

TO HEAL A FRACTURED NATION: EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP FOR A NEW NIGERIA:

Matthew Hassan Kukah, Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese
Convocation Lecture presented at University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria
on Thursday November 20th, 2014

A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved -- I do not expect the house to fall -- but I do expect it will cease to be divided...It will become all one thing or all the other.

The above quotation comes from Abraham Lincoln's famous speech, known now as the *House Divided Speech* was delivered in Springfield, Illinois on June 16th, 1858. It was one of his greatest, moment defining speeches, delivered at a very critical period of the nation's life. In a slightly different, less dramatic context, I believe it speaks to our moment because it draws attention to the moral choices a society has to make. We may be physically free from slavery in Nigeria today, but we are in a form of bondage that requires that we respond with the same candour that drove Abraham Lincoln because I believe that our nation requires a balm of healing well beyond the silence of the guns.

Today, we are told that the Boko Haram insurgency is only a foretaste of what is still to come. We are told that Nigeria is likely to split into tiny pieces sooner than later. We have the words of a scapegoat or a prophet to prove this. Professors, politicians, traditional rulers, bishops, priests, market women are all talking about it in fear and trepidation: The red flag has been raised by the moral policeman of the world: The United States of America has predicted that Nigeria will collapse in 2015. We are only to prepare to take our place in the funeral parlour as we prepare to bury Nigeria. Moving **home** and returning **home** have become routine scarecrows that prey on our fears. This lecture is about some of exploring the fracture that has produced these fears, anxieties and hopes.

In this lecture, I wish to address what I call the state of fracture of the Nigerian state and explore what steps we need to take to work towards some form of healing. We have developed different longstanding vocabularies for expressing the manifestation of these fractures in our daily lives: *marginalization, Nigerian factor, ethnicity, national character, federal character, North and South, Christians and Muslims, Minorities and Majorities*. These catch phrases continue to haunt almost every sphere of our national life.

This will be divided lecture in four sections. **Firstly**, I will try to identify the fractures in our nation and briefly look at the causes and their impact. **Secondly**, I will identify what I call the three 'vehicles' for healing the fractures of our nation. Here, I will choose Politics, Education and the Bureaucracy only to illustrate the point. **Thirdly**, I will specifically address the issues around the so called, impending collapse of Nigeria in 2015 as being predicted. **Fourthly**, and by way of conclusion, I will argue that our situation requires a particular typology of leadership to mend our fractures.

1: Nigeria's Fracture: Colonialism and the wheels of human history

On a visit to Jordan in 1998, I was told of a place called Churchill's hiccup. According to the anecdote, Churchill, who was Colonial Secretary for Colonies, boasted that he created Jordan *by the stroke of a pen!* Apparently, on the said day in 1921, Churchill had taken one drink too many at lunch and then went on to create what accounts for the sharp zig-zag that constitutes the strip of land on the Eastern border between Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Some people would say that Nigeria has just celebrated 100 years of its own Churchill's hiccup! This therefore is the first fracture of what is today modern Nigeria.

It is largely a waste of time for us to continue to argue today about the pros and cons of colonialism and about whether colonial fractures were right or wrong. After all, had the British not come, we are not sure what our collective fates would have been in the face of the conquering and slave raiding armies of the Sokoto Caliphate, the empire builders of Benin, Kwararafa, or Oyo and Zamfara, among many others.

A lot of those who agonise about colonialism focus on its conquest and subjugation but pay little attention to the fact that this was in fact part of the turning of the wheel of human history. The disciplines of both history and anthropology have shown that colonialism is the universal process of movement of human civilization, it is part of the human experience with domination, control and oppression, and it is part and parcel of the struggle and negotiation for power among peoples. The story of colonialism is a vital part of the tapestry of the history of all nations of the world. The colonial state laid the foundation for the emergence of the modern state as we know it today in developing nations. The structure and forms of colonial governments were inherently unequal and inequalities lay at the roots of the system. Some nations seem to have been able to mend their colonial fractures with some success. Why has Nigeria been unable to make the transition? How have succeeding elites exacerbated the fractures and wounded the nation further? It is to these that I now wish to turn my attention.

2: Nigeria's Fracture: Its Causes and Consequences

At independence, Nigeria adopted the Westminster Parliamentary system of government. The historical development of those processes is the subject for another platform. However, the nation's greatest achievement was sealed when the British flag was lowered and the Nigerian flag of green-white-green was hoisted. The Parliament was a galleon of colours filled with a paroxysm of voices.

To honour Nigeria and to show its promise, the very influential international TIME Magazine (December 5th, 1960 edition) took the historic decision of making Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa its cover person and Nigeria. It followed with a sub heading: The Other Africa: Independence Without Chaos. This pointed at the optimism about the prospects of Nigeria developing along the path of honour, non-violence and progress. In the lead story, the magazine noted: *Along with its echoes of Britain's Westminster, the legislature over which Sir Abubakar presided last week had some flavour of Pan African Congress. On its benches, tall, haughty Hausas, splendidly robed in green and scarlet, sat among volatile Ibos draped in white azure gowns. Across the aisle were Yoruba tribesmen wrapped in gold, yellow and orange with little porkpie beanies on their heads. Between them, they constituted the world's noisiest Parliaments. Each Speaker was greeted with cries of "Heah, heah" from his friends and derisory shots of "Sit down, you wretched fool" from his foes. From the rostrum came the perennial plea for "Oda, Odah".* But somehow, through the din, the

nation's problems got discussed and decided.

The reporter was far more generous than these early lines suggested because he went on to raise a banner of hope for Nigeria. He continued: *In the hurly burly of the 1960s African avalanche of freedom, Nigeria's impressive demonstration of democracy's workability in Africa is too often overlooked...Nigeria entered the world community without noisy birth pangs or ominous warnings of its determination to avenge ancient wrongs. Since moderation and common sense are not the stuff that headlines are made of, the world's eyes slid past Nigeria to focus worriedly on the imperialistic elbowings of Ghana's Nkrumah...In the long run, the most important and enduring face of Africa might well prove to be that (face) presented by Nigeria. Where so many of its neighbours have shaken off colonialism only to sink into strong man rule, Nigeria not only preaches but practices the dignity of the individual.*

So how did Nigeria take its eyes off this ball which was heading straight into the goalpost of opportunity, dignity and freedom? How did Nigeria end up delaying its journey to greatness? There are bound to be many and contradictory explanations. There is enough blame to go around all the regions, religions, communities, individuals, the political class, the military and weavers of national and international conspiracy theories. However, our intention here is merely to highlight just three phases in our national life that account for the major fractures that we are referring to.

i. First fracture caused by the first military coup: Northern Dominance

The first fracture in post-colonial and post independent Nigeria was caused by the blow of the first military coup. By this singular act, the military shattered the glass of optimism elevated by the writers in TIME Magazine and chose bullets rather than the organised noise that represents the very essence of the Democracy that Nigeria had inherited.

Many attempts have been made to justify and explain how gallant the intention of the coup plotters was and how they would have resolved some of our lingering national issues and created a truly just polity. This truly begs the question because, the truth is that in principle, to the extent that military intervention is not the will of the people, its rape on Democracy can never be justified, no matter the nobility of the cause. For, as we shall show, that coup opened up a can of worms that would afflict the entire nation and throw up challenges that would delay the healing of our nation. For some inexplicable reason, the period of military rule after the coup that overthrew General Gowon in 1975, witnessed the prolonged dominance of the levers of power by northern Muslims. This phase of our national life witnessed major policy shifts such as the ill-advised misadventure of the Babangida administration with the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), the lingering anxieties over the status of Islamic law in the Constitution, and the rise in the curve of religiously induced violence across the northern states. These left severe fractures, some of which still haunt our nation.

ii. Second fracture caused by the Civil War: Eastern Grievances

The second major fracture in the Nigerian polity was caused by the civil war. General Gowon's policy of three Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconciliation did not go far because many of those who worked with him did not share his enthusiasm in the philosophy of 'no winner, no vanquished'. Thus, today, the Igbos still nurse grievances that they have not been fully integrated in national life across the nation. Whether one agrees with these claims or not, time has not healed the fracture and we cannot ignore its feature in our national life. However, right till date, this feeling of injury permeates every facet of our national life, from politics, the bureaucracy, the military, the economy and almost everything else.

iii. Third fracture caused by the Creation of states: Loss of sense of national unity

The third fracture was the creation of states which replaced the regions left behind by the colonial administration. Unlike post-colonial states such as Ghana, Kenya, India, South Africa and other African countries, it seems that only Nigeria enthusiastically and, to my mind, wrongly opted for state creation as a means of resolving the crisis that followed independence. Other countries soldiered on, coping with military interventions, corruption and violence, and still saw wisdom in leaving the internal colonial boundaries such as Regions or Provinces largely intact with very minor adjustments. The painstaking care and thought that went into the creation of Provinces and regions by the colonial administration contrasts very sharply with the arbitrariness that followed the creation of States and Local Government areas in Nigeria.

Whereas the local bureaucrats greeted states creation with enthusiasm, facts have shown that the balkanization of the political space has only deepened the frustrations, bitterness and hatred among Nigerians. The creation of these States, and later Local Government Areas, merely offered local elites new fiefdoms with yesterday's majorities becoming minorities or vice versa. The first noble intention was to avert the civil war. It did not work. The second was to allay the fears of minorities. That too has not worked as we can see from the embarrassing demands today for over 100 new states and a thousand Local Government Councils. The effect of these fractures still haunts our nation today as more bitterness, angst, suspicion and fear continue to stalk the land. At local levels, the ubiquity of Emirates, Traditional Institutions have all further opened up new fractures as communities, clans and families have all turned on one another.

Tragically, whereas the colonial state left us a workable state with some infrastructure relative to the resources of the time, a sound educational base and a bureaucracy, subsequent military regimes merely superintended over the destruction, collapse and decay of these institutions one after the other. Rather than diagnosing and seeking cure to these ailments, successive regimes only deepen the wounds of the nation by institutionalising violence. The senseless execution of alleged coup plotters and armed robbers only added to the sense of injury and the glorification of violence. The children who saw this waste of lives would later grow into adults and later glorify violence.

How then do we address the problem of national healing? Some of us, including myself, have an injury in some part of our body that is the result of a fight or a sport, an accident of one form or the other. These injuries have since been cured. However, healing has not taken place. What I mean here is that although we may not feel the injury, each time we look at the scar we remember what caused it. I argue that healing of our national injuries will be the result of a combination of factors. If we gloss over injuries as we have tended to do, we will surely pay the price, as we can see in the volatility that has become part and parcel of our national life. The resort to violence by many communities today arises from that feeling of unhealed injury, leading to frustration. What strategies, then, should we adopt to effect deep and lasting national healing?

3: Vehicles for Healing the Fractures of our Nation

What is the best strategy for effecting healing in post conflict societies or societies in transition? What policy measures should a society in transition take to ameliorate the trauma of the past? How should the accounts of the past be read and written? These and many other questions need to be asked.

There are many strategies but the most common for many nations in the last twenty years was the resort to Truth Commissions. These initiatives have their own logic and often they may have opened the wounds of society, but they tended to leave the society even more divided than healed. Nigeria has already experimented with the Truth Commission model. The federal government under President Obasanjo attempted to commence a process for healing our fracture through the setting up of the Human Rights Violation Investigation Commission. Sadly, that initiative got caught up in the web of politics and intrigues and became a victim of the politics of the day. It was illustrative of the fact that our nation was still not ready to lance the boil so as to commence a process towards healing.

The Report of the Oputa Panel, released or not, should have been the stuff of research in the Political Science Faculties in our Universities so that we can work towards writing a better history of our nation for the next generation. Sadly, from my experience, there is more interest among foreign researchers abroad in the work of the Commission than in Nigerian Universities. My book, *Witness to Justice* gives an account of my personal experience, the trials and also the hopes and opportunities I saw in the work.

It is not my intention to explore this theme here or to ask why this did not work for us. What I think I need to do is to focus more on what is before us, namely, the fact that we are faced with a broken country in need of healing, to see what other options there might be. To do this, I have decided to look at what I call vehicles for service delivery, vehicles which I believe, if properly deployed, can help our country heal from the some of the fractures that I have listed above.

3: 1. Education as a Vehicle for Healing:

The history of Nigeria's educational system has been well told and needs no repetition. However, our concern here is not with the history. I am concerned with whether or not Education has been a vehicle for exacerbating the fracture or if it has effected some level of healing. The reality and the fact before us do not inspire any kind of inspiration.

It is difficult to find any other country in the world that has done as much disservice to its Educational system as Nigeria has done. This destruction is really another word for describing almost every facet of our national life. Looking at all public institutions of yesterday, from Hospitals, Roads, Railways, Bureaucracy etc., one would be forgiven for believing that those who governed us all these years came to deliberately preside over the destruction of everything they laid their hands on. Their inefficiency and corruption merely deepened the sense of fracture and frustration.

Many Nigerians are wont to argue that the takeover of schools by the Gowon administration was the first strike that dealt the most severe fracture on the nation's educational system. Looking back, whatever good intentions the Gowon government may have had, these intentions were later turned into a license for vengeance, victimization and high expressions of envy.

Since Nigeria's return to Democracy in 1999, we have witnessed a new turn, marked by a combination of passion for our people and a sense of remorse and repentance. In all the Southern States, we have seen Governors genuinely becoming aware of the fact that the takeover of schools was a mistake and that to restore quality in education, the state needs to collaborate with the faith communities. We today witness a return to what ought to have been, namely, federal and state governments seeing the faith and ethnic community associations as partners. These commendable efforts are now bearing fruit in almost all the Southern States. But not so in the

North, ironically, the worst hit in calculating every index of development.

In the Northern states, those in power are still looking backwards, weighed down by fear, prejudice and pure ignorance. Sadly, northerners have come to see the takeover of schools as an arrest of the growth of Christianity. Many northern Muslims seem to be blinded to the opportunities that secular education holds out for the future. They continue to tinker with Education, refusing to create a more integrative system that can harmonise the rich cultures and diversity of our nation. They continue to hoist the word Religion as an excuse for not opening up the society. The result is that the region continues to produce generations of young men and women who cannot compete with the larger society. Driven by this insecurity, they fear change and are quick to reject the unknown. They are more comfortable in the womb of religion. This is what has produced the toxic, nihilist and murderous doctrines that drive the madness called Boko Haram.

What is important for our reflection here is to answer the question: how can Education become a tool for healing and integrating a fractured nation? Indeed, there can be no healing without education. Education must be a tool for nation building because it is the source of knowledge. Therefore, the kinds of people and the environment around which that knowledge is transmitted must not be left to chance. We have witnessed the systematic decline of the status of the Teacher, the pivot of Education.

In the murky waters of corruption in Nigeria, teachers have fallen victim and are involved in nearly all the petty crimes of survival that the rest of us are involved in, except of course, such lucrative ones as fuel subsidy or pension fund scams, kidnapping or oil bunkering, which are the preoccupation of their ex and current students! Other nations have not been as irresponsible and criminal as Nigeria has been despite having the same colonial roots and experiences. Asian and Latin American countries have used education to uplift their people, restore their dignity and create viable nations. The problems have not gone away, but clearly, from these, we have a few lessons to learn.

Costa Rica

Take Costa Rica, a small country which in many respects is the model for the value of Education. I came into contact with the news of their system purely by accident. In 1998, I was invited to speak at a conference in the United States on the military and the struggle for Democracy. After my presentation, we went on a tea break. A man walked up to me and introduced himself. *I am Oscar*, he said, to me, *Oscar Arias*. The name rang a bell but I did not wish to speculate. He moved me gently in the direction where coffee was being served. Our conversation went something like this: *Father*, he said to me, *I enjoyed your presentation and your enthusiasm. But I must tell you, the military is not what you think it is. It is not as powerful as you think. It can be overthrown peacefully. You do not need the military. My country has the experience and I can show you how this can be done.* I wondered who this man was. His humility was striking and his eloquence suggested a man who had a lot of experience in what he was talking about. He continued: *Education is the key to ridding any country of the virus of the military. In my country, we invested a lot in education and we have reaped the fruits. Now, we do not have a military and, rather than feel threatened, we actually feel stronger as a people and as a nation.*

He went on to explain how the founders of modern Costa Rica had battled to lay the foundation for a sound educational system as the basis for security. They believed that an educated populace

would be able to defend themselves against the greatest enemy, ignorance and poverty. Suddenly, the co-ordinator of the Conference walked to us and I heard him say, *This way, Mr. Arias, the next session is about to start and you are the Chairman.* He walked away and it was when he was introduced at the session that I realized that I had been with Mr. Oscar Arias, the former President of Costa Rica and winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace!

Arias was also the epitome of those leaders who left their countries, got a good education and came back home with a clear idea of how to fix their societies. He received his education in Costa Rica, but then went on to Boston University in Massachusetts, London School of Economics, and the University of Essex, United Kingdom. These roundly educated persons often are great reformers who often effect change arising from the quality of education they received and the time they may have had to plan a future for themselves and their countries. Dr Arias was President from 1986-1990 and received a Nobel Prize for Peace in 1987 for the great and courageous work he did to bring about Peace in the Americas.

Yes, Costa Rica still has no military. They also have no Oil or any known resources. Education is their Oil and it is the anchor for almost every facet of life. Teaching is the most prestigious and precious calling-card for every citizen. If you want to win elections in Costa Rica, it is not money that you need to have. No, if you are lucky to have Parents or even better still grand parents who were teachers, you have nothing to fear. Teaching is the most prestigious engagement and that is why they can afford to be a country without an Army and still be one of the most peaceful countries. Dr. Arias received the Peace Prize at a period of the greatest display of US power in region. It was a measure of the triumph of moral authority over weapons that he won the Prize with no standing army!

As an aside, let me divert our attention a bit. In our own situation, Nigerians have also demonstrated that if they are truly allowed to make their choices, they value the Teacher, his probity and his contribution. Teachers have also received their reward here on earth in ways that Nigerians would seem to have forgotten or do not appreciate. Let me give you some examples: President Shagari was a Teacher before politics. He was neither rich nor ambitious for politics. This is why his biography is titled, Beckoned to Serve! Governor Ibrahim Shekarau was a teacher before politics. He won his elections as Governor of Kano State even though he was unemployed and had no house of his own at the time he joined politics. Today, Dr Goodluck Jonathan is President of Nigeria was a teacher. Today, both Jonathan and Shekarau are President and Minister of Education respectively. We expect to see qualitative and measurable changes.

Singapore

The world continues to bow to Singapore and South Korea among other Asian countries. Since Nigeria's return to Democracy, Lee Kwan Yew's autobiography, *From Third World to First* has sold more copies in Nigeria than anywhere else in the whole world. President Obasanjo and his successors apparently ensured that all Ministers had copies of the book. While it is doubtful if these Ministers ever went beyond the first few pages, it is even more doubtful that those who may have managed to read the book had any real intention of borrowing the sense of discipline and patriotism that Mr. Yew so eloquently spoke of. It is a measure of our dilemma that, apart from Alhaji Shehu Shagari, none of our former Heads of State has had the courage to publish an autobiography.

Like others who have been to Singapore, the beauty, order, serenity, and the sense of patriotism,

efficiency, dedication and commitment of the Singaporeans, struck me. Most of what the country is today has been attributed to the vision of Lee Kwan Yew. But visions are not enough if you do not build a sound educational system to inspire sharers of your vision to see through your window. Lee himself speaks about the deliberate efforts he made to reserve and recruit some of the most brilliant minds into public life and politics. Neither patriotism nor anything else in life can be left to chance.

For example, there is a fascinating educational grid in Singapore that ensures that all Singaporean children acquire certain values and traits as they go through the system. It is organized in such a way that all children are literally indoctrinated to achieve an already defined outcome. The result is that in the end, there is a set of shared values that all children imbibe from Primary to Secondary and Junior College. That means that by the time one finishes Junior College and is ready for University, between the ages of 16-18, these values would already have been deeply ingrained. This ensures that after 18, when one has become an adult and is released into the larger society, one is fully equipped with what it is to be a Singaporean citizen, prepared to take his/her place in society. The table below speaks to the story¹:

After Primary School	After Secondary School	After Junior College
Children should distinguish between right and wrong	Children must have imbibed Moral Integrity	Youth must be resilient and resolute
Learnt the art of sharing and putting others first	Have care and concern for others	Have a sense of social responsibility
Must know how to build friendships with others	Be able to work in Teams and value contribution	Understand how to inspire others
Developed intellectual curiosity	Be enterprising and innovative	Have an entrepreneurial and creative spirit
Must know how to think and self expression	Possession foundation for further education	Able to think independently and creatively
Take pride in work	Believe in their personal ability	Strive for Excellence
Cultivate healthy habits	Have an appreciation of Aesthetics	Have a zest for Life
Love SINGAPORE	Believe in SINGAPORE	Know what it takes to lead SINGAPORE

Moving Forward in Nigeria through Education

We do not need to look far to know why our nation has seemingly lost its soul. Education which constitutes the backbone, the central nervous system, of any nation has collapsed in our country. It is not as if the system has been taken over by bad men and women. No. It is just that we have had a complete system collapse, triggered by years of military rule which had total disregard for systems and processes. It is not that bad or unpatriotic soldiers governed us. On the contrary, with all the derision and criticisms, we have had some of the most patriotic leaders who actually were convinced that they were doing their best for this nation. Sadly, they were like men driving expensive cars, driving real hard, but in the wrong direction. This has resulted in a fractured society with no shared values and no clear navigational aids.

Today, from top to bottom, the rut is noticeable. The noble ideas behind the engagement of the Federal government's involvement in Education have been compromised by a combination of

¹ Source: Claudio Castro & Aimee Verdisco (eds): Making Education Work: Latin American Ideas and Asian Results (Inter-American Development Bank, 2002) p22

wrong policy options and poor vigilance. The noble ideas for national unity behind the establishment and funding of institutions like the Federal Government Unity Colleges, Federal Special Science Colleges, Federal Colleges of Education, Federal Universities, Polytechnics and so on have been reduced to mere fiefdoms at the mercy of local cabals.

Appointments, promotions and so on have been hijacked by local tribal, regional and religious war lords who see these institutions as federal government patronage to their territory while a morally weakened Federal Government sees these institutions as extensions of domains of patronage to the local elites. The bureaucrats, politicians and public officers have filled up these Federal schools with their children not because they measure up but because of nepotism. The result is that the sense of common citizenship and nationhood that guided these visions has been severely compromised. How can these institutions possibly breed graduates that can, as they say in Singapore, *know, believe and dream of what it takes to lead Nigeria?*

In fairness to ex President Obasanjo, he did a lot in his second term to reverse the rut in Education. He set up Universal platforms to initiatives to bridge the gaps and deficits in the Educational systems from Primary to the University. The problems here relate to the fact that the State Governments have turned these Boards into platforms for patronage of their political cronies. There is more emphasis on procurements, construction, renovation and other avenues for slush funds.

Given the complexity of our nation, can we find a Professor of Fulfulde in the University of Ibadan, a Professor of Tiv in Benin, or a Professor of Hausa in Uyo, or a Professor of Efik in Usman Dan Fodio? Are there specialists in Nok or Ife civilizations in the University of Madiguri or specialists in the Sokoto caliphate in the University of Lagos? Are our Universities prepared to confront the demons of our past historical experiences? Can a Fulani Professor teach history of the civil war, or an Igbo Professor specialize in the history of the caliphate? What will the results of their research look like? These are the demons that the academia must confront if we are dredge up and confront our common histories and narratives. This incestuous territoriality and domestication of the academia has stunted national politics and discourse and the result is that even the best of our academicians are vulnerable to be bait of their regional, religious and ethnic hegemon. Can we carry on like this and hope to build a nation?

Undoubtedly, and notwithstanding all our difficulties, we can still make progress. There needs to be some very vigorous competition for Excellence and professional achievement among our Universities. At a local level, we should be asking how many National Merit Awardees our University has produced, which University has produced more renowned Scientists in the various fields and so on? Is the hope for a Nobel Prize in Science being nurtured in some Laboratory somewhere in this country? There is need for Universities to address the issues of self-sufficiency. The way to do this has to be by research, endowments and consultancies with academicians interested not in their own self-serving projects but in the development of their Department, Faculty or University.

Universities must seek to position themselves so that their research results can change their environments. Since the federal government decided to pool resources by setting up a body like TETFUND, many Universities seem to have gone to sleep, merely waiting for funds to come from that body. The Universities must do more to ensure that they achieve some level of independence so that they can become insulated from politics and politicians who wish to continue to see them as extensions of their political fiefdoms. There is need to energise the Alumni Offices so as to

reposition our Universities to become more competitive.

Going forward, Nigeria must address the need to deliberately plan how to raise up a huge army of professionals covering all fields, especially in the Sciences, developing expertise to address our domestic and international needs. This means that the Government must turn to the Universities, immediately free them from the stranglehold of politicians and deliberately seek how best to return the academic community to its days of glory as an incubator of new ideas to drive progress.

Can the universities recover from the choking hold of ethno-centricism to which they have been consigned today and become mere expressions of ethnic, religious or regional hegemonies? In the hey days, we had Professor E. A. Ayandele, Gilbert Onuaguluchi and Professor G. Tasié as Vice Chancellors for the University of Jos, from its inception in 1971-1994. University of Ibadan had the phenomenal historian, Onwuka Dike, Horatio Thomas and Tekena Tamuno, the first alumnus as Vice Chancellors. The first Vice Chancellor of the University of Lagos was not a Yoruba man, but Professor Eni Njoku. Ahmadu Bello University and the University of Benin had Professor Akingubge and Adamu Bakie as Vice Chancellors. Our universities are now severely constrained and can hardly serve as vehicles for national integration.

3: 2: The Bureaucracy as a Vehicle for Healing

This is not the place to discuss either the notion of Bureaucracy or its origins in Nigeria's national life. Max Weber has addressed these issues in his theories of the Bureaucracy. Weber's *Seven Rules of the Bureaucracy* remains a timeless take-off point: *Fixed Division of Labour* (to avoid whimsical caprice of moving people from one point of labour to the other), *Hierarchy of offices* (the guarantee of authority and each knowing his or her place), *Rational-Legal authority* (by which everyone knows where they legally derive their powers from), *Governance performance rules* (by which everyone knows their place and ensures stability), *Separation of private from official properties* (to avoid conflict of interest), *Selection based on qualification* (to avoid nepotism and arbitrariness) and finally, a *Clarity of career path* (through a steady ladder of promotion). Imperfect as these have been, they have continued to guide the Bureaucracy as a viable vehicle for service delivery.

Rd. Tunji Oloapa has undertaken some extensive and perhaps the most up to date analysis of the evolution and the challenges of the Nigerian bureaucracy today². But, this is outside the purview of this presentation.

Successive governments have made serious attempts at improving the quality and capacity of the Bureaucracy to deliver efficient results and services to Nigerians. From the 1963 Morgan Commission, through Simeon Adebó, Jerome Udoji right up to the Stephen Orosanya Panels, the Bureaucracy has often been drowned in the ocean of its own papers. However, despite a deluge of paper, Commissions, Committees and Panels over the years, not much has been achieved due to the volatility of the bureaucracy itself and the arrival of too many heads of government with little preparation and knowledge of the system. The military compounded all this by their actions and so an institution which elsewhere has always operated under a strict code of discipline, process, and procedure was soon reduced to the whims and caprices of the military authorities.

The rules guiding the Civil Service, such as threats, sanctions, promotion exams and so on, are

² Tunji Oloapa: [Public Administration and Civil Service Reforms in Nigeria](#) (Bookcraft. 2012)

well known to civil servants but most of this energy remains lost in the system. The Civil Service has continued to reinvent the rules to accommodate and domesticate public service into personal fiefdoms. As the years have rolled by, we have witnessed the gradual erosion of the values and culture of public service. In between these bouts of frustration, we hear the nostalgic wails of an Alison Ayida, Philip Asiodu, Ahmed Joda, or Adamu Fika, about what might have been in the years past.

A scholar, M. Sani Abdallah, in a reflection on the Service, noted that: *Whereas the civil service rule prevents officials from engaging in any economic endeavour except Agriculture, official duty has become the side business for the well connected officials while their various private businesses are their real concern. Civil servants are now engaged in any and every business*³. He identified areas within the system, which continue to provide avenues for civil servants to subvert the system, and noted as one of the most lucrative platforms the area of Public Procurement.

Despite there being an Act along with rules and regulations, he argues that: *Officials make proposals not because they believe the item to be procured is of any value or in the public interest. Often times, these procurements are never installed. There is the popular belief that there is hardly any procurement concluded especially in Abuja without top officials reaping a handsome gratifications or houses, cash and sponsored exotic holidays*. He cited the multi billion naira CCTV Camera project in Abuja as a good example of the many failed public procurement initiatives that merely re-enforce this culture of theft⁴. The stories of Ghost workers, scams in the Pension Sections of the various Government Agencies, abandoned projects, payments for unexecuted jobs, employment rackets are some of the areas of immense graft in the Civil service.

It would be wrong to look at this issue in isolation as if the Civil service is merely a forest of crime and criminals. On the contrary, there are many honest, patriotic and dedicated Nigerians who are helplessly held captive by a corrupt political elite that has continued to hold the entire system to ransom. We cannot confront the rut in the Civil Service today without addressing the way and manner that successive military and civilian administrations have continued to tamper with its rules and culture. Greedy politicians and their political appointees insist on making the bureaucracy serve their interests.

The failure or the weakness in the Civil Service today is a combination of factors. How long we shall be on this road and whether we shall climb out sooner rather than later remains to be seen. Our future lies in what we need to do to truncate the gargantuan appetite of public officers in our country. Resolving this is the duty and responsibility of whistle blowers within civil society and the arms of government, law enforcement agencies and the courts. If we do not reverse this ugly trend, the Civil Service will merely continue to increase the depth of the fracture of the Nigerian state, thus, making healing impossible. If the civil service can be made to serve our people, it will indeed be a great vehicle for healing the wounds inflicted by our massive oceans of poverty.

3: 3: Politics as a Vehicle for Healing

It is difficult to imagine where to start assessing African politics. Both Aristotle and Plato dwelt on the nobility of politics and its inevitability in our human genes. Politics remains so far the most noble of all tools for organising society.

³ M. Sani Abdallah: *The Nigerian Civil Service and the Burden of Development* (African Development Magazine) (Vol. 1, (12), p31.

⁴ M. Sani Abdallah: *The Nigerian Civil Service and the Burden of Development*, p36

Politics is about the management and allocation of resources for the benefit of the greatest number of people in any given society. Democracy has been adopted as the most popular form of expressing political choices especially in diverse societies. Political Parties are the platforms which people with common visions congregate to seek power. They seek the mandate of the people to govern by articulating their visions through Manifestoes. Political parties are managed by their own guidelines but also according to the provisions of the Constitution nation's laws. The Electoral management bodies provide the rules of engagement and they serve as referees. Once these platforms have come into being, politics takes a life of its own and competition of among parties ought to become routine. In settled Democracies, politics has become part and parcel of life and it has been adopted as a vehicle for development and integration.

Sadly, for us in Africa, Politics has deteriorated into an instrument of war and death. As a vehicle for ascent to power, it has caused far more destruction than perhaps any other institution in Africa. Nigeria's failure presents us with one of the most ignoble manifestations of this dance of death called politics whose corrosive effect is shattering our communities. Today, Nigeria's politics is choking from the stranglehold of godfathers who have turned the parties into fiefdoms.

Why has politics failed to heal our people in Nigeria? Why have we been unable to raise a political class worthy of the name of politics? Is Democracy alien to us or is our culture unable to develop a democratic reflex? Will Democracy further divide us or heal us as a people? Will the high cost of getting into public office continue to gnaw at our body politic, further deepening the ostracisation of the weak and the vulnerable from the table of opportunity in a nation so richly endowed? How long can we contain the lava of frustration and anger some of which has been spewed and is being spewed by Boko Haram? For a nation used to seeing politics and government as means of mere self-gratification, are the likely losers of the next elections already preparing their armies to ensure that the country remains ungovernable if their candidate does not win?

Despite the much-touted flaws in the 2007 elections, Professor Maurice Iwu, the then INEC Chairman remained quite upbeat about its perceived success. In a television interview recently, he argued that when he was given the job, the then President Obasanjo said all they wanted was a successful election that would guarantee three years of back-to-back, uninterrupted elections. In his view, this was where the success of the elections lay. This is not an insignificant point and its hidden meaning should not be lost on Nigerians. The fact that imperfect elections were greeted with judicial processes not a call for the military is quite important for the deepening of our Democracy. It means that while rejecting flaws in the processes, we must seek to resolve them through the legal and democratic processes.

Whatever may be the strength of that argument, we can now boast that we have gone ahead and doubled the back-back achievement. That being the case, one would expect that by now, going into the fifth elections, Nigerian politicians and the electorate should be supremely confident. We would by now be proud of the fact that we have clear ideas about what to do and what outcomes to expect, that the political class would have learnt the rules and predisposed themselves to accepting the rules of engagement and the outcomes. Sadly, if what we see is anything to go by, the politicians have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. They seem to have perfected their rules of perfidy, they seem determined to enact their own rules and have come to the conclusion that violence must be in the DNA of Nigerian politics. With allegations of imposition across the parties and both Governors and Senators at loggerheads over access to Senate slots, it remains to be seen how this will impact on the process. The future lies with whether the politicians themselves decide to play the game in the most mature and patriotic manner.

How else do we explain the tremor, the palpitation of our collective hearts and the splitting headache that characterizes the 2015 elections? In my encounter with journalists in the last one-year, no interview is complete without reference to what is often presented as the looming clouds around the 2015 elections. Yet, rather than worrying about the quality of those who will participate in the process and ensuring a transparent process of elections, the Parties are showing signs that they have merely improved on the quality of their desperation for power. The dictatorship inherent in the imposition of party candidates, the stupendous display of ill-gotten wealth that has turned our experiment into a plutocracy, are all causes for anxiety. The stranglehold of the Governors over the entire party apparatus of power has led one commentator to refer to what we have as a *Governorcracy*, rather than a Democracy. The Governors have become mini gods, presiding over fiefdoms with literally powers over life and death. Their tight grip and control of the electoral rigging machines in their states is total.

Two weeks ago, I chaired an event organized by Civil Society groups to enable them get an update on the state of INEC's preparedness for the next elections. I was quite impressed with Professor Jega's eloquent demonstration of the fact that INEC had learnt quite a lot of lessons and had deployed some technological innovation to ensure that the elections are free, fair and transparent. INEC's preparations can be thrown into the garbage can if the political class persists in its wayward and criminal ways. The entire political class must concede that politics must become a vehicle for healing. Going forward, we must ask, what options do we have? I will list and address three of these options.

i. To learn from the history of northern domination: Develop the skills for managing diversity and creating a sense of national identity

First, is the issue of how we responded to the post-colonial state that was handed over to us by the British. In my book, *Religion, Politics and Power*, I have clearly demonstrated the fact that the British distrusted the southern educated elite whom they considered too troublesome (in asking for independence), and feared they would create too many problems for them. Their wish to hand over power to the North was not in doubt and was clearly illustrated in even the geographical decisions that were taken in the allocation of regions and populations. The dominant role assigned to Islam then as now enabled the northern elite to consolidate their stranglehold on power in a way and manner that further deepened the anxieties of both their non-Muslim constituencies and the larger society outside its boundaries. There was little or no sensitivity in addressing the lingering feelings of alienation that had been captured in the Report of the Minorities Commission in 1958. Tribunals, Conferences, Commissions and Committees have done very little to ameliorate the grievances and trauma of the minorities.

Discussions about northern domination have been clouded by churlish and fragmented arguments over distributions of Industries or allocation of offices and so on between the north and south, Christian and Muslim. Little attention was paid to developing strategies for the co-operation and collaboration of the various communities even in the north itself. Allegations of open and blatant discrimination against non-Muslims in most northern states in areas such as federal representation, the takeover of Mission schools with no compensation, the lack of a clear policy of integration, all deepened angst and frustration and distrust. Barely five years after independence, these frustrations were already bubbling over in the form of political violence.

The Tiv riots in the Middle Belt in 1964, and the violence in the Midwest, popularly known as *operation wetie*, in 1965, became the preludes to the coup and then civil war which followed. When the civil war broke out, it inflicted the deepest fracture and shattered the optimism

captured by TIME Magazine just five years earlier. The point here is that if we are to heal the fractures in our nation, our leaders and people must effectively think through very clearly how to develop the skills for managing diversity, sharing power and creating a sense of national identity and belonging.

ii. To learn from the history of state creations and on-going oppressions: Understand the social structure of society and the distinctiveness of its groups

Second, the military responded to these crises by adopting state fracture as a solution. The creation of states out of the old regional arrangement generated a lot of excitement and cries of **independence** across the land. Each time a new state was created, the minority elites who had felt oppressed by the dominant group whether by virtue of religion, ethnicity or class, felt the new space was an opportunity to breathe fresh air. They went on to celebrate their independence by reproducing the same dynamics of perceived oppression that they had experienced. The oppression is usually related to the skewed distribution of state offices, especially what Nigerians call *juicy offices* by the local elites. Sooner or later, the logic flows all the way through and yesterday's victims become today's oppressors. The oppressed then begin to demand for their own space within which to also oppress others. This is what explains the upsurge in the demands for States, new Local Government Areas, Emirates, Chiefdoms and Kingdoms. The cumulative impact of all this is what we see in the rise of ethnic, religious or regional loyalties and the diminishing interest in national unity. This must be revised if we are to heal nationally.

Resolving these distortions requires deep critical and analytical knowledge, a high degree of imagination and courage, which no single Nigerian leader has been able to bring to the table. All through, we have had office holders whose obsession with clinging to raw power has blinded them to these processes. Without a clear understanding of the social structure of a society and the distinctiveness of its groups, it is impossible to design a satisfactory system that can unite them together. There are too many people officers who are governing over their people but know next to nothing about the even the ethnic composition of these communities. One of the key demands for a place in public life must be that Nigerians must show that they are familiar with the history, culture and structure of the Nigerian society. There are too many ill informed people in public life.

iii. To learn from the illusion of a binary North-South, Christian-Muslim universe: see an end to the manipulation of religion, ethnicity, and region in election processes

Third, is the very irritating fallacy of representation in power. Carrying on with what the British left behind, the political elite has deepened our differences by focusing on North and South, Christians and Muslims as categories of power sharing mechanisms. Yet, the British operated in this binary universe because it suited them: it kept us divided and we could therefore never rally around to deal with our issues as citizens. Tragically, but not surprisingly, the military and the political elite have sustained this illusion of our division and they have carried it as a vehicle of mending the fracture of our pain.

Recently, General Obasanjo, our former President who we believe should know better, has persisted with this dubious construct by warning the political parties against fielding Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates from one faith. This observation is a measure of how little we have progressed in understanding the heart of Democracy. President Obasanjo is speaking as a military man who benefited from this duplicitous *army arrangement* that has been carried into what is at best a mockery of Democracy. Let us subject this piece of illogic to reason and the realities of the Nigerian experience.

First, if this dubious arrangement were the solution to our problems, why did President Obasanjo and Atiku fight all the way through their Presidency? Secondly, why did huge majorities of Igbos and Yorubas, or call them Christians, vote massively for the late General Yar'adua in an election that was cancelled by a northerner, General Babangida? Thirdly, how and why did huge majorities of Christians across this country massively vote for Chief Abiola and Kingibe in 1993? And before then, why are we still a bit nostalgic about the Buhari-Idiagbon regime with all its skewed regional and religious preferences? As an aside, we might only pose the question: would the Muslim elite especially in Northern Nigeria even have contemplated supporting a ticket of two Christians, then as now? Muslims in Nigeria must reflect on their sincerity in this regard.

This thesis is at best, a shibboleth, no more than a heuristic device which hides the fear of the consequences of our people's choices if they were to be exercised freely. The primary kernel of Democracy is choice and its essence is the efficacious management of diverse groups and interests. For example, in all honesty, General Buhari knows that his greatest opposition is not Christians but the Muslim elite in the north. Therefore, to continue to hoist this mannequin on the window of our Democracy is to take us back and to dig us deeper into the cesspool of atavism, stoking our worst fears and keeping us permanently on the boil. If we remain on this path, we will never defeat violence, we will never have free and fair elections, we will never see an end to the manipulation of religion, ethnicity, and region.

To push this further, we should appreciate that the religious identity is just one out of many identities that make up our social structure as a society. Why do we suggest that a religious identity is more important than gender or class? If we push this logic, then why are we assuming that justice has been done when two men run and no provision is being made for women? Or, put another way, why not field, *Old* and *Young*, or *Rich* and *Poor*, or *Tall* and *Short*, *Male* or *Female* candidates in our elections? The challenge is whether our politicians are prepared to subject themselves to the scrutiny and discipline that the rules and dictates of Democracy demand. The only qualification anyone has for contesting office in our country is and should be the fact that they are citizens of Nigeria. How they organise to achieve this must only be decided by its legality and compliance with the rules of engagement, not sentiments and emotions. Let experience expose the foolishness or otherwise of these decisions.

4: The so called, impending collapse of Nigeria in 2015?

Before I conclude, I would like to say a few words about the thorny issue of the future of our nation. As I said earlier, everywhere one turns, we hear the tales of gloom about Nigeria's impending collapse. The Boko Haram insurgency is being touted as the final evidence. It would seem that in this popular narrative, the 2015 elections will mark the final phase of this scenario.

I feel quite sad about this development because although this story has been making the rounds for some five or so years now, it has increasingly taken a life of its own, climbing all the way from the *ise ewu joints*, meetings of Tribal Associations to some serious academic institutions and finally, even into the heart of government. This prediction accounts for the reason why Nigerians are now blaming the United States for not working hard enough to help us end the Boko Haram insurgency. Others have created even a bizarre scenario linking the United States with Boko Haram. This tragedy would have been a subject of debate and could be taken as part of our conspiracy theories if ever it were founded on some reason and common sense. Now, Nigerians are already moving or planning to move in different directions for fear that the 2015 elections will be the fulfilment of the American prophesy of doom.

However, the thesis that Nigeria would collapse as a nation initially evolved from a report released in January 2005 as the proceedings of a one day conference on US experts on Africa. The consultation was sponsored by the National Intelligence Council under the auspices of the Office for Africa. The thrust was to discuss trends in Sub Saharan Africa over the next fifteen years with the United States' concern being primarily to ensure its security and interests. This is in keeping with America's concern over its power and dominance in world affairs. The United States takes very seriously its role and place in the world, how to secure and continue its dominance and to ensure that no one threatens these interests. The US is not unaware of the fact that its power and dominance are under threat by other forces and it has refused to leave anything to chance. The report has some staggering conclusions which have proved its experts right. Let me take just three examples to illustrate the point:

- *the level of violence in Africa is unlikely to change appreciably in the next 15 years. Most conflicts will be internal. Many African security forces will undergo further atrophy due to low economic growth, shrinking foreign military aid, and the impact of AIDS.*
- *Africa is unlikely to become a major supplier of international terrorists due to the profound differences between Islam practiced in Africa and in the Middle East. Foreign terrorists, however, may seek sanctuary in Africa or attempt to hide weapons and assets there. The overwhelming majority of terrorist activity in Africa will involve or be caused by indigenous groups waging war against local governments and populations.*
- *the most important terrorist-related trend in Africa affecting the United States is the further development of pockets of radical Islam that actively provide support and sanctuary to international terrorists. Most African countries will continue to proclaim a public adherence to democracy and no other form of government will significantly challenge the nominal allegiance to regular elections; however, commitment to democracy in Africa will remain a "mile wide and inch thick".*
- *While Nigeria's leaders are locked in a bad marriage that all dislike, but dare not leave, there are possibilities that could disrupt the precarious equilibrium in Abuja.*
- *An overwhelming majority of terrorism in Africa will be caused by indigenous groups waging war against their own or neighbouring governments or against other population groups, defined by religion or ethnicity.*

The Report went on to single out northern Nigeria, pointing out how radical Islam, supported by some northern Muslim politicians will continue to be funded largely by Saudi Arabia and the threat that this will continue to pose. Looking back, it is hard to find a more embarrassing reflection of the lack of seriousness on the part of Nigeria in terms of how it defines or conceives of its security. Intelligence is not mere acquisition of weapons. In a serious country, the business of intelligence is a robust intellectual exercise. Governments all over the world do this by securing the support of Think Tanks, sponsoring and supporting serious research in areas and countries that might negatively or positively impact on the country's interests.

It is not the fault of other countries that the Nigerian leadership has not been able to consider strategic thinking as a vital tool for strategic development. It is not enough that Nigeria is producing oil and has a huge population. It is important that the leadership in Nigeria defines its interests very clearly. We hear much talk about this but there is no policy clarity and vision. The Office of the National Security Adviser is the brain box of the nation and should therefore not be seen only in purely military terms. This is borne out of our military past. Evidence of a tough intellectual understanding of world politics and strategic thinking should be the preoccupation of

that office and not merely the acquisition of military hardware.

Why is Nigeria not thinking beyond its borders? Why is Nigeria not concerned about the threat to its interests from Alaska to Zimbabwe? Why are we only focusing on those who hate us, or those who are conspiring against us? In a serious country, the University communities and Think Tanks should have been buzzing with analysis of these claims. But, does it not worry us that while the United States of America has designed tools and is thinking and projecting about our future in the next fifteen, we are merely panicking about the next few months? Leadership is about prophecy and prophecy is not foretelling the future, but a mere projection of the future based on present realities as we see them. Acquiring these tools and these platforms for forecast is an inevitable part of our Democracy. It is a challenge that our Universities must take up as an annual ritual. We should therefore not blame America. We should be courageous enough to learn from them and plan our future.

5: Summary and Conclusion: Leadership and the Courage to Heal

I have argued in this paper that Nigeria is riddled with fractures. The first was the fracture of the colonial state. Subsequent scars have been inflicted by the succeeding military and political elites, leaving the country scar-faced. In my view, the effects of those fractures are responsible for the endless cycles of violent protestations that afflict our dear nation. I have argued that there are many vehicles that can be designed to help heal our fractures. I chose to look at three and I know that there are many more. By skipping the Judiciary, I may be accused of leaving out a very important institution and I do perfectly agree. However, the Lecture cannot address everything and indeed, I believe that this conversation is not conclusive. To return to where we started, how do we heal our fractured nation? How did we throw away the opportunities for greatness which TIME Magazine predicted? Where did we take the wrong turn? Let me make my point by relating a little personal story that might hold a few lessons for the point that I am making.

I spent some of my early years with my grandmother and she was, then as now, my favourite person of all time. I was of course pampered but I still have one or two painful memories of my life with her that have impacted my life. I will share one with you.

One day, I picked up an injury while playing my cousins. I got a cut behind my shin. I hid it from my grandmother because I feared that she would stop me from playing and I did not want her to feel vindicated since she had often warned me. Then it became painful and I began to limp. She noticed it and waited for a perfect time to confront me. I came back from school and after I had eaten, she deliberately sent me on an errand. I walked out and after a few steps, she called me back. *You are limping, what is wrong with your leg*, she said. *Nothing*, I muttered, *it is only a small injury. Where is it?* she asked. I showed her, even though I suspected she had already seen it. It was right behind my shin and clearly the wound had gotten far worse than I knew.

She waited patiently until a Saturday when we did not have to go school. I did not know that she had arranged for an ordeal for me. It seemed that a plot had been hatched to get hold of me. My uncle called me and I thought he wanted to send me on an errand, so I innocently went to him. He grabbed me and two of my other cousins who seemed to have been part of the plot emerged from nowhere. They all held me and turned me face down and went to work. I have no idea of the details of what followed but the pain of that ordeal never left me. While they held me down, my grandmother used sliced lime to clean the wound which had begun to fester. Even now, I do not recall any other ordeal half as painful as what I went through that day. But that was the beginning

of the end of my wound whose scar I still carry till date.

I am telling this story because the reasons for Nigeria's festering wound have been the subject of subterfuge; but, deceit and machination must be lanced and cleansed. The military and the political elites have tried to solve Nigeria's problems by presenting the symptoms as a disease. State and Local Government creation only deepened our wounds and those wounds are still festering. We now believe that we can resolve our problems by creating new fractures even when the old fractures have not healed.

The colonial state did an excellent job of trying to hold our diverse communities together. We often get carried away with colonialism and fail to learn some great lessons from the way the colonial project was executed. An understanding of this will help us understand the longevity of the project, its relative peace and its ability to first impose its will and dominance and finally to acquire control through co-option and integration. Getting the defeated caliphate on its side required some incredible diplomacy. But this came about as a result of an amalgam of forces that were chiselled together by the skill and knowledge that the British brought to the project. Prior to the conquest and afterwards, the British recruited and co-opted Anthropologists, Bureaucrats, Explorers, Historians, the Military officers. Colonialism was sustained by a combination of the knowledge of these experts to develop policies of the colonial state.

So, what has happened that the succeeding Nigerian elites have proved totally incapable of managing the inheritance? The reasons are many but they are not unrelated to the accidental processes by which all our Former Heads of State and Presidents have come to power. The average newcomer to the presidency of Nigeria comes totally unprepared, with no knowledge of the environment itself, no experience in public life, no knowledge of the bureaucracy or those who run the system, no knowledge of politics and power derived from some years of loyal pupillage.

Countries in transition, whether from colonialism, military or civilian dictatorships, require a certain set of skills. These include, a clarity of vision, an understanding of the country, the people, the resources and its challenges. He has to develop the ability to read the mood of his people and their expectation, communicate the challenges, create synergy and develop a most effective strategy for holding his diverse people and their ambitions, fears and hopes together. Most importantly, is the courage needed to lance a few boils despite the inherent pain. We have a few examples to draw from.

Transitional leaders like President Abraham Lincoln, Fredrick D. Roosevelt or a Churchill of yester years or those of our modern times like Mikhail Gorbachev, Margaret Thatcher, Lee Kwan Yew, P.W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela have left us some of the lessons I am speaking about. Some times, two leaders arrive on the scene at the same time, face the same challenges and their decisions change history. A few examples are, President Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin who confronted Nazism in Germany. Pope John Paul 11 who with President Reagan and Mrs Margaret Thatcher who teamed up with Gorbachev and helped to end Communism and bring about a new world order. Another example is the courageous Williem de Klerk who paired up with Nelson Mandela and presided over the funeral rites of apartheid.

President Lincoln's resolute commitment to ending slavery in the United States was at the heart of his private engagement as a lawyer even before he got into politics. Lincoln believed that fighting to end slavery was a battle he was prepared to live and die for. Over two hundred years

later, Mandela would state the same sentiments during the Rivonia trial when he said freedom was something he was prepared to die for. Indeed, on the day he signed the Emancipation Proclamation, on December 31st, 1863, Lincoln stated: *If my name ever goes into history, it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it.*

A leader must have a vision that is larger than his personal ambition. He must therefore know where the good of the nation starts and where his personal ambition ends. All the great leaders of the world always knew when to bow out after they believed their vision had been accomplished. The tragic contrast is illustrated in the African situation where our leaders have buried the future of their nations in the wombs of their personal ambitions as we see in the gerontocratic tragedies that still afflict the continent and have stunted the growth of our Democracies and freedoms.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the only American President to have served four terms and the 32nd President of the United States (March 1933-April 1945) stands shoulder to shoulder with Abraham Lincoln in many respects. His legacy and memory in the history of the United States is tied to his vision called the ***New Deal***, a reconstruction and rehabilitation programme that enabled him to team up with his political opponents at home and abroad to achieve a most spectacular record four terms of office as President.

Under the New deal coalition, he mobilized Republicans and others around his themes and programme beyond the shores of the United States; he mobilized Churchill and Stalin to confront Nazism. His spectacular initiatives would later lay the foundation for the emergence of such historic institutions like the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Little wonder, after a war, he still campaigned on the theme song, *Happy Days are here again*. His policies gave the Democrats an unprecedented control of Government in the United States over a long period of time.

In conclusion, all transitional societies carry fractures, but identifying them is a challenge that requires certain leadership skills. As I have illustrated, our beloved country remains severely fractured because too many citizens are, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, *half slave, half free* despite over fifty years of independence and huge resources. Boko Haram is merely a metaphor for understanding the depth and extent of our fractured nation.

Boko Haram is the fruit of a country whose leadership has not had the courage to break the eggs of different identities to make the omelette of a united country. The undefined role of the feudal institutions continues to get in the way of our building a united nation, not because there is anything wrong with ethnic identity, but because increasingly, our sense of nationhood and loyalty to a common flag and Constitution remain subordinated to other loyalties. This has left a huge vacuum that Boko Haram has exploited.

Confronting what seemed like a rag tag army of misguided fanatics has turned into an nightmare and has further exposed the underbelly of our nation. We have watched helplessly as the competence and commitment of members of the Nigerian military has been tested. Wrong diagnosis has led to a total misreading of the context of the war and our inability to identify the best strategy for fighting the war. Now, before our own eyes, it is an unconventional gathering of illiterate hunters who are now scoring victories where the Nigerian military has failed. There could not be a further metaphorical expression of our predicament.

Our fractures have been the result of bad politics. However, it would be suicidal for us to think

that the process of healing should be left to the politicians. Healing our nation is too serious a business to be left to our politicians. Those who aspire to lead us must know who we are and what our fears, anxieties and hopes are. When they win our votes, they ought to know what to do because they have asked to lead us and our votes have given them to job. Creating a team of rivals should then be the real challenge. This is why vigilance on our part remains a key part of politics. The time to start is now and the place to start is here. Thank you very much. God bless Nigeria.