Leadership and Peace in Nigeria

By

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Introduction

"Leadership styles shape peace and conflict outcomes" – (Ikwerre Proverb).
"A 'great man' can come forth to unify and weld Nigeria into a strong and solid whole" (Smythe, 1958:227).

Leadership is a critical aspect of every society, association and organisation, which cannot be downplayed, especially as the existence of quality leadership within a country, stimulates growth and development, and enhances national cohesion, peace and stability. In other words, peace is an ingredient of national integration which leads to successful nation building, particularly in a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic nation-state like Nigeria, where various ethnic groups have different traditions of origin and experiences. This is why the style of leadership, personality of the leader, and transformational value of leadership matter.

In his work *The Trouble with Nigeria*, Chinua Achebe identifies the failure of leadership as one of the problems plaguing Nigeria. Even after the publication of the work in the 1980s, the country is still trying to get it right generally. About two years before independence in 1960, it was found that the state of leadership in Nigeria presented a very pessimistic picture as to when Nigeria would get its freedom from British colonial rule despite the April 2, 1960 target set for the country to gain independence (Smythe, 1958).

One of the major setbacks to the nation's development is conflict. The negative impact of conflicts has made peace elude the country in the past. The situation is exacerbated by corruption, which is usually associated with instability. Some of the incidents of conflict are traceable to corrupt practices that sustain socioeconomic injustice and marginalisation, making groups to revolt or form movements to challenge the authorities of leaders. Corruption undermines intergroup relations at political and economic realms. According

to Ibrahim (2015), corruption in Nigeria is one of the major factors that led to violent conflict across the country, undermining the country's value system. Nwobueze (2018) opines that "corruption is a crime against society because lives and resources are lost, and the society is consequently underdeveloped and unstable".

In its 2015 report on "Peace and Corruption" the Institute for Economics and Peace in Sydney (Australia), New York (USA), and Mexico City (Mexico) observed that "low level of peace and high level of corruption are related to each other" and that "changes in corruption drive changes in peace". (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015). Ultimately, the more a nation invests in curbing corruption the more peaceful society becomes.

Nigeria has been bedevilled by several leadership crises since independence. The leadership crises contributed to national economic stagnation and further disunited many groups in the country. For almost 60 years of Nigeria's existence, it has been administered by several leaders under the three systems of government, namely parliamentary, military (authoritarian) and democratic systems. The democratic system seems to have been more people-oriented leadership in principle and practice since 1999, giving civilians more roles to play in governance. The three main systems of government have been characterised by different dimensions of crises, with successive governments devising mechanisms to manage such threats. Notable among such threats are the Action Group crisis of 1962, the Civil War, ethno-religious crises, Niger Delta question, and insurgency. The different strategies adopted by different governments in managing such conflicts inherent in intergroup relations contributed to the unity of the country despite the existing mutual suspicion and defensive radicalism by the government.

For a country that has adopted leadership role conception as its foreign policy since 1960, having a stable society is the best way to preserve the leadership posture, especially when factors like resources, geography and population favour the country (Johnson, 2018). This is because sustaining her position as the giant of Africa and the foreign policy of good neighbourliness largely depend on national stability, which is achievable through peace.

As leadership is important, followership is also crucial because it takes peace-loving followership to produce peaceful leaders for a stable society where the peace culture will become the order of the day. Peace culture means that people must adopt peace as a way of life. The fact that conflict is part of human existence, as claimed by many scholars, does not mean that people cannot decide and choose to be peaceful even in a state of disagreement with people.

Leadership is all about people – guiding humans in the society to achieve common set objectives. It comes with expectations and desires, as people usually look up to the leadership class for answers to their concerns, worries and needs, some of which may be short-term or long-term needs. Leaders are expected to productively engage their followers in policy formulation and implementation.

Using secondary sources of data, this paper argues that inefficiency owing to corruption, coupled with lack of workable people-centred programmes accounted for the recurrent breakdown of law and order and intractable conflicts. The paper is structured into six sections – introduction; conceptual clarification and theoretical framework; leadership, democratisation and electoral process; consultations, dialogues and visits initiated by Nigerian leaders; ex-presidents and their interventions for peaceful society; conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Clarification and Theoretical Framework

Leadership refers to a body of people who lead and direct the activities of a group towards a shared goal; and it denotes the ability to lead, direct and organise a group (Ogbeidi, 2012). For Newstrom and Bittel (2002), leadership is the process of influencing and supporting others to follow you and to do willingly the things that need to be done (Agbude, Excellence-Oluye, and Godwyns-Agbude, 2014). According to Stone, Conley and Luo (2014:31), "within the Confucian perspective, leadership is viewed as the emergent quality of one's character that is emitted and in turn encourages others to want to follow." This definition means that the first quality a leader must have is the character to lead, followed by the humility, courage and willingness to cooperate with the followers to bring about constructive social change.

The explanation of Munroe (1984) is apt: "leadership is like beauty, it's hard to define but you know it when you see it." Similarly, leaders are ordinary people who accept or are placed under extraordinary circumstances that bring forth their latent potential, producing a character that inspires the confidence and trust of others" (Agbude, Excellence-Oluye, and Godwyns-Agbude, 2014:107).

Leadership should take care of the welfare of the public, ensuring that basic needs of life are provided. This is why leadership ought to be transformational. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leaders are individuals who stimulate and inspire their followers to accomplish unprecedented results and, in the process, build up their own leadership competencies, while bringing about positive change for the achievement of set objectives (cited in Abasilim, Gberevbie, and Osibanjo, 2019). With idealised influence

applied by a leader, he is able to use charisma to generate enthusiasm and draw people together around a vision through self-confidence and emotional appeal that motivate followers (Fisher, 2009; cited in Stone et al., 2014). This emotional appeal could be backed by his firm awareness of his emotional intelligence skills in leading people.

Based on the Confucius model of leadership, which emphasises how and why a leader must strive for perfection, and be idealistic and realistic, Fernandez (2004:29) maintains that:

> For this leader, carrying on his task is the very essence of the development of the perfection of his responsibility. Through her actions, the leader improves the world and brings harmony to all. He or she is a leader who delivers results that go beyond short-term profit, a leader with a vision of a better society, a better life and a better place to work (Stone, Conley, and Luo, 2014).

The perfection of leaders at all levels is imperative, given that people are expected to look up to them as role models. Even blind people can feel the impact of efficient leaders who know his roles and leads the right way.

Amadi (n.d.) outlines the types of African leadership and the skills of successful leaders:

1. Successful and conservative leaders
2. Radical and ideological leaders
3. Predatory leaders
4. Tyrants

He then gives four basic skills and attributes of successful leaders:

1. The management of self
2. The management of trust
3. The management of attention
4. The management of meaning

Theoretically, the Social Goods Theory propounded by Magstadt (2006) offers more insight into how leadership can be used to make the society a better and stable place for all. With effective leadership, the government will be able to meet up with its obligations, especially concerning the individual and group needs in the state, where there are interests and aspirations for all to have a sense of belonging. The theory focuses on the fact that the constituted authority in every state has the responsibility of creating an enabling

environment through the provision of essential social services that meet the fundamental needs of the citizens, such as food, clothing, shelter, security and sex without difficulty, as well as equitable distribution of resources (Ibrahim, 2015). Simply put, if effective leadership is able to give priority to basic human needs, as advanced by Abraham Maslow, based on socioeconomic justice, and prevent marginalisation, society cannot descend to the level of struggling to enjoy peace and security. This is because the easiest way to isolate troublemakers is to empower the majority of the citizens. This is applicable to all levels of leadership in Nigeria -federal, state and local. It means that leaders should determine the people-centred approach in distributing resource and address such concerns that are linked to welfare, survival, self-actualisation and safety.

Closely related to the discourse on leadership and peace in Nigeria is the liberal political theory of state. This theory explains how the state exists and functions to promote the welfare of the citizens and protect their lives and property. Without doing these as responsibilities, the state cannot earn the loyalty of its citizens, which will erode the legitimacy of the government (Mbachu, 2009). Usually, it is difficult for citizens to regard or recognise any government that does not value the needs of the populace. Such disaffection could extend to the different territories when people decide to consider self-determination, with implications for peace and security, when state repression becomes the order of the day. Sustaining the confidence of people in the capability of leaders to meet their basic needs is an antidote to rebellious acts. This is achievable through selfless service to the populace, rather than self-aggrandisement.

Since leadership is associated with challenges, leaders must be emotionally intelligent, get adequately self-aware, manage self, manage situations and pay attention to details or developments to gain and sustain the trust of the masses. This is why some Nigerian leaders are known to have paid the price of leadership, some constraints notwithstanding. Ndubisi (1980) has this to say about the price of leadership:

> The price of leadership is enormous in whatever direction it is paid. Negatively paid, it is a disaster. Positively paid, it is noble, glorious and great. It does not matter who pays it, the leader or the led. The price of the mismanagement of the First Republic was paid with disaster. Arson, rioting, vandalism, murder, insecurity, bribery and corruption, sectionalism and nepotism all compounded to cause friction, frustration and loss of precisions and innocent lives. The cruel and gruesome Civil War affected mostly the masses, and most of the leaders that caused it paid no price. They rather became millionaires overnight and turned round to

> educate Nigerians to forget the past and look for the better in future (cited in Ndubisi, 1991:91-92).

From the foregoing, it is obvious that some mistakes were made in the past, and people have been going about with their lives and endeavours in view of the lessons of the past as far as leadership and peace are concerned. All levels of leadership come with commitments and are associated with responsibilities to the extent that much accountability is required on the part of the leadership class. This creates a platform for trust and loyalty, and promotes confidence, a more participatory community, true federalism and good governance.

Leadership, Democratisation and Electoral Process

One of the factors that make democratisation successful is leadership. Democracy is about issues, policies and national development for the benefit of all members of society (Mbachu, 2009). Democracy requires leadership values, which "consist of justice, and it denotes action in accordance with the appropriate aspects of the law" (Umar, 2011).

Nigeria is endowed by Nature with huge human and natural resources, thereby giving the state the opportunity to occupy an enviable leadership position in Africa, especially by providing leadership in economic development and democratisation (Mbachu, 2009). Such efforts are required considering Nigeria's intimidating population, citizen diplomatic efforts, large market, resources and technical aids capability.

As far as state building is concerned, leadership at all levels is crucial in guiding the actions of people, especially the electorate and politicians, in their bid to campaign for votes. This is necessary to ensure peaceful electoral process, particularly to prevent acts that could jeopardise the democratisation process. Such acts are pre-election, election and post-election activities in which conflict of interest is usually common with politicians and their supporters. As a country that has witnessed numerous elections, pre-election and post-election violent acts are no longer new in the polity. This is why leaders are now actively involved in reorientation to make the electoral process more peaceful. The readiness of leaders to make the entire process peaceful remains critical. Besides, it is difficult to gain the confidence of the people in the system when there is little effort to make elections transparent and peaceful.

Peace will go a long way in sustaining the rule of law when leaders adhere to the principles of the rule of law, especially the electoral act. With them playing their own part, the followers would have no option other than to play by the rules guiding the conduct of

election. It then means that when the leaders condemn electoral violence and rebuke those indulging in electoral malpractices, like rigging, vote buying and ballot snatching, others will desist from such heinous acts because they will not have anywhere to run to or hide.

Electoral reforms have contributed to the stability of the country. When he was elected president in 2007, late Umaru Musa Yar'Adua addressed Nigerians on the need for more transparent and credible electoral process, and acknowledged that the 2007 general elections that brought him to power as the president of Nigeria was flawed (Umar, 2011). This was a display of leadership considering his acceptance of error, lapses and state weakness. The identification of the trouble with the electoral process was a right step in the country's democratisation journey and the subsequent move by the presidency contributed to the enactment of the 2010 Electoral Act.

Another good example is that of former President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan. He led by example during the 2015 presidential election, when he prioritised the welfare and safety of Nigerians above his political ambition. Contrary to the assumption or imagination of many people who expected dispute, he shocked the world when he welcomed the outcome of the election and even accepted the results before official announcement by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), when he called Muhammadu Buhari to congratulate him. This is leadership because his peaceful action automatically disarmed those waiting to foment trouble with the outcome if it was disputed. This effort prevented tension that was already brewing as the two major parties engaged in war of words.

The judiciary has significant role in curbing elite rascality and impunity through judicial processes, which are instrumental to preventing anarchy. The judiciary is saddled with the responsibility of interpreting the law to avert constitutional crisis or breakdown of law and order, which could threaten the peace. At the post-election stage, the judiciary is there to take up the task of election dispute resolution, thereby making it democratic for parties that have grievances to resolve their differences without taking laws into their hands. The judiciary must be strong enough to suppress intimidation, and should always promote justice premised on the truth.

The role of justice in post-civil war Nigeria is important in contributing to the process of national reconciliation and peace. All branches of government need to tackle the challenges of accountability in order to ensure legitimacy. It is difficult to secure peace without justice and accountability.

As for the followership, the social responsibility in the selection and promotion of credible leadership also promotes peace in the country. When credible leaders are elected, the issues of primordial sentiments and nepotism will reduce to the minimum and cannot become an issue. Such achievement would affect positively the early warning system in peace and security. This is because patriotic leaders would tend to respond swiftly to situations of conflict in any part of the country, whether it is in their ethnic group or geopolitical zone or not.

Schwerin (1998:116) argues that "major structural transformations are accessary to obtain greater social justice, more participatory democracy, environmentally sustainable economic development, peace, and prosperity". Leadership must govern with humility and diligence and inspire the people to fight and defy corruption and injustice.

Furthermore, participatory and people-centred democracy and development will encourage Nigerians to lead, express their power to curb conflict, controversy, and contention, as well as demand freedom, dignity and new independence.

Remarkable Leadership Efforts Aimed at Promoting Peace in Nigeria

S/No	Administration	Policy Intervention
1	Olusegun Obasanjo	Oputa Panel for investigation of human rights abuses
2	Olusegun Obasanjo	Niger Delta Development Commission
3	Olusegun Obasanjo	Carrot-and-stick response to militancy/invitation for dialogue; arrest of Asari Dokubo
4	Umaru Yar'Adua	Establishment of the Niger Delta Ministry in 2008
5	Umaru Yar'Adua	Proclamation of Amnesty for repentant militants in 2009
6	Goodluck Jonathan	Implementation of the amnesty/disarmament/demobilisation of ex-militants
7	Muhammadu Buhari	Dialogue with Niger Delta stakeholders through the Vice President, Yemi Osibanjo
8	Muhammadu Buhari	Establishment of Northeast Development Commission and de-radicalisation of repentant Boko Haram members

Source: Author's compilation, 2020

The table above shows some of the efforts of Nigerian leaders since 1999 aimed at promoting peace and preventing a state of anarchy, which could cause tension in many parts of the country. The list is not exhaustive but offers insights into how these leaders have contributed to sustenance of peace and security through their leadership positions during their tenures.

Consultations, Dialogues and Visits Initiated by Nigerian Leaders

In all societies, purposeful and effective leadership is critical for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. This is because the readiness of a leader to embrace peace and regard peace as a currency for national cohesion would affect all sectors of the economy. Leaders at all levels often initiate consultations and visitations as platforms for dialogue between aggrieved individuals/groups with the intention of changing conflictual relationship as well as curbing the violent effects of conflicts emanating from confrontation or protracted conflict. This is because dialogue is imperative to national cohesion, and such a state in intergroup relations cannot be reached without communication, consultation and visitation. While consultation offers opportunity to identify critical issues and the stakeholders that influence decisions, visitation also makes it possible for leaders to gain access to first-hand information needed for peacebuilding, bearing in mind the parties involved and their roles.

During industrial actions by organised labour or protests by Nigerians against government policies, some of these measures are adopted to engage parties involved in order to prevent troublemakers from taking advantage of protests to threaten the peace across the country. Promoting enlightened, credible, transformational and committed leadership also requires continuous engagement of followers to build sustainable peace and development in Nigeria.

Through broadcasts, Nigerian leaders also promote peace, by identifying problems and areas of intervention, and admonishing citizens to obey law and order. Also, such broadcasts offer government the opportunity to highlight policies on any troubled region, cautioning troublemakers to desist from lawlessness or face the wrath of the law. For instance, when he assumed office in 1999, President Olusegun Obasanjo informed the nation about the readiness of his administration to intervene in the Niger Delta crisis by establishing a development plan which would guide the region's development, but also cautioned against unlawful use of arms by non-state actors. He equally used his office as the President to initiate dialogue with the representatives of the Niger Delta communities with the aim of improving understanding between government and the people to prevent aggression and disruption of the petroleum industry by restive youths. Nwobueze (2015)

argues that "gaps in policy implementation vital for empowering all the citizens is unsatisfactory".

It is disheartening that some privileged indigenes of Niger Delta who have occupied and are occupying key positions that would have accelerated sustainable peace and development of the region have not shown the required patriotism by challenging the structures and processes that contribute to insecurity and underdevelopment. If the presence of the Niger Deltans in government cannot accelerate the development of the region, it becomes difficult for Niger Deltas to have the moral justifications to ask other Nigerians to come and develop the area in future. As a popular Yoruba adage says "the owner of a load lifts the heavier part".

Credible and disciplined leadership will transform the Niger Delta to an industrial giant, thereby creating employment, peace and prosperity. Also, low corruption and crime rate will stimulate development and highest standards of living.

Ex-Presidents and Their Intervention Roles for Peaceful Society

Former Nigerian leaders are relevant stakeholders in maintenance of peace and security in the country. Through their active participation in various national affairs/programmes, as well as Council of State meetings, former heads of state and presidents have been contributing to the stability of the country, identifying areas of intervention, as well as early warning and response when necessary. This is in view of the fact that the President and Governors cannot claim to successfully govern the country alone. They need the involvement of ex-leaders to contribute their wealth of experience to national development and stability. They also play significant roles in areas of suggesting ideas on youth empowerment to reduce risk of sliding into violence.

The intervention efforts of former Nigerian leaders are remarkable. Past governors, presidents, senators and council chairmen have been actively involved in peace-building initiatives, encouraging people to embrace dialogue and shun confrontational conflict handling styles. A notable approach is their preference for arbitration/mediation aimed at preventing tensions. According to Opukri and Etekpe (2011:289), "arbitrators/mediators can only operate in an atmosphere of impartiality and must be recognised and accepted as knowledgeable individuals with high level of wisdom and integrity by all the parties involved in the crisis." Their peace initiatives are based on their strategic roles as experienced leaders having the qualities of good offices.

Also, they have been instrumental to peacefulness by serving as watchdogs to current governments. They do this by either commending or condemning some policies, depending on whether or not they are perceived as people-centred. Harrington and Merry, 1988; Burton, 1990, posits that societies are transformed when fundamental social and political changes are made to correct inequities and injustice to provide all groups with their fundamental human needs". This form of transformative mediation exemplified by the work of Bush and Folger (1994) is designed to change the consciousness and character of human beings (cited in Nwobueze, 2015)

Through their letters to the Presidency, ex-leaders are known to communicate their concerns to the government of the day on the need for policy rethinking and change of strategy. In his widely circulated letter of December 2013, titled "Before it is too late", former President Olusegun Obasanjo identified the threats to and challenges of state building in Nigeria. He also cautioned then President Goodluck Jonathan on the urgency to respond to national issues that needed government's intervention, such as the insecurity in the Northeast as well as ethno-religious violence and youth unemployment. Despite the blames by aides to the president, Obasanjo contributed his part to the peacefulness of the country as a member of the Council of State. To date, he has not stopped writing letters to the President, commenting on national issues. In addition, former heads of state also take advantage of their presentations during public academic, civil society or media events to suggest ways of mobilising human and material resources for peaceful state building in the country. Such a transformation represents not only removing the flawed and dysfunctional social, economic, and political systems, but also necessitates a psychic transformation in the attitudes and relationship between parties with its appreciable impact on grassroots involvement, nation building, national reconciliation and healing, change agentry and social change.

There has being clamour for revolution and restructuring. However, this has not been welcomed by leaders at various levels despite the fact that concerns have been raised at various quarters on the rationale and modalities of the so-called restructuring. The ways such agitations are addressed without considering their merits have engendered nationwide protests, which have the capacity to determine the peacefulness of the nation. This is why early response must be given the much-desired attention.

Revolution could be more susceptible to being highjacked by youths. It is also seen as treasonable felony and an attempt to destabilise the entire country for the benefit of few disenchanted individuals. This indicates why Nigerian leaders regard the clamour for revolution as a threat to the territorial integrity of the nation and why the security agencies

were deployed at different times in 2019 and 2020 to clamp down on many protesters during the "Revolution Now" protests. Transformation, through the paradigm of peace education, will make a difference in the context of ending something destructive and building something desired.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has examined the relationship between leadership and peace in Nigeria, as leaders have strategic roles to play for the country to enjoy sustainable peace. This study supports the argument of Mbachu (2009), that Nigeria does not only need a patriotic and visionary leadership, but also a committed followership. The foregoing submission is apt considering the intersection between peace culture, committed followership and visionary leadership. These elements are the foundation of peaceful society. The fact that Nigeria has remained indivisible despite various threats to national integration, including the Civil War of 1967-70, suggests that various leaders have done well as far as patriotism is concerned. This is based on the truism that, if some leaders had compromised the peace initiatives aimed at uniting different groups in the country, it would have been difficult to have a state called Nigeria today.

The paper recognises public good as the essence of leadership within the contexts of multi-track diplomacy (government's role in peacebuilding) and human needs. It is argued that emotionally intelligent leaders are successful in their leadership positions. Empathy towards others is a precondition for a moral and ethical life. In order to have this, you must have the requisite emotional discipline and intelligence. Actualising and sustaining peace in the society also requires the influence of leaders because if the nation is to get all affairs right, the issue of quality, responsible and responsive leadership must be addressed for appreciable impact on peace and stability.

It is easier to achieve peace when there is a peaceful leader in power, as his readiness to maintain the peace would make the people believe in the state. "A heart of peace Is always the best Problem-solver" (Sri Chinmoy). Government needs to open more space for dialogue. The capacity of the people to dialogue with governments and violent extremists needs to be proactively built. This will promote collaboration and consensus building, cultural diplomacy, and peaceful co-existence.

The 2017 released Global Peace Index shows the benefits of investing in Peace. For instance, every one dollar can lead to sixteen dollars in the cost of armed conflict. Violence costs 12.6% of world gross domestic Product, that is, 5.40 dollars per day per person globally (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017).

Rethinking and managing ethnic and religious relations in Nigeria will require consensus building. This should rest on protecting human rights, and resolving ethnic and religious claims and the politics surrounding them. It should also involve promoting a healthy working relationship between peoples from different cultural backgrounds in various parts of Nigeria, inclusive growth, environmental justice, and peace. This is our primary peacebuilding responsibility.

To achieve peace, security and development in Nigeria, there is need to place patriotism and nationalistic education in the forefront of the human development framework, with sustainable human security as the guiding principle. This would create a civil society of people-centred and participatory governance, a critical factor in peacebuilding. Education remains the best tool for modernity. Without the creation of a knowledge-based society through functional education, sustainable and self-reliant modernisation is hindered. As is apparent, the development of requisite human capital could help Nigerian communities conquer the scourge of underdevelopment and insecurity (Nwobueze, 2015). Only a sustained human capital development process with special focus on leadership and followership education, character education, skills or emotional intelligence, financial education could reform the mindsets, values, attitudes and behaviours of people towards the prevention, management and transformation of rural and urban violence in Nigeria.

The empowerment of the individual is embedded in empowerment of others in community. Empowerment involves mutual dependence. Schwerin (1995) building on the work of Sartori (1984), argues that "empowerment can be delineated into eight primary components: self-esteem, self-efficacy, knowledge and skills, political awareness, social participation, rights and responsibilities, and access to psychological, social and material resources". Leadership should mobilize our people into taking up productive activity through a vision to boost the country's development.

A more participatory approach in the design and implementation of economic empowerment programmes and promotion of peace education, especially in school curriculum, will strengthen stakeholders' initiatives in pursuit of sustainable peace. Similarly, the strategic significance of Patriotism Studies cannot be ignored if introduced as a core subject at all levels of education in Nigeria. This is because being patriotic will promote peace.

Logically, therefore, conflict transformation and peacebuilding must nurture community and work for the empowerment of the people to be active and full participants in the decisions and environment that will promote peaceful society. What Nigeria needs now is

transformational leadership and peace, and not revolution, as it is easier to destroy than to rebuild. Sustaining the peace in Nigeria requires continuous efforts in areas of leadership, political will, patriotic followership, and the use of National Orientation Agency to advocate peacefulness in the country.

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