

## A PHILOSOPHICAL EXAMINATION OF GOVERNMENT AS AN AGENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE AND PEACEFUL COHESION: THE ABIA STATE OF NIGERIA EXAMPLE

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### Abstract

*The success of the process of interactions (through the laws, norms and the power of language of an organized society over a social system) constitutes the major preoccupation of government. This is in turn predicated upon the efficiency of government in the provision of leadership, public services, economic security/assistance and maintenance of order. The afore-stated are the responsibilities of governance, which demand a positive and welcomed structural transformation of the political, social and economic systems and institutions necessary for the creation of more equitable, just and peaceful society. The foregoing glaringly depicts the government as an agent of social change. Their agency status is however a direct function of the process of their empowerment by the votes of the electorate in a democratic setting. Our paper therefore examines the government as an agent of social change and peaceful cohesion. We used the Abia State of Nigeria example as our study case and adopted the hermeneutical and analytical methods of enquiry in our research.*

**Keywords:** Government, Agent, Social Change, Peaceful Cohesion, Social Integration.

### 1.1 Introduction: The Intertwining Relationship Between Agent of Social Change and Peaceful Cohesion

The category of agent of social change and peaceful cohesion proactively focuses on the advancement and development of societies through social transformation. This cannot be made possible without a specific ideology. In that case, Afrocentricity, (which incorporates the ontology, epistemology, axiology and aesthetics of African people, combines with Afrocentricism to promote a thorough-going reflection on African values and reality) becomes attractive to us. However, the Abia State example in this paper is a case of an exemplification of a further determined search for a paradigmatic shift towards such social changes that lead to peaceful cohesion and social integration. There is however, no gain saying the fact that, without peaceful co-existence and cohesion, no society, African or otherwise, can develop. Consequently, for us to succeed in replacing a time-honoured, stagnant and decaying paradigm of disunity and retrogression with a new paradigm of peaceful cohesion, both the government and the governed must contribute to the much needed social change. While the weightier responsibility of social change falls on the former, we all must at the same time, be ready to be doctors, who cure the viruses of dissensions, violence, mutual hatred, tribalism and ethnicism. We must be soldiers of peace, who can do more than effect war type bloodletting. We must be artists, who create breathtaking artifacts and politicians, who eschew nepotism, religion and rancour in order to integrate people against disputes, divisive

differences and to finally achieve a unity (not uniformity) that expedites development for our present society and posterity.

Being an agent in this context, therefore entails acting on behalf of the people (citizens of the state), thus agents take up active roles pursuant of a specified end. An agent therefore acts in an official capacity for another. In governance, the executive supposedly becomes an agent that represents the interests of his principal, namely the people, who empowered him or her by their votes and in a democratic setting. He is then required to be a medium that ensures that public weal is achieved. Merriam Webster's definition of an agent, as one who acts or exerts power in order to produce an effect, captures our meaning of the usage of the term in this paper.

As previously remarked, this agent's responsibility is achievable only in a peaceful environment. Peaceful cohesion on the other hand, tasks our patience in developing a listening ear to the concerns of the people and in the pursuing of policies that carefully and strategically harmonize the different interests of the citizens in order to effect a social change. The foregoing therefore constitutes the herculean task of the government. As Emile Durkheim posits "there are two sides of the coin to social cohesion. The first, is the absence of latent social conflict (in this instance, social conflicts are said to arise based on wealth, ethnicity and gender) and the next, is the presence of strong social bonds e.g. civil society, responsive democracy and impartial law enforcements" (Suicide, 1897).

Moving away from the ever contested meaning of social cohesion among academics, the term in more recent years is conceived as involving building shared values and communities of interpretations, reducing disparities in wealth and income, and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise; facing shared challenges and that they are members of the same community. This is in tandem with Judith Maxwell's idea.

It is in the afore-stated sense, that the agency of social and peaceful change is considered in Abia State. But what then is social change? According to Desh Raj Siswal, "social change is a structural transformation of political, social and economic systems and institutions to create a more equitable and just society, it is a moral phenomenon that occurs technically in every social setting, it is also an alteration in the social order of a social group or society involving a change in the nation; social institutions; social behavior or social relations of a society" (Philosophy of Social Change: in the positive philosophy, 2011).

From the foregoing, it is glaring that social change entails transformation of the *status quo*, the evolution and/or revolution of new standards of practice other than things as they used to be. It brings in remarkable changes hence, besides evolutionary social change, which happens over a long period of time, what Africa needs now is the revolutionary social change. This paper consequently emphasizes this type of social change which contrasts the delay in the evolutionary aspect and brings in drastic and remarkable transformation of the *status quo ante*. Such change occurs in the style of living, conduct and concepts of do's and don'ts. It is true that this change is often achieved through some movement, revolution or war but it is not limited to these as revolutionary changes also come about by rapid technological innovations orchestrated by a sudden commensurate change in social events. It is this latest paradigm that our paper highlights. At this juncture, we have chosen the examples of Nigeria, Ghana,

Senegal and subsequently, Rwanda (which are in contradistinction to the Nigeria dilemma) to expose the workability of our social change and peaceful cohesion thesis.

## **1.2 Social Change and Peaceful Cohesion in Africa: The Cases of Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal**

Permit me to only undertake a brief survey of the phenomenon of social change and peaceful cohesion in these selected African nations as this will give focus to the perspective we want to be understood while discussing social change and peaceful cohesion in Africa.

### **1.2.1 Nigeria**

Our first case is our dear country, Nigeria; our own father land, I will do my best to overcome the temptation of running a detailed survey of her history. Rather, suffice it to state here that the vision of our founding fathers is presently being challenged. Sixty-two years back, Nigeria, a multinational state, with over 250 ethnic groups, who speak over 520 distinct languages according to *Languages of Nigeria Ethnologue*, occupies a landmass which is situated between Sahel to the North and the Gulf Guinea to the South in the Atlantic Ocean, which covers an area of 923,769 square kilometres (356,669 square miles). She has a population of over 218 million peoples, being the world's 6<sup>th</sup> most populous country, and the most populous country in Africa. She is also bordered in the North by Niger, Northeast by Chad, Benin in the West Cameroun in the South and has 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. *The 2018 Africa: Nigeria the World Factbook of the Central Intelligence Agency* has it that the ethnic groups that make up Nigeria are variously in the following percentages. Hausa, 25%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo 18%, Fulani 6%, Ibibio 8.5%, Tiv 2.4% and Kanuri 2.4% (Retrieved on 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2020). If the data above is dependable as held, the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo have the dominance of numbers hence, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo languages are the major languages of the Federal Republic while English language is her office language.

Prior to our present structure, Nigeria had her pre-colonial states and kingdom with the Nok civilization in the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC marking the first internal unification of the country. However, the present structure is the handiwork of British colonization through the agency of Sir Fredrick Lord Lugard, who merged the Southern and Northern protectorates in 1914 while setting up indirect rule through traditional chieftains. But on October 1, 1960, she became independent.

Celebrating the unity of purpose that held sway in the early Nigeria, our former national anthem had it that though our tribes and tongues may differ but in brotherhood we stood, but no sooner we got independence, than inequalities in the political system including unbridled injustices led the nation to a civil war which lasted from 1967 to 1970. The era of military dictatorship followed before the clime of democratically elected civilian government, which dovetailed into the 1999 presidential election. Now let us just fast forward to today's Nigeria. As observed by Olugbonge Jaibesimi in his *History of Nigeria Economic Policies*, right in the early of 1950s, when Nigeria attained self-government, regional and even the central governments, embarked on several development plans to empower their economies. Unfortunately, none of them went out of her way to empower indigenous business people in the private sector. They rather set up parastatals like Western Nigeria Development Corporation, which consisted of an admixture of a lot of socialism (though claimed to be a mixed economy). This statist mentality intensified with the advent of oil and petro dollars and

culminated in the formation of Mega-parastatals by the Federal Government, such as the NNPC. From 1980s, most states, (the then newly formed ones inclusive) set up development cooperations, and all fared well until in 1982, when all their castles built in the air and without indigenous foundation, crumbled leading to a change of government in 1984.

Regrettably, the incoming government deepened the statism with the introduction of price controls and cartels, and distribution of essential commodities but despite all these, they again failed to address the structural defects and deficits of the economy until the introduction of SAP in 1986 after another change of government. This latest master stroke guided multinational companies and slightly promoted indigenous industries until the already reviving economy went down between 1993 – 1998 and the nose-diving stalled with another return to civil rule in 1999. This development witnessed reduced statism and signaled liberalism with a market determined currency and economy.

From 1999 till date, there has been several economic policy somersaults and politico-religious induced violence that have become detrimental to Nigerian citizens both locally and internationally. Our country has suffered so much from a cargo-cult mentality as an intractable consumer nation boasting of hardly any sciento-technological product besides her natural endowment, oil. We create wealth for the West in our education and health tourisms and to the obvious detriment of our local economic and social existence. Africa generally has consistently turned a net exporter of her capital to the West. We always go cap-in-hand to European countries and now to Arabs and lately, the Chinese. Corruption pervades almost in every sphere of our national life despite all struggles by different administrations to fight it. Worse still, is that the latest threat of religious fundamentalism, human abductions, the menace of Boko-Haram, unknown gunmen, and separatists groups. All these scare foreign investors away from Nigeria soil and orchestrated the relocation of multinational companies and other industries off our shores. In Nigeria today, our citizens are unsafe, run-away unemployment, drug abuse, sexual molestation with fraudsters and tricksters having a field day. The law is even trampled upon hence, Nigeria approximates a failed state. There is mutual hatred among Nigeria tribes. Religion has become the bedrock for politicking and an ever ready tool for division. Beside that, our educational system, which should have given us the hope of recovery is far from being creative rather, it is racist and characterized by stereotypes and prejudices which promote different versions of narratives. Therefore, if we become docile, our healing will remain far-fetched.

Experience has shown that as the social system within a society changes (like that of the regrettable Nigeria civil war when Nigeria did her all to protect her unity and down to the present mercilessly divided society), the forces surrounding the system change and adapt. Similarly, subsystems within the same structure change too. As Asike and Anwuluorah (2017) rightly observe, “the changes among interacting systems do not take place simultaneously, there is always a time lag between the change in one system and the beginning of adaptive change in the other, (this is the cultural lag). During this time lag, there is a breakdown in time-honoured patterns of social function which otherwise represents disorganization. This arises consequent upon the fact that some internalized norms as expectations of the society have been disrupted” (p. 01). Scarce wonder, the *EndSARS* imbroglio of 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 hence, new norms, new value-judgments, a paradigm shift is now inevitable. Akukwe (1988) acquiesces with the foregoing that, “in this ensuing disequilibrium, some people begin to

suffer when it adversely affects a significant number of people and they feel that something must be done through collective effort, then we have a social problem” (pp. 617). This seems to be our present state of things in Nigeria. It is therefore high time the Nigeria political class and by extension African political class focuses on delivery of democracy dividends than doling out necrophilic gifts to the ever ready beggarly hands. How then can this abstruse challenge be contained and peaceful integration ensured?

Our answer is that this can only come about by social changes. Granted that this is the responsibility of both the governed and government, it is also obvious that the weight of social change falls first on the latter as the change agent of the people. This is because the time of deception of political philanthropism is up. Fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity which constrains the fearful and subdued, the rejects of life, to extend their trembling hands annuls generosity. As Freire posits, “real generosity lies in restraining those hands, whether of individuals or entire people such that has need to be extended less and less in supplication so that more and more, they become human hands (Pedagogy, p. 02). Let us examine how this approach has been successfully executed with good results in Ghana.

### **1.2.2 Ghana**

The Republic of Ghana, a West African country with its capital at Accra was founded from the merging of British colony of Gold Coast and the Togoland Trust Territory. In 1957, it became the foremost sub Saharan country to gain independence from her colonial masters. This country has an area of 238,533 km with a population of 28.3million (in 2016), she has 75 ethnic groups and has English as her official language including Akan (TivFante) including 70 other West African languages. This small country, which is slightly smaller than the UK and Oregon state in the U.S. has had her share of social upheavals and many coups which led to the suspension of her constitution in 1981 and a ban on political parties. However, in 1992 (under Lt. Jerry Rawlings, who came to power in 1981 and won the presidential election in 1992), a new constitution got approved and led to the restoration of multiparty system before the coming to power of Atta Mills, who in 2000 succeeded Rawlings.

After an abysmal nose-diving of their economy in the 1983’s, which made their citizens human parasites and nuisance to other West Africa countries and led Nigeria to expel 2 million undocumented West African migrants half of whom were Ghanaians, (with the notorious Ghana-must-go bags). We learn from *2017 Niyel Report* that this oil producing nation, in order to bring about the needed social change in their country, employed among others: The Legal Tool of The Decentralization Act of 1988, which made citizen participation in drafting of medium term development plans compulsory. This singular move rubbed off on the development and on tools to promote civic participation such as the functional organizational assessment tool. This strategy further mandates district assemblies in Ghana to secure popular participation in local decision making and with this tool, local state officials were made to work hard to ensure that they got good remarks under this assessment.

Again, Ghana through her commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) boosted accountability and checked corruption leading to the increase in number of resolved justice. The government therefore adopted a 10 year National Anti-Corruption Action Plan. Besides, Ghana employed the ECOWAS Mining Directive as a tool for the harmonization of the guiding principles and policies in the mining sector – a move which

obliges mining companies to respect the economic communities and required them to obtain free and prior informed consent before exploration. The difference this policy made is that the country ended up adopting the Petroleum Management Act (oil chapter of the Mining Directive), which enabled communities to have a basis to challenge and check all oil explorations that lack the proper authorization to operate.

Two outstanding factors decipherable from Ghana's case which revived their economy are namely, (1) The involvement of the citizens in the making of policies that will affect them. We also observed an active and strong citizen participation in this process. As Freire puts it in relation to the oppressed, "solidarity requires that one enters into the situation of those with whom one is identifying in a radical positive posture, no Pedagogy which is truly liberating, can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunate and by presenting for their emulation models...the oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption" (Pedagogy, p. 30). Notable also, is the use of the legal tool and only the joint resolve of the three arms of government can achieve this. For the foregoing to materialize, a leader who knows and is willing to perform must, embrace social change with a focus on crime prevention, law enforcement, international cooperation, asset recovery, technical assistance and information exchange. However, the second tool regulated the public procurement system while the third allowed the government to participate in open budget survey. These approaches variously made big differences. While the first policy namely, the adoption of United Nations Convention in the fight against corruption aided the government to pursue an effective National Anti Corruption Office known as OFNAC. Their second policy regarding the Transparency Code, resulted in the creation of the Public Procurement Regulation Authority. Lastly, its Internal Budget Partnership enabled the Ministry of Finance to willingly share budget documents related to expenditure. This way, transparency got encouraged. The same policy also helped Senegal to improve her open budget score (43/100) by scoring higher than the world average (of 45/100).

The lesson for us here is that the government served as agent of change by pursuing economic policies that enhanced transparency and openness in budgeting thereby entrenching the value of patriotism among the citizens as well as improving their economy. This same factor could be seen among the Rwandians and subsequently, the Abia example.

### **1.2.3 Senegal**

The West African Republic of Senegal (with its capital at Dakar) famed as the Gateway to Africa, occupies a narrow silver of land along the banks of Gambia River. She is almost surrounded by The Gambia with an estimated 2021 population of about 17,196,308 (*Population, total-Senegal World Bank Data*). She runs a multiparty republic with one legislative house namely, the National Assembly. Senegal was a long part of Ancient Ghana and was contested during the scramble of Western African Lands between the colonial masters of France, Portugal and the Netherlands. Finally, it became a French colony in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However in 1960, under the leadership of Leopold Sedar Senghor (1906-2001), it gained its independence, first, as part of a short lasting Mali Federation and later, as a sovereign state.

Senegal is dominated by the Wolof, a highly stratified society, whose hereditary nobility holds great influence. Senegal is multilingual with 36 languages, Wolof dominates other languages but their official languages are French, Arabic and Wolof. *The World Report On Senegal 2022*

has Gender based violence of rape, sexual exploitation and abuse of students by teacher and school officials as their major challenges. Terrorist groups' activities in neighbouring countries and cross-border trafficking render her more vulnerable as a country ([www.worldbank.org/en/country/senegal/overview](http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/senegal/overview)). However, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Senegal in the year 2020 stood at \$24.9 billion in current terms, its per capita gross national income (GNI) was \$1,430 making it a lower-middle income country. Between 2014 and 2018, her economy grew by more than 6% per year. Her SDP growth stood at 0.87% in 2020 down from 4.4% in 2019 and 6.2% in 2018. Though the conflict in Ukraine presently affects that growth, Senegal, being the motherland of Senghor's democratic and humanistic socialism, (African socialism) and the philosophy of negritude denounces Europe's devastation of Africa because of its lack of human qualities but values African culture. It downplays the glories of some nefarious African practices, beliefs and traditions but locates in African culture, a cohesive instrument for unity and peace. Senghor however, tried to modernize Senegal's agriculture, emphasized the inculcation of enlightened citizenship among Africans, combated corruption and inefficiency and even forged closer ties with her African neighbours alongside cooperation with his French colonial masters, though rejecting colonialism due to its inhumane face.

However, *The 2017 Niyel Report* has it that, Senegal variously adopted the tools of the United Nations Convention on the Fight Against Corruption, the Transparency Code of the West African Economic Monetary Fund and International Budget Partnership respectively requiring states to implement several Anti-Corruption observances which meant that respect for the family, the law and the king or in modern parlance, the nation-state are now challenged when corrupt. With this dilemmatic condition, there arose a novel idea to a harmonized society in a globalized and multicultural world in which we live in modern times. These new ways of creating social cohesion, which is driven by industrialization, urbanization and, democratization and worse still, capitalism present a challenge. This challenge is all about reviving the old collective consciousness, which locates the ties that bind inclusive of material terms.

Here now comes the place of governance in the distribution of the natural resources of the state and the maintenance of equity and justice. These notwithstanding her adherence to the moral codex provided by our religions became exemplary such as what Chad did with Confucians, Turkey did with the ethos of Islam in pursuing political projects in order to restore social cohesion and America did with Christianity and the Tea party movement or Right wing party in contemporary Western Europe. This also, may be a way of approaching social cohesion.

## **2.1 The Need for Social Change and Peaceful Cohesion: Lessons from Rwanda and The Abia Example**

There is no gainsaying the fact that if Nigeria and by extension, Africa must experience social change and achieve peaceful cohesion, there is the need that the change agent must get familiar with the demographics, talking about the composition of the people, which demands consideration of factors such as age, gender and ethnicity. Armed with this knowledge, the change agent equips himself with the roles the people can play in a community. The identification of class and gender factors are necessary at this point in order to understand the power structure of the society. In modern Africa, the upper classes are likely to be

entrepreneurs such that a nation that has a large upper class is likely to be in trouble as the controversies from the middle and low classes are always rift. Here again, come the places of politics and education. Politics (understood here as the process in which societies make decisions and allocate resources) employs education as a tool which does away with discordant or divergent ethics. With this post modernist worldview, the social agent in this paper, (the government) moves to create the community that is not only transformed but a society that coheres, where individual rights and freedoms are protected, good lifestyles and innovations are encouraged and infrastructural development, economic growth are enhanced through human capital development.

But again, this cannot be successfully undertaken without mutual trust in the government. To overcome the problems of discrimination, tolerance and respect for diversity characterizing the worldview of modern societies, Emile Durkheim (1888 – 1917) argues that the interpretation clause found in the production structure of modern societies, where industrial or service workers aid in their process of production, for instance, just as in an agrarian society, more number of persons could be more or less, self sufficient. Similarly, in modern society, industrial and service workers are also dependent on raw materials delivered by others; food produced by others and markets, where exchange of products take place. Durkheim therefore maintains that the idea of an organic solidarity could be fostered among different ethnicities and races such as found in Nigeria. The conscience collective which Durkheim thought could replace mechanical solidarity found in pre-modern societies, where its solidarity was established on the grounds of the type of another solidarity based on strong religious fundament rooted in a commonality of belief among the citizens that they are bonded by a shared moral community that enabled mutual trust at their enclaves but Karl Marx's introduction of material conditions could torpedo that conservative ideology of non-material perspective. These are the revolutionary ideas found in liberalism and socialism which challenge the old religious cum moral terms that bind.

From the foregoing, you will agree with me that interaction with people outside our own enclaves is necessary for social cohesion but like I previously hinted, this process is impossible if government lacks the will to ensure that trust lubricates the wheels of this interdependent interaction. Giddens (1990) describes this paradigm shift as "from embeddedness to disembeddedness". Many social risks arising from trusting new and strange faces can be overcome by mutual trust with fellow citizens and others. That is the reason modern sociological thinking has it that governments should ensure such social trust. The Abia example is a commentary on such trust. Abia Government has so far developed the following approaches as her investor plan and 11 Pillars of development alongside 4 cutting edge areas of oil; gas; health; education. Also taken into consideration are public service reforms; infrastructures, environment and regional planning ministry and education. For the strand of peaceful cohesion requisite for every other development in the society to be achieved, there must be trust in the social system as in The Police, Social works, Bank advisors and countless foreigners.

Anyanwu regarding this, notes that, "there are no isolated individuals since there are no isolated forces in the universe. Individual awareness is possible only in a community of forces. Individuals are born into a community and their obligations as to manifest the spirit of community in them by sharing collective beliefs, works, duties and results" (1981, p. 278). This



contradicts the Europeans ideal which as observed by Senghor in his *African Socialism Project* that, “in Europe, man distinguishes himself from the others and claims his autonomy to affirm himself as a being in his basic originality. The member of the community claims his autonomy to affirm himself as a being. But he feels, he thinks that he can develop his potential, his originality, only in and by society, in union with other men – indeed with other being in the universe; God, animal, tree, pebbles” (pp. 93, 94).

Let us now detour to take a look at Rwanda and her national healing, which is a direct result of social changes that encourage peaceful cohesion.

### 2.1.1 Rwanda

The Republic of Rwanda’s Case, this fourth smallest country in Africa with its capital as Kigali has a population of 13million people hence 5<sup>th</sup>most densely population in the world with the duo of the pastoral Hutu and the agricultural Tutsi tribes in dominance over the pygmy Twa-people having gained independence from Germany which colonized her in 1899 as part of German East Africa in the year, 1962. Rwanda has had share of revolts in 1959, 1962, a coup in 1973 and a civil war in 1990. Her most recent social crises is called The Rwandan genocide in which an estimated 500,000 – 1,000,000 Tutsis lost their lives in the hands of the politically motivated Hutu extremists before the final victory of the Rwandan patriotic front in July, 1994. With subsistence agriculture as the base of their economy, Rwanda under the leadership of Mr. Paul Kagame has recorded many impressive social changes and improvements, some of which, we will now highlight here and subsequently compare with the Abia example. In any case, Hannah Gage’s pictorial reports indicate impressive social changes in Rwanda. These social changes that led to their present peaceful cohesion include but are not limited to:

1. **Poverty Reduction.** By 2001, their poverty rate was as high as 77%, but by 2017, it has dropped to 35. Their poverty reduction strategy in 2008 and a second five year plan of 2013 account for the above breakthrough.
2. **Increase in life Expectancy.** The post war years of Rwanda had life expectancy at 26years precisely in 1993 but improvements in health and quality of life has got it to 69 as at 2019.
3. **Gender Equality.** As at November 2021, Rwandan Government had a 61% women led majority making her one of the top 5 leading countries in gender equality in the world. Her women labour force as at 2019 is as high as 84%.
4. **Decrease in unemployment.** As a nation ravaged by war and subjected to the menace of war, Rwanda expectedly ought to be the hub-nub of the unemployed. Contrariwise, the skyrocketed 1.35% unemployment rate in 2020 is upturned by the 43% employment rate in the second quarter of 2020 and 49% in the third quarter of the same year.
5. **Improvement in Maternal Mortality.** The rate of maternal mortality in Rwanda in 2019 increased by nearly 23% from 1,260 per 100,000 live births and reduced to 29% in 1990.

6. **Decline in Inequality.** Previously notorious for inequality in Africa, and the disparities between urban and rural communities, Rwanda has been able to shrink the disparities among groups and individuals in their income, wealth, education, health, nutrition, space, politics and identity. From 2006 to 2017, inequality declined from 0.52 to 0.43 according to *Gini index*.
7. **Growing Economy.** Land restoration through the novel Green Fund Policy which has created 10,000 jobs, encouraged rural communities participation in agro forestry and reforestation. Rwanda's economy from 2000 to 2019 has grown by an average of 7.2% and the country's GDP has risen by 5% annually.
8. **Medical Improvements-Malaria progress.** Fatal malaria cases in Rwanda in 2017, was 4.8million cases but in 2020, it has dropped to 1.8million. Malaria related deaths have reduced from 700 in 2016 to 148 in 2020. Their adoption of universal health system namely, Mutual Health in 2008 has covered about 96% of Rwandan population thereby leading to lowering of medical costs as of 2019.

As we can see, the recovery and restoration in Rwanda is unprecedented, great resilience in the citizens and purposeful leadership has turned Rwanda into a prized bride among Africans and the world over. Her strong inclusive economic growth orchestrated by 1.2million new jobs created between 2000-01 and 2010-11; the adoption of digital technology, which has enabled mobile payments that ease the rate and reduce cost of doing business coupled with her placing technology at the heart of efforts to boost economic development-the reason for which she launched her *Chatbots Reset Framework*. Again, Rwanda Artificial Intelligence Triage Pilot's use of Robots to minimize corona-virus risk and her pioneering in the area of smart phones production in Africa are unparalleled. Summarily put, the mutual synergy and patriotic dedication of her citizenry and their visionary leadership is racks in lots of dividends and brings about social peaceful integration and cohesion consequent upon this common purposefulness.

### 2.1.2 The Abia Example

In Abia, the government has put in place policies which do not enrich a particular individual at the expense of the Abia community or such policies that enrich the State itself at the detriment of individual Abians. What social changes therefore has governance in Abia State affected to ensure peaceful cohesion and social development. As Wale Suleiman espoused in his "Ikpeazu and industrialization of Abia State", Government in Abia State has exemplified itself as an agent of social change by the following social transformation programmes:

1. **Improvement of Education.** The Ikpeazu led government's intervention in the education sector is novel. On the occasion of his 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday, the governor launched a scheme to salvage primary education in Abia. *Friends of Abia School Adoption Initiative (FASAI)* was launched with a focus on mobilizing funds from meaningful Abians to renovate dilapidated primary schools in some 17 local government areas in the state. Within Ikpeazu's few years in office, 600 new classroom blocks with 4 model schools and renovation of 3 federal colleges were delivered. Onyema Ibeh reports in *PM News* of February, 2016 that "one could palpably feel the progression of sustained development projects in several facets of the government. The governor's ideas of creating a synergy between education, employment and youth

empowerment as a fulcrum for developing a safe and secured society are great innovation. The platform for achieving that, is the establishment of a scheme called “E for E”. “E for E” means Education for Employment, which apart from exposing the young ones to functional education, takes them through vocational training in order to become self sustaining. Our primary school enrolment figures have moved from an initial 150,000 in 2015 to about 700,000 today.

**2. Peaceful Coexistence and Security.** The present administration in Abia State understands that no meaningful development can take place in an atmosphere of rancour, violence, strife crises and any type of social disintegration. Ikpeazu’s administration has endured great provocation and unwarranted poking and has remained calm and promoted peace and mutual coexistence among socio-political tendencies within the state. “In Abia State, we have managed to remain at peace with every strata of tendencies in the state. The present Abia governor, has had no quarrels with our predecessors in Abia State. We do not have Executive – legislative cold war or rancour among arms of government or across political divides” (Ikpeazu’s Birthday Address). We even work harmoniously with Abians holding Federal Government Appointments despite belonging to different political parties. Even in the thick of succession electioneering which we are currently facing. We have urged political stakeholders to go about their political activities with decency, adding that security agencies have been put on the high alert to ensure that no individual or group jeopardizes the peace and unity of the state in the name of politicking and electioneer. Abia has managed to maintain peace and harmony even in the face of the activities of violent groups, kidnapping and attempting parches of violence. A glaring testimony of the peace in Abia State was given on October, 16 in a synod service by Rt. Revd. Timothy Yahaya (Bishop of Kaduna), who was the guest preacher on the synod thanksgiving service at Umuojima. According to him, “Abia State is very peaceful and calm. There is no insecurity here. I am from one of the Dioceses in the North and last week, I buried 23 of my members in a single burial event but since my wife and I came into Abia, we have slept with our eyes closed”. In a similar vein, the Primate of All Nigeria, His Grace Most Revd. Henry C. Ndukuba preaching the sermon at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (Golden Jubilee Thanksgiving) of Aba Diocese, Anglican Communion which held at St. Michael’s Cathedral, harped on the peace in Abia State. He had this to say “I am from Imo State and I cannot go home but Abians enjoy peace and calm. This peace according to the Chief Executive of the State, is not for lack of provocation but, because we understand that the value of peace is unquantifiable hence, we are poised to maintain the peace in our state until the end of our tenure”.

The Governor considers his most enduring achievement in the course of his administration to be the peace and harmony, which he has entrenched in the state since he came on board. As he puts it, we have been together on this journey for 7 years and counting and have weathered storms and celebrated triumphs.

**3. Infrastructural Development.** The measure of social change inspired by massive infrastructural development in the present tenure of Ikpeazu led government is unprecedented. Ugochukwu Alaribe regarding this while reporting about the 31<sup>st</sup> Anniversary celebration of the creation of the state cites the governor’s exact words, “my administration has delivered many landmark infrastructural projects across various sectors of the state, we have delivered and over 150 roads across the state including the Osisioma

Flyover while work is ongoing in another 48 roads with a target to conclude them before May 29, 2023". I am proud and excited about the works we have done in the infrastructural sector. One thing I am not in doubt of is the fact that we have taken the state further than we met it 7 years ago. Aba as today has visible evidences of the transformed trading centre; which had been known to attract on daily basis, a large number of traders and businessmen from across Nigeria and neighbouring West African countries". From the foregoing, the potential of a new Aba to boost the economy of Abia State has always been there and today, an average Abian, who cherishes good service delivery is proud of the Ikpeazu phenomenon.

**4. Visionary Planning and Economic Turn-around policies and programmes.** Abia for the first time in her history in over 30 years has accessible roads to her major markets. The government has put in place a long time development plan, a futuristic document which outlines clearly Abia development pathway for the next 30 years. Working together with UN-HABITAT, Abia now has a standard and workable master plan for Aba, Umuahia and Ohafia. The government has an industrial policy which has been produced in collaboration with UNIDO for our state. As Suleiman puts it, "when people talk about the Ikpeazu phenomenon, it is this uncommon, patriotic zeal for service delivery and a knack for thinking outside the box. Any perspective observer of governance in this country, especially at the state levels, will agree that these are qualities in short supply" (Ikpeazu and industrialization of Abia Business, 2016).

**5.Promotion of Local Industries:** Kennedy Onyema, a journalist with PM News in an interview on 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2022, reported the Governor to have submitted that, "our administration has created a new ministry for the SME out of the existing ministry of Trade and Investment; but an investment house, this ennobled one stop integration of veritable SME visions across the state. The JAAC building started by our former governor, T. A. Orji is nearing completion. Never in the history have people been so proud of made in Aba products and never in history has Aba creatives received the kind of boosted prominence in the world of design and fashion. From Aba to Lagos, Abuja, United Kingdom and America, Abia brand is eminently identified and proudly endorsed... Ikpeazu became the brand ambassador of made in Aba, a task on himself, he entrusted and never abdicated for once in the past seven years. It is on record that Ikpeazu never adorned nothing publicly but the locally made Aba wears, who beat that?" (Interview with PM news, 27<sup>th</sup> Aug. 2022).

Additionally, the government has launched the Abia industrial clusters with 40,000 shoemakers capable of producing 1000 shoes daily and sourced for the equipment that can match the standard of technological development needed for the clusters and has assiduously walked their talk as the Aba creative were taken to National and International exhibitions, where they won laurels. The back to back awards received by Abia creative even at the annual SME awards organized by the Vice President, Yemi Osinbajo's is evergreen. The aim for the promotion of this local industry and the technological inputs that will drive production is to mechanize the process of leather-making and artisan works since Abia leads in technological innovation in Nigeria. This will be complemented with establishment of trade centres for the revival of old professions such as craft works, carpentry, and masonry and so on. Supervisors for these programmes have been brought in from Mexico and The Philippines. The goal is to teach young Abians, the rudiments of the old craft works so that the state can produce its household items and reduce importation. You will agree with me that these

strategies are most honest solidarity pathways to partner with our citizens to achieve societal development and better the lot of Abians.

**6. Improvement of the Power Sector:** The Ikpeazu led Abia government has robustly facilitated the geometric power project, a PPP project of Prof. Bath Nnaji. The aim is to provide uninterrupted power supply to 7 out of the 17 local government areas in Abia State. Realizing that it is the power sector that drives the industrial sector, Abia State, as reported by Mark Amaza on June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018 leads other Nigeria states on scaling off-grid energy. Our government is poised to hugely share the glory from our landmark power project and equally take greater part of the credit for the revival of the once Moribund Golden Guinea Breweries; innovate and visionary Enyimba Shoe Factory and the Enyimba Economic City among others.

**7. Urban Renewal & Service Delivery:** Wale Suleiman examining the effects of Governor Ikpeazu to reposition Abia State in this regard in his paper “Ikpeazu and the “Industrialization of Abia State” remarks that after inspecting some of Ikpeazu’s signature projects, the former Nigeria president, Olusegun Obasanjo called Ikpeazu “The Visionary performer” and said that his people were lucky to have such a committed Chief Executive. Not only was Obasanjo impressed by the service delivery ethos of the governor but the former president saw quality jobs done at the lowest affordable cost to the state. Within a few months of coming into office, he delivered 7 metropolitan roads, a feat that has never been recorded in the history of Abia State.

## **2.2 Conclusion**

In the course of this paper, we have attempted to chronicle the stewardship of Abia State government particularly as it relates to her responsibility as an agent of social change. We have taken time to explore the nexus between improvement in the people’s weal, their existential realities and their security as conditions *sine qua non* of social development and its associated phenomenon namely, peaceful cohesion. We deliberately undertook a long survey of social changes in the three African nations of Ghana, Senegal and Rwanda and emphasized the propriety of synergizing the governments’ will through consistent instrumentality of development oriented policies and enactment of effective citizen-friendly policies with also the citizens’ readiness to actively work hands in glove with the government in a stance of solidarity to improve their lives and bring about the much needed developments in their polity. Howbeit, the Rwandan/Abia examples were specifically used as a challenge to all political leaders and the led across Africa in order to realize the possibility of such social improvements in Africa, which are devoid of foreign accretions and docile dependence. In any case, if this paper succeeds in waking the citizens and governments up to their responsibility in ensuring the social well-being and peaceful cohesion of the society, it would have been said to have achieved its purpose.

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