

POWER WITHOUT AUTHORITY: LEADERSHIP CRISIS IN NIGERIA

by

Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, Bishop of Sokoto Diocese

at the 2ndNLI Guest Speaker Forum

Rivers Hall, Transcorp Hilton, Abuja April 26, 2012

Introduction and Conceptual Clarifications:

First, let us define the key terms that we are using and the context in which they are being used for the purpose of this paper. I believe this is necessary because somehow, our politics and political thought have been held hostage by a combination of factors. Our inability to connect with the larger issues of politics and processes has rendered our politics a rather chaotic engagement, prone to violence and anarchy. My intention in this paper is to help us return our politics and political behaviour to a path of order, decorum, and proper conduct. This will lead to the cultivation of a political culture and an appreciation of the nobility of politics as opposed to its present form and context in Nigeria. I have chosen the above topic largely to help nudge us to the nobility of ideas as a vital part of politics.

Simply defined, **Power** means the (moral) ability to use one's influence to get things done either in one's favour or for the sake of a larger group. I use the word *moral* because merely getting things done is not enough. Getting even the same things done at particular moments, in particular environment, in a particular situation might elicit completely different reactions and responses. For example, a person might actually be guilty of a serious crime of murder or theft, should he die in the hands of a mob or after the order of a competent court? In his hey days, Mike Tyson could go to jail for hitting say, Evander Holyfield in the bar, but he would smile all the way to the bank if he inflicted more severe injuries on him in a roped ring.

Although the word **Legitimacy** does not appear in the title of the paper, still, it is the central hub that confers respectability and acceptance to power when it is exercised. Legitimacy is the unwritten agreement which arises from the fact that the one who exercises power and the one who conferred power to him or her have done so by some tacit or active form of agreement or understanding. An elected public official for example has power transferred to him or her by virtue of the votes that were cast in an election or the process that brought them to power. He or she can act on behalf of those he or she represents. The legitimacy of the holder of trust depends on the amount of satisfaction that those who delegated power to him or her enjoy. Closely related to legitimacy is the concept of Authority.

Authority is a controversial concept. It relates to the actual exercise of power. For some, it is tied to legitimacy and is more a relationship than an action. When a Bishop transfers a priest, when a President appoints an Ambassador and so on, it is possible for the ones under authority to be unhappy. However, if they trust the judgment of the one acting on their behalf, they will obey. There has to be a relationship of mutual trust for the other parties to obey even if they are not happy because they believe that the superior is acting for a higher good. Both parties would have, over time hopefully earned the respect and trust of each other.

Power and authority can be squandered if carelessly or arbitrarily used by the one who to whom they have been entrusted. For example, an official elected through the most transparent process could end up losing authority depending on how they use the power they have acquired. For example, the sympathy which the President of the United States of America, Mr. George W. Bush enjoyed after the September 11 2001 attacks, was squandered after he went on a wild goose chase for non-existent weapons of mass destruction and ended up with wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. So, although the President of the United States of America had the power to go to war, he lost the moral authority required to exercise that power once he was perceived as acting arbitrarily and thus, abusing the power that he had.

General Abacha for example staged a coup in 1994, overthrew the Shonekan-led but highly unpopular Interim Government and also succeeded in arresting the national drift in Nigeria after the annulment of the 1993 elections. He squandered all that good will and authority when he let Abiola remain in prison. He continued to exercise power, but he had no authority and that is largely why he became increasingly brutal. Even General Abdulsalam who took over had his reputation diminished when Chief Abiola died in prison. It was within their power to release Chief Abiola but they did not exercise that power for a higher good.

To be sure, our problems in Nigeria are not peculiar. What is most worrying is why and how is it that they seem to defy all cures. Since the end of colonial rule, we have not been able to make steady progress on the path of national integration and development. We hardly have any hey days to celebrate. With some rare exceptions, we hardly have former Presidents whose brilliant performances evoke national emotions. We have no national monuments, icons or infrastructure to command the respect of citizens.

The collapse of the Railways has condemned the vast majority of Nigerians to a life of compulsory *pardah* in their homes and cities, constrained by a *hijab* of ignorance. This is why Nigerians do not know one another, they are not interacting and it is also the reason why the prejudices and stereotypes have built up over time. It is the reason why the lives of the *Other* have become so cheap as we have no feeling of common citizenship and affinity. The roads are death traps and unsafe, the cost of travel is high, so why bother? Except the few who can fly, over 90% of our people are trapped in their communities.

One of the major set backs in dealing with the leadership question in Nigeria has been the issue of legitimacy and succession and how they have impacted on power and authority. Why has moral authority eluded Nigerian leaders? Why has the nation been so bereft of men and women of inspiration? Why has no Nigerian President ever delivered that most momentous, memorable, time and game changing speech, the type to bring tears to our eyes? Why has no Nigerian leader displayed style, character, charisma, class, brilliance and drama to mobilize us to a vision? I think there may be many reasons, but let us focus on the processes of ascent to power in Nigeria as the most significant obstacle to our progress.

I have spoken about severally of the fact that Nigeria has consistently produced **office holders** but not **leaders**. The climate has not been favourable for the erection of a structure/platform (Political Parties) and the development of a process and culture for leadership recruitment and discipleship. There has been no continuity in Party formation or membership. There have been no ideologies to draw from and so the political space has been thrown open to all kinds of species of humanity. We have watched spineless politicians migrate from one Party to the other in search of bread and butter even while the game is still on. We have watched new Parties formed each time the whistle was blown at the end of a military era.

The Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, may pride itself as being the largest political Party in Africa. However, that is not to say it can pride itself as being the most disciplined, principled or cultured party within West Africa. The PDP is not the ANC with its over one hundred years of history, tradition and discipline. This is why we find Nigerian political Parties often breaking the plates, glasses and tables after their political orgies. This is why Party Chairmen often have a very short lifespan. Indeed, if you calculate the number of Chairmen of the Party including those in Acting capacity, the lifespan of a Party Chairman in the PDP since we returned to Democracy in 1999 will be less than two years! This is why the Party lacked the moral authority to resolve its **Zoning** arrangement and foisted an albatross around the neck of our nation.

Coups and countercoups, propelled by greed threw up different characters with very little preparation and questionable competence for managing a country of such complexity as Nigeria. We have had some really fine gentlemen and professionals, but they were men who were trained for other things and not for political leadership. Thus, we have produced through different processes, men and women who have come to power and office largely unprepared. Most were clearly caught unawares by the offer to lead Nigeria and others were often shanghaied to power. Let me give a light hearted, one liner popular narrative of our former office holders.

The Sardauna who should have become the Prime Minister did not want to go all the way to Lagos as he was more interested in being the Sultan of Sokoto. He decided to send Tafawa Balewa to Lagos to be the Prime Minister. Neither Generals Gowon, Ironsi, Murtala nor Obasanjo had ambitions of taking up power in Nigeria as none of them were directly involved in the coups that brought them to power. They were what we might call circumstantial beneficiaries of power. Alhaji Shagari's preference

had been for the Senate. Both Buhari and Babangida who directly plotted their ascent, were more engaged in settling personal scores and other forms of scheming than running Nigeria. Chief Ernest Shonekan, a very decent gentleman was conscripted by General Babangida to *do Maigadi* as a Head Of Government (HIG) while he, General Babangida, stepped aside hoping to come back to take his thing back. Abacha anchored his coming to power by the belief that it was his turn having saved Babangida's skin in the Orkar coup and the belief that it was his **turn to eat**. General Abdusalam had been penciled for retirement before Abacha's death as we heard and Obasanjo's jail term had not run its course before Abacha died and his prison trap was sprung. Babangida and his people were not ready and so they wanted Obasanjo to serve as a stop gap, but they did not know that Uncle Sege had branched to Damascus in the course of his trip from Jos to Yola prison. He returned from prison, fully baptized and confirmed as Matthew. Yar'adua, a decent man had submitted his papers to teach Chemistry in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria at the end of his two terms as Governor. Goodluck was a beneficiary of the face off between such powerful interests like Dangote, Otedola, El-Rufai who used Ribadu's EFCC to blackmail Odili out of the race for the Vice Presidency (ask Segun Adeniyi for details). So, we have been a nation of leaders with Good luck as individuals, but not much to be said for the leadership of the country.

I have gone to all this length because we owe ourselves an explanation, we owe ourselves a proper reading of our history, we owe ourselves a narrative that can help the young men and women who, through the Nigerian Leadership Initiative of which I am a proud founding father, could and should aspire to lead Nigeria to begin to put the check out the facts about our country. In that way, we can avoid the mistakes of the past. Perhaps, it is due to the fly-by-night, conspiratorial scheming that have brought many people to power that has made it impossible for our former leaders to give us a narrative of their involvement in the affairs of our country.

None these great men came to office with any degree of mental preparation or experience in governance. The soldiers might have employed subterfuge and treachery to ascend to power, but as we now know, many of them came to power first to settle personal, ethnic or regional scores than to rebuild our nation. They had the best of intentions for the country but a nation as complex as ours, with huge resources but severely undeveloped, required more than just good men and good intentions. This is why the sight of Oil and free money threw the military into wild ecstasy and the riches of the nation became a distraction rather than an opportunity for our office holders to deliver on the basics of good governance

Secondly and as a corollary, there is the questionable process of ascent to power in Nigeria. In the absence of Parties with a history and ideology, Nigerian politicians have had nothing to believe in except the hope for a slice of the Oil loot. Thus, ascent to power in Nigeria was for the most part through military conspiracies and coups. The civilians who came to power through the democratic process had allegations of electoral fraud trailing them. Allegations of electoral fraud were often excuses for the military to intervene, but in either case, these questionable circumstances

placed a severe burden on the legitimacy of the governments of the day. There is also the issue of godfatherism and its attendant distraction and focus on corruption and looting of state resources. The godfathers believe in nothing rather than sharpening the knives of thefts and recruiting their kind.

A combination of these factors has diminished the status of our office holders even with the best intentions. With no experience, many of them were often held hostage by the hegemony within their ethno-regional or religious sponsors, multinational corporations, and their newfound fellow travelers. The result was that things remained basically the same or even got worse with both military or civilian regimes in Nigeria. It is the accumulation of all this that has made our nation static and created the condition for the politics of violent protest which has been our lot in the last twenty or so years. We want to draw from international standards for measuring government performance to help us appreciate our predicament.

2: Measuring Power, Authority and Legitimacy:

It is impossible for us to try to design a simple matrix for measuring Power, Authority and Legitimacy or performance. Difficult as this may be, in the last twenty or so years, the issues of measuring outputs and assessing governance have become a significant part of the debate about the efficacy of democracy as the best option for guaranteeing what has come to be loosely called, **Good governance**.

Over time, many annual publications by major world agencies and organisations related to human development have emerged focusing on measuring Governance, Human development and performance of states around the world. For example, every year, we see publications from such organisations as; *The United Nations, The World Bank, The International Monetary Fund, The Food and Agriculture Organisation, The African Development Bank, The CIA, The World Health Organisation, Afro Barometer, The African Competitiveness Report, Freedom House, Transparency International, The Mo Ibrahim Index*, etc.

The *Millennium Development Goals, MDGS*, were introduced by the United Nations as a means of setting out basic human needs to lift our people out of misery. Yet as we all know, most or nearly all of Africa is lagging behind even in these indices relating achieving all the most basic requirements for ending misery around the world.

Good governance, the boring term that is now being used as a measure of performance focuses on what we might refer to as the key ingredients for assessing legitimacy. Good governance relates to ability of a state to meet some of the most basic human needs necessary for human development and growth. The duty and responsibility of every state is to deliver these services to its citizens or those who legitimately enter its territories. These key indicators can be summarized as follows:

The lists of indicators for measuring performance are many and rather elastic. Each of them are ranked by using certain composite scores, depending on what is measured. Countries are measured by how close or far away they stand from the

weighting methodology applied. The **Mo Ibrahim Governance Index** which focuses on Africa has adopted basically these same indicators and continues to use them to measure human development and the quality of leadership effectiveness in Africa. As an aside, it is important to note that no Nigerian leader has come close to being nominated for this Prize and so far, only two persons have won it. Let us now briefly look at the key questions surrounding these in

dictators. My intention is to merely pose questions and let the reader measure what they perceive to be the effectiveness of Nigerian governments in achieving these goals. So be the judge.

2: 1: Security: Here, some of the key questions include the issue of whether a state has the capacity to govern itself effectively, overcome external threats to its territorial integrity. Can the nation's apparatus of security contain internal threat and dissent? Do citizens feel secure as individuals, families or communities? Do they feel secure in their homes their places of work or worship? Are their properties protected either by the state or other mediating agencies of state such as the Military or the Police? Do the security agencies enjoy respect and co-operation among the citizens? Do citizens perceive them as being effective?

2:2: Rule of Law: Here, the key questions surround the constitutionality or otherwise of government. Do citizens enjoy protection under the Constitution? Has a culture of transfer of power by constitutional means become acceptable in the country? How does the country's legal system work? What is the cost of justice and do citizens generally feel that the law protects them? How do individuals, families and communities assess the rule of law? How much does Justice cost the weakest members of society? Are all citizens equal before the law? Do citizens understand the Constitution as a secular document with a sacred ring to it? Does the government respect Court judgments and is it really committed to Constitutionalism?

2: 3: Leadership: How do citizens perceive those they have elected to lead them? Do they trust their leaders? Do they believe that these leaders are acting on their behalf and the greater good of the majority of the citizens? What is there in the life style of the leaders that elicits respect or contempt? What are the recruitment processes for leadership? How does the country deal with leadership in a multi-layered environment such as Nigeria especially at the traditional and religious levels where processes of recruitment and expectations are often distinct and in conflict?

2: 4: Political Rights: Here, the questions relate to the type of system of government that is in place. If it is a democracy such as the one we lay verbal claim to having, are citizens' expectations being met? Do citizens feel that their votes and voice matter? Do citizens feel that they are being listened to and that their leaders respect their choices? How do Political Parties operate and how are they registered? Is there a level playing field for key political actors and do the Parties enhance or threaten democracy? Do citizens feel and believe that Democracy has made a qualitative change in their lives? Are they prepared to defend or undermine

Democracy and its institutions if threatened? Do they have remedies in the political process, that is, can they legitimately reject those they have elected if they feel they are not meeting their needs or representing them properly?

2: 5: Economic Rights: What economic resources are available to the citizens? Nigeria survives as a rent collecting state, depending on Oil. How does this impact positively and negatively on the economic survival of citizens? What ranges of economic activities are available to ordinary citizens? Can ordinary citizens access loans from banks? What is the value of Land and how does this impact on the economic fortunes of citizens? How are property laws framed and do they protect ordinary people? For a nation with such huge rural and illiterate population like Nigeria, how do ordinary farmers gain access to fertilizers, farm inputs, farm seedlings and so on? Do they have access to markets for their crops?

2: 6: Civil Liberties: Again, as with the rule of law, the crucial questions here surround citizen access to basic rights as enshrined in the Constitution. For a plural society like Nigeria, how do we manage our diversities by ensuring that different people with different and sometimes conflicting cultures live in harmony? How are freedom of association, religion and so on perceived? Are there cultural or religious barriers that hinder the freedoms of ordinary citizens? Are citizens' liberties often assaulted? Are they detained without trial for a long periods of time? Are detainees often tortured? Are citizens freedom of movement curtailed by fear or threats?

Human Rights: Despite being signatory to a myriad of international laws , Protocols or Covenants, especially in the areas of human rights, is Nigeria prepared to domesticate these laws? How are Minorities protected and here we are not just talking of numbers but groups such as women and youth who often have no voice. What rights are available for the exercise of freedom of religion and expression under the law?

Infrastructure: In many respects, it is Infrastructure that connects ordinary people with government. This is why, states and countries pride themselves in being referred to as work sites. It is to meet this that Nigerian politicians have come up with that dubious concept known as *dividends of democracy*. What plans does the state have for moving citizens freely and safely? What kind of social services are available, water, roads, power, and so on?

Freedom of Speech: One of the key indicators of a working democracy is the robust quality of debate that allows citizens to air their views. This is why Professor Amartya Sen privileged this concept by praising the argumentative culture of India as a great contribution to Democracy. He also suggests that citizens of societies which enjoy freedom of speech are not likely to die from famine.

How much does it cost to set up the most basic of media outlets? Are all segments of society free to set up media outlets (In Nigeria, we are told that religious bodies cannot be trusted to run media houses!). How does government view opposition in the media? What guidelines and safeguards are there to protect journalists? Are

individuals, communities easily blackmailed for airing opposing views to those in power?

Corruption: This is the big one, the terminal cancer, and the one who destroys everything in its path. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, corruption is an ill diagnosed disease and we often do not get a handle on it in its multi-faceted and multi-dimensional manner. Corruption straddles all disciplines and areas of a nation's life. For us in Nigeria, the focus tends to be on the theft of resources by a criminal state and its agents. However, for the purpose of its weighting, considerations are often paid to GNP, government spending on health, education, percentages of GDP, literacy levels, gini co-efficient rankings, national debt as percentage of GDP, the bureaucracy and so on. For a society like Nigeria where corruption drives the entire engine of national life, where it has become the engine of growth and major driver of the Nigerian economy and politics, it is hard to know where to start to address this Frankenstein.

Against this backdrop, how do we rank Nigeria? At the Kennedy School where I was part of the class that worked on some of the material that is now being used by the Mo Ibrahim Index, Nigeria hardly scored more than 4 on a scale of 10 on all the indicators. It is clear that things have gotten progressively worse, depending on where one is looking. But the recent statistics released by the Federal Bureau of Statistics this year itself tells the horrifying and staggering story of our national malaise and tragic existence. We should consider their findings incontrovertible first because they are a Federal Government agency and secondly because we are faced with a Transformation agenda. The Transformation agenda has its job cut out.

Today in Nigeria, the staggering and mind boggling data that is being churned out on corruption across the board, the scandalous revelations that have come out of the various Probe Panels could easily sink an armada. But this is Nigeria where we have been inoculated against all the things that can shock or call other nations to repentance. We have made a pact with both God and the devil and are comfortable in driving on both sides of the road. We are straddled across two horses heading in different directions. This leads us to pose the questions, How did we get to this? How can we climb out of this mess? Do we have the will or have we become so comfortable in this mess that we now actually dread order, process and procedure?

The inability of successive governments to meet these goals, to deliver on the goods and services that form the basis for the legitimacy of every state is responsible for the chaos and instability that have made our nation so volatile. It is the cumulative impact of these addictions that has produced what has become our worst nightmare, the toxic known as Boko Haram. The fact that what ordinarily looked like a rag tag army of miscreants has now come to hold our nation hostage is a statement of the mess we are in. First, this group has challenged the Federal Government and Boko Haram has successfully created enough fright to all arms of government, security agencies and the entire populace.

If the President could not hold a national day celebration in the open for fear of Boko Haram, if the entire political class and the population now live in the fear of Boko Haram, if Nigerians can no longer meet in groups whether to worship or to socialize, then how do we contemplate security? Our lives have been totally disrupted. We can no longer worship, organize social events, even bury the dead without fear and yet, no one can assure us that the government is fully in charge. The federal government has voted almost a trillion naira for Security, but beyond Presidential engagements and Abuja, nowhere else in the country is considered safe. The predicament of the organisers of the South-South summit where the credibility of the event had been hinged on a high profile list of foreign speakers must be a lesson for us all about the difference between perception and reality. It exposed our structural weakness and our seeming inability to understand that as long as parts of Nigeria are unsafe, the whole of Nigeria is perceived to be unsafe!

The President had announced publicly that there were Boko Haram members or sympathisers in his cabinet. Members of the cabinet were not elected but they are people he himself has chosen. Now, the National Security Adviser is holding the PDP responsible for creating the condition for the tragedy we are in. But is the PDP larger than the Presidency? The buck passing shows the state of total confusion that we are in and evidence that we are at best chasing a black goat at midnight. For, as Chaucer said, *If gold rusts, what will iron do?* Clearly, today, we are on crossroads and the verbal assault across the country, the accusations and counter accusations all call to question the very basis of the legitimacy of the state. If the state has lost capacity to feed and protect its citizens where should we turn if not the arms of the peddlers of evil? It is to answer this question that I want to examine the oxymoron being bandied as a solution, the so-called Sovereign National Conference.

1: 3: Sovereign National Conference: Rattle and Hum:

For a country notorious for lacking the capacity and discipline to think deeply, it is not a surprise that Nigerians have dredged up the idea of a Sovereign National Conference to cover up their shallowness of their thinking about how to solve the problems of their country. First, ours is a country where we love to mimic, imitate, or at best photocopy. We have no time for the discipline of originality. We wait till others have sweated and then we are anxious to see if we can reap the benefits by thinking so we can replicate the scenarios. No sooner do we start a debate about a major national issue than we fall head long into the laager of ethno-regional bigotry, dredging and rehashing the same tired prejudices and stereotypes with everyone throwing stones from their corner. At those moments, it is considered a mortal sin for you to escape the group imprisonment. Once your ethnic, tribal, regional or religious group has taken a position, you dare not show any impression of breaking ranks. We abuse ourselves until we get exhausted.

Like synchronized swimmers, we dance to the same music. Notorious for never concluding a debate, we soon return to the same issues we fought over yesterday. Look back and ask if you remember any serious debate that we have concluded well in Nigeria. We had no consensus over the date and timing for independence. We did

not conclude the debate about the status of Minorities as canvassed by the Willink Commission. We did not conclude the No Winner, Vanquished philosophy. We did not conclude on the issue of creation of states. We have not concluded the debate over the status of our Constitution. We did not conclude the series of debates over the status of Islamic law which was begun in 1957. We do not know whether the Zamfara induced Sharia is dead or alive. We do not know whether we are members of OIC or not. We do not know what the status of our Federation. We have not concluded on the best formula for revenue sharing. We do not know whether marrying a minor is a matter of religion or state law. We do not know anything about any national thing in Nigeria. Everything is left hanging until someone provokes or wakes it up when it makes political sense to do so.

Each time we have a crisis, we want a Sovereign National Conference, so that, as the proponents say, *we can decide if we want to live together or go our separate ways*. Perhaps what is even more frustrating is the way and manner some members of the gerontocratic club have responded to these issues. In these difficult moments when one expects the experienced statesmen to stand up and be counted, all we get are childish and churlish abuses across the Niger by men who have made a life from this nation, men who by now should we watching their grand children pursuing a career in politics. We all fail to understand that in political science, gerontocracy, government by old men has been identified as an obstacle to democracy! Some of these Jurassic park democrats are an obstacle to our vision for the future.

The question to ask is, beyond our obsession with photocopying, what really will a SNC do for us? Something must be wrong with us and I put it down to an incurable lack of patience, discipline and dedication. Does it really make sense that in so short a time in our history, we would have had so many Constitutions? Why are Nigerians so lazy in thinking through their difficulties and challenges? Why do we keep looking at and hoping to borrow what others have done when it is clear that their history, their geography and their cultural experiences are different from ours?

From the Order in Council of November 22nd, 1913, Nigeria has had 10 Constitutions with an average life span of less than 10 years per Constitution. If this is not legal madness, I am not sure what it is. We have had a variety of 14 occupants of the highest seat in the land with a profusion of nomenclatures, as Heads of State, Head of Interim Government and Presidents, even under the military. If we divide them by the period of our independence, each will have had an average lifespan of slightly over 3.7 years. Even for the position of Chairman of Motor Park touts, where can you have such a leadership hemorrhage and hope to progress and develop? This is why I think that Nigerians must pause and think more clearly rather than allowing themselves to be stampeded by people who just cannot stay in the shadows of power for too long, people who mistake talking for thinking. I therefore wish to proceed on this matter with the following observations.

First, I doubt that we beyond the grand standing, an SNC is what we need now because there is absolutely nothing new that will be on the table. The issue is not the questions but why we do not seem to recognize answers nor use them for correcting

our mistakes and charting a way forward especially as we all seem to think that everyone else is guilty except ourselves.

Secondly, when President Obasanjo set up the National Political Reform Conference, NPRC in 2005, people like Professor Wole Soyinka and the late Tony Enahoro were suspicious and they backed out and decided to set up a parallel outfit to really capture the wails of our people and produce a peoples' constitution. They argued that a real Constitution should be made up of the voices of all ethnic groups in the country. They gathered together everyone that had an axe to grind with the system and rightly so. After abusing everyone and claiming to represent all the tribes of Nigeria, they produced a document which does not have the signature of both men. So which SNC do they want to call again and what is there to discuss that is not in the old document that was produced?

I am doubtful that there can be anything significantly different from both initiatives. So, rather than taking the ball away and seeking another pitch because we lost a match, should we not at least ask what we have done wrong and what might be corrected? How and why is it that we believe that talking and shouting past one another without thinking and listening are more important than the discipline we need to do things that are lasting? Let's take some different stories from elsewhere where people faced with the similar problems like us have acted differently and with more discipline. These stories are an illustration of what separates truth from falsehood, what we need to do if we are to be sincere with ourselves

Let us start with Burma. On May 27th, 1990, elections were conducted in Burma and Ms Aung San Su Kyi and her National League for Democracy won 392 out of the 492 seat Assembly elections. The establishment did not approve of the direction of the elections and so they cancelled the elections and placed Ms Su Kyi under House arrest. Her story is all too familiar to us. It is a story of mental strength, discipline, honour, integrity and inner convictions about truth and falsehood. It is only in the last two months that things have taken a dramatic turn. She has won a seat in the National Assembly elections and clearly poised to become her country's next President. She and her colleagues have refused to take the oath of office which requires that they **defend** a Constitution of seemingly questionable legitimacy. Compare this with our five fingers of a leprous hand and members of Chief Abiola's party who jumped on the Abacha train and abandoned their man even in death. Compare this resilience with that of our so called politicians who were so hungry for power that they accepted a transition without a Constitution! Next is Algeria.

In 1989, the government of Algeria, hitherto run by the National Liberation Front almost as a one party state, decided to open up the political space and allow the formation of Parties and new elections. In June 1990 and December 1991, the country conducted Local and Legislative elections which were massively won by the Party known as the *Islamic Salvation Front, FIS*. These results were unacceptable to the establishment. As such, on January 11, 1992, the military staged a coup and sacked the government of Chadli Benjedid. Algeria went into crisis leading to a low intensity civil war between the government forces and members and sympathisers

of FIS. In the six or so years of fighting which ended in 1998, over a 150,000 lives were lost. In 1999, the country conducted elections, Abdul-Aziz Bouteflika won the elections after his opponents withdrew. He has remained President till date. Algeria is definitely not worse off than Nigeria is and the people are not sadder than us.

Finally, look at Paul Kagame whose resilience as a rebel fighter saw him take over power in a country almost physically and emotionally torn to shreds. Magically, he has rebuilt his country morally, physically and emotionally. Now, with no shame, we Nigerians are asking Paul Kagame to come and show us how to rebuild a country which we deliberately ruined. When I visited Kigali in 2004 and celebrated Mass at the Cathedral, I met five Nigerians who were members of the Technical Aid Corps sent to that country as well as other countries and fully paid for by our country. Yet, when it came to fighting for the Chair of the African Development Bank, Rwanda floored Nigeria. When shall we learn how to spell shame? I am convinced that what is missing in our lives is the failure to seek Truth to which I shall now turn.

1: 4: Truth and the Nigerian Elite

When Jesus told Pilate that He was for the Truth, Pilate asked the question, *Truth, what is that?* (Jn. 18: 38). It is natural that truth is a contested notion. The reasons are many but they relate to our personal experiences, beliefs and ideologies. When the sun shines or rain falls, people's experiences of it will depend on where they are and the extent to which they avail themselves of its potential and opportunities. Similarly, our relationship with Truth will depend on how close we are to it, how faithfully we seek it and how committed we are to finding it and having found it, our commitment to living it.

The superfluous nature of our environment, its blurred and distorted nature all combine to make it very difficult for us to appreciate Truth. Our artificial and false commitment to religion has tended to make us associate truth with visible show of religiosity. Whereas faith throws new light to Truth and yes, God is the ultimate Truth, it does help us to understand and appreciate that truth is not limited to those who openly state their beliefs in God as Christians and Muslims. Jesus admitted this much when he told His followers that He had sheep of another fold (Jn 10:16).

The history of the last century, the forces that shaped the end of history and dictatorship cannot be complete without drawing attention to seekers of Truth who did not necessarily profess their faith as Muslims or Christians. Nelson Mandela, Andrei Sakharov, Mikhail Gorbachev, Lech Walesa, Williem de Klerk, Aung San Su Kyi, Vaclav Havel, Gandhi.

In an environment where truth has become a prisoner held hostage by negative forces who believe that an open show of religiosity, measured by the number of times we have gone on various pilgrimages, sizes of churches built, awards and honours being worn and so on are evidence of faith and religious expression. The result is that we have made a pact with God and the devil and that is why our society is visibly religious but has a distorted sense of what is right and wrong why moral

exhortation has replaced punishment by a judicial process. We are living with the consequences of stolen elections, weak law enforcement as we can see from the rise in social vices, kidnapping, assassinations, ritual killings, and now, Boko Haram. All these young men and women are our children, they are children conceived in fraud and deceit, children born into a society where corruption is now part of our DNA.

Boko Haram is not the cause of our instability and volatility. It is not the reason why the investors refuse to come. Insecurity, volatility, insincerity, elite irresponsibility, carelessness, greed, imperviousness to common sense, fraud have become associated with us. While elsewhere, wealthy men and women fund **Arts, Think Tanks, Museums, Schools, Grants, Research and Development**, the Nigerian elite has fallen into disrepute as it wallows in confusion. Its stolen wealth funds the economies of their dubious host nations abroad. The elite build the most outlandish structures, compromise the institutions of state all in the name of being in power. In collaboration with highflying lawyers, they have made nonsense of our quest for a better society even through our Democracy. Lawyers and Judges constitute some of the greatest beneficiaries of our electoral failures. Based on the evidence before us, electoral failure must be part of the daily prayers of these lawyers and some judges who pray to become Chairmen of Electoral Tribunals so as to oil the vehicle of deceit.

Lawyers, in collaboration with unscrupulous judges have turned the judiciary into a captive institution unable to open the doors of justice for the poor. We are daily watching as men and women who should be in prison or should have been shot dead in China and other more serious countries anxious to create an integrative society. They are offered comfortable landing pads by a corrupt judiciary in concert with reputable lawyers who have surrendered their professional calling on the altar of filthy lucre. We have watched as the bureaucracy has abandoned its call to service and duty to the nation and turned itself into a den of thieves and outright criminality. That environment is now hostile to men and women of integrity.

A stunned nation watches daily theatricals of tales of criminality as public officials, bureaucrats and technocrats steal billions of naira and dollars. Both the office holder and the larger society seem to be in agreement that theft of state resources comes with the job and this is why we do not expect our public officials to return home after service to the nation. This is why every public officer only aims to go for a bigger prize since theft is part of the building material for the political career of those who seek more power. Can we go on this way and expect to find the exit door to freedom, justice and dignity?

Government ineffectiveness, the inability of those we have elected to provide the social services listed above as indicators of good governance have produced Boko Haram. It is easy to say, as we often do, that we cannot grow in an environment of violence and instability. However, any nation, government of people who wear corruption as a badge of honour as we do in Nigeria, any nation which pretends to fight corruption with feathers, clearly is the best advertisement for what we now have as Boko Haram. As long as our country is failing so woefully on the scale of the

governance indicators above, and as long as we have over one hundred million Nigerians going to be bed hungry amidst so much, we shall remain prone to poverty, strikes, revolts, instability, volatility, distrust, anxiety, theft, misery and death.

Let me be properly understood. Boko Haram is evil and its atrocities condemnable in their entirety. However, the question is, how did a derelict state allow evil to steal its thunder by letting an evil agency appropriate the energy of its youth? The intensity and passion of Boko Haram should have been channeled to good use by a more purposeful society. It is the corruption, fickleness of government and its agencies that have produced this conundrum. We must have something that we are prepared to die for. Since poor governance has failed in the struggle for the blood of its citizens, it is sad that today, this blood of sacrifice is being offered to an evil god. But, as we know better that, *the gods are not to blame*.

No ethnic, regional or religious organization has threatened the foundation of our nation the way Boko Haram has done. The threat of this organization cannot be limited to religion or region as it is clear to us that they are more interested in instilling fear and taunting the federal and state governments. Boko Haram has cashed in on a state with a weak architecture of governance and security, an army of citizens who are now too weak to fight or stand for anything. With government in retreat in the lives of citizens, Nigerians have retired into their ethnic and religious enclaves. This is why there are no street soldiers to defend the commonwealth from internal and external threats. Tragically, the government continues to look totally clueless as to how to confront this ogre. Government must by body language and concrete action show that it is committed to closing this gap and gaining the confidence of citizens.

A country that cannot feed its citizens is a breeding ground for Boko Haram. A country that allows its public officials to have no moral code in public life, is creating a condition for moral anarchy and decay. A country that has no sincere data and no response for the Youth bulge is courting disaster. This is what W. B Yeats captured in his epic poem, **The Second Coming** from where Achebe borrowed the title of his epic novel, *Things fall Apart*. The second stanza says:

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

*The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

Clearly, Boko Haram represents the ugly face of what passionate intensity can be. Yet, despite what seems like a somber narrative, I believe that there is great hope. But this hope must be hung on a strong pillar built on facts, history and courage, not moral demagoguery and grandstanding. The notion that Boko Haram can be prayed away and that vigils or prayer warriors will resolve this for us is a huge joke. I am a Bishop, I market hope and prayer, but not as a substitute for what human agency can do. All those who have turned the corner in solving these problems did not do so

by mere prayer warriors and vigils. Not in the US, not in the UK, not in Rwanda, not in Israel. So, let us wake up. Not when these prayers warriors have become an industry and when the altars of the gods and goddesses are offensive to real faith.

All hope is not lost on our country, but we cannot continue on this path without crashing sooner than later. There is cheering news coming out of the states of the South-West and South-South. I commend many of these Governors who are showing how things can be done, who are showing that a new dawn is here, men who are showing us that we can turn the corner. I salute and commend them and hope that they can spread the template of their vision and dreams for our nation. The **Governors Forum** must go beyond merely seeking to share power and resources with the Federal Government. They must share ideas and become interested in how the weakest links in the chain can be strengthened. There was talk of Peer Review among the Governors, but all that reads like interference and it is now a whisper.

The South-East, even at the worst of times has been an engine of growth as the relentless industry of the individual Igbos has shown over time and across Nigeria. The Igbos lost a war, recovered from the war and have done far better than any other section of the country in rebuilding their broken lives. If the nation had this kind of disposition, we would not be the laughing stock of nations. With their industry, given their international reach, connecting the dots is just a matter of time and clearly, some of the South-East Governors are also doing well and showing the way.

However, while the rest of the country seems clearly poised for a take off amidst the rut that the country is in, very little light seems to be coming from the Northern states. The North seems to be some kind of an Afghanistan now. There is no clear collective vision about what to do and how to move forward. If size has made speed impossible, why can the Governors of the different zones rally together as others are doing rather than trying to push an elephant called Northern Governors through a narrow door? Why can the Governors not meet according to their three zones of North-Central, North-West and North-East? They can all discuss their peculiar problems rather than trying to hold an unwieldy group that is largely divided on many fronts. While other zones enjoy some relative political and cultural homogeneity, the North does not possess such. The North is not a recognizable geographical category of identity in the present dispensation. The zones are.

The Governors of these zones must understand that even if we ended Boko Haram insurgency today, the psychological scars, wounds, injuries and perceptions will stretch many more years ahead for all those who live here. While there is a lot of creativity in other parts of the country, the states in the Northern zones believe that their salvation lies in having more money, returning the Presidency and dredging for Oil in the Chad basin. The issues are far deeper than this.

Recently, a few outbursts pitching key Northern elites against one another was to say the least, embarrassing but evidence of the leadership crisis and vacuum that we have especially given the threat that this area faces. Mallam Adamu Ciroma, ex this

and that, believes for example that the answer to our conundrum is the return of dan Fodio. Such a pathetic application of imagery at a time like this betrays a serious lack of sensitivity for a man who has served this nation at the highest level and even attempted to be President. What was the difference between his statement and the dubious goals of Boko Haram? Did he and his wife become Ministers under the Party of dan Fodio? How has he and his colleagues not been able to produce descendants for this dan Fodio and what have they made of his legacy?

General Buhari's fire and brimstone statement well ahead of the 2015 elections, not different from what he had said before the last elections is also to say the least, most insensitive especially given where we are now. There are better ways of preparing to win the next elections and we should be seeking ways to close the gap of prejudice and clear the clouds of doubts among us. The altercations between the Governor of Niger State, Alhaji Babangida Aliyu and Alhaji Shehu Malami the former Ambassador to South Africa show a serious crack on the wall. Taken together with the admission by leaders of the North that the region's economy and political strengths are under threat, we see a region that is heading fast to the emergency ward.

The Northern elites must appreciate the fact that merely securing the Presidency of Nigeria will not solve the problems of the North. It did not do so for over thirty years. What the Northern Governors need to do and they must do quickly is to borrow ideas from their colleagues in the Southern states. They should swallow their pride, scale the walls of ideology and find out how to develop people oriented and strategic programmes for development. Heaping money on dubious security pursuits is not the solution. Insecurity is product of inefficiency, ineffectiveness, and a feeling of frustration by a populace that feels abandoned by its governments. This is where we should look. Northern politicians must move away from the thinking that anyone owes the region a favour. Winning power is not about zoning, or honouring obligations. Winning elections must be based on the ability of those who seek power to convince the people by their track records about what they can do and not some balderdash about whose turn it is.

For a country so richly endowed and yet lacking in leadership and imagination, it is a pity that we have been reduced to the sidelines of international politics. We need to reclaim our place in the international sun, but that will not happen until we show seriousness and become more assertive. For if we cannot quell an internal insurrection such as Boko Haram, how do we expect to be entrusted with more serious issues especially given that security is at the heart of world politics today? Nigerian professionals will continue to excel in their individual capacity but not because they are Nigerians, but the country needs the kind of respect that can push Nigerian statesmen and technocrats to the centre of world politics. We have the material and human resources to give Africa the leadership it so badly desires but that will not happen if we continue this way.

We lost the Presidency of the African Development Bank to Rwanda a few years back for the same reasons. We are told that other African nations worry about

Nigeria's leadership even at a regional level like ECOWAS on the grounds that our house is not in order and others do not want our Boko Haram excess luggage. In the 80s we were good at corrupting weaker nations by cheque book diplomacy, but that has not earned us any respect to date. We have fought wars around the West African region, but we have very little to show for it in terms of credibility and respect.

We have brilliant minds like our dear sister, Dr. Ngozi Iweala who made history by bidding for the World Bank job. We are sad she lost but we understand the context. I believe and I may be wrong, that, had she been from say, South Africa, Rwanda or Ghana, the world would have taken notice. After all, the Presidency of the World Bank cannot compare with the Secretary General position in the United Nations. It is time for us to clean up our act so that Nigeria can be respected again.

President Jonathan did not cause these problems. However, he has a historic opportunity to change our tragic course. He stepped forward to govern our nation and we gave him the mandate in an election that was reasonably fair by many standards. So far, the cylinders of the oxygen of legitimacy and authority filled up during his elections are gradually running empty. The President still has a lot of power to award contracts, allocate oil wells, and make more millionaires by the day by virtue of his office. But this was not the reason why we opted for Democracy nor is it why we voted for him. If that was the case, we would have been better off under the military. We voted for him to give us a new lease of life.

Boko Haram is not an excuse nor should we continue to find enemies from elsewhere by creating imaginary scenarios about religion or regionalism. Nigerians know far better than those who want to hold the President hostage can admit. Did we not live with Buhari and Idiagbon knowing that both of them were Muslims? When we voted for Abiola and Kingibe, did we not know that they were Muslims? Nigerians vilified General Abacha but, in Lagos of all places, Col Marwa (as he then was) was the beloved of the same Lagosians because by his performance conferred authority on him. Dr Ngige became Governor of Anambra State under some dubious circumstances. However, his performance elicited commendation and even the high and the mighty in Anambra conceded that, we did not vote for him, but he is working for us.

Democracy was meant to be a conveyor belt, conferring legitimacy and authority on our elected officials while bringing back to us, the good things that help in our pursuit of happiness and the good life. The President and his team must wake up to the fact that without authority conferred on them by the people who appreciate them, the nobility of politics will be lost and Democracy will simply be the banditry that we had in uniform. In which case, Boko Haram will only remain the metaphor for our sorrowful wails. The security strategy is definitely not working and it is a woeful failure whatever anyone may say. The President must take full responsibility for both himself and those he has committed our future to. The wastage of lives must end and the security system must be thoroughly overhauled immediately.

I want to commend those Governors, a few Ministers and some members of the National Assembly who have taken their jobs quite seriously and are showing that things can be different and democracy can give us a new life. But time is not on our side. Until the welfare of our people takes centre stage, those who hold office today may have power to share out the loot of this country, but they will neither have the legitimacy nor the authority that engenders love and respect needed to make the public servant one into whose hands trust can be entrusted.

Like his 13 other predecessors before him, President Jonathan came to power on a strain of good luck to him, but as we have noted, in most situations, this good luck has not been that good to our nation and our people. Already the sycophants have started their game. It will be sad and tragic if President Jonathan allows his fickle minded sycophants to hold him hostage by some useless talk about 2015.

We believe that those elections will be crucial but no one will win them because they are merely in power and can corrupt the system. A lot of the mess that we are in now can be traced to the huge cost of fighting the last elections. This should be a lesson and I hope that the President can now re-organise his team with a view to finding men and women who can take charge of changing this country. Taken together with the great strides in some states in the South West and the South-South, we believe we can reverse the tide. Moving trains, uninterrupted power supply, more jobs, food on the table, are all that we need to drive out the darkness of Boko Haram. They are what we need to pump up the testosterone of patriotism needed to set our nation bubbling again. Against that backdrop, what better way to end than with the immortal words of Percy Shelley in his epic work, **Prometheus Unbound** when he said:

The good want power, but to weep barren tears.

The powerful goodness want: worse need for them.

*The wise want love, and those who love want wisdom;
And all best things are thus confused to ill.*

It is not too late to reverse the tide and reclaim the moral high ground. We have a choice to either dream new dreams or wake up to a nightmare. Thank you for your kind attention. God bless you all.