Today nearly everyone can read, but only a few can think... *Cardinal Ottaviani*

The first word, I wish to use on this exalted platform is ‘Thank You.’ All thanks to God and thanks to Godfrey Okoye University and I say this with utmost humility and simplicity. From the very first day I stepped into this Ivory Tower and citadel of learning to acquire knowledge, it has been an interesting and richly rewarding experience. Even more interesting is the fact that I studied International Relations.

International Relations is a discipline that encompasses virtually all other Social Science disciplines. Its interdisciplinary approach to inquiry and explication of phenomena makes it a sine qua non in understanding contemporary human society and further points to the organic unity of all fields of study as I shall explain in later part of this paper. International Relations emerged as an autonomous academic discipline in the wake of the first world war. Before this, matters of war, peace and diplomacy were dealt with by reference to history, philosophy and law.
The behaviour associated with the scale and extent of the First World War prompted the search for an alternative approach. The international system, it was suggested needed reform or better management. The response was two pronged: in institutional terms, the mood of reform produced the League of Nations, with an emphasis on the power of reason and the rule of law to enhance the prospects of peace.

Beyond the institutional level there was an intellectual response and this gave rise to the first academic departments of International Relations. This department was to study how the system of states could be made to work more effectively so as to enhance the power of law, the peaceful management of interstate affairs, the preservation of order and especially the minimisation of the prospects of war.

All these were to be studied quite explicitly and not in the interstices of history, philosophy or law. There is a difference between International Relations and Political Science.

International Relations is the examination of international issues, actors, structures and processes which are the external environment of the state this differentiates it from political science that shares similar concerns but focuses on politics in the domestic environment of the state.

As the US foreign policy adviser Mike Diver commented “Until human nature changes, power and force will remain at the heart of international relations.” I likened what happens at the international circle to what happens in the zoo. It is a system where the animals’ negotiations are largely centered on self-interest and each group of animal selecting what is advantageous to them with no consideration on how it affects others. This is what makes International Relations complicated and posses tremendous challenge to diplomacy.

Arising from the above, the fostering of development at the state and international level remains the basics of every state interaction with another state. Since no nation is an island, both rich and poor countries continuously make tireless efforts to bring their citizens out of poverty and to create a greater quality of life. To effectively nurture and strengthen these relationships, we need diplomats. As a corollary, a diplomat conducts diplomacy with one or more other states or international organizations. The functions of a diplomat revolve around the representation and pursuit of state interest and promotion of friendly global environment for sustenance of such interest.

The interdisciplinary nature of International Relations as a field of study spurred my interest in the study of development during my academic pursuit in GOU. Specifically, it ignited in me certain questions like: why are some countries developed and some underdeveloped. How can the underdeveloped countries develop under the contemporary complex relations among countries and other international actors? Owing to this, my research work in GOU was devoted to evaluating the MDG goal 1 which is “eradication of extreme poverty and hunger” in Nigeria, using Enugu state as my unit of analysis.

Development is multi-dimensional and synonymous with progress. It encompasses issues such as reducing income poverty, improving health and education, access to water and sanitation, foreign aid, debt relief, fair trade, governance, human rights, gender equality and reducing the effects of climate change.
In line with the above point, Dodly Seers (1969) opines that development can be said to have occurred if the level of poverty, unemployment and inequality has declined over a period. To Seers true development lies in the elimination of poverty, increase in literacy and improvement in the health system as opposed to the increase of per capita output.

Similarly, Walter Rodney (1972) in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* defined development as a process of change. To him development is many-sided. In his view, development is represented in the context of increased skill, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being.

Development has remained the goal of every human society though pursued via various strategies by different countries. Despite the development agenda pursued by states of the world, there is still prevalence of abject poverty, unemployment, poor health care, lack of infrastructural development, lack of education, environmental degradation, inequality, diseases, insecurity, high mortality rate etc.

One might ask, what frustrates these efforts made by the states of the world? My research during my stay in GOU shows that factors that undermine development effort are equally multi-faceted and cannot be appreciated *sui generis*. This underscores the need for epistemic unity in the search for sustainable development. Further, available evidence shows Sub-Saharan Africa is the epicenter of these developmental predicaments with continuing food insecurity and numerous terrorism concerns topping the list. A rise in extreme poverty, extremely high child and maternal mortality rate, the multitude of people living in slums, are widespread short falls for most of the MDGs.

History has shown that poor dialogue among nations accounted for one of the biggest setbacks in achieving stated development agenda especially during the World Wars and the Cold War. Little wonder Godfrey Okoye University in its quest for global transformation and dominance, has dialogue as its foundational pillars.

This is the era of dialogue my friends, we have lots of opportunities to negotiate here. Let us seize it!

Permit me at this juncture to give a brief view of the Cold War. The cold war was a state of political, and military tension after the World War II between the powers in the western bloc United States, its NATO allies and others) and powers in the
Eastern bloc (the Soviet Union and its allies in the Warsaw pact). The world was bi-polarized.

The developmental challenges occasioned by the Cold War and bi-polar world system cannot be overemphasized in our society till date. The power struggles between the West and the East made many states of the world join blocs in order to pursue their strategic interest in the international community. Although African countries just emerging from the ravages of colonialism decided to form the Non-alignment Movement. Evidence shows that most African countries were covertly penetrated (economically and politically) by both the West and the East, especially the West in their struggle for global hegemony.

During the Cold War, the superpowers employed various strategies to pursue their goals which included denial of foreign aid to some states, enforcement of economic and military sanctions on some others in order to get them to dance to their tune. As it is popularly said he that pays the piper detects the tune. The imperative role of Dialogue has been relegated.

At the end of the cold war, the United States of America emerged the winner of the ideological conflict, becoming the leader of the world and “unipolarising” the international community. This is what Robert Fukayama coined as “The End of History”. The U.S. has continued to dictate the foreign policies of other states either directly or indirectly in order to protect its global hegemony. This pursuit of U.S. strategic interest has also stimulated another type of challenge in addition to the development crisis ravaging the world. This new challenge is the rise of terrorist groups especially in the Middle Eastern countries.

One interesting development at the dawn of the 21 century is the recognition by nations of the need for dialogue and unity of knowledge in initiating and implementing development agenda. Specifically, strong efforts are being made around the world to accelerate the pace of economic growth and development concerns such as hunger and poverty eradication, empowerment of women, improvements in the education, health and environmental protection especially for people living in the developing countries. Thus, for the first time in history, countries collectively agreed on a global applicable set of development goals, indicators and targets, referred to as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In my research work, one of the specific areas I focused on, was identification of challenges militating against the achievement of these goals gearing towards development. They include lack of participation of the citizenry in the conceptualization and implementation of MDG programmes, poor coordination, corruption, inadequate funding.
**Epistemic Unity in the International Community: A Panacea to Development crisis**

I strongly believe that the adoption of the MDGs by UN member countries is one such step towards epistemic unity.

Epistemology is the broad study of knowledge. It is the measure and extent to which an individual or entity has an understanding of a particular field or area of knowledge.

Therefore, epistemic unity is the art of logical comparison, ethnical analysis and methodical understanding that forms the basic foundation for equality and relationship of knowledge from all areas of specialization.

Since development is multi-dimensional, knowledge towards understanding the logic of development and salvaging mankind from underdevelopment should equally be united and coordinated. More so, countries of the international community must embrace dialogue to foster unity in its pursuit of development. This is because the improvement of less developed nations depends on the empowerment given to “Epistemic Unity”. The power in dialogue and equality of knowledge and ideas, gives credence to expression of ideas.

Also when this unity is fostered world peace will be stabilized and the rising cases of terrorism and insurgency will be eradicated since marginalization fans their embers to flame.

As an international relations graduate, my rigorous training in GOU has endeared me to the pursuit of epistemic unity in finding solution to development challenges in the world. It is my resolve at this early stage of my career to join like minded experts to work out a win- win modality where development brings a virtuous cycle unlike the contemporary contradictions where development brings about underdevelopment in various parts of the world.

I invite my fellow graduates to join hands in this collaborative research since we have been empowered with knowledge from different fields of discipline Biochemistry, Micro Biology, Biotechnology, Physics, Mathematics, Computer Science, Accounting, Banking and Finance, Business Management, Marketing, Public Administration, Economics, political science, Sociology and so on and pursue development in all its ramifications.

As you may be itching to hear the story of my journey to success, I will of course make it quick and brief. My parents played a vital role in all of this. My father a highly disciplined and principled man has his philosophy deeply rooted in nothing
short of being the best in everything we do, and this he has succeeded in instilling in us his children.

The first day he brought me here for registration, as part of the registration process, a handbook was given to us. He quietly went through it and saw the page where grades were categorized he called my attention as I turned he covered grades C,D,E and F, leaving A and B open. He said, “you are expected to get these grades.” Still pondering on this statement and the stern look on his face, he went further to justify his position by saying, “if human being get it, you too can”. From then on I became conscious of the herculean task facing me and made it Centre of my focus.

My mum, on the other hand, a born teacher, always encouraged and prayed for me. She would say “If you must compete favorably with your male counterparts in anything, you must then work harder, be disciplined and prayerful because they are naturally stronger and fit”. I took this advice to heart and made it my watchword. My parents I must say gave me the moral and financial support I needed and taught me things that ordinarily I won’t learn by going through the pages of a text book.

Permit me at this juncture therefore, to give honor to whom honor is due. My Vice chancellor Very Rev. Father Professor Christian Anieke, a man of honor, dedication, integrity, discipline, principle, resilience and a rare gem who gives zero tolerance to academic indolence.

Among so many things I learnt from him is good time management which is imperative to any iota of success in life because time is the greatest loss of all losses, no time lost can ever be recovered again.

He is a father to us all and I can vividly remember what he said to us, that he would ensure we leave for our National Service this year despite the short time frame, even if it means cutting short his holiday. This is why today, we are Corp Members. He is largely the reason for our success in this Institution, we are grateful sir and pray to God for more power to your elbow.

To our dedicated academic and administrative staff, deans of faculties, heads of departments, lecturers, Liberians, hostel moderators and cleaners. We say a very big thank you to you all. Especially to the Dean, Faculty of Management and Social science, Rev. Sis Prof. Mary Gloria Njoku, my Head of Department Prof. Ocheoha, my adorable lecturers Mr. Mbaeze, Mr. Okonkwo, Mr. Roland Okoli, Dr. Mrs. Unachukwu, Dr Onwo, Dr. Ugwuozor, Fr Ogbuka, Dr.Ngozi Igwe. We thank you for inculcating the spirit of hard work and excellence in us and we will forever remain grateful to you for your efforts in making us better.
It is worthy of mention that this enviable achievement would not have been possible without the support of my friends especially my darling friend Okafor, Cynthia that worked with me during this period and today a first class holder, Barr. Ugwuanyi Emeka, who I call the boss, and many others.

To my course mates I am greatly thankful to you all, I won’t forget most especially the lovely moments we shared together; to my fellowship (NIFES) where I was taught the word, trained in righteousness, and strengthened to prevail over all life challenges. I will forever carry on what you deposited in me. To my mentors, Dr. Dave Onyekazi, Barr Joy Ogbonnaya. My aunts and uncles you are all part of what made me who I am today.

Interestingly, I was admitted into this great university to study International Relations, late October 2011. Many had arrived before me and started their lectures, but that was not an excuse to fail. I made up my mind to catch up with them. Like every other freshers, I was naive, lacked ideas, completely new and everything looked strange to me. There were plenty of books to read and so many people to deal with, even those who do not share your belief. I must say, this was quite challenging. But I remembered some words from the US president, Barack Obama, “If you are walking down the right path and you are willing to keep walking, eventually, you will make progress.”

Thus, I made up my mind to surmount the problems come what may, bearing in mind what my father told me: if someone did it, you too can also. Today here I am giving a valedictory speech as the overall best graduating student. I must admit that my success was borne out of sheer determination to succeed, notwithstanding the mountainous obstacles on the way. Thank God, the effort paid off after all. I am eternally grateful to God Almighty through whose grace this was made possible.

To all undergraduates facing these challenges wondering how to overcome them. I have a poem by Berton Braley for you;

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\begin{align*}
\text{With doubt and dismay you are smitten} \\
\text{you think there’s no chance for you, son?} \\
\text{Why, the best books haven’t been written} \\
\text{The best race hasn’t been run,} \\
\text{The best score hasn’t been made yet,} \\
\text{The best song hasn’t been sung,} \\
\text{The best tune hasn’t been played yet,} \\
\text{Cheer up, for the world is young}
\end{align*}
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