

# Reimagining Nigeria



# Reimagining Nigeria:

*The Strategic Role of Peace  
and Unity in 21st Century  
Development*

By

Musa Mohammed Bello

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Reimagining Nigeria: The Strategic Role of Peace and Unity in 21st  
Century Development

By Musa Mohammed Bello

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# INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and one of its largest economies, is a country with immense potential. Rich in natural resources, cultural diversity, and human capital, Nigeria has the capacity to lead not just the continent, but to be a significant player on the global stage. However, the nation's journey through the 21st century has been marked by challenges that threaten to undermine its development, including ethnic and religious tensions, political instability, economic disparities, and widespread insecurity.

In this context, the concepts of peace and unity emerge as not just ideals to be aspired to, but as essential building blocks for the nation's progress. Without peace, the social and economic fabric of the country remains vulnerable to the destructive forces of conflict, while the absence of unity further fractures a society already divided along ethnic, religious, and regional lines.

This appraisal seeks to explore the critical role that peace and unity play in the reconstruction and development of Nigeria in the 21st century. It examines how fostering these values can help address the root causes of Nigeria's challenges, promote sustainable development, and create an environment where all citizens can thrive. The analysis will also highlight key strategies for achieving and maintaining peace and unity, drawing on historical lessons, current efforts, and future prospects for a better Nigeria.

In a nation as diverse as Nigeria, where over 250 ethnic groups coexist, the imperative of building a peaceful and united society cannot be overstated. The journey towards this goal requires concerted efforts from all sectors of society, including government, civil society, religious and traditional leaders, and the private sector. Only through collective action and a shared commitment to peace and unity can Nigeria realize its full potential in the 21st century and beyond.

**Musa Mohammed Bello, Ph.D.**  
**2024.**

## FOREWORD

The future of any nation rests upon the pillars of peace and unity. In the case of Nigeria—a country richly endowed with human and natural resources, yet challenged by ethnic, religious, and socio-political divides—the pursuit of national cohesion is not merely a desirable goal, but an existential imperative. In this insightful book, *An Appraisal of the Role of Peace and Unity in Rebuilding a Better Nigeria in the 21st Century*, Dr. Musa Mohammed Bello addresses one of the most pressing challenges confronting our nation: how to harness the power of unity and peaceful coexistence to build a more stable, inclusive, and prosperous Nigeria.

Dr. Bello, a seasoned scholar and practitioner in the fields of political science, peace studies, and conflict resolution, brings both academic rigour and practical insight to this timely work. His analysis transcends theoretical discourse, offering a grounded and nuanced examination of Nigeria's socio-political landscape. The book explores how historical injustices, institutional weaknesses, and political fragmentation have hampered national integration, while also highlighting the transformative potential of inclusive governance, civic dialogue, and intercommunal harmony.

What distinguishes this work is its forward-looking vision. Dr. Bello does not dwell solely on the past or present; rather, he projects a blueprint for a Nigeria that can overcome its divisions through deliberate policy choices, grassroots engagement, and the fostering of a collective national identity. His recommendations are pragmatic, rooted in indigenous values, and aligned with global best practices in peacebuilding and development.

This book will be of immense value to scholars, policymakers, civil society actors, and students of Nigerian politics and international relations. It serves as both a call to action and a resource for those committed to the national project of rebuilding Nigeria through unity in diversity.

I commend Dr. Musa Mohammed Bello for his scholarly commitment and for contributing meaningfully to the discourse on peace and national

development. I trust that readers will find in this work not only critical insights but also inspiration to act for a more united and peaceful Nigeria.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO PEACE AND UNITY IN NIGERIA

### **1.1 Introduction**

Peace and unity are foundational pillars for any nation's stability, prosperity, and growth. In the case of Nigeria, these concepts are particularly significant given the country's complex social fabric, which is woven from a diverse array of ethnicities, languages, and religions. The nation's journey since independence in 1960 has been a tumultuous one, marked by periods of intense conflict, both internal and external, that have tested the resilience of its people and institutions. Understanding the role of peace and unity in Nigeria is crucial for grasping the broader dynamics of the country's development and its prospects for the future.

This chapter delves into the historical and contemporary significance of peace and unity in Nigeria, exploring how these values have shaped, and continue to shape, the nation's trajectory. From the devastating effects of the Nigerian Civil War in the late 1960s to the ongoing challenges posed by religious and ethnic violence, the chapter examines how the lack of peace and unity has often impeded progress and exacerbated divisions. Conversely, it highlights instances where efforts to promote reconciliation and national cohesion have led to periods of stability and growth.

The chapter also considers the various factors that contribute to peace and unity in Nigeria, including the role of leadership, governance, civil society, and the legal framework. It looks at the challenges that have historically undermined these efforts, such as corruption, inequality, and the politicization of identity, while also identifying opportunities for fostering a more peaceful and united Nigeria.

In a country as diverse and complex as Nigeria, achieving lasting peace and unity requires more than just rhetoric; it demands strategic and sustained efforts across all levels of society. This chapter sets the stage for a deeper exploration of these efforts, laying the groundwork for

understanding the broader implications of peace and unity in Nigeria's ongoing quest for development and nation-building. By examining the interplay between these forces, the chapter aims to provide a nuanced perspective on the essential role that peace and unity must play in securing Nigeria's future in the 21st century.

Peace and unity are not just aspirational ideals; they are indispensable foundations for the survival, stability, and development of any nation. In Nigeria's case, these concepts assume even greater significance due to the country's deeply pluralistic nature—comprising over 250 ethnic groups, more than 500 languages, and a religiously diverse population split primarily between Islam and Christianity, alongside indigenous beliefs. This cultural and social heterogeneity, while a potential strength, has often been a source of tension and fragmentation in the absence of deliberate policies and practices aimed at fostering national cohesion.

Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria's path toward nationhood has been turbulent. The Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), also known as the Biafran War, remains one of the starkest reminders of what happens when national unity breaks down. That conflict, which claimed over a million lives, underscored the critical need for reconciliation, inclusion, and a national identity that transcends ethnic and regional loyalties. While post-war slogans like “No victor, no vanquished” reflected efforts at healing, the legacies of distrust and marginalization have persisted, often manifesting in recurrent ethno-religious violence, separatist agitations, and political instability.

This chapter seeks to critically examine how peace and unity have shaped Nigeria's historical development and how their absence has frequently hampered it. It highlights the cyclical nature of conflict and reconciliation in the country's political history—ranging from military coups and insurgencies (such as Boko Haram in the North East) to communal clashes and the ongoing secessionist sentiments in parts of the South East and South South. These challenges underscore the fragile nature of national cohesion and the need for sustained and inclusive dialogue across Nigeria's fault lines.

Beyond analyzing past and present conflicts, the chapter explores the enablers of peace and unity in Nigeria. Central among these is effective leadership—leaders who view the entire nation as their constituency and prioritize justice, equity, and national integration in their policies. Good governance and the rule of law are also essential, as they foster trust in

institutions and reduce the grievances that often lead to unrest. Civil society and community-based organizations play a pivotal role in bridging divides, promoting intercultural understanding, and holding the state accountable. Additionally, legal and constitutional frameworks must ensure that all groups feel represented and protected under the law.

However, significant obstacles remain. These include systemic corruption, poverty, youth unemployment, electoral violence, and the politicization of identity. These factors continue to undermine efforts to build trust among Nigeria's diverse communities. Moreover, the state's failure to equitably distribute resources and opportunities has deepened social and regional divides, fueling resentment and unrest.

Yet, there is cause for cautious optimism. Initiatives such as the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), peacebuilding interventions by traditional rulers and religious leaders, and constitutional amendments aimed at decentralization reflect efforts—albeit uneven—toward promoting unity. Social media and digital platforms have also given young Nigerians a voice, helping to foster cross-regional solidarity on issues such as police reform and governance.

This chapter, therefore, provides a foundational exploration of how peace and unity must be nurtured through strategic policies, inclusive governance, and a shared commitment to the common good. It lays the groundwork for subsequent discussions in this book by illustrating that in a nation as richly diverse as Nigeria, true development cannot occur without a deliberate and sustained investment in building bridges across its many divides. Peace and unity are not optional virtues—they are the lifeblood of Nigeria's quest for nation-building in the 21st century.

## **1.2 Objectives and scope of the book**

The book *"An Appraisal of the Role of Peace and Unity in Rebuilding Better Nigeria in the 21st Century"* explores how fostering peace and unity can contribute to Nigeria's development and stability in the modern era. Here's a detailed outline of the objectives and scope of the book:

The objectives of this study are to assess the impact of peace and unity on Nigeria's national development, socio-economic stability, and political cohesion. It aims to understand the positive outcomes of peaceful coexistence and national unity on governance, economic growth, and social integration. The study also examines historical and contemporary

challenges that have hindered peace and unity in Nigeria, such as conflicts, ethnic tensions, and political instability.

The study also explores strategies for promoting peace and unity in Nigeria, including peace-building initiatives, conflict resolution processes, and policies aimed at fostering national cohesion. Policy recommendations will be provided for enhancing peace and unity as part of Nigeria's development agenda, offering actionable suggestions for government, civil society, and international partners to support peace and unity efforts.

The study also focuses on promoting inclusive development by examining the relationship between social cohesion and equitable access to resources, opportunities, and services. The scope of the study includes an overview of Nigeria's historical context, current issues, peace-building initiatives, socio-economic impact, policy analysis, case studies, and future directions for strengthening peace and unity in Nigeria.

The study provides an overview of Nigeria's historical context, contemporary issues, peace-building initiatives, socio-economic impact, policy analysis, case studies, and future directions for strengthening peace and unity in Nigeria. It also highlights real-life examples and lessons learned from various contexts within the country.

The book titled *"An Appraisal of the Role of Peace and Unity in Rebuilding Better Nigeria in the 21st Century"* is a comprehensive examination of how peace and unity serve as fundamental prerequisites for sustainable development, national cohesion, and political stability in Nigeria. Against the backdrop of Nigeria's complex socio-political landscape, the study seeks to articulate a pragmatic and scholarly framework through which peace and unity can be harnessed as transformative forces in the country's nation-building efforts.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The primary objectives of this study are as follows:

1. **To assess the impact of peace and unity on national development** in Nigeria, especially with regard to political stability, governance effectiveness, and the consolidation of democratic institutions.
2. **To analyze the socio-economic benefits of peaceful coexistence and national integration**, including their roles in fostering investment, infrastructure development, education, and healthcare delivery.

3. **To investigate historical and contemporary challenges** that have undermined peace and unity in Nigeria, such as ethno-religious conflicts, regional marginalization, political instability, insurgency, and weak institutional frameworks.
4. **To examine the role of policy, leadership, and civil society** in advancing peace-building and unity, highlighting best practices and existing gaps that require urgent attention.
5. **To develop actionable policy recommendations** for governmental and non-governmental actors, focusing on inclusive governance, equitable distribution of resources, youth engagement, education reform, and interfaith dialogue.

### Scope of the Study

The scope of this book is both extensive and multidimensional, encompassing various temporal, thematic, and institutional dimensions:

- **Historical Context:** A review of Nigeria's post-independence trajectory, civil conflicts, and peace initiatives that have shaped the present-day reality.
- **Contemporary Issues:** Analysis of current challenges such as banditry, terrorism, separatist agitations, and electoral violence, and their implications for peace and unity.
- **Peace-Building Initiatives:** Evaluation of local, national, and international interventions aimed at conflict resolution, post-conflict reconstruction, and national reconciliation.
- **Socio-Economic Impact:** Assessment of how peace and unity influence key developmental indicators, including poverty reduction, economic diversification, employment, and social inclusion.
- **Policy Analysis and Recommendations:** Critical analysis of existing laws, government frameworks, and policy instruments related to national integration and conflict prevention.
- **Case Studies:** Documentation of real-life experiences and lessons from diverse regions in Nigeria (e.g., the Niger Delta amnesty program, Northeast conflict rehabilitation, and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in the North).
- **Future Directions:** Exploration of emerging trends and strategic pathways for deepening peace and unity, such as digital peacebuilding, youth leadership, educational reforms, and regional integration through ECOWAS and AU platforms.

This study provides a holistic narrative by integrating theoretical insights with empirical realities, thus offering a balanced perspective that is both academically rigorous and policy-relevant. It emphasizes that peace and unity are not abstract ideals but essential tools for achieving equitable development, social justice, and enduring national harmony. Ultimately, the book aims to contribute meaningfully to scholarly discourse and public policy on nation-building in Nigeria and comparable African contexts.

### **1.3 Definition and significance of peace and unity in Nigeria**

Nigeria, a diverse and complex nation, has faced numerous challenges related to peace and unity throughout its history. Understanding these concepts is crucial for addressing the country's socio-political and economic issues. Peace refers to a state of tranquility or quietness, characterized by the absence of violence, conflict, or war. It is essential for national stability and development, ensuring a safe environment for citizens to thrive. Peaceful conditions are necessary for effective governance, economic growth, and social cohesion.

Unity, on the other hand, refers to the state of being united or joined as a whole, fostering a sense of solidarity and collective identity. It is critical for Nigeria's progress due to its ethnic, religious, and regional diversity. Promoting unity involves bridging divides, building national identity, and fostering a sense of belonging among citizens from various backgrounds.

Peace and unity are foundational for national stability and security in Nigeria, as they help reduce violence, promote security, and prevent the escalation of conflicts. A peaceful and united Nigeria is more likely to attract investment, promote economic activities, and ensure the efficient implementation of development projects. Economic growth is facilitated when there is stability and cooperation among various regions and communities.

Social cohesion and integration are also important aspects of peace and unity. It helps in overcoming ethnic and religious divisions, encouraging inclusive participation in societal activities, and building a shared national identity. National events and celebrations, such as Nigeria's Independence Day, provide opportunities for fostering national unity and celebrating the country's diverse cultures.

Effective governance contributes to peace and unity by reducing conflicts and creating a conducive environment for policy implementation. A unified nation is better positioned to engage in constructive dialogue, address grievances, and work towards collective goals. The interplay between peace, unity, and development underscores the importance of fostering a harmonious society where diverse groups work together for common goals.

Nigeria, as a diverse and complex nation, has continually grappled with challenges to peace and unity throughout its post-independence history. These two interrelated concepts are central to resolving the country's persistent socio-political and economic issues. **Peace**—defined as a state of tranquility marked by the absence of violence, conflict, or war—is essential for national stability and sustainable development. It creates a safe environment where citizens can engage in productive activities, facilitates effective governance, and supports economic advancement.

**Unity**, in contrast, refers to the state of being united or joined together as a whole. In the Nigerian context, this means fostering solidarity among its more than 250 ethnic groups and various religious and regional constituencies. Promoting unity is indispensable for national progress, as it involves bridging identity-based divides, cultivating a shared sense of national belonging, and nurturing a collective commitment to the nation's future.

Peace and unity serve as the foundational pillars of Nigeria's national stability and internal security. They play a crucial role in reducing violence, deterring extremism, and preventing the escalation of local conflicts into broader national crises. A peaceful and united Nigeria is more likely to attract both local and foreign investment, promote inclusive economic activities, and ensure the smooth execution of development initiatives across all regions.

Additionally, peace and unity are key drivers of **social cohesion and integration**. They provide a platform for overcoming the deep-seated ethnic and religious divisions that have historically hampered national integration. By encouraging inclusive participation in governance, education, and civic life, peace and unity help build a shared national identity rooted in mutual respect and cooperation. National events and cultural celebrations, such as Independence Day and the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) program, serve as practical instruments for fostering unity and celebrating Nigeria's rich cultural diversity.

**Effective governance** is both a product and a facilitator of peace and unity. Transparent institutions, equitable policies, and responsive leadership reduce grievances, resolve disputes amicably, and create a conducive environment for nation-building. A unified society is better equipped to engage in constructive dialogue, address socio-political discontent, and work collectively toward common developmental goals.

Ultimately, the synergy between peace, unity, and development illustrates the critical importance of fostering a harmonious society in which Nigeria's diverse population can collaborate to realize shared aspirations. Achieving this vision demands deliberate and sustained efforts by government, civil society, traditional institutions, and the citizenry at large.

### *Definition of Peace and Unity*

Peace in the Nigerian context can be defined as the absence of conflict, violence, and unrest, as well as the presence of conditions that foster harmony, security, and stability. It involves not just the cessation of hostilities, but the creation of an environment where individuals and communities can coexist without fear, and where social justice, human rights, and equitable opportunities are upheld. Peace is more than just a state of non-violence; it encompasses the positive development of society, where differences are resolved through dialogue, and where the rule of law prevails.

Unity, on the other hand, refers to the sense of oneness and solidarity among the diverse groups that make up the Nigerian nation. It is the collective consciousness that transcends ethnic, religious, and regional differences, fostering a shared identity as Nigerians. Unity is built on mutual respect, understanding, and a common commitment to the nation's welfare. It does not mean uniformity or the erasure of individual identities, but rather the harmonization of these identities within a larger national framework.

In Nigeria, peace and unity are not merely aspirational ideals; they are critical preconditions for national survival and progress. The country's diversity—expressed through over 250 ethnic groups, various religious affiliations, and regional identities—makes the pursuit of peace and unity both more challenging and more essential.

**Peace** in the Nigerian context must be approached as *positive peace*, a term that goes beyond the absence of conflict to include the presence of justice, equity, and sustainable development. It implies a condition where systemic inequalities and grievances are addressed, and where institutions function transparently to protect the rights and welfare of all citizens. In regions plagued by insurgency, such as the Northeast, or areas experiencing communal clashes, such as parts of the Middle Belt, peacebuilding efforts must tackle root causes like poverty, marginalization, and poor governance—not just immediate security concerns.

Peacebuilding in Nigeria must transcend the traditional notion of “negative peace”—the mere absence of violence—and embrace **positive peace**, a concept popularized by Johan Galtung (1969), which entails the presence of justice, equity, and systemic harmony. In the Nigerian context, this approach is particularly vital given the country’s multi-ethnic composition, socio-economic disparities, and history of political instability.

In the **Northeast**, where Boko Haram insurgency has devastated lives and infrastructure, peace cannot be sustained merely by military victories or ceasefires. Rather, peacebuilding must address **structural violence**, including youth unemployment, lack of education, and regional underdevelopment (Onuoha, 2014). Similarly, in the **Middle Belt**, ethno-religious clashes and farmer-herder conflicts are often symptoms of deeper grievances tied to land rights, resource competition, and exclusionary governance (Okeke, 2020).

Achieving positive peace requires **institutional reforms** that foster **good governance, inclusivity, and rule of law**. Institutions must move beyond reactive security operations to proactively design policies that eliminate the roots of marginalization. This includes reforming law enforcement, investing in equitable education and healthcare, and creating mechanisms for local dispute resolution and participatory governance (Albert, 2011).

Furthermore, **transitional justice frameworks**—including truth-telling, reparations, and community reconciliation—must be integrated into post-conflict recovery strategies. Nigeria’s past amnesty programs, like that in the Niger Delta, reveal that without long-term planning and inclusive development, short-term pacification can quickly unravel (Ibeanu & Mohammed, 2014).

Lastly, civil society and traditional institutions play a crucial role in local peacebuilding. By leveraging indigenous practices and community dialogues, a culturally grounded and locally owned peace process can emerge.

Moreover, **peace must be institutionalized**, not improvised. This involves:

- Strengthening conflict resolution mechanisms at local and national levels,
- Promoting inclusive dialogue platforms,
- Building the capacity of traditional and civil society actors to mediate disputes, and
- Ensuring transitional justice where violations have occurred.

**Unity**, meanwhile, is a social and political glue that binds the nation. In the Nigerian experience, unity is frequently tested by the manipulation of ethnic and religious identities for political gain. However, true unity emerges from a deliberate process of *nation-building*—a process that includes equitable access to resources, political representation, inclusive education, and shared national symbols and narratives.

Unity, in the Nigerian context, transcends symbolic patriotism—it is the *structural cohesion and mutual commitment* among diverse groups within a single polity. However, unity remains an elusive goal, frequently challenged by **ethnic chauvinism, religious polarization, and regional marginalization**. As scholars such as Ekeh (1975) and Osaghae (1994) argue, Nigeria’s colonial legacy fostered a “dual public” where ethnic loyalty often supersedes national identity, undermining the project of a cohesive nation-state.

Post-independence, political elites have often **instrumentalized ethnicity and religion** for electoral advantage, fragmenting the polity rather than consolidating it (Suberu, 2001). This manipulation manifests in violent contestations over federal appointments, resource control, and regional autonomy—issues that are often framed in identity terms. The resulting mistrust erodes the social contract and weakens national integration.

Yet, **true unity** must be *constructed through inclusive nation-building*. This entails:

- **Equitable distribution of resources**, especially through mechanisms like fiscal federalism that address perceived imbalances among regions.
- **Political inclusion** that ensures minority groups are adequately represented in decision-making processes.
- **An inclusive educational curriculum** that promotes interethnic understanding and shared citizenship values.
- **National symbols and narratives**—such as a genuinely respected national anthem, public holidays, and historical accounts—that reflect the multiplicity of Nigeria’s identities and experiences (Ajayi, 2007).

Programs like the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) were designed to foster unity, but without addressing deeper systemic inequalities, such efforts remain symbolic. Unity is not the suppression of difference, but the celebration of diversity within a framework of *equity, justice, and shared purpose*.

To achieve enduring unity, Nigeria must:

- Foster inclusive governance that reflects the country’s demographic diversity,
- Reform institutions to ensure fair treatment of all ethnic and religious groups,
- Strengthen national identity through civic education, and
- Celebrate pluralism as a strength rather than a source of division.

Importantly, **unity and peace are mutually reinforcing**. A united society is more likely to manage conflicts constructively, while a peaceful society provides the space necessary for unity to flourish. Thus, any strategy for national development in Nigeria must integrate peacebuilding and unity promotion as core components of state policy and civil engagement.

### **Definition of Peace**

Peace is a multifaceted concept that has been defined and interpreted in various ways within academic literature.

**Johan Galtung**, a prominent scholar in peace studies, defines peace in two primary forms: **negative peace** and **positive peace**. Negative peace refers to the absence of direct violence, conflict, or war, whereas positive peace involves the presence of social justice, equality, and harmonious

relationships that prevent conflict from arising in the first place (Galtung, 1969).

**John Paul Lederach**, a scholar in conflict transformation, views peace as a dynamic social construct that encompasses not only the absence of violence but also the presence of constructive relationships and the resolution of conflict through non-violent means. Lederach emphasizes that peacebuilding involves creating structures that address the root causes of conflict and foster sustainable peace (Lederach, 1997).

### **Definition of Unity**

Unity, in the context of social and political sciences, is defined as the state of being united or joined as a whole, particularly within a diverse society.

**Emile Durkheim**, a foundational sociologist, discusses the concept of unity within his theory of social solidarity. He differentiates between **mechanical solidarity**, which is based on the similarity of individuals in simpler societies, and **organic solidarity**, which arises in more complex societies where unity is based on interdependence among diverse individuals and groups (Durkheim, 1893/1984).

**Benedict Anderson** describes unity within the concept of **imagined communities**, where members of a nation, despite never meeting all fellow members, share a sense of community and solidarity. This unity is often fostered through shared language, culture, and national identity (Anderson, 1983).

The significance of peace and unity in Nigeria cannot be overstated, as these two concepts are critical to the nation's stability, development, and future prospects. Their importance is evident in several key areas: Peace is essential for maintaining national security. In a country plagued by various forms of violence, including terrorism, communal clashes, and political unrest, the absence of peace leads to instability, making it difficult to govern effectively. When peace prevails, the government can focus on development rather than crisis management, and citizens can go about their lives without fear of violence.

## 1.4 Peace and National Security: Scholarly Perspective and Practical Examples

### Scholarly Perspective

Peace is a fundamental prerequisite for national security, as it provides the necessary conditions for stability, governance, and development. The absence of peace, characterized by violence, terrorism, and political unrest, often leads to instability, undermining the state's ability to govern effectively and secure its population.

**Barry Buzan**, in his book *People, States, and Fear* (1991), emphasizes that national security extends beyond military defense to include political, economic, societal, and environmental dimensions. Buzan argues that peace is crucial for maintaining security across these dimensions, as persistent violence and unrest weaken the state's capacity to function and protect its citizens.

**Johan Galtung's** concept of "negative peace," which refers to the absence of direct violence, aligns with this view. Galtung posits that negative peace is a necessary condition for stability, as it allows for the cessation of hostilities and the creation of an environment conducive to governance and development (Galtung, 1969).

### Practical Examples

#### *Nigeria and the Boko Haram Insurgency*

Nigeria has faced significant challenges to national security due to the Boko Haram insurgency, particularly in the northeastern region. The absence of peace in areas affected by Boko Haram has led to widespread displacement, loss of lives, and destruction of infrastructure. This instability has hindered the government's ability to deliver basic services and maintain law and order. The ongoing conflict has also diverted resources from development projects to crisis management and military operations. However, in areas where peace has been restored, such as in parts of the northeast where military gains have been made, there has been a gradual return to normalcy, allowing for the resumption of economic activities and governance (Onuoha, 2014).

The Boko Haram insurgency has indeed been one of the most significant challenges to Nigeria's national security, particularly in the northeastern

region. As highlighted, the absence of peace in these areas has led to severe humanitarian crises, including displacement of millions, significant loss of lives, and destruction of infrastructure, which have strained both local and national resources.

The government's ability to deliver essential services has been severely impacted by the insurgency, as resources have been reallocated to military efforts to counter the insurgents. Basic needs such as healthcare, education, and economic development have been disrupted in areas affected by the conflict.

However, military successes against Boko Haram in some areas have allowed for a partial return to normalcy. These gains have enabled the government to re-establish authority and provide services, with economic activities gradually resuming in more stable regions. Recovery remains a challenge, requiring continuous efforts in reconstruction, reconciliation, and support for displaced populations.

### *Rwanda's Post-Genocide Recovery*

After the 1994 genocide, Rwanda was left in a state of chaos, with severe threats to national security. The absence of peace during the genocide period led to mass killings, displacement, and the collapse of the state apparatus. However, the establishment of peace in the aftermath has been critical to Rwanda's recovery and development. The Rwandan government, under President Paul Kagame, has focused on maintaining peace through strong governance, reconciliation programs, and economic development initiatives. This focus on peace has enabled Rwanda to become one of Africa's fastest-growing economies and a model for post-conflict recovery (Gready, 2010).

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda indeed resulted in a catastrophic breakdown of national security, leaving the country in a state of chaos. The genocide led to the deaths of an estimated 800,000 people, widespread displacement, and the near-total collapse of the state's infrastructure and governance systems.

In the aftermath, peace became a foundational element of Rwanda's recovery. Under President Paul Kagame, the Rwandan government adopted a multifaceted approach to rebuilding the nation. This included efforts toward national reconciliation, such as the Gacaca courts for community-based justice and the promotion of unity through various

initiatives aimed at healing divisions between ethnic groups. The government also prioritized economic development, investing in sectors such as technology, agriculture, and infrastructure, contributing to Rwanda's impressive economic growth.

Rwanda's post-conflict recovery has made it a model for other countries emerging from conflict, demonstrating how a focus on peace, governance, and development can help rebuild a shattered society.

Rwanda's recovery following the 1994 genocide provides a compelling case study of **post-conflict peacebuilding**, where peace is not merely understood as the cessation of violence, but as a holistic reconstruction of society. The genocide, which resulted in the deaths of approximately 800,000 people and the displacement of millions, exposed the complete breakdown of the state's protective mechanisms, institutions, and civil trust (Prunier, 1995).

In the aftermath, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)-led government under President Paul Kagame adopted a **multidimensional strategy** to rebuild the nation—rooted in reconciliation, justice, institutional reform, and economic modernization. Central to this effort was the establishment of **Gacaca courts**, a community-based justice system that sought both accountability and healing by facilitating public confessions, forgiveness, and reintegration (Clark, 2010). While not without criticism for limiting due process, the Gacaca model provided a mechanism to process thousands of genocide cases outside a heavily burdened formal judiciary.

The Rwandan state also embraced **positive peace**, as theorized by Johan Galtung (1969), by addressing structural violence and fostering inclusive development. The government's **Vision 2020** strategy emphasized national unity, poverty reduction, and economic transformation. Investments in healthcare, education, and technology—alongside rigorous anti-corruption policies—have positioned Rwanda as one of the fastest-growing and most stable economies in sub-Saharan Africa (Ansoms, 2008).

However, some scholars caution that Rwanda's peace is **highly state-centric** and may come at the cost of democratic freedoms. Reyntjens (2011) argues that while Kagame's regime has maintained stability, it also suppresses dissent and operates under a "benevolent authoritarianism." This presents a paradox where peace and order are prioritized, sometimes at the expense of political pluralism and civil liberties.

Nonetheless, Rwanda's approach reflects a **pragmatic model of post-conflict governance**, emphasizing institutional resilience, economic empowerment, and social healing. Its experience shows that peacebuilding must be locally grounded, government-led, and rooted in tangible improvements to citizens' lives to ensure sustainability.

### *Colombia and the Peace Agreement with FARC*

Colombia's decades-long conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) severely impacted national security, leading to violence, kidnappings, and drug trafficking. The absence of peace made it difficult for the government to control large parts of the country, leading to widespread insecurity. The peace agreement signed in 2016 between the Colombian government and FARC marked a turning point, leading to a significant reduction in violence. The agreement has allowed the government to extend its authority across previously contested areas and focus on development and governance rather than conflict. The stabilization of these regions has contributed to improved security and economic growth (Sánchez, 2019).

Colombia's conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) indeed had a profound impact on national security. The violence, kidnappings, and drug trafficking associated with the conflict destabilized large parts of the country, creating zones where the government struggled to maintain control. This insecurity hampered development and led to decades of instability.

The 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and FARC was a critical step toward resolving this long-standing conflict. The agreement resulted in a marked reduction in violence and enabled the government to reassert its authority in previously contested regions. This has paved the way for stabilization efforts, improved security, and a renewed focus on economic development in areas that had long been affected by the conflict.

Colombia's protracted armed conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which spanned over five decades, profoundly undermined national security. The conflict resulted in more than 220,000 deaths and the internal displacement of over 7 million people—one of the highest figures globally (IDMC, 2017). The FARC insurgency also fueled organized crime, particularly narcotics trafficking

and rural insecurity, creating **ungoverned spaces** where the state had minimal presence (Pécaut, 2000).

The 2016 **Havana Peace Agreement** between the Colombian government and FARC marked a historic shift from armed confrontation to political negotiation. This comprehensive agreement included rural reform, political reintegration, transitional justice, and drug substitution programs. According to Sánchez (2019), the deal enabled the state to re-establish authority in former conflict zones and create conditions conducive to long-term development and governance.

**Violence reduction** was one of the most immediate outcomes of the agreement. The United Nations and local monitoring bodies recorded significant drops in homicides and kidnappings in the years following the accord (UN Verification Mission in Colombia, 2020). Furthermore, **DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration)** programs helped over 13,000 former combatants reintegrate into civilian life, a foundational component of post-conflict peacebuilding (Theidon, 2007).

However, challenges remain. **Implementation has been uneven**, with critics pointing to delays in land reform, persistent violence by successor armed groups, and limited economic opportunities in rural areas. In some territories, criminal organizations and dissident factions have filled the vacuum left by FARC, undermining peace gains (Kroc Institute, 2022).

Nonetheless, Colombia's experience underscores the importance of **comprehensive peace agreements** that address both security and structural inequalities. Peace, in this context, is not merely the silencing of guns but the establishment of **effective state presence, access to justice, and inclusive economic policies**. The country's transition highlights how political will, international support, and sustained local engagement are critical to consolidating peace and security.

Here is a table summarizing definitions of peace and unity from various scholars, along with references:

Scholar	Definition of Peace	Definition of Unity	Reference
Johan Galtung	Positive peace: the integration of human society.	Unity involves cooperation and cohesion within a society.	Galtung, J. (1969). "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research". <i>Journal of Peace Research</i> , 6(3), 167-191.
Immanuel Kant	Perpetual peace: the end of all hostilities and a civil constitution.	Unity achieved through a federation of free states.	Kant, I. (1795). <i>Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch</i> .
Mahatma Gandhi	Peace as the absence of violence and the presence of justice.	Unity based on non-violence and shared values.	Gandhi, M. (1938). <i>Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule</i> .
Martin Luther King Jr.	Peace is not merely the absence of tension, but the presence of justice.	Unity as a beloved community transcending racial division.	King, M. L. Jr. (1957). "The Role of the Church in Facing the Nation's Chief Moral Dilemma".
Thomas Hobbes	Peace as the absence of war, achieved through a social contract.	Unity as the collective agreement to abide by societal rules.	Hobbes, T. (1651). <i>Leviathan</i> .
Baruch Spinoza	Peace is not the absence of war but a virtue of a well-ordered state.	Unity achieved through rationality and shared values.	Spinoza, B. (1670). <i>Tractatus Theologico-Politicus</i> .
John Paul Lederach	Peace as a long-term process of reconciliation and relationship building.	Unity through sustained dialogue and reconciliation.	Lederach, J. P. (1997). <i>Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies</i> .
Kwame Nkrumah	Peace is tied to liberation and economic justice.	Unity as Pan-Africanism, collective solidarity among African nations.	Nkrumah, K. (1963). <i>Africa Must Unite</i> .
Desmond Tutu	Peace through forgiveness and reconciliation.	Unity through Ubuntu philosophy, emphasizing human interconnectedness.	Tutu, D. (1999). <i>No Future Without Forgiveness</i> .
Albert Einstein	Peace is the result of a world without militarism.	Unity as international cooperation and collective security.	Einstein, A. (1931). "The World As I See It".