

**‘Establishing Lasting Peace is the work of Education..., all Politics can do is keep Us out of War’- Maria Montessori**

**‘War appears to be as old as Mankind, but peace is a modern invention’- Henry Maine**

## **RATIONAL FOR THE FORMATION OF PAPO**

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### **Introduction:**

Human beings live in groups, and groups of human beings make up a community. There are, of course, two types of communities, namely the local and the international communities. The local community refers to a group of people living within a particular geographical area or a country. On the other hand, the international community is made up of the countries of the world. In international relations, countries are often referred to as states, while the international community is synonymous with the international system, the global system, or the world system.

States in the international system are in dynamic interactions with each other and events in one country are often felt in another, such interactions vacillate between competition, conflict and cooperation.

In spite of this, however, there is a tendency among them to promote and sustain peace. For one thing, every nation needs peace for a variety of reasons, and for another, there is a positive correlation between peace, security, and development. This is equally true even in relations between individuals and groups.

### **What is Peace?**

There are many definitions and interpretations of the concept of peace. Yet, there is no agreed or precise definition of peace, especially among scholars of peace studies and conflict resolution. For instance, peace has been defined from the instrumentalist, functionalist, philosophical, sociological and political perspectives. The instrumentalist and functionalist interpretations of peace see it as the opposite of war. For the instrumentalists, peace, as the converse of war, is an end which is necessary for social progress and development. As for the functionalist view of peace, the concept of “peace” is seen from two dimensions namely, to fulfil a social

function and the outcome of other social structures and institutions. In other words, every society and state not only seeks to create peace, but they also need it if they must co-exist and avoid the breakdown of law and order. From these two perspectives, therefore, peace connotes the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering, and violence.

From a philosophical standpoint, peace is divine: it is a God-given state of human existence. It is argued by philosophers like John Jacques Rousseau that this natural and original divine gift has been corrupted by human desire and greed. For Plato, justice is the basis of peaceful human existence, and once injustice is enthroned over justice, the functional system becomes distorted. Peace and social harmony, he argued, cannot, therefore, exist in a society where there is no justice.

Sociologically, peace connotes a condition where social conflict does not exist and where, by obvious implications, individuals and groups are able to satisfy their needs and expectations. These could be achieved when a society creates functions and establishes structures for handling such functions. This is known as structural-functionalism and it is predicated on the argument that a given state is able to move in the direction of order and stability once it has put the necessary structures in place to perform and achieve its stated functions, supported, as it were, by the requisite culture, norms, and values.

The second arm of the sociological interpretation of peace is dialectical materialism. It is a tradition of social analysis which is associated with Karl Max, a German philosopher. The gist of dialectical materialism is that society is best understood by examining and appreciating the processes through which the society's production and distribution of its material existence as well as the class struggles are part and parcel of the process. Put succinctly, it is argued that every society is made up of two classes, namely the exploitative, parasitic and unproductive but dominant class (the bourgeoisie) and the exploited and underprivileged working class (the proletariat).

The relationship between these two classes leads to the class struggle which leaves the exploited class poor, unequal, and oppressed by the bourgeoisie. The dominant class employs violence through state agencies (the armed forces and the police) to maintain its privileges vis-à-vis the exploited proletariat. In the long run, the underprivileged classes accept the ideology of the dominant classes which is far more organized and has the advantage of being hegemonic. Thus, this perspective of peace believes that the existence of two antagonistic classes vitiates any possibility of peaceful coexistence.

The political definition of peace is anchored on the assumption that there must be some kind of institutionalization of political structures in any society before peace can prevail. In other words, it is argued that if there is an absence of structural institutionalization, every group could use its own unique endowments to ensure that it achieves its own interests. That way, the existence of the society is threatened. But

the institutionalization of political structures would ensure stability and citizens would become more rational and objective in relation to political issues.

No matter the angle from which it is viewed, peace entails justice, freedom, equality and progress. It also implies happiness and the absence of violent conflicts. Finally, peace exhibits three major elements, namely tolerance, kindness and love. It is, without doubt, the most sought-after condition by individuals, groups, societies, and communities.

## **What is Conflict?**

As stated earlier, human beings live in groups. Any given group, society or community, has members who have different needs and aspirations. The same is true of states in the international system whose national interests are, more often than not, divergent. This makes disagreements an intrinsic and inevitable part of human existence and international relations as well. The occurrence of conflict, therefore, has remained pervasive and prevalent all through human history.

Like peace, conflict has lent itself to many definitions and interpretations. Its manifestations range from the psychological, the political, the social and the anthropological spheres of human existence. At the psychological level, conflict refers to a situation in which an individual is motivated to engage in two or more mutually exclusive activities. For example, on a battlefield, a soldier could have to contend with either the desire to run away or the fear of being taunted by his colleagues as chicken-hearted.

At the political level, conflict emerges whenever two or more persons or groups, lay claims to the same object, occupy the same space or the same exclusive position, play incompatible roles, maintain goals that are incompatible, or engage in mutually incompatible means for achieving their purposes. In this case, it is clear that conflicts are borne out of what parties think may happen, rather than from any phenomenon that is actually threatening. Because conflict suggests some kind of competition and the resultant antagonism, it is best understood as the manifestation of incompatible desires and interests.

Socially, conflict occurs when there is interaction between individuals and groups whose ultimate objectives are divergent. This makes violence different from conflict. Thus, while conflict may not necessarily be destructive, violence is, in most cases, destructive. There is, therefore, no gain-saying the fact that conflict is an important aspect of human existence. Conflicts, it has been observed, engulf all societies in more than one dimension.

By implication, conflict is the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving these goals. That is to say, it means a perceived divergence of interest or a belief that the current aspiration of two or more groups cannot be achieved simultaneously. Therefore,

conflict occurs whenever incompatible activities exist, with one group (or party) interfering, disrupting, obstructing, or in some other way making another group's (or party's) actions less effective.

## **The Inevitability of Conflict**

Because human beings live in groups and because countries of the world must, of necessity, interact with one another, conflicts are largely inevitable. However, violent conflict can be avoided if good counsel is allowed to prevail over other considerations. Conflicts exist whenever there is competition and rivalry. Groups compete with each other when they seek to obtain something that is present in limited supply, such as water, food, mates, or status. Similarly, rivalry exists when there is a scarcity of a sought-after resource in a given society.

Therefore, conflicts are inevitable because, in the course of trying to actualize its goals, one group is bound to obstruct another group from achieving its own goals. In multi-ethnic societies, ethnic, religious, and other identities with historical antecedents make conflicts inevitable. This is so because a particular group may be led to believe that its very survival as a group is being threatened by another group, especially in a situation where there is competition over scarce resources. More often than not, this kind of scenario could lead to violent conflict when recourse is had to violence means of either pursuing group objectives or resisting marginalization by another group.

Thus, the inevitability of conflict is anchored on the inescapable fact that human societies are engaged in complex interactions with each other. These interactions are multi-dimensional and do, more often than not, lead to disagreements. Such disagreements also create distrust among the various groups in a given society. A pattern of conflict challenges might be the outcome of complex interactions, especially in plural or multi-ethnic societies where the search for identity and the disenchantment of minority groups could lead to violent conflicts.

In sum, conflict, as an expression stimulated by a cause (usually a structural or systemic condition, such as poverty, oppressive government policies, and environmental conditions, among others) is inevitable because it is a natural process of life in any given society.

## **The Importance and Relevance of Peace**

Historically, periods of war have often tended to be followed by periods in which peace is espoused with particular vigour. In part, this is so because the potential adversaries are exhausted physically, economically, and socially. It is also due, in part, to the literal inability of devastated societies to mobilize the resources (emotional and material) necessary to prosecute a lengthy war. In other words, people are especially likely to favour peace in the immediate aftermath of conflict, especially violent conflict.

Given the inherent desire of human beings to actualize their personal ambitions and of states to discharge their statutory responsibilities to their citizens, there is a preference for relative calm and stability among both individuals and states alike. Put differently, the progress of every society is a function of peace and most societies have a preference for the peaceful settlement of disputes along the lines prescribed by the institutions and values of such societies.

The importance and relevance of peace, therefore, lies in the fact that conflicts (especially the violent types) disrupt the process of production, create conditions for the pillage of the resources of countries of the world, and divert the application of such resources from development purposes to servicing conflicts and wars. What this means is that conflicts have the capacity to severely constrain development endeavours by destroying infrastructure, interrupting the production process and diverting resources away from productive use.

Peace, on the other hand, is a basic requirement for development in all ramifications and it creates new forms of solidarity and action among groups and societies generally. For peace to be relevant, it must be accompanied by justice, democracy and good governance, respect for human rights, tolerance and respect for the rule of law. This explains why every international organization espouses the pursuit of peace as one of its cardinal objectives.

The United Nations Charter specifically abhors armed conflict as a means of attaining national objectives. It provides that all peaceful means must be exhausted in settling international disputes. Peace is thus desirable and necessary.

### **Justification for the Establishment of PAPO Nigeria: An International NGO for Peace Education and Conflict Resolution**

The Second World War ended in 1945 and from that date till now, no fewer than 165 wars have been fought. In 1994 alone, there were 31 wars fought in 27 locations. If smaller armed conflicts are taken into account, the total would be much higher. These are mostly internal or civil wars, such as the ones following the collapse of the former Yugoslav Federation and the 1994 War in Ruanda. If the numerous communal and ethnic conflicts are included, the number would be staggering. Millions of people have been killed in such violent or armed conflicts and a lot more have become refugees in other parts of the world or have become internally displaced within their own countries.

Furthermore, the scale and speed of social transformations at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have resulted in marked changes in the character of conflicts worldwide. Since 1999, disputes that are intra-state, identity and ethnicity-based, resource-motivated and precipitated by human rights abuses, marginalization of minority

groups or lack of adequate representation, have increasingly become a concern not only to neighbouring countries but the international community as a whole.

Such emerging conflicts pose new challenges and require new forms of response from international, regional, and sub-regional organizations, as well as from governments. The management of conflict has also become complex and problematic, more so, when conflict is considered to be a pervasive social process which occurs at all levels of life, be it personal, group, organization, or international.

It was against this background that the National Universities Commission (NUC) considered it wise and expedient to introduce the course as part of the General Studies programmes of Nigerian universities. Thus, the need for the inclusion of conflict resolution and peace research in the curricula of the university system was inspired by the fact that the search for human dignity, justice and peace, requires that everyone should be taught that each and every individual has rights, but that these rights go with obligations and responsibilities.

Also, the heterogeneous nature of groups and societies makes the introduction of relevant courses in peace and conflict imperative because it aims at inculcating in every society and individual the principles and values that would enhance respect and tolerance.

Most importantly, it is hoped that when today's students become tomorrow's leaders, they will, based on the knowledge acquired in these courses, formulate and implement policies on human rights, conflict prevention, and peace. Ultimately, positive values such as tolerance and peace would be passed on to future generations of leaders and policymakers. This way, the current culture of violence based, as it were, on distrust, suspicion, intolerance, hatred and the inability to interact constructively with those who are different, would be checked.

The above considerations ultimately led to the establishment of the non-governmental organization named 'Peace Advocates and Practitioners Organization (PAPO) in Nigeria on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of February 2021. The founder and Director General of the organization, Professor Paul U.J Mbakwe, had a vision: wanted a way to put into practice, all the theories associated with the discipline during the period he taught the course, Peace and Conflict Resolution in the faculty of Law, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria between 2015-2024.

He is presently the Coordinator of the Peace and Conflict Studies Unit, Division of General Studies, ABSU, as well as the editor of the book of reading entitled 'Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution'. As a peace educator, practitioner and consultant, he has contributed immensely to bridging the gap not only between theory and practice in peace and conflict education in Nigeria but also in peace and conflict studies in general.