

Global Culture of Peace: Gender Perspective

Dr. Mrs. Chinyere L. Nkama

Ani Kelechi

Department of History and Strategic Studies
Philosophy Unit
Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper titled “Global Peace Building: Gender Perspective” was carried out to search for viable factors and principles that could facilitate global peace. Data were collected through the use of available data in printed records, report journals, text books and so on. The following were the findings of this exposition: In other to achieve a global culture of peace, it was discovered that such principles as commitment to peace, respect for justice, respect for human rights and cultural diversities and the principle of inter-cultural cum interfaith dialogue must be promoted and upheld. Additionally, the possibilities of adopting the use of ICTs and tourism in fostering global peace were explored. More so, the crux of the matter being women’s role in promoting global peace was examined. It was discovered that achieving global peace was possible if different nationalities of the world would empower their women and involve them to be committed towards peace building just as they are home builders.

Introduction

War is not inherent in human beings, we learn war and we learn peace. The culture of peace is something which is learned, just as violence and war culture is learned too (Boulding, 2008). Boulding’s argument above conversely put, means that since war is learnt, it could be unlearned and in its place be replaced by peace. The above assertion holds true in the deliberate efforts made by the United Nations (UN) through one of its agencies,- United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to get the whole globe to speak the language and imbibe the culture of peace. The United Nations has done that through the promotion of peace, peace keeping and peacemaking resolutions in the Security Council as well as through their economic and social council. The UN body, being the umbrella of governmental organizations across the globe, was given birth mainly to promote a global culture of peace.

However, following the fact that the journey to peace is a collective responsibility of state and non-state actors, it has become imperative that the sovereign leadership of many countries must lend their voice in the roadmap to peace. This has become very necessary at a time like this when all the forces within and outside the state and international system are constantly under the pull and push effect of one form of conflict, violence, terrorism and negative peace. Ironically, as the world stage is progressively affected by conflict, violence, and terrorism, its direct impact on gender as a social construct remains a progressive reality. This work is therefore an intellectual adventure into the need and roadmap of the journey towards sustainable global peace. It would unfold the place of gender in such a strategic social journey. Nevertheless, such a social journey could easily be seen as a mirage or utopia by skeptical philosophers and social critics. Ironically, the quest for peace has become increasingly necessary in a world characterized of violent culture of man. An attempt would therefore be made to inquire into the historical journey to peace from a global perspective.

Global Peace Culture from Historical Perspective

The idea of a global culture of peace has become very necessary at a time when globalization is swallowing all aspect of human life in the twenty first century. Unfortunately, the reality of the global social problems faced by man today reveal that the wind of violence, terrorism, revolutions and all forms of human insecurity is blowing across the globe with the speed of light as no state is currently immune from its growing impact.

Consequently, there is need for both a conscious effort towards promoting a global culture of peace as a strategic approach that will curb the menace of this growing culture of violence and negative peace on the world stage. Global culture of peace as a counter-concept to a perceived culture of war, terrorism and violence everywhere, especially in the contemporary world could be traceable to 1992 program of United Nations, Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), under the leadership of David Adams (Adams and True, 1997). That global institution created a new vision of peace culture based on the Yamoussoukro Declaration of peace in the minds of men in 1989. The declaration called for a culture of peace built on the universal values of respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights and equality between women and men (Yamoussoukro Declaration on Peace in the Minds of Men, 1989). Unfortunately, we live with the tendency for men to abuse, hunt and take-away life as well as frustrate justice, prevent human solidarity, breach human rights, prevent equality and fan the embers of conflict, violence and terrorism in different parts of the globe. This has led to progressive search for peace.

Sequel to that search, UNESCO in its constitution states that since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed, as such in 1998 several noteworthy resolutions of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly dealt with the concept of culture of peace, its importance and its implementation. They include:

- Resolution 52/13, which was the first major resolution on a culture of peace.
- Resolution 52/15 proclaimed the year 2000 as the international year for the culture of peace.
- Resolution 53/22 proclaimed the year 2001 as the United Nations year of Dialogue among civilization. It emphasized the significant role of dialogue as a means to reach understanding, remove threats to peace and strengthen interaction as well as exchange among civilizations.
- Resolution 53/25 proclaimed the decade 2001-2010 as the international decade for a culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world. It pointed out the fundamental importance of a culture of peace as core values of the United Nations, and reaffirmed the 1989 Yamoussoukro Declaration on peace. It stated that the task of the UN to save future generations from the scourge of war requires transformation towards a culture of peace, which consists of values, attitudes and behaviors that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy as well as human rights, tolerance and solidarity. This culture rejects violence and endeavors to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes in order to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation.

Subsequently, in 1999, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 53/243, which came up with the declaration and program of action for a culture of peace (Sabadello, 2011). This document is directed towards the organization's primary goal, which is to abolish war and entrench peace as well as emphasize the importance and potential of intercultural dialogue. A section of the resolution demanded the recognition that peace not only is the absence of conflict, but also requires a positive, dynamic participatory process where dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are resolved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation. Till date, September 21st of every year is designated as International Day of Peace. However, the pertinent question remains, to what extent has global peace been achieved? And more fundamentally, what is peace?

The Concept of Peace

The concept of peace especially has witnessed an evolution in its meaning and interpretations. Groff and Smoker (2001) identified stages of its meaning. They include peace as absence of war; peace as balance of forces in the international system; peace as negative peace and positive peace; feminist peace; macro and micro levels of peace; holistic Gaia-peace; peace with the environment; and holistic inner and outer peace.

Traditionally, peace as absence of war meant the absence of violent or armed conflict between and within states. This view of peace is still widely held among general populations and politicians according to Groff and Smoker (2001) and remains a pre-condition for all other definitions of peace. This is a form of peace expected in a society where there is no terrorism, a society where there is no bloodletting through revolution as well as a society where the destructive hands of multi-dimensional conflicts are not experienced.

Peace as balance of forces in the international system is a modification of the absence of war idea. Wright (1941) in Groff and Smoker (2001) suggests that peace is dynamic balance involving political, social, cultural and technological factors in the international system and that war occurred when this balance broke down.

Wright (1941) maintained that this balance of forces which occurs in the international system defines the overall pattern of relationships between states and International Government Organization (IGOs) as well as between other actors within states and beyond. This form of peace could be imposed on the state by the forces of international system. It shows the manipulation of power game on world stage in such a way that internal forces in a state could form alliance with the actors in the game nations play to ensure that a potential violent situation is aborted or a full blown wind of conflict is reduced and controlled. The role of domestic and international public opinion remains fundamental for the rise of this form of peace, whether through the agitation of proactive peace initiative or through the promotion of peace keeping, peacemaking and post-conflict peace building. This model of peace assumed that any significant change in one of the factors involved in the balance of peace within and outside a state would require corresponding changes in other national and international actors to restore balance of peace. For example, Robert Oppenheimer, the much misunderstood father of the atomic bomb, adopted Wright's view when he insisted on continuing to develop the bomb so that the global political institution- the United Nations (UN) would have to be created, which will help control the new global military technology (Groff and Smoker, 2001).

Galtung (1969) further modified Wright's view, using the categories "negative peace" and "positive peace". He developed a new position and argued that negative peace was the absence of war (absence of those negative factors that could lead to war) and that positive peace was the absence of "structural violence" that leads to conflict. This concept is defined in terms of the number of avoidable deaths caused simply by the way social, economic, and other societal structures were organized. If people starve to death for example, when there is food to feed them, somewhere in the state or die from sickness when there is medicine to cure them, then there exists structural violence since alternative structures could prevent such deaths. The feminist conception of peace would be later discussed in the part on the place of gender in building a global culture of peace.

The holistic Gaia form of peace or peace within the environment has been receiving more scholarly disciples due to the wind of global warming and its multi-dimensional violent effect on the lives of man (Oyesola, 2008; Oyesola, 2005). This model places a very high value on the relationship of humans to bioenvironmental systems. Peace with the environment is seen as central for there to be holistic peace model, where human beings are seen as one of the many species inhabiting the earth and the fate of the planet is seen as an important goal. This holistic peace thinking according to Smoker (1991) does not have spiritual dimension. This peace model is simply peace between people which applies across all levels of analysis from the family and individual level to the global level.

Subsequently, the holistic inner and outer peace, which is the sixth view of peace sees inner, esoteric (spiritual) aspects of peace as essential and stresses the centrality of inner peace to individual and environmental levels of peace. This is the most fundamental form of peace as it is popular knowledge that all forms of conflicts start from the minds of men (Ani, 2014; Ani, 2012D; Nwanaju, and Ani, 2011; Nweke and Ani, 2011; Dad and Ani, 2009). This model of peace theory is very crucial in discussing the global culture of peace. This is because for a culture of peace to be imbibed globally, certain factors and principles for peace must be harnessed and synthesized in the heart of men, who are the principal drivers of peace. Individuals must be at peace in themselves which will translate into peaceful co-existence for one cannot give what he or she has not got. This factor and or principle is very salient in the above discussed models of peace. For UNESCO, peace is more than the absence of war, it is living together in a non-violent way, irrespective of the differences in sex, race, language, religions or culture, while promoting the universal respect for justice and human rights on which such coexistence depends.

The Culture of Peace

Culture is traditionally seen as the people's way of life, which is expressed in their mode of dressing, language, arts, music, dance, type of food, science, technology and all forms of their civilization. It is characterized by learned and creative behavior. As such culture could be described as the distinct set of behaviors, habits, rules traditions, customs, attitudes, values and beliefs of a group of individuals (Sabadello, 2011). UNESCO defines culture as one's way of looking at the world. Within a society, the world views embodied in the society's culture are expressed through laws, policies and social norms. The key points observable in the above description of culture are that culture is learned, no one is born with it, but something learnt after one is born. It is shared by a group of people together, forms their worldview and is transmitted or handed down from generation to generation. Groff and Smoker (2001) have outlined perspectives of peace based on the evolution of peace. They could be used in describing the culture of peace. Thus, the interpretation of the culture of peace for each of the apologists of peace depends on the perspective of peace they represent.

For examples, culture of peace for peace in a society where peace is seen as the absence of war would mean a culture that sees war between or within states as a taboo. That would be increasingly unlikely, until eventually inter-state and intra-state war would cease. Furthermore culture of peace for peace as balance of forces in the international system would mean increased economic, social and political interdependencies between states in the international system, making violent conflict between states less likely. Unfortunately, states are not endowed with the same quality and quantity of human and material resources; hence the state or collection of powerful states that have more comparative advantage in resources would always define the game nations play. Consequently, a culture of peace should be a deliberate process of learning and imbibing those principles that ensue for peace and the transmission of same to generations yet unborn. These principles of peace are what the Institute for World Order, in its World Order Models Project (WOMP) highlights as core value areas, which they envision in creating a desirable world future not only in terms of what they would like to create as an alternative. Mendlovitz (1975) explains the core normative values as:

- Peace not war
- Social and political justice not injustice
- Economic wellbeing not poverty
- Ecological balance not decay

From the perspective of the Institute for World Order, a global culture of peace is peace itself, social and political justice, economic wellbeing and ecological balance that will be conscientiously practiced world over.

Some Fundamental Principles and Viable Instruments for Building a Global Culture of Peace

Expectedly, a global culture of peace is such that should emerge from different cultures and traditions of the nations of the world. Right from the Yamoussoukro declaration on peace to UNESCO's Bureau of Strategic Planning stand on the culture of peace, certain principles have been resonating, such as mutual respect, justice and dialogue. Sabadello (2011) opined that prerequisites for a culture of peace are respect for cultural diversity as well as attachment to one's own cultural identity. One of UNESCO's most important documents, the "Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity" was adopted soon after the September 11, 2001 attacks in order to reaffirm the conviction that intercultural dialogue is the best guarantee of peace. The preamble of the declaration mentions the significance of dialogue and cooperation between cultures, thus "affirming that respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are among the best guarantees of international peace and security" (Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001). The above seeks that all peoples and nations of the world should come to appreciate the many diversities inherent in cultures and therefore show a measureable level of understanding towards one another.

Going back to Mendlovitz's core values of peace against war, social and political justice against injustice, economic wellbeing against poverty and ecological balance against decay; nations of the world must generally agree to the fact that peace should be given a chance in the first place, before we will begin to talk about how to make it a universal phenomenon. Therefore, the foremost principle of global culture of peace should be the agreement to allow peace reign or what could be called commitment to the goal of global peace. This form of commitment is the collective responsibility of every breathing soul to ensure that it is enthroned on the world stage. Lending credence to the above position, Ogar (2011) opined that there is the need for nations of the world to renew their commitment to the goal of global peace and building a world that is at peace with itself. Additionally, as stated by the UNESCO Director-General, peace is more than the absence of war; it is living together with the universal respect for justice and human rights on which such coexistence depends. Therefore, peace should not be taken for granted; it should be an on-going process with a long-term goal that requires constant engineering, vigilance and active participation by all and sundry, globally. So peace has to be conceived as an everyday living experience, not only in periods of conflict but also in ordinary times, when there are no conflicts.

Second to the commitment to the goal of global peace is respect for justice. This principle has already been highlighted above. Justice here demands that what is good for the goose is also good for the gander. It makes for equitable distribution of global wealth. Rich and developed nations of the world should help to develop poor nations and discard the usage of such derogatory terms as "third world countries", "underdeveloped countries", "developing countries" and "developed countries" which could facilitate hate for the western world and encourage rivalry. These concepts on their own create fundamental problems of epistemological explanation.

For instance, if some countries are absolutely developed, does that imply that development has ended or reached its climax in those countries? When would the developing countries attain the utopia of developed countries in the face of the reality of continuous development among the so-called developed countries? Again, what factors have sustained the status of under-developed amongst nations? Who creates the stereotype and what is the punishment for the role of the developing and developed states in keeping the so-called under-developed states in the valley of rejection and subjugation in the international social status. These questions apply to all nations of the world. The gap between the rich and the poor should be closed so that no one will begin to see the other as an enemy.

Ogar (2011) outlined five principles for building a global culture of peace, namely: promoting common parenthood among the human family; understanding the wisdom in the prayers to “rest in peace” after death; realizing that global peace begins in the local family; promotion of a global culture of collective reliance through living with partnership beyond the traditional barriers of religion, region and resources. Of the five principles, the first and fourth principles support this paper’s second principle which is respect for justice. Ogar’s fourth principle explains that there is the need for global establishment of a tradition of growing beyond self reliance and independence to collective reliance and interdependence, that is, that the whole nations of the world are interdependent on each other for collective existence. Therefore, there should be the culture of giving and receiving, investing self to harvest in others and by others, wealth not measured in terms of harvest by self but harvest by others through self investment; and living for the sake of other people as well as living with other people. This position holds true on the global realization of a common ancestry for all people and the need to recognize one global family.

The third principle is the principle of respect for human rights and diversities. Human beings world over, are born with some inalienable rights that they possess just for the fact that they are humans. As such human beings have the right to life, right to freedom of expression, thought and conscience, and et cetera. Again, there are diverse cultures, languages, religions, policies that different nations of the world align themselves to and express. Each nation of the world should respect others’ inclinations to these diversities. No individuals, religious affiliations or nations should think they are superior for belonging to one culture, neither trying to impose their national-cultural or religious identities on others, nor even try to “penalize” others for inclining to different national, cultural and religious identities other than theirs.

The fourth principle that can help in building a global culture of peace is the principle of intercultural and interfaith dialogue, which follows directly from the third above. This should apply when there is a disagreement between two cultures or religions, other than resorting to violent means in settling their disputes they should employ this method of formal discussion on a neutral table to end the disagreement.

Another dimension of peace building that could be identified is the role of ICT/ Social media. Irrespective of some problems inherent in the use of ICT in promoting global cultures of peace, such as using internet to reinforce prejudice for example; the ICT could be a viable dimension in promoting a global culture of peace (Sabadello, 2011). To achieve this, respective online applications and services are to be designed in a way that accurately represents cultural identity, encourage respect for cultural diversity and enables the free and beneficial exchange of thoughts and ideas. Sabadello (2011: 19-20) opines that “if ICTs are to be used for promoting the values of a Global Culture of Peace, then the expression of cultural identity in online platforms must be greatly enhanced, so that it becomes possible to learn the value of cultural diversity and actively engage in intercultural dialogue.

The role of tourism in promoting peace cannot be neglected. Salazar (2006) explains that tourism is an extremely complex phenomenon through which identities and world views are continually being represented, consumed, reconfirmed, negotiated and modified. According to Salazar, peace through tourism ideas at the moment seems to be sustained more by the sweet dreams and rhetoric from tourism industry and policy makers than by fine grained empirical research and academic theories. That notwithstanding, tourism which allows citizens of other nationalities to tour around the world and cultures other than theirs could be available mechanism that will foster peace because it is capable of helping tourists to unlearn certain unwholesome behaviors that impede peace through interaction. Tourism also has the potential of helping tourists to deconstruct pre-conceived notions they had about others when they come face to face with realities on ground about such people. The United Nations through its appropriate agency should consider tourism a viable tool in global peace building and so subject it to study on how best it could serve that purpose.

This can only work effectively with the alliance of state governments that would guarantee maximal security to tourist sites as a roadmap to prevent the use of such areas/ sites as fragile target for terror onslaught.

The Place of Gender in Building a Global Culture of Peace

The role of gender in building a global culture of peace cannot be neglected. This is because the world is characterized by all manner of gender-based violence (Ani, 2012A; Ani, 2012B; Ani, 2012C and Saliba, Ani, Danladi, 2008)). Consequently, during the 1970s and 80s, another perspective of peace was ushered in by the feminist peace researchers, who extended both negative peace and positive peace to include structural violence from all levels of life down to the individual level (Brock, 1989 in Groff and Smoker, 2001). The feminist peace model, which has macro and micro levels of peace, is flourishing in contemporary world scholarship. Their definition of peace include not only the abolition of macro levels of organized violence, such as war, conflicts and terrorism but also doing away with micro level unorganized violence, such as rape in war as well as other forms of domestic violence and gender based stereotype in the society. The concept was also expanded to include personal, micro and macro level structural actions that harm or discriminate against particular individuals or groups. Thus feminist peace model came to include all types of gender violence, broadly meted against people, from the individual to the global level, arguing that the absence of gender violence was a necessary condition for a peaceful planet.

Beck (2012) wrote on the role of women in leadership and peace building which was presented in the Global Peace Foundation Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. The panelists included Mrs. Jun Sook Moon (International Chairman of Global Peace Women); Tan Sri Zaleha Ismail (President of Global Peace Festival Malaysia) and Mrs. Maria Pou Brito del Pino Lacalle (Former First Lady of Uruguay). The panel discussed the remarkable role that women play in the family as well as in the community and described women as vehicles of peace who from a young age start taking care of siblings, then looking after children of their own and often providing primary care for aging parents, all of which exhibit the power of love. Tan Sri Ismail said that peace can be found through the power of love which is women's greatest asset. Citing research that affirms the effectiveness of women in leadership, she said that women are powerful voice in opposing conflict and fostering dialogues. For Mrs. Jun Sook Moon, the family is a child's first example of teaching and learning. Informal educational topics like spousal relationships, the way to communicate, and the way to disagree and resolve disagreement as well as other social norms like tolerance, forgiveness, non-violent dispositions are amongst the culture of peace that women promote at the home front. These ways of life that are learnt and often taught by mothers at home could be perceived as the core or foundation of developing a sustainable mental disposition to peace. Women often take initiative to spread values that promote peace by being active in the lifelong education of children and the community. The value of working such informal peace education is a greater good culture of peace in their neighborhood. It is such peace that spreads into an aggregate culture of peace, bearing in mind that world peace cannot come about from injustice. When such values are inculcated in children by their mothers, world over, a new generation of peace ambassadors would have emerged with high sense of peaceful orientation. This view is supported by UNESCO's program of action which includes:

- Developing a new political program, which favours a strong commitment by state and society to nurture and promote everyday peace.
- Improving the world's global understanding and deconstruct pre-conceived ideas by placing emphasis on the futures of humanistic aspiration (by establishing guidelines for a global curriculum on shared values) and,
- Promoting a global movement in favour of the ideals and practice of a culture of peace and non-violence with emphasis on youths, civic engagement and democratic participation.

Women would go the extra-mile to ensure that they engage in peace building at home and through their NGOs. Mead (1976) wrote that at home 'they often struggle with problems that seem to have no solution'. Middle-class women often tend to employ a servant or maid at home in order to meet the challenges of the home front. Children orphaned by death, children conceived through rape (especially by soldiers), children of young mothers, children born into extreme poverty or children who for other reasons have been rejected by their blood mothers have been supported by other mothers (Collins 2002:610).

Mutunga (2006:375) wrote that ‘women make up around half the population in most war torn states and often times are even more than 50%. Excluding them from peace talks therefore is a rather serious omission because it is denying the rights of the majority to be heard’. Ezirim (2006:220) quoted the comments from UNESCO Director General, Federico Mayor showing the importance of women in building peace as he declared that ‘women and life are synonymous terms’ (Ani, 2012C). A woman gives life and is the most apt at preserving it. Further, she did not fail to note that only 4% of decisions are taken by women in the world even when they are the best messengers for peace (Ezirim 2006:220). The idea of Federico Mayor highlighted the expressive role of women in societal peace, development and progress (Ani, 2012C).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The discussion so far has been on building a global culture of peace. It documented peace models and showed that certain factors are responsible to maintain peace and when those factors are absent, conflict ensues. The work presented the interpretation of peace. It showed that the absence of war interpretation of peace sees peace as obtainable in any society where there is no war. The apostles of balance of power interpretation of peace argue that peace is attained when nations prevent the rise of a hegemonic state that would wield a lot of coercive power in the game of nations, which could easily corrupt absolutely and lead to war/conflicts. Those who see peace from the positive and negative point of view argue that positive peace is the absence of structural and institutional factors that could easily explode into conflicts, while negative peace means the absence of war in a society that have lots of inherent violent and explosive situations. The feminists introduced the concept of ensuring the absence of gender discrimination in the road to peace, while the apostles of Gaia peace are of the primary view that it is a form of peace emanating from the holistic peace in the environment, which include the rise of a peaceful animate and inanimate society. The work equally revealed that the culture of peace is that which is deliberately imbibed and learnt against negative factors that have impeded peace, which also involves handing down such values that promote peace to future generations. In other to achieve a global culture of peace, it was discovered that such principles as commitment to peace, respect for justice, respect for human rights and the principle of inter-cultural cum interfaith dialogue must be upheld.

There are other vital issues in building a global culture of peace. They include that the United Nations should organize a global peace conference inviting the actors and representatives of violent and terrorist group’s world over for a round table discussion. This is to be done with assurances of no victimization, even if their demands are not granted; it would continue to reveal necessary strategic information that is needed to promote global peace. Different governments of the world should demonstrate love for their people and exemplify it through a conscious effort to eradicate poverty, unemployment and class-based struggles emanating from social inequality and injustice. Religious differences and violence need to be curtailed using the principle of truth, objectivity, equity, forgiveness and reconciliation. Teachers of different religions of the world need to teach their adherent the truth of peaceful co-existence and take caution in interpreting their holy books to avoid inciting hate and intolerance.

UNESCO’s Bureau for strategic planning maintains that the culture of peace and non-violence is a commitment to peace-building, mediation, conflict prevention and resolution, peace education, education for non-violence, tolerance, acceptance, mutual respect, intercultural and interfaith dialogue and reconciliation. The list could be endless, but all of those factors are what could make for peaceful co-existence world over. Finally, women’s role in promoting peace cannot be neglected. To achieve global peace, different nationalities have to deliberately work with commitment to their local peace by empowering rural women.

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