveness? It is geared towards ethical consideration as well as question of what should be forgiven, and the everyday question of what have we been able to forgive (Derrida, 2015). The questions are complex and complicated because of the idea of “banality of evil,” apriorism, wrongdoing—willed evil, radical evil, banal evil—characterizes the limits of forgiveness for Arendt.

Trespassing, then, are unvarying manifestation in the political world, undistinguishable to the unavoidable conflicts amongst “worlds.” They are separate from deliberate acts of willed evil and are foreseeable in the space that is founded through shared exchange of a multiplicity of inimitable judgments. It is rational to induce; however, this is constantly implied in Arendt's account, that the standards upon which actions are considered by some to be trespasses is not constant, it changes in the course of time, in line with the ever-changing network of associations, that is the political world. Since the standpoint of others in the collective world, everyone is vulnerable to becoming a trespasser, if one's actions are in conflict with each other. What forgiveness achieves is not the eradication of trespasses, nor is it the reassessment of what constitute a trespass (i.e., that it actually was a

trespass) (Levinas, 2011:28). Actions, appropriately talking, are unforgiveable; however, the subjects of actions are forgiven for what they have done. Inversely, somebody is pardoned once they have been free from the penalties of their wrongdoing is seen in that light by others.

De Warren observed attentively that this freedom, for Arendt, it conveys a dual “sense of release from (Ablosung) and liberation to (Erlösung),” It is not only from the standpoint of the subject who is free from their action, but also from the viewpoint of the political environment—the prospect of action—which cannot occur short of a means to be “redeemed” from the danger of its own breakdown or end (De Warren (2018:26). In the first instance forgiveness, free the representative from the penalties of their deeds. To be specific, it is a liberty from the response of others to a wrongdoing, which is basically connected hither with revenge (Arendt, 1998:240). There is no justification whatsoever in responding—literally “re-acting,” According to Arendt—in disagreement to a violation; it not only foreseeable, the response encompasses the process of the innovative action, that is the perception of others, who are capable of responding. Nonetheless retribution, is a response that provokes responses, “can only play itself out until the process is complete, or perhaps endlessly, as a cycle of retributive violence. To release the agent from this process, to which they are bound as the original subject of the action, is to forego revenge and choose to end the process, so to speak, prematurely.”

May be, more significantly this decision not only free the agent from the responses of others; it free them to act again, without hindrance by their association with their prior actions. It is based on this logic that forgiveness exposes the subject to be essentially political, because it entails the rebuilding of an agent to the political world. Through recreation of the space wherein actions and speech are indicative of their subjects, the trespasser has the option to unveil herself anew, as somebody who is ahead of their trespass. In the absence of forgiveness, there will be no prospect, making the wrongdoer perpetually bound to their action. The argument of Arendt is that, reprimand is the substitute to forgiveness in reaction

to a trespass, as penalty also bring an end to a process of action and interferes with what may perhaps turn to never-ending cycle of violence. The connection between forgiveness and punishment Arendt espoused appeared big in other efforts to preserve a political kind of forgiveness. For example, Zaibert view point is that forgiveness is just the thoughtful rebuttal to penalize (Zaibert, 2009, 2013). However, for Arendt the difference lures devotion to what is both achieve more primarily, which is the repair of an agent to the collective world wherein in future their actions could be worthwhile and impactful on humanity.

These remarks about forgiveness, that is, it brings an end to hostilities and entails some kind of restoration between parties, are not exclusive to Arendt; rather in contrast, descriptions of forgiveness as the fixing of a shattered relationship, or observing the future in the place of the past, or inclining in the direction of reconciliation, are common. Arendt described attention as something which are all unambiguously political roles. Short of locus to the collective political world, becoming worthless or prosaic, sheer suggestions of person's penchant differing from larger context. Furthermore, Arendt proposition of forgiveness and the political world helps elucidate the means that forgiveness is unlike forgetting. While the act of forgiveness helps to eradicate something, specifically the tie of obligation that hold a wrongdoer to the penalties of their action, it is not capable to eradicating the penalties themselves. Arendt do not promote that which is forgotten whether it is the deed or that the wrongdoer did. Nonetheless we should not forget or overlook the current consequence from an action that has triggered injury. It is based on the foregoing that Arendt emphasizes that forgiveness is an action that rewards the irreversibility of action as such—if actions might be uncompleted or streaked from recollection completely, forgiveness would have been needless. As a result, Arendt account agrees for, and even assumes, a circumstance that an agent is forgiven of wrongdoing and reinstated to the political community, given that it is the community that recollects from this time the wrong that was done, the one who did it, and what it led to and continues to cause (Arendt 1992:43-44).

Accordingly, Arendt displayed cynicism on forgiveness that is virtuously personal. On forgiveness premised on love she engraves, that “love ... destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others.” It is “not only apolitical but antipolitical, perhaps the most powerful of all antipolitical human forces” (Arendt, 1998:242). When the lover forgives the cherished, Arendt claims, it is in deference to locus to the material implication of the action, since love engaged to its life-threatening posture to oversee all of the beloved's burdens. The inference in this situation is that forgiveness can be based in love (i.e., take place inside the background of a private personal affiliation), but that its import is lessened—it does not make points to any other world rather it expresses the love that is previously there. Whether this is an adequate explanation of love, which give the impression of basic binary relations amongst two people wherein they breakdown into a quasi-unity, is uncertain. Arendt's major preoccupation is that purely interpersonal forgiveness is entrenched in an assessment of the other person (i.e., as beloved) and not in the effect of their action within a collective world (Arendt, 2006a). In exactness forgiveness, always mentions posterior to the world and not just to the agents in it, is driven as an alternative by deference, “not unlike the Aristotelian *philia politike*,” which identifies in other persons the ability to take actions and accept obligation for action, and needs to preserve the space in which this can linger. Reverence is not predicated on a personal or emotive evaluation of other subjects, but consider others as political beings and integral part of a shared political community.

From the foregoing, apparently, a careful examination of Arendt political forgiveness through the lenses of it major features offer insights on how it can be deployed for peacebuilding and conflict transformation in the world political community especially in protracted conflicts which are common among communities around the world today.

5. Key Features of Arendt's Political Forgiveness

Based on the foregoing the researcher highlights the essential features, implications, challenges and

limitation of Arendt political forgiveness. Scholars and policy makers must realize and acknowledge it's imperative for peacebuilding, given its capacity for conflict transformation.

5.1 A Remedy for the Irreversibility of Action:

Arendt argues that human actions are inherently irreversible; once something is done, it cannot be undone. This irreversibility can trap individuals in a cycle of consequences, especially in cases of wrongdoing. Forgiveness, in Arendt's view, acts as a "remedy" or "cure" for this irreversibility. It allows for a "release" from the consequences of past actions, preventing actors (both wrongdoer and wronged) from being perpetually bound by them.

5.2 Breaking the Cycle of Vengeance and Retaliation: Without forgiveness, Arendt suggests that human interactions would be caught in a relentless automatism of vengeance and retaliation. One action would inevitably lead to a reactive counter-action, creating an unending chain of violence and resentment. Forgiveness interrupts this cycle, allowing for a new beginning and preventing the past from completely dictating the present. It is the "exact opposite of vengeance."

5.3 Enabling New Beginnings (Natality): For Arendt, one of the fundamental human capacities is "natality" – the ability to begin something new. Forgiveness is essential for this capacity to flourish in the political realm. By releasing individuals from the burdens of past wrongs, it frees them to act anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the original transgression. This allows for the continuation and renewal of the public space of action.

5.4 Maintaining the Space of Politics: Arendt believed that without forgiveness, the very space of politics, where free action and interaction occur, would be destroyed by reactive rancor and endless cycles of retribution. Forgiveness helps to sustain relationships in the community and allows for the possibility of a shared future.

5.5 Secular and Political, Not Primarily Theological or Moral: Arendt deliberately secularizes the concept of forgiveness, detaching it from purely religious or personal moral imperatives.

While acknowledging its Christian roots, she emphasizes its worldly and political function. For her, it's not about compassion or love in a private sense, but a political activity that ensures the continuity of human affairs.

5.6 Distinction from Punishment: Arendt sees punishment not as the opposite of forgiveness, but as an alternative. Both aim to put an end to something that could otherwise go on endlessly. However, punishment seeks to re-establish justice by making the wrongdoer pay, while forgiveness offers a release that allows for a fresh start. A crucial point is that forgiveness does not negate responsibility for the action; it liberates from its consequences.

5.7 Conditions for Forgiveness (Implied): While Arendt doesn't lay out strict conditions in the same way some moral philosophers might, her work implies that for political forgiveness to be effective, it should be anchored in concepts like respect and continuity. It's an act that takes place within a community, often with witnesses, and it implies the power to punish, even if that power is withheld.

In essence, the "result" of Arendt's political forgiveness is the preservation of the human capacity for action, the maintenance of the public sphere, and the possibility for genuine new beginnings in the face of the inherent irreversibility and unpredictability of human deeds. It is a political "remedy" that prevents society from being perpetually trapped by its past wrongs.

5.8 Implications of Arendt's Concept of Forgiveness

Political renewal: Forgiveness makes it possible for individuals and communities to move beyond past grievances and create a more just and equitable future.

Collective action: Forgiveness promotes collective action by creating room for all parties involved in conflict to work together in furtherance of achieving a shared goal, amidst previous conflicts or wrongdoing.

Human freedom and agency: Forgiveness empowers individuals to exercise their agency and shape the course of events, rather than being determined by past actions.

6. Challenges and Limitation of Forgiveness and Arendt's Political Forgiveness

On one hand, notwithstanding the acknowledgement of the mental power of forgiveness for social healing and mental well-being, it is relatively not well promoted in psychotherapy literature and many reasons have been adduced to be responsible. Diblasio (1985) and Procter (1965) There exist "anti-forgiveness" bias as a result of the conceptual link of forgiveness with religion especially Judeo-Christian tradition. Though it is historically true that forgiveness is a religious practice but to restrict it to the confine of churches, temples and mosques alone is a great disserve for the body of knowledge and the human family (emphasize mine). Writers like Hope 1987; McCullough and Worthington 1994; MC Min and Rhoads 1996; Shontz and Rosenak 1988 challenged the notion that to denounce or limit the influence of forgiveness from the mainstream human society because of its historical root which is religion is not worthwhile and logical. Also, there is opposing view about forgiveness in the study of mental health. According to Tournier (1962:174) the strong resentment against forgiveness by some scholars stems from the fact that it contradicts the rudimentary human expectations which hinges on the notion that "everything must be paid for." Thus, because forgiveness is related to an act of mercy in judicial sense, it is viewed by some scholars that it authorizes the wrong doer to be free to wrong the victim again, and the victim to endure in dominated situation. This schism can be attributed to the easy simpleminded approach by which "forgive and forget" and shake hands with just the word "sorry" without taking into cognizance of the effects of such actions on social relations that it throws up. Hence Bass and David (1998) opined that, forgiveness confers blame on the victim while the victimizer is absolved of guilt and accountability. And that forgiveness is often perceived as the avenue by which patriarchal religious and social systems can maintain female subjugation. Such criticism is

justified when those who advocate forgiveness as a therapeutic intervention utilize the concept in unclear, dubious and one-dimensional way.

For example, Bloomfield and Fielder (1983) considered forgiveness simply as "letting go" of an event, implying the mental frame will just forget about it." McAlister (1984) described the paradigm of forgiveness not as a method of fixing, but as a necessity: "The client may not initially be able to forget but the client must forgive because we have a need not only to be forgiven but also to forgive" (p. 55). Inability to develop the idea of forgiveness inevitably becomes a threat to the safety of clients who experienced or was a victim of harm and convey sense of validity to the derision that forgiveness is not a vital beneficial intercession. McCullough *et al.* (1995) recapped this inkling, when he posited that "forgiveness should not be oppressive . . . we should avoid the assumption that these interventions are good for all clients in all situations" (p. 362). Likewise, Hargrave (1994) promotes a viewpoint that is further complex compared to 'good/bad' divide commonly seen in literature. 'In dealing with families where there has been a severe violation of love and trust, the therapist must realize the harsh reality of the damage . . . it is the therapist's job to help family members assess the damage accurately and provide consultation and assistance on how best to handle the damage' (Hargrave, 1994: 110). The foregoing is also applicable for utilization by negotiators and mediators for peacebuilding in ethnic, religious and group conflicts wherein there is severe violation, implicitly, the process of forgiveness is not one-way traffic lots need to be done and acknowledge to make it impactful in peacebuilding.

On the other hand, which is Arendt's political forgiveness, its applicability in extreme cases: Arendt's concept of forgiveness may not be applicable to extreme cases of wrongdoing, such as radical evil or mass atrocities.

Relationship between forgiveness and punishment: Arendt's view on the relationship between forgiveness and punishment is complex, and may

require further exploration in the context of transitional justice.

Overall, Arendt's concept of forgiveness offers valuable insights into the complexities of human action and the importance of forgiveness in facilitating collective action and promoting human freedom and agency.

7. Role of Forgiveness in Peacebuilding

There are evidences to suggest that forgiveness can be a very viable tool for peacebuilding in a cultural setting which shares the value of forgiveness and are willing to exploit it to achieve reconciliation. According to Lederach, "understanding conflict and developing appropriate models of handling it will necessarily be rooted in, and must respect and draw from, the cultural knowledge of a people." However, when there is a wide cultural gap among parties involved in a dispute, the lesser the possibility said Gopin (2001). Nevertheless, seeking forgiveness or offering apology by conflicting parties with measure of personal reflection and touch expressed can be a positive omen for peacebuilding. Forgiveness is very effective in peacebuilding due to its critical role in transforming societies transiting from conflict. When forgiveness is not factored into it chances are that conflict can be reignited by a little detonator. Thus, forgiveness can make a whole lot of difference to avert further violence confrontation because when there is forgiveness, revenge will be out of the way. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu put it, "to forgive is to relinquish the victim role and the reward that goes with it, the power to seek punishment of the perpetrator." According to Joseph Lengmang the act of forgiveness is an essential ingredient for peaceful co-existence of any given society that has experience one form of conflict or the other. He posited that post-conflict peace building can only be successful if the people are willing to let go of their grievances against each other. Accordingly, Joseph Montville asserts that. "Healing and reconciliation in violent ethnic and religious conflicts depend on a process of transactional contrition and forgiveness between aggressor and victims" Montville (1993).

Psychological research validates the role of forgiveness in trauma recovery and societal therapeutic. Montville stressed that it will be challenging for expert mediator and negotiator to achieve the ultimate desired outcome in the absence of genuine process of healing the wounds of history. At best there may be temporary result which may not be sustainable. More often it is difficult to put the past behind when there are visible scars of injury done but human beings are endowed with the innate ability to forgive and let go irrespective of the magnitude as the Holy Bible and other religious scriptures advances with examples (Montville, 2001). As Andrew Rigby posited, forgiveness is shaped by the capacity of humans to let go of what happened in past, and avoid the right of seeking for vengeance. Abhorrence and the pursuit of revenge is overwhelming, thus without the ability to abandon the quest for pay back, there will be no foundation for the transformation of relationships, there will be no hope for co-existence for a mutual understanding and future (Rigby, 2008). According to Donald Shriver the process of apology and offering forgiveness demands the acknowledgement by the one or those who acted injurious ways against the injured, the readiness of wrongdoers to admit their evil doing, unrelenting recollection of wickedness, the optimism of relation mending, self-control, avoidance of retaliation and expression of empathy for the culprit. Some people and nations considered it difficulty to forego the traumatic experience and loss that was meted to them historically. Montville asserts that, the burden of history which is shaped by losses and wounds and the lasting sense of injustice that impedes on efforts at peacebuilding by traditional diplomats and political leaders (Shriver, 1995). Forgiveness provides the opportunity for both victims and victimizer to share their stories. This enables the victim to have closure and the victimizer to take responsibility for their actions. Thus, forgiveness is a potent tool to heal wounds, restore relationship and guarantee better future for both parties involve in conflict.

8. Conclusion

The significance of forgiveness hinges on rebuilding of relationship and the restoration of connecting bond between human persons or groups of people.

Fundamentally offering of forgiveness and seeking of apology is a recipe for mending fractured relationship. Forgiveness is a potent ground in a setting in which the conflict is conventionally built on balanced choice expectations are inadequate guides to reconciliation. Therefore, promoting forgiveness among the parties involved in violent conflict to tell their stories, will engender social healing. Making forgiveness, apology, remorsefulness and reparation has deep seated value for peacebuilding. However, because forgiveness is an act of contrition it is not an option for dialogue or negotiation among parties involved in conflict. However, because it eliminates power consideration, bargaining power wherein power of reason is down played for power of compassion. Thus, forgiveness and apology are vital components of reconciliation to bring about conflict transformation hence peacebuilding. Forgiveness should be promoted as an antidote for conflict resolution and transformation giving it therapeutic power for social healing.

From the perspective of Hannah Arendt's political forgiveness, several conclusions can be drawn regarding its impact on peacebuilding: Forgiveness as a foundation for new beginning, for Arendt forgiveness can facilitate peacebuilding by enabling individuals and communities to break free from the past grievances and forge new path. It distinguished forgiveness from reconciliation, though forgiveness is a necessary but not sufficient condition for reconciliation. Peacebuilding effort should make justice, accountability and institutional reforms alongside forgiveness. Empowering agency and collective action, forgiveness can help reframe narratives about the past and transform identities, allowing individuals and communities to move beyond victimhood and perpetrator roles. Contextualizing forgiveness in peacebuilding, forgiveness should be understood within the specific context of conflict and peacebuilding, taking into account power dynamics, cultural norms and historical circumstances. The above insights highlight the complexities of forgiveness in peacebuilding and the need for nuanced approaches that balance justice, accountability and healing. Therefore, the challenge of the government, (policy makers) today is to look at human condition in line

with Arendt's political forgiveness in order to genuinely intervene in conflicts and post conflicts building and reconstruction with the mind of achieving conflict transformation.

Further study: African scholars and researchers should look at forgiveness in African context especially that there are established conflict resolution mechanisms among African groups.

Recommendation

This research work is recommended for government and policy makers all over the world as a viable literature on the subject of political forgiveness. To the researchers and the civil society and community-based organizations this research work is a durable manual for study and field work on peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

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