

# **NIGERIA'S CULTURAL TAPESTRY AND THE CHALLENGE OF DEVELOPMENT**

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## **Preamble**

President of the Nigerian Academy of Letters, permit me to begin by expressing gratitude to God and to the leaders of this Academy for giving me the privilege to deliver this lecture. When the College of Fellows, of which I am a member, chose the theme of this year's Convocation, I never imagined that I would be asked to deliver this lecture. This choice is a great honour that goes to my family, teachers, students, friends and the institutions that produced me. I will, therefore, approach this task with some measure of circumspection, if not trepidation, and a high sense of responsibility. However, do bear with me if I ruffle a few feathers in the course of this lecture.

## **Tapestry or Mosaic as Metaphor**

President, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the theme of this year's Convocation, "Nigeria's Cultural Tapestry," dwells on the central issue of diversity, which is critical to development in plural societies. It is a recurring issue in the post-Amalgamation history of Nigeria. This is especially so in view of the challenges of nation-building which seem to have defied the best efforts of our leaders and countrymen. Hence, as a modest contribution to the discourse on diversity and development, I shall speak on '**Nigeria's Cultural Tapestry and the Challenge of Development.**' Please permit me to state some caveats from the outset. First, since I am not a literary or cultural studies expert, this presentation is not laden with heavy postmodernist theory and arcane expressions. Second, as an

eclectic historian, my presentation reflects my preoccupation with governance and development in changing historical contexts. Essentially, the lecture focuses on the interlocking issues of leadership, governance, diversity and development.

That said, the lecture proceeds from the fundamental assumption that diversity is a fact of life, which has to be faced rather than erased. Hence, the reference to a “tapestry” evokes the image of a mosaic of cultures, each of which exercises its right to existence, alongside others. In a short essay on America’s cultural tapestry, which outlined “How various ethnic groups work together in U.S. society,” Gary Weaver (2008) explains that the metaphor of tapestry or mosaic better represents the current American reality than the “melting pot” model that had been used to describe the United States. The “melting pot” metaphor evokes images of the arrival of various peoples on American shores, each group contributing their peculiar cultures to an American pot in which the compound mass is heated till it melts into a new element, which is, however, dominated by the male White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP). The WASP “cookie-cutter” mould then fashions the various elements after its own image. But this development is more mythical than real in practice, especially with the passage of time and greater ethnic diversity. Hence, unchangeable cultural and physical features defied the mould, retaining the American diversity as we now know it. Weaver, therefore, presents tapestry/mosaic as a better representation of the American cultural reality. For, in a mosaic or tapestry, each colour retains its identity but adds to the overall beauty of the object. To remove a piece from a mosaic or a thread from the tapestry, he asserts, is to destroy it. Consequently, diversity is a positive force and tampering with it through homogenization would damage its essence and utility. This raises the bigger issue of the relationship between diversity and development, the core of this lecture. But first, a discussion of the connection between culture and development.

### **Culture and Development**

“Culture” and “Development” are two of the most difficult concepts to define as there are probably as many definitions as the number of writers on the subjects. It has been suggested, for example, that there are “at least four contested definitions of culture.” (Nurse, 2006:35). These are:

- a developed state of mind (when we say, for example, “s/he is a cultured person”)

- the processes of this development (with reference to “cultural interests” or “cultural activities”; or, Wallerstein’s distinction between “production cultures” and “consumption cultures” – Nurse, 2006: 38)
- the means of these processes (“the arts” or “humane intellectual works”)
- “a whole way of life” or “a signifying system” which provides a lens through which society or a social order is reproduced, experienced, communicated or explored (Nurse, 2006: 35, citing Williams, 1981: 11-13)

“Development,” too, is open to diverse definitions, and it is better described than defined. According to Said (2004:9):

development is a historical process through which human beings choose and create their future within the context of their environment to achieve a humanist and creative society. It is concerned with the dignity of the individual – that level of self-esteem and self-awareness that is secure and self-accepting and the restructuring of the institutions and culture of society to support such ends.

Generally, development encompasses the physical, material and spiritual changes in society which produced consistent improvements in the wellbeing of the people. But while the steady and consistent growth of the economy, improvements in lifestyle, educational standards and technology are quantifiable and measurable, intangible things such as emotional wellbeing, cannot be quantified. Hence, development is relative, contextual and non-linear.

What is of immediate importance is the relationship between the two. Informed opinion holds that culture and development are interwoven. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO):

Development interventions that are responsive to the cultural context and the peculiarities of a place and community, and advance a human-centred approach to development are most effective, and likely to yield sustainable, inclusive and equitable outcomes. (UNESCO, 2012: 5)

Hence, since January 2012, culture has been included in 70 per cent of the UN Development Assistance Frameworks. (UNESCO, 2012: 3, note 2)

In general, culture may be said to be key to development in the following areas.<sup>1</sup> First, as a contributor to the global economy, tourism is one of the fastest growing business sectors. Cultural tourism accounts for 40 per cent of total world tourism revenues. Second, investment in culture-related activities has revitalised the economies of major cities, which utilize cultural heritage and cultural events to improve their image, attract investment and visitors and stimulate urban development. Third, culture-led development has also facilitated greater social inclusiveness and rootedness, innovation, creativity and small-scale business enterprises. Fourth, culture has also been critical to sustainable development. Indeed, it has been described as the fourth pillar of sustainable development. (Nurse, 2006) Fifth, sound knowledge and application of local culture has built trust between development agencies and local end users, and ensured a proper insertion of new technologies and ideas into local contexts. Sixth, culture aids development by the acknowledgement of the virtues of cultural diversity and respect for individual human rights, and the promotion of sustainable environmental management practices. Finally, inter-cultural dialogue has also prevented or/and mitigated conflicts, and protected the rights of marginal and minority groups. (Akinyele, 2013)

In proposing an optimal synergy between culture and development, UNESCO (2010) produced a Culture for Development Indicator Suite, which demonstrates how seven policy areas or “Dimensions” (Economy, Education, Heritage, Communication, Governance and Sustainability; Social; Participation; and Gender Equality) and their sub-dimensions function in a framework of culture for development. (See Table 1)

**Table 1: Dimensions and Sub-Dimensions of Culture for Development**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Sub-dimensions</b>
<b>Economy</b>	1. Added value of cultural activities to GDP 2. Employment in culture 3. Household expenditures on culture
<b>Education</b>	1. Complete, fair and inclusive education for all 2. Valorization of interculturality, cultural diversity and creativity in the first two years of secondary school

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO, 2012: 4, for the discussion in this paragraph.

	3. Training of professionals in the cultural sector
<b>Heritage</b>	1. Promotion and valorization of heritage
<b>Communication</b>	1. Freedom of Expression 2. Access and Internet use 3. Diversity of media content
<b>Governance and Institutional</b>	1. Standard-setting framework for culture 2. Policy and institutional framework for culture 3. Distribution of cultural infrastructure 4. Civil society participation in cultural governance
<b>Social Participation</b>	1. Participation in cultural activities 2. Trust 3. Freedom of self-determination
<b>Gender Equality</b>	1. Levels of gender equality 2. Perception of gender equality

Source: UNESCO, 2010: Accessed at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/cultural-diversity/diversity-of-cultural-expressions/programmes/culture-for-development-indicators/seven-dimensions/>, 9 June 2013.

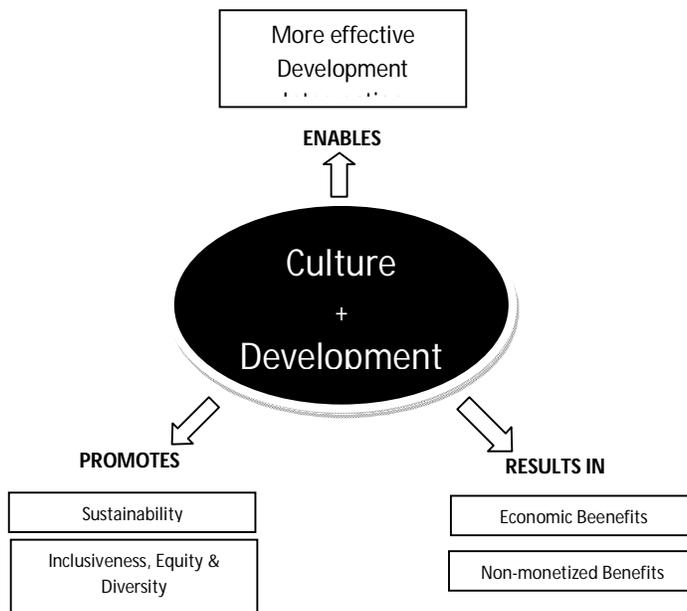
UNESCO (2012: 7-8) has also proposed the following practical recommendations toward dovetailing culture with development:

1. That culture should be integrated into governance, in the conception, measurement and practice of development, to make development inclusive, equitable and sustainable.
2. That sustainable cultural tourism, cultural and creative industries, cultural institutions and culture-based urban revitalisation be promoted as catalysts of local entrepreneurship, employment generation and local development.
3. That fragile cultural assets be protected as a unique and non-renewable cultural capital.
4. That traditional knowledge and practices should be integrated into sustainable environmental schemes to foster environmental sustainability.

- That culture be deployed in promoting social cohesion through intercultural dialogue while the arts could be harnessed to develop local entrepreneurship among the youth in post-conflict and post-disaster situations.

Figure 1 illustrates the UNESCO proposal for synergizing culture and development.

**Fig. 1: How Culture Contributes to Development**



Source: UNESCO, 2012: 8.

### **Culture and Development: Diversity as Recipe for Disaster?**

“Diversity” as a rubric covers disparities in cultural values, gender, ethnicity, age and religious beliefs, among others. What is of interest in this lecture is ethnic diversity, for which “diversity” serves as an alternate. A dominant narrative in scholarly and popular discourse is that diversity is necessarily conflict-ridden, that it is in/of itself a recipe for friction and disharmony. History is replete with struggles by various nation-states to manage their problematic cultural or ethnic pluralism, which has generally hobbled national development. A notable exception has been Penang (discussed later in this lecture), the most ethnically (that is, racially) diverse State in Malaysia, where “ethnic solidarities and inter-ethnic connections rather than conflict, have created stability

over long periods of time.” (Evers, 2012) “High and increasing diversity,” with the arrival of more immigrants to Penang, it has been noted, “poses a challenge for good governance, but also provides the basis for the upcoming innovative knowledge-based economy and society.” (Evers, 2012)

The negative valuation of diversity in politics contrasts sharply with its utility in management theory, which makes it a positive force in business. Hence, “diversity management” serves a positive role as an attribute in business. Big organizations deliberately create diverse teams to harness the potential of their pool of multi-national or multi-racial operatives for innovation and creativity. Such practices have generally engendered competitiveness and improved performance. (Evers, 2012)

Returning to the political scene, the general consensus is that ethnic diversity is problematic and constitutes a drag on development. “There seems to be a general consensus, based on both cross-country regressions and individual country studies,” notes the leading economist Gustav Ranis, “that ethnic diversity, especially in the Sub-Saharan African context, is one of the causal factors behind relatively poor economic performance.” (Ranis, 2011:3)

This is buttressed by numerous studies on the connection between diversity on the one hand, and conflict and economic crises on the other.(Goren, 2013) However, there is a debate over which of ethnic polarisation or ethnolinguistic fractionalisation (ELF) inflicts greater damage on economic development. In a well-cited article (Collier and Gunning, 1999), it was claimed that ELF alone accounts for 35% of growth deficit in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and for 45% when taken together with some policy issues. However, Montalvo and Renal-Querol (2005), in another well-cited article, also established the connection between ethnic diversity and economic underdevelopment but attributed this to ethnic polarisation instead of ELF. Their argument was that: “Where there are social cleavages, there are frictions among social groups. When the society is divided by religious, ethnolinguistic, or race differences, tensions emerge along these divisions.” (Montalvo and Renal-Querol, 2005: 308) They pointed out that resources that should have been invested in generating economic growth were diverted into nonproductive inter-group competition. Where tension between competing groups bred instability and uncertainty, these would reduce investment. Their extensive statistically-backed analysis led them to the conclusion that: “an increase in social polarization has a negative effect on growth because it reduces the rate of investment and increases public consumption and the incidence of civil wars.” (Montalvo and Renal-Querol, 2005: 318) Other authors, such as Easterly and Levine (1997), also contend that ethno-linguistic polarisation delays or prevents quick

resolutions leading to positive public policies and that it promotes rent-seeking activities, undermines trust, raises transaction costs and has an adverse effect on development. (Ranis, 2011)

In terms of nation-building and governance, a popular solution to diversity (where ethnic groups live together in a defined geographical space, such as a nation-state) has been the adoption of the federal system of government, which has many variants. However, federalism or unity in diversity, has never been universally popular. Indeed, it has been debunked as aggravating, rather than ameliorating, the knotty situation. There is the school of thought that parlays the myth of Africa's precolonial cultural unity and peaceful co-existence, and advances a narrative that it was colonialism that made diversity a veritable avenue to political instability, so pronounced in most post-independence African countries. Colonialism or, more generally, imperialism has been fingered as the critical culprit in the underdevelopment of Africa, exploiting the fault-lines of ethnic diversity. In my undergraduate years at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the popular speakers of the day – Professor Ikenna Nzimiro and Drs. Inyang Eteng and Chuba Okadigbo, never ceased to invoke the title of a much lampooned article, “The Inevitability of Instability” (O'Connell, 1967), to loud guffaws to advance the argument that if diversity was a problem at all, it was the imperialists that had manipulated it to sow discord. In the same context, Chief Obafemi Awolowo's reference to Nigeria as a “mere geographical expression” drew much flak and his advocacy of federalism was presented as compounding rather than solving the problem.

This lecture seeks to engage this narrative and explore the possibility of a counter-narrative that dwells more on how to transcend diversity by harnessing it to achieve societal development. It acknowledges the undeniable debilitating contributions of the slave trade, colonialism, the digital divide, globalization and differential human and natural resource distribution to the underdevelopment of African countries. But it projects the absence of good governance anchored on the developmental state and focused leadership as the missing link between diversity and development.

### **The Nigerian Cultural Tapestry: The Poverty of Civic/Public Culture**

Returning to our earlier reference to the American cultural tapestry, it is necessary to clarify an important point – the mosaic combines diversity with a dominant, defining national culture. In the American case, the dominant national culture encompasses the predominant values shared by a vast majority of the people and which drives official policies, as well as corporate and individual action.

According to Weaver, regardless of their diversity, Americans hold certain values or aspirations dear, such as emphasis on individual achievement, class mobility and distrust of an overly powerful central government, a common language (though Spanish is a second official language in many States) and standing united behind the Stars and Tripes – the national flag. The emphasis on personal achievement, which fuels social mobility, is illustrated by the habit of the average American introducing him/herself by what s/he does for a living rather than by his/her family background or origins. Hence, according to Weaver, it is usual for an average American to tell a stranger his name and profession - that is what **they do** - while for a Nigerian, for example, the likely emphasis would be on his state of origin, lineage or some other reference to **who s/he is**.

There are, of course, exceptions to this generalization. It only goes to show what premium each society places on indices of identification and recognition. Americans also share a rejection of the monarchical form of government, given the experience of the first immigrants from Europe, and the glorification of rugged individualism that accords more with republicanism. This extends to a suspicion of “big government,” captured by Henry David Thoreau’s maxim: “less government is better government.” Again, there are exceptions to this general rule in times of national crises, such as wars and economic depression. I am not painting a utopian picture of America, which has its own Archiles heels in gun violence, youth delinquency and institutionalised racism, just as other nations grapple with their own challenges.

What can be deduced from the experiences of the United States and many other countries is that it is that public/civic culture, the aggregate of the shared values of the people(s), as articulated in daily life and subscribed to by their leaders and ordinary people, that shapes the fortunes of the nation itself. Consequently, national character that flows from such shared values largely determines the social, political and economic fortunes of the people.

Many people steeped in the idea of a Nigerian diversity characterized by ethnic-based cultures assume that there is no dominant pan-Nigerian culture, to which a large number of Nigerians subscribe and which defines our national character within and outside the country. This erroneous impression is corrected in the discussion in this section. The aim is to demonstrate that it is informal culture in the public sphere that accounts for what Nigeria is today, the same way American public culture has driven the United States to where it is today.

The post-independence history of Nigeria has been dominated by certain key events, including the systematic and sustained subversion and bastardisation of the democratic system in each of the First and subsequent republics; civil war and prolonged military rule; various ethno-regional irruptions; and the mismanagement of the country's natural resources, especially, crude oil and natural gas. These events shaped what I have termed the country's national public culture, which has largely determined the fortunes of the country. My position is that it is those elements of our public culture, much more than any foreign imperialist or neo-imperialist agenda, that account for the Nigerian situation. These traits in Nigerian daily life constitute the sinews of Nigeria's anti-developmental public culture.

### **Constituents of Nigeria's Anti-Developmental Public Culture**

Regardless of protestations to the contrary, public culture in Nigeria is dominated by most, if not all, of these features. Due allowance may be made for the contexts in which Nigerians live or operate. An attempt will be made to give historical depth to these features by citing examples from Nigeria's post-independence history.

It is an understatement to declare rapine or systemic corruption to be the chief defining feature of Nigeria's anti-developmental culture and the greatest threat to the corporate existence of the country. The scale or quantum has grown exponentially since independence. In the First Republic, the scale of corruption was apparently limited by the quantum of resources available for plunder, and by the relatively more developed public spiritedness of the leading political leaders of the era. Nevertheless, it was not unknown. Even the corrupt governors and ministers of the Gowon era (1966-75) appear saintly compared to their more rapacious successors. So rife and systemic has corruption become that things have become worse with each passing regime since the Second Republic of Shehu Shagari, which eventually collapsed under the weight of profligacy, corruption and electoral malfeasance. The cancer of corruption and political sleight of hand became systemic and symptomatic of the Babangida regime, which was largely associated with the "settlement" culture. Abacha's brutal regime superintended the looting of the till leading to the flight of billions of dollars into overseas bank accounts, much of which is still being traced.

The "settlement culture" manifests in two ways. The first one is: "don't ruffle feathers, just suck it up, let's cover the shame, let's forgive and forget, and let's pretend the evil never happened so as not to expose our friend or our man/brother." We enjoy sweeping dastardly acts under the carpet in the

name of settlement. The other type of settlement culture is that there is no case that has no price. Hence, you hear people talk of “name your price” and this has gradually become a way of life for Nigerians.

Yet another is the culture of pathetic patronage. Family and associates pester persons who have just been elected into office for corrupt patronage. Undue pressure is mounted on public office holders to pay back financiers (so-called political godfathers) after elections. Contracts are awarded after every election to people who lack the technical competence, managerial experience or resources to handle the projects. Abandoned contracts are never probed, and released funds are never recovered because of our culture of “not opening old wounds,” best described by the story of three proverbial monkeys: “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.” Consequently, public money now grows wings in billion-naira scams. No nation has ever developed under the albatross of the purloining of the public purse.

A corollary of systemic and endemic corruption is profligacy, the mindless waste of public resources. This, too, has become a great drag on Nigeria’s developmental efforts. Granted that Nigeria earns a fairly steady income from crude oil and natural gas exports (with all the perils of a monocultural economy), the country is still relatively poor. Its poverty is revealed by the huge deficits in infrastructure, education, healthcare and local content in industry and critical sectors of the economy, which the totality of internally generated revenue, even with prudent management, cannot possibly fund. Yet, Nigerian leaders have rather focused on white elephant – the proverbial bridge to nowhere: the under-utilized seaports and airports, prestige projects without economic spin-offs – which would yield slush funds to oil the corrupt politicians’ campaign and election and saddle the people with sub-standard infrastructure, which benefits only a small fraction of the population. Driven by megalomania and a bloated sense of Nigeria’s importance, Nigerian officials take very large and bloated delegations to regional, continental and global summits. A retinue of officials accompanies our athletes and sports ambassadors to international engagements. Presidents and governors undertake countless and useless overseas trips, especially the quizzical search for foreign investors, with a huge entourage, all drawing estacode from our national patrimony. The rate at which public officials and their friends acquire a fleet of aircraft and put the latest models of exotic cars on pothole-infested roads betrays the absence of a developmental vision and a lack of self-confidence in our so-called leaders.

It may be argued that next to corruption and profligacy, the greatest common behavioural trait of players in the Nigerian public space is impunity, and this is not a recent development. As early as the

First Republic, notable people and/or their agents committed offences against the State and its citizens, and were not made to face the full wrath of the law. In consequence, such misdemeanour was repeated in later times. For example, the mayhem in the Western House of Assembly in May 1962 was perpetrated by some so-called “Honourables,” who broke the mace, assaulted their colleagues and disrupted proceedings.<sup>2</sup> Till date none was brought to book. The recent affray on the floor of the Rivers State House of Assembly merely rehashed that script. Elections were brazenly rigged in the Western Region in 1964-65, and again in August 1983. In spite of court decisions and/or graphic evidence, the culprits got away with it. In the case of the perennial cancellation of elections in Oguta, Imo State, a commentator, who identified federal lawmakers from the area as major culprits stated as follows: “Any inquisition that ignores the brazen impunity displayed by these elected federal legislators will be patently meaningless.” He added that it had become “paramount to check the impunity of these ... people.” (Omeihe, 2013)

Another trait that dominates public behaviour is self-help, which is widely acknowledged as the weapon of the weak in the face of perceived injustice. Violent reactions to electoral heist, perceived to have been perpetrated by unpopular but powerful state actors with the connivance of judicial and security apparatus of State, have characterized most elections in post-independence Nigeria. Western Nigeria achieved notoriety for the “*wet e*” spree of arson, destruction of property and murder of political opponents in 1964-65 and in Ondo State in 1983. Sporadic violence also greeted disputed elections in parts of the West, Benue and Akwa Ibom States in more recent times. Self-help can be regarded as an indignant response to weak institutions, brazen injustice and impunity, and the “might-is-right” syndrome. The “might-is-right” type of self-help, typical of powerful Nigerians who abduct creditors or demolish physical structures or forcibly possess disputed land, was recently demonstrated in a long-drawn dispute between two agencies of the federal government. On June 21, 2013, the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Security Agency (NIMASA) blockaded the Bonny Channel to compel the Nigeria Liquefied and Natural Gas (NLNG) company to pay a disputed levy. The blockade defied a High Court injunction in favour of the gas company. A newspaper (*The Nation*, 8 July 2013:19) declared that it was “hard to find a more befitting word than self-help” to describe the NIMASA action. Given the intervention of the court, the paper wondered why NIMASA was “in a hurry to do things its own way.” But this was merely one in a long list of cases of self-help, mainly among private persons, between government agencies and private concerns, and, as in

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<sup>2</sup> The author’s father, Hon. Israel Adeniyi Olukoju, escaped the mayhem and remained with the Action Group.

this case, between government establishments. No nation can develop in such an atmosphere of lawlessness.

What is also becoming alarmingly rife in the Nigerian public space is the suffocating grip of acquiescence to a decadent system and unwholesome practices by the populace. It is reflected in the robotic obedience to unlawful orders by police orderlies who brutalize fellow citizens on the orders of their power-drunk principals. For instance, the brutal treatment of a journalist, Minere Amakiri, by the military governor of Rivers State, Alfred Diете-Spiff, in 1973 was done by underlings in obedience to what was a patently inhumane order. A commentator asserted that: “Nigerians are specially gifted at rising or falling to the level of leadership they’re offered.”(Ogunlesi, 2013:25)

There is a pervasive cult of silence in Nigeria. It is called “suffering and smiling,” living in denial, pretence, and complicity with injustice and oppression. It manifests in a herd instinct (Fela’s “follow-follow”) or the “if you cannot beat them, join them” syndrome. For instance, those who should have spoken out kept quiet till the Boko Haram insurgency in the North invaded even the hallowed chambers of emirs’ palaces. The bandwagon mentality and appeasement of the “winner-by foul means” or worship of the *parvenu* (“money-miss-road”) betrays moral cowardice. Sycophancy, eye service, obsequiousness and hero-worship are routinely expressed in fawning congratulatory messages to temporary holders of power on occasions of inconsequential “achievements” or “landmarks.” Even an octogenarian could address a lady half his age but fortunate to be a First Lady, as “our mother,” even when Her Excellency’s conduct belies the title.

Where nepotism (“man-know-man”) reigns, mediocrity becomes the norm. Banality takes centre stage and reaches new depths in the craving for titles, especially Honorary Doctorates. Even institutions that do not award bachelor’s degrees brazenly award all manner of doctorate degrees, often styled “fellowships,” and those institutions that do not have the professoriate now organize inaugural lectures! It seems that we have chosen to settle for second-best and sub-standard products, leaders, facilities and what have you.

Sheer mendacity – brazen lying as an art of governance - what the inimitable Professor Emeritus Tekena Tamuno has styled “lying-in-state” has become official policy. Endorsement now supersedes voting and sixteen votes are higher than nineteen! Official double-speak makes it difficult to know what and who to believe. Usually reliable sources are now suspect. The credibility of government as an institution is eroded and public trust in the integrity of our leaders is weakened.

In a materialistic world, hedonism and excess should be expected. But the degree and pervasiveness of godless, soul-less greed (“chop and quench”; jeun ko’ku”), avaricious and vulgar materialism, loud and raucous exhibitionism, vanity (“I better pass my neighbour”), get-rich-quick mentality beat the imagination. Our materialism is tasteless and gaudy. We love grandeur and pomp without quality and substance. We are notorious, even in Europe and North America, for our ostentatious celebrations of empty “landmarks.” A columnist lamented that: “Those who should be laying out the framework for reconditioning our minds are too busy over-celebrating underachievements, too busy building castles on the ground for themselves and in the air for the people.” (Ogunlesi, 2013:25)

Although Nigerians can be aggressive when their national pride is wounded, most suffer from “culture cringe” - inferiority complex - that makes all things foreign superior or more attractive. Anything foreign seems fine, if not better than ours. Foreign degrees, foreign accent, foreign spouses and elaborate wedding ceremonies in foreign lands (Dubai, the UK, the USA, etc.) have now become status symbols.

Nigeria has produced many authors and easily dominates any list of winners of competitive scholarly fellowships and the like in Africa. Yet, obscurantism appears to have been adopted as an official policy. We seem to have canonised illiteracy. The ‘no-nothing’ syndrome has given meaning to the popular saying: “I no know book o.” Once you have money, it seems, that covers a multitude of your inadequacies.

In politics, when driving on the highway and everywhere else, we resort to brinkmanship and muscle-flexing. Nigerian public culture is replete with one-upmanship and grandstanding. People of power, who should have known better, huff and puff over petty issues of ego and neglect the fundamental issues that concern the vast majority of their subjects. We do not need an accountant to tell us that huge sums of money have gone down the drain as the ongoing ridiculous power show in Rivers States - the shame of the Black race - enters another round. And the common people are the worse for it. In all of this, Nigerians have murdered public shame, opprobrium and outrage. Nothing shocks us any more.

It is commonly acknowledged that the lack of strong institutions is a major hindrance to development in these parts. It is one thing for the institutions to be fledgling and in need of nurturing. But it is a different matter if Nigerians engage in a favourite pastime: institution-wrecking. It is done with relish as long as it serves a narrow interest, such as unleashing security and anti-corruption agencies against

your political rivals, or suborning the electoral commission and the judiciary to facilitate vote-rigging. In one stroke, you effortlessly destroy EFCC, INEC and the judiciary.

One would have thought that in a system that has been run for over fifty years Nigerians would have mastered the art of planning. Sadly, where strategic plans and budgets exist at all, they are treated as monuments or documents to be shelved, or glazed and displayed. Hence, we always resort to last-minute measures, ad-hocism, fire brigade approach in an atmosphere of uncertainty and unpredictability. This is why we perform poorly at major global sporting events because we always leave everything till too late or to chance. Yet, when we want to move at all, at the eleventh hour, we now scramble and stampede to beat the deadline. Much energy is wasted and such haste is often without progress and this amounts to effort without efficiency.

After we have failed to plan and actually planned for failure, we begin to search for scapegoats, usually political opponents and other adversaries, real or imagined. Ultimately, we resort to fatalism in the garb of religiosity. We explain away our failures to the will of God or the designs of Satan, as the case may be.

The way we handle our waste says much about our national character. Whereas the Japanese, for example, have simplified things through a disciplined use of sorting-at-source, we have mastered the shot-put and “not-in-my-backyard” method of litter proliferation and waste dumping. To physical waste, we have added noise pollution. Unlike the colonial period, where there was noise control in Lagos, Nigerian cities (and increasingly, too, the suburban and rural areas) are notorious for the cacophony of uncontrolled noise from honking vehicles, brawlers, hawkers, entertainers and preachers. Even university campuses are no longer immune.

What runs through our public conduct is incivility, even in high places. Beyond the ‘uncivil society’ of motor park touts and the like, the hallowed chambers of legislative houses have often been turned into boxing rings without referees and rules of engagement, as exhibited in Rivers State a few weeks ago.

But this was not always the case and should not continue to be. We need to develop a template for good governance, anchored on our cultural values to promote development.

## **An Indigenous “Good Governance” Template?: Towards an Enduring, Developmental Civic Public Culture**

The parlous state of our public culture belies the existence of developmental cultural traits in our indigenous societies. Without prejudice to what we have outlined from the experiences of more successful plural societies, our indigenous values contain elements that can enhance a new civic culture that promotes development. Drawing on the record of Nigerian history and the rich repertoire of our traditions, this section highlights what we can revive in our civic culture to remake our nation.

It is often assumed that Nigerian peoples have never had traditions of good governance even in their village settings. Such misconception could have been informed by the fact that they did not have formal, written constitutions, with elaborate sections and provisions as most nations have today. But, as is well known, there are nations today that do not have a formal constitution or have a threadbare one. The point is that Nigerian peoples practised in their different settings versions of good governance that suited their peculiar epochs. (cf. Ajayi and Ikara, 1985; Osuntokun and Olukoju, 1997)

While the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria did not have a formal constitution, each village had a conception of “development” as its members understood it, and the vast majority of the people imbibed norms of participation, majoritarianism and consensus-building. The same can be said for other non-monarchical or republican groups, though we must admit that Lugardian indirect rule and the quest for a so-called fulcrum of authority pushed many communities to adopt some form of monarchical rule. This has since been exacerbated among the Igbo, where the kingship institution has spread beyond the western flank stretching from Onitsha to Oguta. But the point is that ideals of participation (“one person, one vote”), freedom of expression and consensus building can still be promoted as a cultural virtue in modern Nigeria, where it often seems that might is right and a minority can brazenly claim victory in elections.

As for the Yoruba, they operated a constitutional monarchical system that effectively checked the autocracy of a single person, who sometimes was made to pay the ultimate price for breaching the unwritten constitution. For example, an unwanted *Alaafin* was presented with an empty calabash or a parrot’s egg as a sign that he had outlived his usefulness and must step aside by committing suicide. Not only was succession not by primogeniture, it also rotated among various branches of the ruling house. This entailed some form of selection, if not election in some cases. Of course, this was an

oligarchy, from which women were mostly excluded, but it was not an absolute monarchy or the autocratic democracy that many so-called modern nations practise today. From the Yoruba worldview, we can deduce the virtues of checks on arbitrary power and the focus on government as a means to an end – “development.” Hence the goal of “itesiwaju” (literally, “progress”) or “olaju” (“civilisation”) can be attained through politics (“oselu”, which literally means “developing the community/polity”) as opposed to what Chief Obafemi Awolowo called “ojelu” (plunder/rapine - literally, “eating up the community/polity”), when referring to corrupt politicians.

If it appears that the Islamic polities of northern Nigeria had been monarchical right from the pre-jihad era, we should not lose sight of the codifications of norms that governed public civic culture.<sup>3</sup> A striking illustration of this – the fact that governance was taken seriously and guided by some publicly declared rules – is that at least two treatises were written and circulated in the Central Sudan. During the reign of *Sarkin Kano* Muhammad Rumfa (d.1499), the celebrated Muslim cleric Muhammad b. Abd al-Karim al-Maghili al-Tlemsani (better known as Al-Maghili) authored a treatise, *Risalat al-Muluk (The Obligations of Princes)*, which spelt out Islamic standards of good governance for the guidance of Rumfa, who was a notable Muslim in his own right. Two other examples from the early nineteenth-century history of the Sokoto Caliphate further illustrate the historical depth of the idea of a governance template.

First, the leader of the Sokoto jihad, Uthman dan Fodio, authored the *Kitab al-Farq (A Book of Distinction)*, in which he distinguished the practices of non-Islamic polities from those of the envisaged Islamic State. It is interesting that when the *ulama al-sui*, who were embedded in the power structure or *siyasa* (politics) of the day criticised him for preaching without separating women from the men, he countered that it was a minor and forgivable infraction compared to the greater *fitna* of keeping women in ignorance. From this we could see that Dan Fodio himself had struck an early blow in favour of girl-child or women education even in a conservative Islamic setting. Small wonder that the cleric’s own daughter, Nana Asma’u, was a poetess and celebrated author in her own right. Not only did Dan Fodio promote women literacy, he practised what he preached in his own household, unlike most modern leaders today.

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<sup>3</sup> I owe the insights in the discussion that follows to my Final Year Special Paper on The Sokoto Caliphate, taught by Professor C. N. Ubah, at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. But I take responsibility for selection of source material and interpretations.

Second, in c.1807, in the early years of the jihad, Uthman dan Fodio's brother, Abdullahi, a poet and lawyer, was so disgusted with the manifestation of worldliness among the jihaddists that he abandoned the struggle for a pilgrimage to the East. However, on getting to Kano, the local reformists prevailed on him to abandon his eastward journey. During his sojourn in Kano, where he also observed some deviations, he composed at his hosts' request a treatise on how to run the government according to the tenets of Islam. Abdullahi dan Fodio's *Diyā' al-Hukkām* (*The Light of the Rulers* or *The Principles of Government*) was a sort of governance template for the emergent Kano emirate. It is a moot point whether any ruler in that part of the country is guided by that document or any other on good governance.

Other examples can be cited from local settings across Nigeria. What is worth stressing is that our traditional values and practices should be re-visited to harness those that can help us to re-invent the culture of civility and developmental governance. How a society treats its women and what it does about peaceful co-existence or the treatment of so-called strangers tell much about its level of development. This is true of Nigerian communities even in precolonial times.

The role of women in various societies is a case in point. In practically all Nigerian societies, even in the matrilineal ones, women have played second fiddle to men, even their own sons and younger brothers. Yet, women have also exercised soft power, which often affected the directions of state policy. The point is that many Nigerian communities recognise and accord women certain roles that men did not play. For example, till date, women are preferred as regents in some kingdoms; in some others they held titles and took part in direct decision making in the highest councils, though always as a minority. In practically all societies, women entrepreneurship was the norm, even when cultural practices limited their mobility. Where they suffered no such restrictions, they accumulated wealth, owned property and played overt politics. The mythical Queen Amina, the historical Madame Tinubu of Lagos and Abeokuta, Efunsetan Aniwura of Ibadan and Omu Okwei of Ossomari, or the more modern examples – Alimotu Pelewura of Lagos, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Abeokuta, Margaret Ekpo of Calabar, Gambo Sawaba, the stormy petrel of Northern Nigeria, Humaini Alaga of Ibadan and Abibatu Mogaji of Lagos – literally rocked the cradle and the crown, often tempestuously.

The treatment of settlers, now a bone of contention in modern Nigeria, is a key issue in the evolution of a developmental public culture. Plateau State has been a theatre of war and various Nigerian communities (Umuleri/Aguleri; Onitsha/Obosi; Warri (Urhobo and Izon versus Itsekiri) and Ile-Ife/Modakeke) have at various times demonstrated our abandonment of the cardinal principle of

good neighbourliness and concern for strangers, so-called. It is instructive in this regard, and this is documented by Adamu Fika (1978: 158, n.82), that Yoruba-speaking peoples had settled in Iyagi and Yakasai quarters of Kano since the seventeenth century. There was no report that they were molested, massacred or expelled at any time during the pre-colonial era. Hausa and Nupe communities have been in Yorubaland for centuries, inter-marrying with host communities. In spite of the conflict that accompanied the rise of the Sokoto Caliphate, trade continued across the ecological divide between northern and southern Nigeria. While not painting an unrealistic picture of unbroken harmony, this writer suggests that indigenous peoples were probably better informed than their modern-day descendants about the benefits of enlightened self-interest, which dictated that one should not see inter-group relations as a zero-sum game.

We can also extract building blocks from our core values, sage philosophy and aphorisms. Hence, the Yoruba “omoluabi” model, which rested on civic education right from the cradle, the Igbo concept of “igwebuike,” which encapsulated the virtue of cooperation, and societal opprobrium against anti-social behaviour, such as greed (which the Yoruba express as “anikanjopon,” “wobia,” “jegudujera,” “kenimani,” “ere ajepajude,” “eni kan kii je ki ilu fe”), injustice and oppression, should be woven into the tapestry of our public culture. But the foregoing cannot be done in the absence of leadership, a critical element in the new developmental culture we are proposing. However, that leadership culture also cannot operate in isolation. It is a siamese twin of the developmental state. One such example is the immediate past ruler of Qatar.

### **The Qatari Challenge**

Although the contexts are different, the transformation of Qatar from an oil-rich but underdeveloped wasteland into regional and global recognition in just eighteen years is a big lesson for Nigerian leaders. It may be argued that the autocratic monarchical system in that tiny Arab country does not recommend it for comparison. But Nigerians are knowledgeable enough to know that the Nigerian Presidency is one of the most powerful and often most despotic in the world. When we have dispensed with facile differences, we can then soberly consider the exploits of Qatari Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, who supplanted his father in a bloodless palace coup on 27 June 1995 and abdicated in favour of his son on 25 June 2013. In that interval, he transformed his tiny country from a regional backwater into a regional and global player in the aviation, media and diplomatic realms. His Qatari Dream of a small country with global reach saw the creation from the scratch of Al-Jazeera in 1996 to match the Western giants, especially CNN. He also created Qatar Air, which now

ranks among the leading players in the global aviation industry. In global power politics, he used the immense wealth of his country to attain the position of a respected power broker in the Middle East and beyond. Yet, he abdicated in favour of his son, even when he could have continued till he became too infirm to rule, like the typical African ruler, who turns public office into a retirement home.

The Qatari challenge to Nigeria's post-independence leaders is manifold (Barakat, 2012; Peterson, 2013). First, the power of vision – thinking big and seeing beyond the challenges. Second, recourse to cultural branding, which is elaborated below. Third, appreciating the true worth of wealth as an enabler of development, which translates to power and influence. This was reflected in policy projection through the deployment of “soft power”<sup>4</sup> and an alliance with the United States while pursuing an independent foreign policy. The tiny country steadily established a reputation for brokering deals between sworn enemies, hosting strategic peace conferences and building bridges across various divides. Fourth, economic diversification – reducing over-dependence on oil and gas revenues; expansion of the tourism, steel and petrochemical industries; privatization and institution of an investor-friendly regulatory environment - and strategic worldwide investment of its huge revenues from the mainstay oil and gas sector. (Barakat, 2012: 5) Qatar acquired major stakes in key British enterprises (Barclay's Bank, the Sainsbury supermarket chain, London Stock Exchange and Harrods); German and Swiss enterprises – Volkswagen, Porsche, Horchietief AG and Credite Suisse; Singapore's Raffles Hotel; real estate mega projects in London and invested a billion euros in France, including majority holding in the leading football club. These investments represent “a sound economic policy of recycling oil and gas income into future income streams,” while also spreading “awareness of Qatar's financial strength” and reinforcing its brand as “an international economic force.” (Peterson, 2013:2). Fifth, following through to actualization regardless of scepticism and lack of local precedent. Finally, putting country first, such as his voluntary abdication even in the absence of health challenges or apparent intra-dynastic tensions.

As difficult, expensive and time-consuming as it was to brand a country, the Qataris succeeded in carving a niche for themselves through careful and sustained cultural and sports branding. (Barakat, 2012; Peterson, 2013) It was not only targeted at the outside world but it was made to serve a domestic purpose: “fostering a sense of national identity, loyalty and social cohesion.” (Barakat,

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<sup>4</sup> “Soft power” has been described as “the ability to appeal to and persuade others, using the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals and policies.” (Barakat, 2012: 7, citing Nye, 2004)

2012: 9) They pursued the following initiatives: the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development; the annual Qatar Cultural Festival; creating a spectacular Museum of Islamic Art as well as museums of history, textiles, photography and modern art; establishing the Al-Jazeera satellite television network, with its global reach; developing a globally competitive airline and creating an Education City in which local campuses of leading American universities, branch offices of the Rand Corporation, the Brookings Institution and the Royal United Services Institute, were sited; hosting regional and global sporting events, including golf and lawn tennis tournaments and motor racing, culminating in a successful bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. In effect, Qatar has branded itself as “a cultural and intellectual hub through hosting world-renowned academic and cultural centres.” (Barakat, 2012:7)

Shaikh Al-Thani’s dramatic reign poses a question: What is the single Big Idea of the Nigerian leadership since independence? As a Nigerian newspaper columnist admonished: “All transformational political elites have a firm vision of where they want to take their countries and how they are going to get there.” (Tatalo Alamu, 2013:3) This is a Nigerian chimera.

In spite of three cycles of oil boom and fortuitous windfalls, no single leader, not even those who presided over the windfalls – Generals Gowon, Babangida and Obasanjo – thought of burying the power sector incubus, optimizing the potential of flared natural gas for domestic consumption, running electric-powered railway transport services across the country or creating a globally competitive national carrier in the aviation and maritime transport sectors. Having been nurtured in a culture that is defeatist and incapable of dreaming big, our leaders produced a rat out of the elephant of our natural and human resources. Going farther afield, our leaders have allowed the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to remain mired in gross failure, operating as a conduit pipe of patronage while Malaysia’s PETRONAS and Brazil’s PETROBRAS in similar conditions have built world acclaimed architectural wonders (which have not been torched in the Nigerian treatment of NNPC offices) and become formidable global players in the oil and gas sector.

### **Bridging the Diversity-Development Divide: Lessons from Penang<sup>5</sup>**

As indicated in an earlier passage, Penang is the most ethnically diverse of the States in Malaysia. Yet, it has managed to harness diversity to promote peaceful co-existence and societal development.

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<sup>5</sup> This section is heavily reliant on, and paraphrases, Nadarajah, 2002: 4-5.

The following is an outline of some of the principles underlying the Penang experience, based upon a 21-point resolution adopted in Penang at a Roundtable on Cultural Vibrancy. The Resolution articulated the elements of Penang's "Cultural Vibrancy and Diversity," anchored on "a culture of peaceful co-existence" and "living in harmony with the environment." (Nadarajah, 2002: 3) The ones that are applicable to Nigeria are outlined below.

1. A heritage-conscious society that consolidates its artistic and cultural traditions, the government of which conserves and promotes heritage not only to attract tourists but also for cultural education and inspiration of its peoples.
2. A culturally confident society whose people, young and old, do not suffer from "cultural cringe," that is, an inferiority complex towards foreign cultures that are deemed superior.
3. A people-centred society in which ordinary people matter and their traditions and sacred places are treasured.
4. An enlightened society that values local history, people-centred history and the history of minority and marginalized peoples.
5. A state and society that promotes diversity by protecting the cultural rights of minorities to self-assertion and the co-existence of multiple indigenous languages.
6. A culturally mature society that promotes the expansion of shared values and spaces, and the common heritage of the country's ethnic and religious communities.
7. A state and society partnership that promotes climatically and culturally appropriate housing (as opposed to modern "uglytechure"), with due allowance for greenery, urban quality and open spaces.
8. A culturally vigorous society that absorbs modern technology and modernity to strengthen and diversify its own culture, without subjecting local culture to erosion or obliteration by the forces of globalization.
9. A culturally developed society in which local artistic creativity can be promoted through the support of the public and private sector cultural infrastructure and "infostructure."

10. A culturally discerning society that values authenticity above pastiche, favours the creative rather than the commercial, and supports local creativity to appropriately engage modernity and globalization.
11. A healthy youth culture that flourishes in an atmosphere of ample opportunities for expression, recreation and friendship.
12. An educational system that encourages critical thinking, innovation and creativity, builds character and encourages students to be environmentally sensitive.
13. A reading and information culture, characterized by modern libraries, publishing outlets and literary activities.
14. A resourceful society that develops indigenous knowledge, cultural resources and traditional skills.
15. A culturally conscious society that privileges culturally appropriate best practices in ecological, social and economic sustainability.
16. A gender conscious society that pursues pro-women policies for social and gender equity.
17. A historically dynamic society that consciously reinvests in social cultural capital, strengthening cultural institutions to cope with the social and economic challenges of the future.
18. A culturally, socially and environmentally attractive society that promotes and rewards excellence without discrimination.

The foregoing provides useful guidelines for articulating a developmental public culture for Nigeria. Though the citizens of Penang were critical to the evolution and practice of a culture of peaceful co-existence and the use of culture to foster development, their societal initiative was complemented by the role of local and national leadership. This pro-development leadership deficit has bedevilled Nigeria till date and needs to be addressed in the final section of this lecture.

### **Nigeria: The Imperative of Visionary Leadership and the Developmental State**

Just as glue binds separate objects, the link between the reality of diversity and the aspiration of development is leadership. As already well known, leadership deficit is a major disaster that has befallen post-independence Nigeria, and it seems to be a component of our anti-developmental

culture, as already indicated. What Nigeria needs to bridge this chasm is the leadership that can envision, strategize and actualize. America had its American Dream, China under Xijing Ping now talks of the Chinese Dream. Now is the time for the Nigerian Dream but it will take a peculiar type of leadership and a particular character of State – a Democratic, Developmental State – to get there.

The admonition of Klaus Vaclav, President of the Czech Republic, who led his people to victory in the Czechoslovak “Velvet Revolution,” is worth recommending to Nigerian leaders. First, “any large-scale societal change is *a domestic task* because democracy and market economy are not export commodities. They are a do-it-yourself project.” (Vaclav, 2005). Second, transformation is a sequence of policies, not a once-for-all policy change. Third, transformation, liberalization, deregulation and privatization impose huge costs, which the people must be informed about in advance. Fourth, societies and economies in transition remain fragile and vulnerable for some time. Fifth, the new challenges posed by globalization require “a strong and efficiently functioning state ... which limits its functions to the provision of public goods, to the internalization of externalities, and to helping of people, who are – for various reasons – not able to successfully participate in the market process.” (Vaclav, 2005) Finally, “good governance” is not the result of a single reform act but results from an evolutionary process.

The leadership Nigeria needs to break through must be bold, visionary, self-sacrificing and committed to leaving a worthy legacy. The country can no longer afford to be led by megalomaniacs who are overwhelmed by the glamour of office, consumed by their self-importance, fixated on the next “do or die” elections or another term in office while leaving undone urgent tasks of infrastructure development. We need to dispense with so-called leaders who focus on skirmishes and retrograde distractions at the expense of the war on poverty, systemic corruption, erosion of values and the depreciation of the national brand.

Leadership and succession should not be left to chance, the Nigerian way. There must be systematic training in leadership right from the secondary school level, with a heavy dose of national and comparative history spiced with biographies of model leaders.<sup>6</sup> Nigeria needs an aristocracy of talent in leadership positions, selected by achievement rather than ascription. That select group in all sectors of society must imbibe the new national developmental culture and be steeped in the histories

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<sup>6</sup> This writer initiated The Caleb Leadership Academy for students of Caleb University, Imota ,Lagos State, soon after assuming office as Vice-Chancellor in late 2010. The initiator and selected guest speakers feature on that platform.

of Nigerian peoples. No nation can develop beyond the knowledge and teaching of its history, a subject that shortsighted Nigerian leaders have taken off the junior secondary school syllabus.

Much has been written on the concept of the Developmental State (Amuwo, 2008, 2010) and the details do not concern us here.<sup>7</sup> What is important to stress is that the Developmental State was the weapon employed by the so-called Asian Tigers in their rise to greatness. The *raison d'être* of the Developmental State is “to foster a rapid process of capital accumulation, industrialisation and massive investments in social infrastructure and human capital.” (Amuwo, 2010:2). The process is driven by an enlightened and patriotic elite that defines the public/national interest in a way that appeals to a cross-section of society, whose members readily embrace and support it. This presupposes that the elite itself must have reached a consensus on what it defines as the national interest and how to achieve it in the interest of the vast majority. A strong sense of nationalism is the key driving force behind the Developmental State and its projects. Meiji Japan, perhaps the oldest modern exemplar of the developmental state, was propelled by the rallying cry of its elite, the self-styled *genro*: “sonno joi,” and “fukoku kyohei” – meaning “rich country, strong military.” Accordingly, the “ideology of developmentalism” becomes the weapon that the State deploys in taming capital, guiding, directing and using the market to achieve specific national goals. Realizing that it cannot do without the market, the Developmental State blends the public and private sectors of the economy and aligns market values with social values. A successful Developmental State, it has been asserted, is “a market economy but hardly a market society.” (Amuwo, 2010:2)

As we approach the 2015 Elections, it is important to challenge our political, intellectual, bureaucratic, business, social and religious leaders to ponder the future of the Nigerian State. The need to build a consensus around the core issue of development and the overall goal of improving the lives of the majority of the people in an ordinarily resource-rich country ravaged by corruption, insecurity, poor infrastructure and poverty is more urgent than ever. Our leaders must think of how to propel us from the country’s current prostrate position. Some practical suggestions can be considered.

1. Apply the selection method of the country’s football team, the Super Eagles, to the composition of the cabinet and other key drivers of the government. That is, select our “First Eleven”

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<sup>7</sup> The latest issue of the *African Governance Institute (AGI) Newsletter*, No. 40, July 2013 is a collection of the leading essays on the subject. See, <http://www.iag-agi.org/spip/IMG/pdf/AGI-Newsletter-N40.pdf>, accessed 4 August 2013.

regardless of ethnicity, religion and politics. Let Federal Character and Quota System go on recess while we build a country for all.

2. Adopt asymmetrical federalism, which privileges the so-called minorities in holding sensitive positions since they are not likely to be accused of wanting to dominate. The Presidency of the Senate and Chief of Army Staff, for example, may, by general consensus, be ceded to very competent persons from any of the identified groups.
3. Respect the sanctity of the ballot box and defend the people's right to choose their own leaders – no matter how stupid we think those leaders are – and the right to replace them at the next opportunity.
4. Make equity and the welfare of the people our battle cry. That way, we may be on our way to the proverbial Promised Land.
5. Finally, transform the central government by devolving power to the regions. It worked in the First Republic and it has worked in Spain and Canada. Local problems are best solved at the local level by people who live there and are accountable to their own people. Experience has shown that an overly powerful and oppressive central government is a threat to peace and stability.

## **Conclusion**

President, sir, in this lecture we have advanced two central arguments. First, that diversity as such is not the cause of Nigeria's underdevelopment. Second, that in spite of the ethno-linguistic fragmentation in the country, there is a supra-national anti-developmental culture that drives bad governance and a poor sense of civic responsibility, and that this has been the real threat to national development, unity and the people's well-being. Finally, this lecture draws on the elements in our indigenous history and culture, and practices in other parts of the world to suggest the possibilities of a counter-culture that is developmental, humane and fair.

It submits that a better Nigeria is possible if Nigerian history is taught in schools as a compulsory subject to equip citizens with a sound knowledge of the society that they may have to govern some day in future and whose peoples they must understand and interact with; and if the right kind of leadership could evolve, imbibe and promote a civil, developmental culture. These are given imperatives for the evolution of the right kind of leadership that is imbued with patriotism and

capable of promoting a civil and developmental culture. In effect, a new leadership culture must be developed practically from the cradle.

It is only by doing this that the gulf between diversity and development can be bridged by an educated, enlightened and patriotic leadership that can galvanize the people through the agency of a democratic, inclusive, developmental state. Such leaders must be able to invent the Nigerian Dream, an articulated vision of a nation held together by the fibres and sinews of our cultural links, the muscle of our human and natural resources, the backbone of criss-crossing physical and social infrastructure, and the blood of social justice and good governance. If such a leadership could emerge, even in the face of daunting odds, if there is devolution to the regions, and if the famed federal might is applied to solving national problems, and not used as *feral* might to oppress and impoverish, then, the Nigerian *centenary* could well lead to the Nigerian *century*.

I thank you for listening. God bless.

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