

Although 2015, the year of the next general election, is about two years away, many people have started heating up the polity. Drums of war are already sounding as individuals and groups in the political circle have begun strategising and carrying out some intrigues to position well ahead of the battle ahead. Politicians and key power brokers are not alone in this game. Leaders of ethnic nationalities have also joined in the game.

In the last few months, they have also been shouting themselves hoarse and declaring that except their wishes and desires are met in the coming general election, the entity called Nigeria, may be as good as a divided. As far as they are concerned, their grouse has to do with alleged marginalisation and injustice perpetrated by those in government or some power brokers. Needless to say that some have chosen the violent way and rendered the state of security almost impossible.

That is not to say that some have not been peaceful in their agitations. Some ethnic groups have also threatened to secede in case their aspirations are not met. Notwithstanding the various colourations given their agitations, many Nigerians believe that the different agitations are mere shenanigans aimed at positioning some individuals and groups to benefit largely from the battle in 2015.

The realisation that the agitations and claims by many are but geared towards benefitting from the power play in 2015 has cast a doubt on the threat that Nigeria may be divided after all. This is particularly so when some groups and leaders of some ethnic bodies under the aegis of National Unity Alliance (NUA) give their words to that effect. According to them, Nigeria will experience a peaceful atmosphere before, during and after the 'dreadful' 2015.]

NUA in a communiqué issued and signed two weeks ago after a meeting in Owerri, Imo State, by about ten ethnic leaders led by the President of the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC), Dr. Frederick Fasehun, pledged their resolve to work for the unity of the country.

Other notable members of the group are the leader of the Movement for the Actualisation of

Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Chief Ralph Uwazuruike; leader of Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Alhaji Mujahid Asari-Dokubo; Maj. Hamza Al-Mustapha, former Chief Security Officer (CSO) to late Gen. Sani Abacha, and Abacha's first son, Mohammed.

The group, during a visit to the palace of the traditional ruler of Nri Kingdom, Eze Obidiegwu Onyesoh, in Nri, Anaocha Local Government Area of Anambra State, also canvassed for the strengthening of Nigeria's democracy, building bridges across the country and promotion of peace and security. The group said the nation would no longer be left in the hands of "some disgruntled, self-centred and unpatriotic citizens to continue manipulating our polity to their advantage, through causing confusion and hoodwinking the public."

The communiqué reads in part: "From today, nobody would be allowed to use us to cause disaffection or mayhem among innocent citizens of Nigeria no matter how highly placed, influential or wealthy. Any attempt towards creating ugly scenarios would not only be rebuffed but exposed including personalities behind such dastard acts. "We warn politicians who are bent on causing disaffection and or cause confusion in the polity to be cautious and stop their actions. They should note that Nigeria is greater than any individual."

Also speaking on behalf of NUA leaders at Eze Onyesoh' palace, Al-mustapha pledged that they were charting a new course that will erase all manner of disaffection that had afflicted the nation. His words: "We understand the need at this point in time on the journey of our democratic history the need to build a bridge that will be seen to create passage for our younger generation across Nigeria for peace, harmony and security.

We will come together to chart a cause that will support, promote peace, unity and harmony, where disaffection will be a thing of the past." Looking critically at the NUA members, some of them had at different times in the history of the country called for the disintegration of Nigeria.

Their coming together, to sing a new tune of ensuring peaceful co-existence, therefore, sounded quite surprising and very timely in view of the tension in which the country appears to be enveloped in. The timeliness of the call for peace from the strange quarters is seen in the fact that the country will be celebrating her 53rd Independence on October 1 and many people are of the views that the need for the people of the country to be united cannot be overemphasised

Besides, the call for peace is in conformity with the aspirations of the founding fathers of the country who fought tirelessly for Nigeria's independence from the colonial masters. Speaking to Saturday Mirror, the Founder/Executive Director of Hope for Niger Delta Campaign (HNDC), Comrade Sunny Ofehe said Nigeria, as a country has strength in diversity, noting that the more Nigerians promote unity among themselves, the stronger they will become in the area of socio-economic advancement.

His words: "I think people who know me and follow my activities will testify to the fact that I am a core advocate of a united Nigeria. I believe Nigeria as a country has strength in diversity and the more we promote unity among ourselves, the stronger we will become in the area of Socio-Economic advancement.

"When I first received the news that some ethnic nationality leaders like those you have mentioned were meeting in Owerri, I was anxious to know what the outcome of the meeting will be. When their joint statement of a call for the unity of Nigeria was released to the press, I saw it as a welcome development. I was in Nigeria recently and was privileged to meet Alhaji Dokubo Asari and Alhaji Shettima Yerima who were part of the Owerri meeting.

They spoke about their determination to ensure that Nigeria is united for peace to reign. I saw the coordinated efforts of Yerima to ensure that Asari addresses the press to set the records straight that he is not a hater of the people from the North. "Nigeria, as a country, has come to stay. We will never be divided and the country is bigger than any individual or group. We had a civil war that drew the country back many years and today we have still not recovered.

The complexity of Nigeria as a country will not even allow a binary split. time governorship candidate of the National Conscience Party (NCP) in Ogun State, Ogbeni Lanre Banjo, in his view stressed the need for peace and unity in the nation of each ethnic group that made up Nigeria.

Said he: "To have peace and unity in the country, there must be peace and unity in the nation of each ethnic. Dr. Fasehun must enjoy the respect of the people he represents and the Obas in Yoruba land must put aside their in-fighting for the unity of the nation. Asari Dokubo must watch his utterances.

Dr. Goodluck Jonathan has every right to contest and Nigerians reserve the rights to reject or accept him at the poll. There is no way we can unite with any kind of misguided utterances. “Ralph Uwazuruike cannot be talking of Biafra and my other brothers of Eastern extraction making inflammatory remarks about the Yoruba on issues that occurred in the 70’s when Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu has joined Chief Obafemi Awolowo in the world beyond.

Our parlances must be watched. Those speaking for their ethnic nationalities at the expense of the welfare of other nationalities or those exploiting the structural imbalance of the country to benefit their nationality, in judiciary, police etc. cannot in all fairness lead the unity efforts. The unity efforts must be led by exemplary patriots.

“Fostering the unity of the country where any Nigerian, including the minority, can contest and win elections should be our focus every second. If we carry Nigerian passports and all of us see ourselves as Nigerians first, the rotation issue should be erased from our mindset. We should be able to vote for the best among us regardless of where the best hails from ”existence among Nigerians.

“We should be more concerned about how to unite the country and how to move this great country forward; Nigeria deserves better deal from what we are getting. All we need to have is peaceful co-existence among ourselves as Nigerians so that everyone of us can enjoy life. It is very important for every Nigerian and leaders to be at peace with one another,” he said.

The National Secretary, New Nigeria Peoples Party, (NNPP), Gilbert Agbo, advised government to refrain from acts or utterances capable of distorting peace. “I charge Nigerians to embrace peace at whatever level they are to let this country move forward. There is no alternative to peace; there cannot be meaningful development without peace, democracy cannot thrive without peace in the country,” he said