

# **Dangers of War, Dynamics of Peaceful Co-existence and the Challenges of Nation Building**

Chris M.A. Kwaja, Ph.D

Centre for Peace and Security Studies  
Modibbo Adama University of Technology  
Yola, Adamawa State, Nigeria

[kwajaamc@yahoo.com](mailto:kwajaamc@yahoo.com) [chris.kwaja@mautech.edu.ng](mailto:chris.kwaja@mautech.edu.ng)

# Quote

*The casualties are not only those who are dead;  
They are well out of it.*

*The casualties are not only those who are wounded,  
Though they await burial by installment*

*The casualties are not only those who have lost persons or property, hard as it is  
To grieve for a touch that some  
May not know is not there*

*The casualties are not those led away by night;  
The cell is a cruel place, sometimes a heaven,  
No where as absolute as the grave*

*The casualties are not those who started  
A fire and now cannot put it out.*

*Thousands are burning that had no say in the matter.*

*The casualties are not only those who escaping  
The shattered shell become prisoners in  
A fortress of falling walls... **JP Clark***

# Background and Context

- The quote above by the renowned poet, John Pepper Clark, was one of the most incisive post-mortem on the consequences of the thirty-months civil war that ravaged Nigeria between 6<sup>th</sup> July 1967 and 15<sup>th</sup> January 1971.
- This poem is as relevant today as it was in the aftermath of the civil war, with cries of injustice and marginalization by each region that make up the Nigerian federation.
- This is not a phenomenon that is unique and peculiar to a particular region, as each of the region that make up the Nigerian federation has experienced one form of marginalization or the other.

# Background and Context (Contd)

- Recent development in Nigeria such as the resurgence of separatist movements and the call for secession by the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), has introduced new dimensions and drivers of instability, which threatens the corporate peace and unity of the country.
- To understand the dangers that such a development pose, this paper examines the dynamics of peaceful co-existence, with specific reference to some key manifestations and recommendations both for North and the Nigerian state in general.
- In pushing forward its articulated agenda for secession, the IPOB of the South East is adopting what seems to be negotiation by force, as against the call for a national dialogue by the other regions.

# Is Nigeria Dancing on the Brink?

- In the context of the present call for restructuring, what does it mean for each of the regions that make up the federal republic?
- Is it just about secession as seen in the IPOB agitation?
- Is it also about creating a platform and opportunity for all the nationalities to review the federal project with a view to correcting certain imbalances?
- In reality, what are the benefits of a peaceful dialogue?
- What are the dangers of using war as a currency for articulating and achieving such goals?

# Is Nigeria Dancing on the Brink? (Contd)

- As the drums of war get louder and stronger in Nigeria, it also signals the transition from a peace economy to a war economy.
- Are Nigerians ready for such transition?
- What does it really mean?
- It is simply a condition whereby the Nigerian state produces, mobilises and allocates resources principally to sustain violence or a state of emergency.
- Under such circumstances, the economy feeds the war- time needs of the country at the expense of the people.
- Merchants of hate, violence and crime are profiteering from our collective inability or reluctance to use the opportunity of good and democratic governance as a key platform for discussing Nigeria's federal project. Instead, the elites are enmeshed in intra-elite struggle for the appropriation and consolidation of power. This situation of elite struggle and fragmentation become a major determinant for both the vertical and horizontal distribution of power in the country.

# The North in the Shadow of Nigeria

- ***Fragility and Weak State Capacity to Protect and Provide*** - The fragility of the states within the northern region is best explained in terms of its inability to deliver on its core responsibilities of welfare and protection.
- ***The Sharpening of Identity Faultlines*** - The 1960s can be regarded as the golden age of northern Nigeria, as underscored by the philosophy of “One North, One Destiny”. There is a sense in which mutual hatred is deepening in an already fragmented Nigeria that is confronted with huge challenge of co-existence.
- ***Bad Governance and the Rise of Extremism*** - The extremist interpretation of the social ills associated with rising inequality, unemployment, illiteracy, deprivation and alienation of the people, particularly the youths, is a contributing fact to the spate of conflicts, violence and insurgency in the country.

The point must be made here that poverty and conflicts are not organic to the North. They are self-imposed, as a result of bad leadership and governance. One of the consequences of bad leadership in the North that has been deeply entrenched in the body polity of the region is that it has robbed the people of their confidence. Corruption became a key instrument used to disempower the people and weaken their capacity to organize, mobilise and speak out against the injustice, inequity and greed of a privileged few.

# Pathways towards Peaceful Co-existence

- ***A One North Policy*** - The goals of peace and security in Nigeria, in the context of the federalist discourse, should be pursued through a united North. One that recognizes and respects diversity at all levels!
- ***Institutionalised Architecture for Peace and Security*** - The overall peace and security agenda for the North should be situated within a human security framework where emphasis is placed on a broader set of issues to address the economic, social, political and personal security needs of its people. In fact, the absence of this agenda remains one of the key obstacles to a united, secured and developed north.
- ***Good and Democratic Governance (Visionary and Competent)*** - The North must strengthen its capacity to understand, anticipate, interpret, forecast and plan as developments unfold, while articulating appropriate responses. This include the quest for good, democratic, visionary and competent leadership, the management of diversity, a shared sense of justice, promotion of rights and the rule of law, stronger and robust regional plan of action for peace, security and development among others.

# Pathways towards Peaceful Co-existence (Contd)

- ***Inclusive Governance (Giving Minorities, Excluded and Marginalised a Space and Sense of Belonging)*** - The rights of minorities, both in its political, economic, ethnic and religious sense, must be recognised and respected as a basis for forging a society that is inclusive and protective of all its citizens. In a sense, a united North outside should be seen as the function of a more united North inside.
- ***Investment in the Youths as Leaders of Today and Tomorrow*** - The collective action of the youths as key stakeholders in the governance processes of the region should be one that recognizes the importance of, as well as create a condition for their voices to be heard, provide a platform for them to be seen, and give them access to power as a basis for influencing change. For the younger generation, the future is now. Unfortunately, the challenge the North is confronted with is such that – the old is ‘dying’ and the new cannot be ‘born’ (Antonio Gramsci).

# Conclusion:

- The might and glory of this union called Nigeria is embedded in the diversity of its people.
- This is really the time to have a credible conversation that would move the country forward. No more blame game. Such conversation should be premised on that common creed that binds us together as we affirm thus:

*O God of creation,  
Direct our noble cause  
Guide our leaders right  
Help our youths the truth to know  
In love and honesty to grow  
And living just and true  
Great lofty heights attain  
To build a nation  
Where peace and justice shall reign.  
So help us God!*

- For now, the drums of war might sound sweet to those who beat it. No matter how sweet it sounds, it is the fastest and easiest path to human misery.