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The Rational Collective Will Formation in the Constitutional State in Sri Lanka: A Study Based on Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action and Deliberative Discourse.

This study aims to engage with Habermas's theory of deliberative discourse and communicative action to explore the collective will within the democratic constitutional framework of Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, the constitution established in 1978 has been a subject of continuous critique and scholarly debates since its inception. Central to this debate is the constitution's role in upholding the country's governance as a unitary state and preserving its identity as a Buddhist nation as the collective will of the majority ethnic group - the Sinhalese, who predominantly practice Buddhism. However, this constitutional framework has been challenged by other ethnic groups, predominantly by the ethnic minorities of Tamils and Muslims. These conflicts create a context where mutual understanding and agreements become essential for resolving disputes and achieving collective goals. This aim is achieved through the following objectives: a) A critical analysis of the reflection of the collective will within the framework of the 1978 Constitution of Sri Lanka; b) exploring the dimensions of rational communicative action in creating understanding and mutual agreement; c) examining the significance of deliberative discourse in forming the goals for collective will; and d) validating the collective will based on the criteria of cognitive truth, normative rightness, and sincerity. According to Habermas, these mutual understandings and agreements involve two distinct types of action. These are value-oriented actions and interest-based actions. In value-oriented actions, conflicting goals are coordinated through adherence to universal principles and norms, such as equality and neutrality. In this context, individuals adjust their goals and respect these universal principles and norms. On the other hand, interest-based actions involve individuals or groups assessing the most pertinent interests in a given situation and adjusting their interests or goals to achieve a mutually acceptable outcome. Based on the above two actions, Habermas identifies two types of goals associated with this action: the first one is illocutionary goals, and the second one is perlocutionary goals. Illocutionary goals aim to foster mutual understanding and cooperation among participants. Perlocutionary goals, on the other hand, are concerned with influencing others, shaping their behaviour or beliefs, and achieving specific outcomes through interactions (Habermas 1989: 145). Habermas emphasizes the crucial role of deliberative discourse in identifying and justifying collective goals and individual goals and

transforming individual goals into a collective goal. The validity of collective goals is justified based on the criteria of cognitive truth, normative rightness, and sincerity. In conclusion, this study argues that Habermas's theories of communicative action, deliberative discourse, and validity criteria provide valuable insights and practical strategies, and this study emphasizes the need for deliberative discourse and communicative action in the Sri Lankan context to reconstruct the collective will.

Keywords: rational collective will, deliberative discourse, communicative action, mutual understanding, validity criteria.