

## THE PRECARIOUS NATURE OF GLOBAL HARMONY AN EXISTENTIAL PREOCCUPATION

Rev. Fr. Dr. Basil Amarachi Okonkwo SMMM\*

### Abstract

*This article addresses the precarious state of world peace and emphasizes the need for collective action to ensure its permanence and sustainability. The introduction highlights the prevalence of violence, crime, wars, injustice, disasters, poverty, and social disorder, underscoring the constant threat to human life and the absence of a day without distressing news. The paper explores the concept of peace in its various dimensions, including international relations, internal conditions within countries, societal interactions, and individual well-being. It argues that peace should not be limited to the absence of war but should encompass constructive, just, and democratic elements. The article, therefore emphasizes that achieving world peace is a shared responsibility. It calls for the eradication of violence, war, injustice, aggression, poverty, and the lack of respect for life. By fostering inner peace, love, tolerance, liberty, justice, and solidarity, humanity can collectively work towards achieving the long-desired goal of world peace.*

**Keywords:** Precarious nature, global harmony, existential preoccupation, world peace, violence.

### Introduction

We frequently encounter instances of violence, crime, wars, injustice, disasters, poverty, and social unrest in our daily lives. It seems that hardly a day goes by without news of some tragic event occurring somewhere in the world. Unlike previous generations, we are bombarded with negative news and constantly reminded that our lives are not secure. Omeunkor (2007:72) aptly describes our current era as one where even the most powerful nations struggle to establish ways of coexisting without the constant looming threat of war.

Living in a world filled with fear and tension, it becomes essential for empathetic and caring individuals to seriously question the state of global peace. The pervasive sense of insecurity should motivate us to seek solutions and strive for a more peaceful world. However, achieving world peace is no small feat. It requires the collective efforts of nations, religious groups, and corporations to come together on the basis of their shared humanity.

This paper aims to emphasize that establishing permanent and lasting peace necessitates a general concern from all individuals and entities. It is not a task that can be accomplished by a single nation or organization alone. Everyone must contribute their skills, resources, and ideas to build a more peaceful world.

To begin with, nations must recognize the interconnectedness of their interests and the importance of cooperation. Instead of pursuing narrow self-interests, countries should engage in dialogue and diplomacy to resolve conflicts. By prioritizing dialogue over violence and understanding over hostility, nations can build mutual trust and foster an environment conducive to peace.

Similarly, religious institutions can play a significant role in promoting peace by emphasizing shared values and encouraging tolerance and respect for diversity. Instead of fueling conflicts based on religious differences, religious leaders can advocate for unity and peaceful coexistence among their followers. Interfaith dialogues and cooperation can bridge divides and promote understanding, ultimately contributing to global peace.

Furthermore, corporations, as influential entities with significant resources, have the responsibility to prioritize ethical practices and contribute positively to society. By adopting sustainable business models, investing in communities, and promoting fair trade, corporations can help alleviate poverty and inequality, addressing root causes of social unrest and contributing to a more peaceful world.

Nevertheless, achieving world peace is a complex task that demands the active participation of all individuals and entities. We cannot simply talk about peace; we must take tangible actions to bring about change. By fostering cooperation, dialogue, and understanding on a global scale, we can pave the way for a future where violence, injustice, and conflict are no longer the norm. It is only through the collective effort of all hands on deck that we can build a world where peace and security prevail.

### **What is peace?**

The concept of peace encompasses a broad range of meanings and applications across various domains. Janusz and Kishore (1996: 103) argue that in the realm of international affairs, "peace" primarily refers to the relationship between states. It denotes a state of tranquility, absence of armed conflict, and the presence of harmonious interactions among nations.

However, beyond the realm of international relations, the term "peace" extends its meaning to encompass different contexts and dimensions. In a domestic context, peace refers to the

internal conditions within a country or society. It implies social stability, absence of civil unrest, and the presence of justice, equality, and order within a nation (United Nations, 2015).

Moreover, peace can also be observed in relationships between organizations and social structures. It denotes the absence of conflicts, disputes, or power imbalances within these entities, fostering cooperation, collaboration, and mutual understanding (Kriesberg, 2017).

Furthermore, the concept of peace expands to include the relationship between humans and their natural environment. It signifies a state of harmony and balance in which individuals and societies interact with nature in a sustainable and respectful manner, recognizing the interconnectedness between human well-being and ecological health (Kopnina & Shoreman-Ouimet, 2015).

In the realms of ethics and morality, "peace" takes on a more personal and individualistic meaning. It describes a state of inner tranquility, contentment, and harmony within oneself. It involves cultivating positive attitudes, such as empathy, compassion, and forgiveness, and promoting harmonious relationships with others. Inner peace is often associated with personal growth, self-reflection, and the pursuit of spiritual or philosophical paths (Stewart, 2019).

In the field of international law, "peace" is commonly understood as the antithesis of war. It signifies the absence of armed conflicts, hostilities, and violence between nations. Peace, in this context, is not merely the absence of war but encompasses the establishment of structures, treaties, and mechanisms that prevent conflicts and promote diplomacy, dialogue, and peaceful resolution of disputes (Simma, 2002).

According to the BBC Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English, peace can be defined as a situation or period without war or violence. It also encompasses a state of calmness, tranquility, and quietness. Additionally, peace is characterized by living in friendship and harmony with others, fostering a cooperative and non-confrontational environment without arguments or conflicts (Hornby, 2010).

In summary, the concept of peace encompasses a multidimensional understanding. It encompasses the relationship between states in international affairs, internal conditions within societies, relationships between organizations and social structures, the connection between humans and the natural environment, individual inner peace in ethics and morality, and the absence of war and violence in international law. Peace represents a desirable state characterized by tranquility, harmony, cooperation, and the absence of conflicts or hostilities.

### **General Understanding of Peace**

In a broader context, peace can be interpreted in two primary ways:

- The 'Negative' limited interpretation simplifies peace as the mere absence or nonexistence of war.

- The 'Positive' interpretation of peace encompasses not only the absence of war but also includes additional requirements and assurances that contribute to a constructive, fair, and democratic state of peace.

### **The Worries of this Paper**

We are aware, however, that the world peace is still very fragile. The question becomes-what is it that makes humans waver in their commitments to nonviolence? Can there be peace when some State Governors in a country like Nigeria have given all the non-indigenous workers in their states a red card to go back to their state of origin for re-employment? One must be forced to ask whether people, state, race, religion have the right to hate, to discriminate against and to exile? Ugorji (2011) writes,

On 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2011 as we marked our independent Day as a nation and celebrated the restoration of our dignity, rights and freedoms, despoiled for decades under colonial rule, the Abia State government went ahead to implement its policy of “back loading”/ “transferring” of “non-indigene” in its civil service to their states of origin. By that very act, fellow citizens, who are innocent victims of this policy, were denied some of their fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

It is not out of place to state here that if people transform their hatred to love and if they adopt the love mode over power mode, definitely, peace will reign in the world.

Among the numerous challenges the world confronts today, certain ones are natural disasters that must be acknowledged and faced with calmness. Conversely, some issues are the result of human actions and stem from misunderstandings. These problems occasionally emerge due to clashes in ideologies, political beliefs, or religious inclinations, often occurring when individuals lose sight of the fundamental human connection that unites us all as one global family. It is important to remember that the diverse religious ideologies and political systems across the world are intended to facilitate peace and happiness for humanity.

### **World Peace: A General Concern**

It is widely agreed that the greatest single danger facing humankind on our planet is the threat of violence. Omenukor (2007) maintains that,

In the twentieth century, with aggressive totalitarianisms and deep-seated conflicts between political, economic and social system, with the development of nuclear weapons and long range missiles, the rapid technological advances in other areas.

..., there is evidently greater complexity to international relations, and the system is fast deteriorating.

To achieve peace, it is important to cultivate a sense of universal responsibility and deep concern for all individuals, regardless of their beliefs, race, gender, or nationality. The

underlying principle behind this notion of universal responsibility is the recognition that, in essence, everyone shares the same desires for happiness and peace.

If people adopt a self-centered approach and exploit others solely for personal gain, they may gain temporary advantages but will ultimately fail to attain lasting happiness. Furthermore, the possibility of achieving world peace becomes completely unattainable in such circumstances.

Injustice is identified as the main barrier to global peace. According to Marti (1996:148), peace is a result of justice. When individuals or groups face oppression, it is natural for violence and conflict to arise. Marti argues that concepts like freedom, oppression, prosperity, and poverty are social constructs, and violence emerges not only as a form of protest but also as a means of dismantling unjust systems.

Considering the above citation, it becomes evident that humans have historically employed various methods, often cruel and repulsive, to break free from injustice. These circumstances necessitate a new approach to addressing global issues. Solving the problems of a single nation can no longer be accomplished satisfactorily in isolation but requires the interest, attitude, and cooperation of other nations. Adopting a universal humanitarian approach seems to be the only viable foundation for world peace.

It is morally incorrect and imprudent to pursue one's own happiness while disregarding the feelings and aspirations of others who are part of the same human family. Conversely, if humanity continues to approach problems with short-term expediency, future generations will face immense difficulties.

It is worth noting that major religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, and Taoism all share similar ideas of love and the common goal of benefiting humanity through spiritual practices. They aim to mold their followers into better human beings. All religions advocate moral principles that promote the well-being of the mind, body, and speech. They universally discourage lying, stealing, and taking lives. Moreover, they emphasize the need to control the unruly mind, which harbors selfishness and other sources of conflict, and provide a path towards attaining a peaceful, disciplined, ethical, and wise state of being. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all religions to strive, each in its own way, to help beings avoid suffering and attain peace. If all religions prioritize the betterment of humanity as their main concern, they can easily collaborate harmoniously for the cause of world peace.

According to Okike (2000: 67), the whole idea of peace springs from two Sources, namely:

(A) The hope for lasting and universal peace which its Source is "God of peace" himself (Rom., 15:33, 16-20; 1 Cor., 14:33).

(B) From the natural disposition of the human soul which longs for that tranquility of order in which peace consists.

In this same light, Manjuvajra (1987: 122) has this to say about peace: "peace in the world will come when national, religious, political and social groups begin to cooperate with one another on the basis of further their common humanity. He further maintains that the peacemaking process starts with the individual man or woman.

## **Conclusion**

Paraphrased: Regardless of whether achieving world peace is possible or not, we are compelled to actively work towards that objective. When our minds are consumed by anger, we lose the most valuable aspects of human intelligence, such as wisdom and the capacity to discern right from wrong. The critical question we face is how we can manage and regulate these destructive forces that underlie almost every global problem.

According to Buddhist psychology, many of our difficulties stem from our intense desires and attachments to things that we mistakenly perceive as permanent entities. To establish a lasting world peace, humanity should take into account the following factors:

- Love and compassion should be recognized as the moral foundation of global peace. This entails demonstrating empathy when it is deemed necessary, without being driven by attachment. Cultivating this type of love and compassion within ourselves is a crucial goal.
- Valuing the sanctity of life: Every individual has the right to live, be safe, and freely develop their personality, as long as they do not infringe upon the rights of others. No one possesses the physical or psychological entitlement to torture, harm, or, worst of all, kill another human being.
- Conflicts ought to be resolved through non-violent means, within a framework of justice.
- It is essential for young people to learn, both at home and in school, that violence must never serve as a method for resolving differences with others.

Based on the above, we must endeavour to eradicate violence, war, injustice, aggression, poverty, and lack of respect for life. It is only when all these are put in place that we can enjoy inner-peace, love, tolerance, liberty, justice, solidarity which in turn leads us into achieving the world peace which is our general concern.

**\*Rev. Fr. Dr. Basil Amarachi Okonkwo SMMM**

Philosophy Department, Faculty of Arts  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Nigeria  
E-mail: basilonline @gmail.com

## **References**

Hornby, A. S. (2010). Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (8th ed.). Oxford University Press.

- Janusz, S. and Kishore, S, (1996). "Constructing a Culture of Peace:Challenges and Perspectives an introductory Note". In: From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace. Paris: UNESCO.9-30.
- Kopnina, H., & Shoreman-Ouimet, E. (2015). Beyond the social contract: Alternative food networks and the ecological imaginary. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 38, 1-9.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2014.12.002>
- Kriesberg, L. (2017). *Constructive conflicts: From escalation to resolution* (4th ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Manjuvajra. (1987) "The Buddhist Teaching on Nonviolence". In: *Education for Peace*. Edited by Haim Gordon and Leonard Grob. New York: Orbis Books. 114-127.
- Marti, Felix (1996). "Understanding and Dialogue between Religions to Promote the Spirit of Peace". In: *From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace* Paris: UNESCO 148-160
- Okike, Benedict, (2000). *The Practice of Sharia in Nigeria: A Democratic Secular State*. Owerri: Amamihe Publications.
- Omenukor. D. U. (2007). "Nigeria's peace Keeping Operation: Towards a Strategy for Influence". *Amamihe: Journal of Applied of Philosophy*. Vol. 5. August.71-80
- Simma, B. (2002). From bilateralism to community interest in international law. *European Journal of International Law*, 13(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/13.1.1>
- Stewart, J. (2019). Peacebuilding as pedagogy: Bridging classroom and community in the pursuit of justice. *Journal of Peace Education*, 16(1), 45-62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2018.1516280>
- Ugorji, Iwejuru Lucius, Bishop, (2011) "No 'Jew' No 'Gentile. A Pastoral Statement Umuahia.
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>