

PEACE AND SECURITY IN ENUGU STATE: BUILDING ON THE BEDROCK OF CONVERSATION

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ABSTRACT

There are three competing theories of peace namely: peace as the absence of war (Hobbes), peace as a divinely order of harmonious existence (St Augustine) and peace as the result of rational human ordering of affairs which needs to be continually nurtured, protected and defended (Kant). The third theory which seems to be dominant in international affairs and diplomacy also seems to be the most plausible since it stresses human agency and responsibility for the world we create. Thus, peace is never the result of mere happenstance. The peace and security of lives and property which Enugu state has enjoyed for the past five years is not a product of chance. Rather, it is the result of deliberate action, of a sustained commitment to the politics of constructive engagement anchored in conversation and a moral vision which needs to be sustained and strengthened for the greater common good of the citizenry.

Keywords: peace, security, chance, deliberate action, commitment, conversation, constructive engagement, moral vision.

Introduction

“Politicians have power, but religions have something stronger: they have influence. Politics moves the pieces on the chessboard. Religion changes lives. Peace can be agreed around the conference table; but unless it grows in ordinary hearts and minds, it does not last. It may not even begin.” –Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, (2004).

“University training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end; it aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life.” –St John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801-1890), *The Idea of a University* (1852).

“Every intellectual has an audience and a constituency. The issue is whether the audience is there to be satisfied, and hence a client to be kept happy, or whether it is there to be challenged, and hence stirred into outright opposition or mobilized into greater democratic participation in the society...How does the intellectual address authority: as a professional supplicant or as its unrewarded, amateurish conscience?” –Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (1996).

“The greatest single antidote to violence is *conversation*, speaking our fears, listening to the fears of others, and in that sharing of vulnerabilities discovering a genesis of hope...

Conversation, the heartbeat of democratic politics, is dying and with it our chances of civic, let alone global, peace.” –Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, (2004).

Let me start with a few disclaimers. This paper does not pretend to be an End Term Report on the Governor’s stewardship – which would be premature. Neither is even his Mid-Term Review, even though time is due for that. Rather, its limited scope may contribute to the Governor’s Mid-Term Report whenever it gets to be written by those more familiar with the facts and thus better suited for the task. My burden here is very simple. I want to help explain an apparent paradox: the existence of relative peace and security of lives and property in Enugu State, its identification by Inspector General of Police as “the most peaceful and secure state in the country”, even as Nigeria faces security challenges of monumental proportions.

In the Beginning...

Let us go back to the recent past or rather to the advent of the current administration in the state. The Governor was first elected to office in 2015 and resumed duties on May 29th of the same year. The months preceding the election were replete with tension and anxiety as many top rank politicians angled for the electoral ticket of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) in the state to replace the outgoing Governor, Barr. Sullivan I Chime. By the Governor’s fiat and with the acquiescence of the ranking members and leaders of the party in the state, the lot fell on the then member of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Ifeanyi Lawrence Ugwuanyi. As party rank and file came to embrace his candidacy, his campaign tours across the nook and crannies of our state took the appearance of a carnival with mammoth crowds of supporters wherever he went. By the time Election Day arrived, the result was almost a foregone conclusion: a sweeping victory for the Governor and his party. But there was a lingering unease, a hunting disquiet in the minds of many party leaders and faithful in all the zones other than the Governor’s own.

What would the Nsukka man do with political power? What will happen to other zones in the state? Will he govern for all or simply take care of the people of his zone? Will he visit a vendetta on other zones to compensate for the marginalization of his people for 16 years, leaving them in political wilderness, bereft of infrastructural benefits and sundry government patronages? While these questions Ayogu Eze, were bugging thoughtful minds, the Governor was faced with another, more fundamental challenge, namely the safety of his electoral victory. One of his opponents at the party primaries, Senator had gone to courts to contest the validity of the process which produced his candidacy and therefore the validity of his election to office as Governor. A third challenge came quite early in the life of the administration: the menace of killer herdsmen. Armed Fulani herdsmen invaded Nimbo, a community in Uzo-Uwani LGA of the state, in the early hours of April 25, 2016 killing over ten persons and injuring several others, while burning a few houses and vehicles. The Governor’s reaction to all three challenges seems to define his stewardship in respect of peace and security giving one an insight into the relative peace and security being enjoyed in the state today.

The Burden of the Past

For purposes of fair evaluation, it is important to keep in mind the legacy of governance and social relations inherited by the current administration in this state at its inception over five years ago. The Governor's zone, Enugu North, had been out of power and reduced to peripheral relevance in the affairs of the state since November 1993. More importantly, the Governor was preceded in office by the governments of His Excellency, Dr Chimaroke Nnamani, FACOG (now Senator for Enugu East) from 1999-2007 and His Excellency Barr Sullivan I Chime (2007-2015) respectively. During this period, both governors paid scant regard to the constitutional provision for federal character in the distribution of government patronage and appointments. Whereas Governor Nnamani literally redefined Agbani, his hometown, into a metropolis through the location of choice projects – the permanent site of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu Law School, Air Force Secondary School, Mia Mater Elizabeth Secondary School and Renaissance University – the Nsukka campus of the state university was wiped off the map and is yet to return. In the case of Barr Chime's administration, the robust road rehabilitation projects embarked on by his administration – completely redesigning his native town, Udi, and environs with well-paved asphalted roads left Nsukka in the lurch with the near singular bequest of Ugwogo –Opi road to the zone. In both administrations, top civil service positions were filled and appointment of judicial officers were appointed and promoted without sufficient regard for geographical spread much to the utter disadvantage of the Governor's zone. The most dramatic emblem of those years was the lake-size pool of water along Enugu Road in Nsukka urban which remained unattended those many years thereby becoming, perforce, a symptom of a people's perceived political insouciance. Neither was any part of the Governor's zone ever articulated in the World Bank's map of areas with erosion problems in the state such that that the Bank's Environmental Intervention Fund could not be mobilized for any infrastructural developments there. Similarly, no citizen of the zone has been found worthy to represent the state in the federal cabinet since 1999 when the last one left office. The list of the putdowns from those 16 years which can easily be stretched is well-etched in the collective memory of a people who have been through hell (See Ngwoke, 2016: 260-277) for detailed analysis).

To add to the weight of that social history of exclusion, the administration was hit from the start by a serious economic recession as the nation's forex earnings dipped in response to the collapse in global oil prices. The economy was tanking while insurgency and insecurity was worsening especially in the north eastern part of the country where several local government councils and emirates were already in the hands of Boko Haram terrorists and their cronies. Yet, the Governor had the pluck to vow (while presenting his government's four points development agenda on Inauguration Day) his resolve to "modernize Nsukka" giving it a status befitting of "a university town".

The Fragility of Society

Why do political office holders fear the loss of power? Why are they afraid of what might happen after they leave office? The reason is not far to seek. As the American sociologist, Peter L. Berger (1990) reminds us, society is simply a project of world-building. It is simply a human product and nothing more. Yet, humans themselves are products of society in such a way that

humans and society are united in a dialectical relationship. This dialectic consists of three related steps or moves: externalization, objectivation and internalization.

Externalization consists of all the ways, both mental and physical, by which humans project themselves into the world. This is how society is constructed by humans. For instance, the novel, *Things Fall Apart*, is an act of externalization. Objectivation is the process through which the objects of human externalization attain a reality independent of their creator. Thus the novel, *Things Fall Apart*, once published developed an existence independent of its author, Chinua Achebe. This is how society becomes a reality in its own right - *sui generis*. Internalization is how humans absorb the objects of externalization. By reading the novel, *Things Fall Apart*, for example, the work helps to frame the imagination of its readers. This is how humans become products of society. As a human creation, society is fragile because what humans have created can always be undone by them either deliberately or through some act of stupidity or sheer incompetence. Society therefore needs various acts of legitimation in order to survive and endure. The greatest act of legitimation is religion in that it invests the precarious world created by humans with an aura of permanence and stability by removing it from the fleeting world of temporal concerns and anchoring it in the stable, unchanging world of the divine. (1-3). The world, that is, the social order created by any administration can easily be undone by a succeeding one without much difficulty; hence, the anxiety to help determine one's successor in office.

The human infant is the most helpless of all animal types, needing years of nurture and care before it becomes functional and capable of independent existence and self-support. But even so, humans still need a lot of support in the struggle for survival in the face of limited goods and opportunities. To help them cope better, humans enter into group relationships, cradling and supporting each other. This human capacity for forming in-group associations and connections is at once the source of altruism and aggression: altruism towards members of the in-group and aggression towards non-members. Michael Ignatieff (1993) makes this point bluntly:

The more strongly you feel the bonds of belonging to your group, the more hostile, the more violent will your feelings be towards outsiders. You can't have this intensity of belonging without violence, because belonging of this intensity moulds the individual conscience: if a nation gives people a reason to sacrifice themselves, it also gives them a reason to kill" (p.188).

The power of the in-group is that it is the source of identity and belonging; it makes people feel secure in an affirming environment. Yet, it can be the source of enormous injustice and aggression towards outsiders.

Such is the source of the exclusionary practices which have been easily characteristic of politics and contestation for scarce opportunities in our society and what invests politics with the character of desperation as a zero sum game in which the winner takes all and the loser goes empty handed. The huge moral challenge for whoever takes up the mantle of leadership in the state is to help the state escape the vicious circle of reciprocal domination or exclusion. And that is the royal road that leads to political peace and social harmony.

In this respect, there are three competing theories of peace. The first, which (according to Howard (2009) is traceable back to British political philosopher, Thomas Hobbes (1588 -1679), says that peace is the absence of war. Assuming that war is the default position among humans, peace becomes a hiatus in-between an endless cycle of wars. *Homo homini lupus* (man is wolf to man) says Hobbes such that human life was 'nasty, brutal and short': this was the so called state of nature which necessitated the creation of the state, the *Leviathan*, to curb the human propensity to violence and protect the lives and property of citizens. The second theory which dates back to St Augustine (354- 430) claims that peace was the usual state of nature, a harmonious order ordained by God and which is upset and overturned by human sin. The challenge of peace was thus reducible to a reestablishment of the divine created order of harmonious existence. In the third theory which was proposed by German enlightenment philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724 -1804), peace is a human construct, a rationally organized state of order which is achieved through human efforts and must be thus painstakingly maintained through vigilance and care. Today, in international relations and diplomacy, it is this third theory which prevails as the international community crafts treaties to ensure harmony and good relations among nations.

Going Beyond the Past

The supreme test of character for the new administration in the state was to go beyond the past, to avoid the temptation to avenge one's people for past wrongs and exclusionary practices perpetrated under the past governments in the state. It is nothing short of repentance, a rejection of the dominant values of the past governments in the state, to dare to stop exclusionary politics in its tracks by turning a new leaf. How was anyone ever going to be able to do this? Yes, it's tough but Gburugburu did it. He did it by sheer force of character and an unwavering moral compass. For he, like America's influential writer and life coach, Marianne Williamson (2009), understands that

Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Without blinking, with unmistakable moral vision, the Governor has beaten his own path in the politics, creating a unique effect which political scientists and social commentators would be busy analyzing in years to come. The main outlines of the Gburugburu effect might be outlined in the paragraphs below.

The Politics of Constructive Engagement: the Art of Conversation

As mentioned earlier, the Governor's administration was confronted right in its first year in office with three important issues. The first was the palpable apprehension of other zones in

the state regarding what the new man on the saddle, the son of Nsukka zone of the state, was going to do with the new and enormous powers of his office. The second was the ongoing legal challenge to his electoral victory. And the third, the security challenge posed by arrogant and marauding herdsmen who would dare to attack farmers in their farms or homes with lethal force. Looking back one finds one thread running through the Governor's reaction to each of those challenges and to such subsequent issues which he has had to deal with. That golden thread is what I choose to call the politics of constructive engagement which expresses itself through conversation.

When the herdsmen struck, rather than confront, the Governor sought to engage, to parley and to find an acceptable mode of coexistence through conversations held with the parties concerned. When Senator Ayogu Eze went to court to nullify the Governor's victory, he sought him out for dialogue and reconciliation. Repeated victories in the courts, right up to the supreme court of the country, did not stop the Governor from seeking reconciliation through conversation even as his peace moves were repeatedly snubbed. This relentless pursuit of reconciliation through conversational dialogue continued following the Governor's second term electoral victory and a return to the courts by Senator Eze as candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the state. That doggedness is the reason the distinguished senator is seated here today in this august assembly. As the leaders of the other zones in the state waited with baited breath to see how he was going to deploy his new found powers, the Governor sought them out: in their homes, in their communities through ongoing conversations and targeted government projects in their respective communities and through attendance at important social functions in their families –even when they belonged to a different political party. Upending the English proverb which says, "Friends may come and go, enemies accumulate," the Governor has consistently tried to give his predecessors in office and sundry political heavyweights in the state both a feeling of importance and critical relevance by being unexceptionably respectful, civil and deferential towards them. Hence the heavy presence of scions of important political figures in the state among the Governor's aides. For, as Chinua Achebe once quipped, "Give the fire-eating man a portfolio and quite naturally, he begins to eat ice cream." The most outstanding case in point here is that of His Excellency, Dr. Chimaroke Nnamani, FACOG, who was rescued from more than eight years in political exile and total social eclipse and returned to the red chambers of the Nigerian senate courtesy of the Governor.

What is this all important art of conversation and why is it so critical in social engineering? Conversation, Jonathan sacks (2004) assures us, is not

mere debate but the disciplined act of communicating (making my views intelligible to one who does not share them) and listening (entering into the inner world of someone whose views are opposed to my own). Each is a genuine form of respect, of paying attention to the other, of conferring value on his or her opinions even though they are not mine. In a debate, one side wins, the other loses, but both are the same as they were before. In a conversation, neither side loses nor are both changed, because they now know what reality looks like from a different perspective. That is not to say that either gives up its previous convictions. That is not what conversation is about. It

does mean, however, that I may now realize that I must make space for another deeply held belief, and if my own case has been compelling, the other side may understand that it too must make space for mine. That is how public morality is constructed in a plural society –not by a single dominant voice, nor by the relegation of moral issues to the private domain of home and local congregation, but by a sustained act of understanding and seeking to be understood across the boundaries of difference”(p.83).

This is the lifeline of a healthy and harmonious community. To be genuine, conversation cannot be an echo-chamber of convenient or accepted opinions. Of its very nature, it must reflect a plurality of voices in accordance with the expansiveness of the society. The more, the better. For as Sachs further argues, “Society is a conversation scored for many voices. It is precisely in and through conversation that we become conjoint authors of our collective future, rather than dust being blown by the wind of economic forces. Conversation – respectful, engaged, reciprocal, calling forth some of our greatest powers of empathy and understanding – is the moral form of a world governed by the dignity of difference” (ibid. 84). When a society loses the capacity for conversation, it loses the very breath of life: it simply withers away.

Important as it is, conversation is not enough. To be successful in bringing about desirable social goals –like peace and security – it must be complemented by a *moral vision* which is so often lacking in the extant political office holders of our day and clime. That was what made Abraham Lincoln capable of healing the wounds of the American Civil War, “with malice towards none and charity for all as God gives us to see the light”. It made Prime Benjamin Disraeli of England to invest politics with moral drama – “justice is truth in action” he said. A moral vision enabled Nelson Mandela to manage successfully the delicate transition of South Africa from an apartheid society to a multiracial democracy midwifed by its Truth and Reconciliation Commission headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. So, what precisely is this moral vision? In what does this vision consist? The world of ancient Greeks was a world ruled by Fate which was inexorable and against whose decrees even the gods of Mount Olympus were powerless. The moral vision shared by all three Abrahamic faiths – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – is that humans have moral agency. We create our own future and our environment: we are not the hapless victims of Fate or of physical forces against whose powers we are helpless. We are important moral agents who help to shape the future of society for good or ill. In the words of Jonathan Sacks,

All of us, by the decisions we make about how we live and work and travel and consume help to shape an environment. To think and act morally, to do what is right because it is right, influences others; it begins to create a climate of opinion; good, like evil, is infectious. We do not have to accept the unacceptable. The only thing that makes social and economic trends inevitable is the belief that they are. The unfolding drama of the twenty-first century is one in which we are co-writers of the script. It can be turned this way or that way by our collective consent. Our aim must be to settle for nothing less than an economic system that maximizes human dignity. We must hand on to

future generations a more gracious, less capricious and inequitable world”
(ibid. 86).

The Fruits of Conversation and Moral Vision

Conversation and moral vision are only as powerful and compelling as the active measures they enable one to undertake on behalf of society and which are translatable into improved living conditions in the lives of the citizens of the state. The Governor’s dialogues of conversation and moral vision have not been lost in the clouds of dreams, rather they have been driving the gradual but steady transformation of the state for the benefit of its citizens – *Ndi Enugu*, in the Governor’s choice phrase.

The Personal Touch

Governor Ifeanyi Lawrence Ugwuanyi has a well-earned reputation for accessibility. He is perhaps the most approachable public servant among his peers across our country today. Even when walking the crowds surrounded by our often overzealous security operatives, he takes time to greet people genuinely, respectfully and with unmistakable decency and civility. He recognizes faces, calls out names and reaches out in friendship, sometimes to the consternation of his security guards. He would say, *Ka, unuhaa m ke m k’lemeumunnem: please, allow me to greet my relatives* – which translates to any recognizable face within view. Sometimes, an anxious but familiar voice in the crowds shouts a question at him. He stops in his tracks, listens and offers an immediate response which can be acted upon later –soothing nerves and boosting egos. Of course, one does not always get what or all of what one asks for. But, always - without exception - one gets respectful attention and thoughtful hearing. Such is the Governor’s style.

Forest Guards and Neighbourhood Watch Teams on Duty

No one has agonized more over the threat to lives, livelihoods and property posed by unrestrained and marauding herdsmen let loose across the country - foraging through forests and farmlands in search of pasture for their flock – than our own Governor. Apart from his natural gift of empathy and capacity to feel the pain of the suffering neighbor, he is infinitely frustrated by one of the most glaring paradoxes of our national constitution of 1999 as amended. This pathetic social document saddles state governors with responsibility for security of lives and property in their respective states while disempowering them towards all of the country’s security outfits: the police, the state security services, the army, the navy, the air force and the Directorate of Military Intelligence –all of which are under the federal government and none of which is answerable to the state governors in whose states they live and operate. The situation is such that the internal security of the states is a matter of constant negotiations between the governors and the various security agencies domiciled in their respective states. In the case of our state, the Governor has, through skilled negotiations, has been able to establish a 1700- man capacity Forest Guards outfit in the state and revived 53 Neighbourhood Watch Teams of 5200 members across the state. These have not replaced the regular police but complement its efforts through indebt intelligence gathering which makes it possible to nip potential breaches of security in the bud. The outcome is that the forests of the state have been rid of cult activities and are no longer capable of providing sanctuary to sundry kidnap and armed robbery gangs. The present government in the state has so far

purchased and distributed 260 vehicles, 260 motorcycles and 300 bicycles to support the various security outfits in the state – both those controlled by the federal government and the local ones supported by the state and local governments.

Good Governance and Social Justice

Sociologists are persuaded that of all the causes of social conflicts, injustice or the perception thereof comes in the first rank. If that were so, the quest for peace and security would ever remain illusory except it were rooted in good governance and social justice. In our clime, successive governments have been keen on how to literally share the so called national cake, with hardly a thought about how to grow the cake or bake more of it. When the present administration came on board, it was obvious that the cake of state was fasting depleting. Our country's forex earnings were in steep decline following the collapse of oil prices in the international market. Government's most immediate need was for up-scaling its internally generated revenue (IGR). The Governor moved quickly in that direction, appointing a seasoned banker, Prince Emeka Odo, to the Chairmanship of the state's Board of Internal Revenue. The result has been a complete turnaround in the collection, reporting and management of the state internally generated revenue. Without imposing new taxes or raising the existing rates, but by streamlining collection and remittance, while plugging loopholes in the system, the state's Board of Internal Revenue has become quite literally an indispensable economic lifeline to the current administration in the state. Quickly, the state came to be rated by Economic Confidential in its 2019 Annual Viability Index (released on July 26, 2020) as the best in the south-east zone of the country and among the six economically viable states in the country which can survive without federal allocation with an IGR of 31 billion Naira.

The success of the state's Board of Internal Revenue has been complemented and matched by accountability and sensible management in several other agencies and parastatals of government. For instance, early in the life of this administration, the government was commended by the Senate monitoring committee for its judicious use of the bailout funds which were advanced to various state governments across the country in the wake of the crisis occasioned by the economic recession of 2015. Similarly, the state was rated the 9th in IGR performance by the National Bureau of Statistics in its 2019 Report published May 22, 2020. Similarly, the state was rated by the World Bank Group as the second and third best in the country on the Ease of Doing Business and Ease of Starting a Business respectively. Likewise, the National Competitive Council rated the state the fifth Most Competitive and the third Most Debt Sustainable respectively in the country.

Beyond the ratings, the government has delivered a number of strategic infrastructural developments to the various political zones of the state.

- Construction/ Rehabilitation of over 600km of roads across the state. Notable among these roads are the following: 11km Milken Hill –Ngwo-Ninth Mile road; 12km Opi-Nsukka dual carriageway; 31km Udenu Ring road; Iva Valley roads in Enugu North LGA; 8.8km Nkalagu-Eha-Amufu road in Isi-Uzo LGA; Nike Lake and Abakpa Nike roads; Amaeke-Ngwo –Nsude-Ama Brewery Junction-9th Mile Bypass; 13km Nike Lake Junction-Harmony Estate-Amorji Nike- Adoration Pilgrimage Centre-Emene road; 22.4km Neke-Mbu-OgboduAba-Obollo-Etiti road (RAMP-2); Airport Round

About -OrieEmene-Eke Obinagu road; old UNTH-Bunker road; Ibusa and Isiuzo Streets in Independence Layout, Enugu; Owerri road and Poly Clinic road in Asata; 8.2km Inyi-Akpugoeze road in Oji River LGA; Ituku road in Awgu LGA; Ugwuaji-Loma Linda Estate –Timber Shed road; Dental School – Tipper Garage road, Trans Ekulu; Amuri road in Nkanu West LGA; 8.5km Ihe –Ogbaku road in Awgu LGA (RAMP -2) ; and the flyover bridge the construction of which was recently flagged off on the famous T-Junction in Abakpa Nike (the first of its kind in the 30 years history of the state) among several others.

- In Education, the Governor is leaving quite a mark, giving all tiers of education in the state a massive boost. Among the most outstanding accomplishments in this respect are the following: the establishment of a University of Education (the first in the entire south-eastern zone of the country) at Ihe, Awgu LGA; the expenditure of over 800 million in massive infrastructural development of the famous Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu, apart from its elevation to full-degree awarding institution; on-going work on the return of a campus of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) and its Teaching Hospital to Nsukka zone; the recruitment of over 5000 primary and secondary school teachers for the state; the construction, renovation and equipment of 897 classroom blocks through Enugu State Universal Basic Education Board (ENSUBEB) –the most ambitious development stride from the board since its inception; conversion of 1000 volunteer teachers to regular staff and release of all outstanding arrears of promotions under the state’s Post-Primary Schools Management Board (PPSMB); the supply of science equipment to 135 secondary schools and computers to 200 secondary schools across the state, etc. The list just goes on and on.

Job Creation and Youth Empowerment

Gainful employment is not simply about putting food on the table. For whereas sustenance is fundamental, employment also has to do with a sense of self-worth and respect. Thus, a society that hopes to enjoy lasting peace and security cannot ignore mounting youth unemployment with all the frustrations that accompany such situations. This government has not been unmindful of the importance of job creation and youth empowerment in the quest to build enduring peace and sustainable security of lives and property in the state. The following is a highlight of some of the government’s initiatives in this regard:

- Engagement of 1000 youths under Enugu Clean Team Project which is helping with cleaning major streets in the state; empowerment of 3600 traders with a grant of fifty thousand naira each; empowerment of 750 youths with important skills under the Sustainable Development Goals Program of the United Nations; offer of scholarships to 680 indigent engineering students of Enugu State Polytechnic, Iwollo; award of scholarships to 22 indigent undergraduate students who are currently studying at Mewar University, India; grant of Bursary Allowance to 246 students of the state at the Nigeria Law School; waiver of Personal Income Tax as well as Market Tax for all traders in the major markets across the state since the administration’s inception in May 2015.

Conclusion: on Sustaining the Ongoing Conversation.

*“Religion is for people who’re afraid of going to hell.
Spirituality is for those who’ve already been there.”*

–Vine Deloria Jr. (1933-2005), Native American author, theologian, historian & activist.

Early in this presentation, I spoke of three competing theories of peace namely: peace as the absence of war (Thomas Hobbes), peace as the divinely established harmonious order which is disturbed by sin (St Augustine) and peace as a human rational achievement which must be constantly guarded and protected (Immanuel Kant). I also signaled my preference of the third theory which has been dominant in international relations and diplomacy. The real purchase value of this theory is its emphasis on human agency and responsibility for peace. Peace doesn’t just happen; people create it and purposefully pursue its preservation. Of its very nature, it is fragile, like all things human. It can be made and unmade; it can be sustained or destroyed. The relative peace being enjoyed in our state is neither an accident nor a product of Fate. Rather, it is the result of purposeful activity and painstaking efforts led by our Governor, Rt. Hon. Ifeanyi Lawrence Ugwuanyi.

In the preceding paragraphs I argued for the art of conversation as the bedrock of peace and security in any society and for its critical role in forging and preserving peace and security in Enugu state. If my intuition is right, then this conversation must remain an ongoing practice, a respectful dialogue which helps to diffuse social tensions and prevent avoidable misunderstandings. This is a social practice which one cannot recommend too highly for the wider Nigerian state especially in this precarious time of national social convulsions. For a Rabbi Sacks rights observes, “The greatest single antidote to violence is *conversation*, (emphasis in original) speaking our fears, listening to the fears of others, and in that sharing discovering a genesis of hope” (ibid. 2). The current practice of lobbing insults across the fault lines of tribal, religious and political divisions in the country will not advance the cause of national reconciliation nor that of peace and security in the country.

In the course of researching and writing this paper, a number of incidents occurred both within and outside our state which make it obvious just how fragile peace can be and how easily the achievement of years of painstaking efforts might be undone. Several weeks ago, the state government set up a judicial commission of inquiry to investigate the crisis in Oruku community’s Nkanu land of the state which led to the day light abduction and murder of the community’s traditional ruler. As the commission was getting down to business and asking for memoranda from members of the public, another tragedy struck as the community’s town union president was gunned down also in broad daylight. Outside our state, there have been five high-profile abductions of hundreds of secondary school kids from their schools (all within a one month timeframe): first in Zamfara, then in Niger, Katsina, Kaduna and Edo states respectively. If those unfortunate incidents prove nothing, they at least prove that peace and security have the *urgency of now*: they cannot be postponed nor can their achievement be taken for granted out of hubris or complacency.

Why was Governor Ugwuanyi able to bring about relative peace and security in our state? Let me hazard an answer coming from the Hebrew Bible. The exodus saga was the foundation event of the people of Israel, God's covenanted people. But the exodus was preceded by 400 years of the humiliating experience of slavery in Egypt. That was God's long lesson to Israel on how not to live, on how not to organize a covenanted community. It was especially a lesson on how not to treat strangers. Most societies are suspicious and contemptuous of and unkind towards the strangers but Israel was *explicitly* forbidden from maltreating strangers. Immediately after leaving Egypt and sealing the Covenant at Sinai, the people were repeatedly warned not to recreate the unjust social situation of their exile experience which necessitated their liberation from slavery and oppression.

You shall not oppress the stranger; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Exodus 23:9).

When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him harm. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God (Leviticus 19: 33f).

In the Prophet Isaiah, there is a powerful vision of the ultimate realization of a reconciled social order of just relations between Israel and its most powerful enemies, Egypt and the Assyria.

In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord in its border...when they cry to the Lord because of oppressors he will send a savior, and will defend and deliver them....

In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come to Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.

In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the Earth, whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, 'Blessed be Egypt my people and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage.' (Isaiah 19: 19f, 23f).

Israel could be an example to other nations because it had been there through oppression and humiliation; for nothing teaches like suffering. *Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi could do it, did it, is doing it and shall continue to do it, because he has been there: not alone, but he alongside all the people of his political zone in the state.* Yes, as a people, we have been there. We know what it feels like to be ignored, sidelined, shut-up and treated like second class citizens. We experienced it from November 1993 to May 29th 2015. It hurts and hurts *very deeply*. And we have gained the wisdom of a lifetime. What lesson did we learn?

We learned from the 20th century Jewish philosopher, Hannah Arendt (1958, 1998), in her book, *The Human Condition*, that human actions or deeds are characterized by irreversibility

and unpredictability. We can never undo what we have done nor can we ever anticipate completely all the consequences of our actions. The remedy for irreversibility is forgiveness and that of the unpredictability of the future is the promise. Both values render vengeance both unnecessary and counterproductive. In her very words:

Without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover; we would remain victims of its consequences forever, not unlike the sorcerer's apprentice who lacked the magic formula to break the spell (p.237).

We have also learned that it takes two victories for evil to achieve total triumph. As Miroslav Volf (2006) frames it, "To triumph fully, evil needs two victories, not one. The first victory happens when an evil deed is perpetrated; the second victory, when evil is returned. After the first victory, evil would die if the second victory did not infuse it with new life" (p.9). As a people, we would rather let evil die; we do not wish to breathe new life into it through acts of vengeance and senseless retaliation which would be stultifying, soul-destroying and ultimately futile.

This work recognizes the man who lit the fire of political enlightenment and emancipation in Nsukka zone through his courage, passion, vision and soaring oratory, Dr. Joseph Nnabuchi Nwodo, who passed on in the night of 10th March 2021 in a London hospital. His legacies should be kept and sustained as one way to mourn him and immortalize his rich multiple and inestimable values.

If the experience of the past five years in this state has taught us any lessons, its most enduring is that *peace is possible*. It is possible to act deliberately and thoughtfully to roll back hate and division and recrimination and narrow-mindedness. It is possible to minimize and attenuate unhealthy competitiveness and exclusionary practices from our socio-political environment. Indeed, *it is possible and morally imperative* for those in public office to serve the common good of all the citizens of the state and not just the private good of a segment of the citizenry. Indeed, it is possible to govern for all, for *Ndi Enugu nile*, to realize the promise of democracy as the government of, by and for the people.

Let me end with the following poem, "Recipe for Peace," from the warm heart of American teenager, Mattie Stepanek (1990-2004), who was born with a rare, fatal neuromuscular disease called Muscular Dystrophy but who became famous as an angel of peace, an incandescent voice, which went silent at the young age of thirteen, but which echo still resounds toward us with unearthly wisdom:

Peace is possible.
Make peace an attitude.
Want it.
Make peace a habit.
Live it.
Make peace a reality.
Share it.

Peace is possible.
Make peace matter.
Our matter.
Make peace a priority.
Our priority.
Make peace a choice.
Our choice.

Peace is possible.
We must
Think gently.
Speak gently.
Live gently.

Peace is possible.
Be happy with who you are.
Be happy with who others are.
Be happy that we Are.

Peace is possible.
Role model acceptance.
Love others.
Role model forgiveness.
Encourage others.
Role model tolerance.
Treasure others.
Peace is possible.
Peace is possible (p.110).

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