

Covenant University
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**NIGERIA, OIL AND THE
YAMANI SYNDROME**

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Preamble

One of the easiest things to do is to live a LIE. Another word for this is DELUSION. But again sometimes, Delusion thrives on its twin – Ignorance. As the Bible says, my people perish for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). It is this lack of knowledge which essentially hall-marks Nigeria's status as an oil producer.

For those who really know, Nigeria is not an oil producer. Nigeria does not produce oil. Rather, the oil is being produced for her by the multinational oil companies. Consequently, Vice-Chancellor Sir, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, Nigeria's authentic status is really that of the recipient of relatively vast and providential oil revenues. The operative words here are “relatively” and “providential”. And this may well explain why Nigeria continues to be caught in the throes of underdevelopment. In simple terms, **providential** revenues cannot be the basis of *development*. The former, i.e. Providence, just happens; while the latter i.e. Development is a conscious choice and process. The illusion of an oil producing status is also accompanied by other illusions, which form an integral part of our national life.

I do not intend to insult our brothers from the South-South. But over time, a sartorial style, or new dress-sense has been given a new name. This style of dressing is called: “Resource Control”. Any time, I hear this phrase, “Resource Control”, I wince and shrink within myself. This is because Resource Control is an apt reference to the oil wealth in the Niger Delta.

But Vice Chancellor Sir, ladies and gentlemen, that oil or that resource is not being controlled by Nigeria. There are indeed other *invincible* forces which control that oil. One easy way of knowing and appreciating this is that, there are three critical phases in the oil industry; *Upstream*; *Mid-stream* and *Downstream*. Nigeria, is only present, and *marginally* too, in only one of these streams – the first one. She is totally absent in the other two streams. This is the unfolding

and searing tragedy that we will be speaking to in this lecture. And as you, my listeners, can guess by now, our story this afternoon is not a sweet one. It is the story of a misguided, ignorant and backward political class, which is driving Nigeria to the precipice. Unfortunately, and I repeat unfortunately, the outcome of what is being said here has been rendered in melodic terms by some of our famed Juju musicians

– Awon kan waiye wa sise; Awon kan waiye wa gbowo.

– Ise kekere, owo lanla, Jah Jehovah, o, ma se wa lo nise.

These two songs, speak seriously and tragically to the Nigerian condition; i.e the gulf between production on the one hand; and consumption on the other. And, in a way they also signpost, the Yamani Syndrome on the one hand; and the ominous admonitions of Perez Alfonso on the other.

**Are we not all parasites? For a country which
Consumes, without producing anything, it is
just about time we refocus the debate.**

- Sanya Oni

1.0 INTRODUCTION

When the idea of this public lecture was broached to me; it did not take me a long time to decide on the theme thrust of oil. This is because for over 30 years, I have been involved in teaching and research in the specific and inter-related areas of Oil and Nigeria, in the context of domestic dynamics and International Politics.

In this respect it is probably relevant to mention here that at the Masters; Doctoral and Post-doctoral levels, I have worked on seemingly diverse themes like: The Role of OPEC in International Politics; Nigerian Petroleum Policy and External Relations; and the Legality of the 1973 Arab Oil Embargo.

In the process, I have researched and written on issues like:- *Potency and Limitations; The Dilemma of OPEC in the New International Economic Order; Oil and the Military; and Local Government Areas: The Ultimate Whetstones of the Nigerian Petroleum Industry.*

As the audience can readily appreciate, in these various studies, I have gone from the global through the national to the local level. The last of these topics, i.e. the focus on local government derives a measure of prophetic significance from the fact that it was written, way back in 1983. At that point in time, the Niger Delta was far from being the pet research project that it has now turned out to be.

In other words, implicit in that piece, was a prophetic insight, which appeared to have fore-shadowed subsisting and contemporary realities in the Niger Delta. It is against this background of my previous intellectual endeavours that one can begin to appreciate the thematic

thrust of today's lecture titled: *Oil, Nigeria and The Yamani Syndrome*.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, Ladies and Gentlemen, this lecture is taking place in the context of great possibilities and expectations in our immediate locality. I refer specifically to our drive to be one of ten in ten. But in the larger context, the melody is not as sweet. The gladiators in the political arena are busy crossing swords and beating the drums of war. And such is the din which assails the land. And, I tell you, these jostlings and joustings are not for fun. The near-mortal struggle derives from the motivation of those who seek privileged access to Nigeria's oil resources. Again, in the larger context, the land is currently reeling from the throes of a fatigued Presidency.

Unfortunately there is a perverse consistency to the immediate foregoing. Our song this afternoon is also not so sweet. Therefore, what I seek to do in the remaining time that is available is to take a bold and realistic look at Nigeria's Petroleum Policy and Politics in the light of evolving realities in Nigeria, the Niger Delta, and global politics.

In carrying out this agendum, I will be looking at various features, which have continued to define oil, Nigeria and the wider world. In the process, I will be dwelling on features like oil, its diplomacy and contemporary concerns like the environment and consequent impact on international politics.

In the ensuing sub-sections of this lecture, I will be focusing on features like: Oil Diplomacy; Multinationals; The Nigerian State and Oil Revenues as well as the Environment and The Response of The Nigerian State to The Niger Delta Problem.

2.0 OIL DIPLOMACY

Oil diplomacy revolves around local forces, as well as transnational forces, with the Nigerian state as a major social force. The interesting thing to note here is that, the nature of Nigeria's oil diplomacy has

substantially changed in form and character. Initially, and in a broad sense, Nigeria's oil diplomacy revolved around three actors: the Nigerian state, other countries (Western and developing) in the international system; and the multinational oil companies.

This type of rather simplistic oil diplomacy can be observed in the fact that the protagonists were essentially state actors and multinational oil companies who in any case, did not act alone, since they were virtual extensions or indeed complementary organs of their home governments.

In making this latter point, I am drawing extensively on the assertions of Louis Turner, who argued that the oil companies do not act alone. Rather, according to Turner, they do so in what has been called an implicit and explicit alliance of interests, with their home governments. In other words, as the classic oil diplomacy goes; entities like ExxonMobil, British Petroleum and Total can only be fully appreciated in a context, which takes on board countries like The United States of America, Britain and France respectively.

A detailed and empirical version of what has been sketched above can be observed as early as the sixties in the heat of the Nigerian civil war. At that point in time, there was an altercation among Nigeria, Shell-BP and the then break-away State of Biafra.²

Similarly, another scenario of oil diplomacy was played out between Nigeria and Britain, when the former decided to nationalize the assets of British Petroleum. In this respect, what Nigeria did was to use oil as a basis to re-define the relationship between her and this extra-Africa power. The action defied the normal turn of events in the international system. In other words, the tenor of classical diplomacy is such that, the developing countries in the normal order of international relations, are usually at the receiving end of the power equation in their dealings with the more powerful countries.

But this critical resource i.e. oil, was able to re-define this relationship. It was not only Britain that was at the receiving end of this oil offensive from Nigeria. A similar situation even held for a super-power like the United States of America. In this respect, Bassey Ate has argued that, owing largely to oil revenues, Nigeria made vigorous bids to the United States as regards African issues. Such African affairs can be located in various contexts like, Gowon's unyielding resistance to the Nixon administration, Mohammed's historic challenge to President Ford over Angola and Obasanjo's progressive partnership with Jimmy Carter, as regards the liquidation of Ian Smith's settler colonialism in Zimbabwe.³

Even forces within the American political system itself were of the view that on the basis of America's seeming dependence on Nigeria's oil imports, Pretoria's influence on the United States foreign policy declined substantially in favour of Nigeria.

Even then, Nigeria's oil inspired diplomacy was not confined to the Western powers. The country's role in West Africa and the wider African continent has in the course of time, also acquired a much more vibrant profile. And one forum through which this has been pursued is in the country's aid commitments. It has been contended that it is the availability of oil revenues which has ensured a place for Nigeria in the league of donors.

It is instructive to appreciate here that in the post – 1973 oil boom era, earnings from petroleum were of the then stupendous order of six billion naira, and as such, more vent was given to Nigeria's ambitions as far as intra-African relations were concerned. It is also important to note that, Nigeria's aid programme could be located at two levels. Those disbursed at the bilateral level, and those given at the multilateral level through institutions like the Organization of

Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC); The African Development Bank and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation.

A consistent feature of this aid programme was Nigeria's commitment to the then evolving issues in Southern Africa. The depth of this commitment was such that Nigeria defied geographical realities and limitations to emerge as a frontline State in the then struggle against apartheid. We might as well add here that Nigeria's aid diplomacy, owing to the self-same variable of oil has since crystallized into what is now known as the Technical Aid Corps Scheme (TACS).

Under this Programme, Nigeria sends skilled manpower to various countries in the developing world. The situation therefore is such that Nigerian doctors, teachers, nurses (and what have you) are in various areas of the developing world, hoisting Nigeria's flag.⁴

All of the foregoing seems to show-up Nigeria as a vigorous social force which has been able to hold her own in the comity of nations, owing to the critical variable called oil. But, as I will go on to demonstrate shortly, this self-same variable, constitutes the Achilles' heel of the Nigerian State. This is because it has spawned a situation which has shown up the under belly of the Nigerian State.

This in itself is a paradox. It is a paradox in the sense that the self-same oil, which happens to be the basis of Nigeria's visible standing in global diplomacy, is at the same time, the nemesis of the Nigerian State. It is in view of this paradox that Nigeria has been described in an oxymoronic way, as “a failed successful state”⁵

There are however new dimensions to Nigeria's oil diplomacy. This novel dimension can be observed in the fact that, forces below the state, particularly in the Niger Delta, are now involved in the crisis-ridden relationship between the Nigerian State and the international system. The site of this struggle is the Niger Delta. And the crisis

spawned by this intermingling of forces is what has been referred to as the Niger Delta crisis.

It is apposite to stress here that the Niger Delta crisis is in fact a misnomer as far as crises go. This is because what is generally and glibly referred to as the Niger Delta crisis, is, in fact a series of crises. Perhaps the most obvious of these crises has to do with the crisis spawned by environmental degradation and the virtual absence of the state in a positive and wholesome way.

What is perhaps less well known and appreciated is that this and other aspects of the Niger Delta crises are owed to the rather interesting but dismal relationship with the oil companies on the one hand and the Nigerian state on the other. It is this seemingly productive but uneven relationship which has in fact given rise to the other visible crises in the Niger Delta. Our main argument here is that the way oil revenues and the oil companies have played out in Nigeria is such that other crises have necessarily been spawned in the Niger Delta. Indeed, we will now turn to what can be called the super-structural dimensions of the Niger Delta crisis.

3.0 MULTINATIONALS, THE NIGERIAN STATE AND OIL REVENUES

The relationship between the Nigerian State and multinationals has passed through various phases. These phases, include: the concession era and various forms of participation like: the joint venture agreements, production-sharing agreements and the risk service contracts. It will also be clear in the subsequent narrative that the Nigerian state also responded to international initiatives in its attempt to re-define its relationship with the oil companies.

But despite the changing phases of the relationship between the Nigerian state and the multinationals, the ultimate and persisting outcomes, have been the hegemony of the oil companies and *their*

parent governments. And the hegemony is such that, the Nigerian State is locked in a relationship of hopeless dependence on the oil companies. But this is only one side of the picture. And one visible instance of this hopeless dependence can be observed in the fact that when, a company like Shell declares a 'force majeure', the tremors will be felt in Aso Rock and the Governors' Lodges across the country. However, a comprehensive insight reveals that despite these features of hopelessness and dependency, the Nigerian State has still been able to possess vast and providential oil revenues, courtesy of the exploratory efforts of the oil companies.⁶

It is arguable that this *vast, unearned, and unmerited wealth* constitutes the structural foundations of the Niger Delta crises. This particular crisis, which Fela Anikulapo Kuti, derisively called “Money Miss Road” has in turn, spawned other crises in the Niger Delta. These sub-crisis, as I have chosen to call them include: environmental degradation, deprivations, violence, poverty, and illegal oil bunkering; as well as what can be called the international dimensions of the Niger Delta crises.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is instructive to stress here that these various dimensions of the crises cannot be located in episodic compartments. Rather, they interface with one another, in a systemic manner which tend-to bewilder the omniscient observer as regards what the Niger Delta crisis is all about. In the bid to effect a measure of clarity, therefore, we will turn, if only briefly, to the various aspects of these crises.

4.0 THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

The environmental hazards which were spawned by the Nigerian oil industry were not initially appreciated by the various scholars and observers of the oil industry. In this respect, two broad categories of scholars were identified; these were the radical and orthodox scholars. The former was represented by individuals like Claude Ake, Terisa

Turner and Segun Osoba. Meanwhile, the orthodox category was amply projected by individuals like F.R. Marinho, O. Shyllon and M. Feyide.

In making this categorization, it should be noted that, at this point in time, we are referring to a temporal frame-work in which, concern for the environments was neither the fad nor the rage that it has since become. Rather, it was an issue which was essentially being addressed by what can be described as a minority fringe in the world of oil scholarship⁷

In those earlier days, scholars like, Soremekun, Lawanson and Biodela Warrioboko, were to be seen, drawing attention to what can be called early and pioneering attention to the issues of the environment as these relate to the oil industry. In this respect, way back in 1983, I dwelt extensively on the environmental and consequent health hazards which have been spawned by the Nigerian oil industry.

Indeed, it has been noted that in much more contemporary times, other analysts have joined in, such that there is a near absolute consensus on the impact of the oil industry on the environment, Perhaps, the main contributions of such latter-day analysts is that their studies have been much more detailed. This particularistic strain is very evident in the works of individuals like: Gbadegesin, Isichie, Obi Alakpedia, Nnimo Bassey and Azibaolanri.⁸

One major fall-out of the environmental degradation in the Niger Delta is the poverty in the area. The poverty has in turn been responsible for the pervasive violence in the area. As regards the former i.e. poverty, Ken Saro Wiwa has been able to link it to the degradation in the environment when, in a rather graphic way, he declared that an ecological war is highly lethal, the moreso, as it is unconventional. According to him: "It is homicidal in its effect.

Human life, flora, fauna, the air fall at its feet, and finally the land itself dies". In view of this scorched earth situation, which is rendered more dangerous by the fact of its invisibility, there is little wonder that poverty is very pervasive in the Niger Delta.

This is only to be expected in a context, where the main pillar of livelihood, i.e. the environment has been reduced to rubble. The poverty is rendered more searing and graphic by the fact that it is even below the average in a poor country like Nigeria. In other words, the poverty in the Niger Delta is of such magnitude that, to live in the Niger Delta in an impoverished country like Nigeria, is to be counted among the poorest of the poor. Yet, what is at issue here is not a natural phenomenon. It is essentially man-made. This is in view of the fact that prior to the advent of oil exploration, nature provided bounty for the people in that region. In this respect, it has been pointed out that, the fertile alluvial soil of the Niger Delta plain(s) provided a rich harvest of yams, cassava and vegetables. Similarly, the pure streams and seas brimmed with fish and other sea food.⁹

As already pointed out, much of the immediate foregoing can be located in the innocent days of pre-oil exploration. The situation has significantly changed for the worse, such that the pervasive poverty has in turn given rise to the various shades of violence in the region. This violence can be located at different levels. There is the violence which exists between the oil communities on the one hand, and the oil companies on the other. There is also the intra-community violence, which more often than not occurs when factions and fractions in communities struggle over resources like land and compensation benefits from the oil companies. Moreover, there is the violence which has been instigated by the various political gladiators in the Niger Delta. In the process when these gladiators lose control, the violence assumes a momentum of its own. There is also the violence in

the larger political arena among various fractions and factions of the Nigerian ruling (ruining) class. As if to indicate that the violence is instrumental in its import and projections, it is useful to appreciate that what is at stake in the various political conflicts are vast providential revenues flowing from oil. In concrete terms, the conflicts become more comprehensible when one realizes that political office holders, as reported in the newspapers earn salaries of the order of 100 million naira, 75 million naira, 60 million per month, et cetera.

There is also the tussle among the status-quo forces in the international system, in those days, the violence was open-ended among Britain, France, United States and Italy

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Ladies and gentlemen, it will be recalled that the violence has assumed a more frightening and heightened dimension in view of the fact that it was until recently hall-marked by the inter-related features of militancy, kidnapping and consequent demand for what can be regarded as hefty ransoms. The remarkable thing here is that, sometimes, these *counter-criminal actions* have little or nothing to do with oil-exploration and other related activities. This is evident for instance, when workers of an aluminum Company or those of Julius Berger, are abducted for ransom purposes.

It is the same pattern of *apparent irrationality* that can be observed, when critical social forces and their relatives are kidnapped by the *counter-criminals* in the Niger-Delta. However, much of the foregoing speaks essentially to the domestic currents of the Niger-Delta crisis.

We will now turn, if only briefly, to the international dimensions of the Niger-Delta issue.

At this point in time, it is necessary to recall that, all along, i.e. right from the inception of oil exploration, the international dimension has

always been present.

The interesting thing here is that what this dimension really represents is the interface between non-state actors and states. It was also a complex situation in which States like Nigeria, the United States and Britain, along with the oil companies, were having relations, although of a subversive order, with the oil producing communities.

This interlocking network was the structure which sustained the Nigerian oil industry.

But in the course of time, rumblings started to come from below the Nigerian State. As we will subsequently see, these rumblings eventually threw up other non-state actors, which ultimately succeeded in turning the entire Niger-Delta into a zone of low intensity conflict, which may well worsen in the course of time.

It is arguable that a pioneering non-state actor was in the form of an Isaac Adaka Boro, who decided to take on the Nigerian State for its neglect of the Niger-Delta. But after 12 days, the armed rebellion was crushed. It is instructive to note here that even at this point in time, a non-state actor like Isaac Adaka Boro, made overtures to a segment of the international system.

But he was rebuffed, as this segment would have nothing to do with none of what was considered to be his heady idealism. Then entered Ken Saro Wiwa many years later. And here, the picture began to change significantly. Initially, Ken Saro Wiwa attempted to draw attention to the tragedy in the Niger-Delta, through lectures and regular appearances in Nigerian newspapers. This was complemented with a comprehensive awareness and sensitization of the Ogoni. Indeed, and as I pointed out in an earlier study, he was able to tap into the largely radical heritage of Nigerian newspapers, which often postures on the side of the underdog.

Still in practical terms, very little was achieved as regards either reforming the Nigerian state, or the unholy alliance between the self-same state and the oil companies. It is this immediate background which impelled Saro-Wiwa to carry the battle outside Nigeria. And this is precisely how the rest of the international community (states and non-states), particularly the latter, became involved in the worsening politics and conditions of the Nigerian oil industry.¹⁰

On the part of the Nigerian State, she has attempted to manage the Niger-Delta crises through various measures. These include subversive generosity to and negotiations with the militants, coercive diplomacy, cooption, and the establishment of various state bodies like OMPADEC, the NDDC and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs as well as increased allocations of funds to the oil producing states of the Niger-Delta. These measures will now be examined in turn.

5.0 THE RESPONSE OF THE STATE TO THE NIGER-DELTA PROBLEM

A number of analysts have dated the initial response of the State to the Willink Commission of 1958. Strictly speaking, this is hardly valid. This is because the Willink Commission was only charged with the responsibility of enquiring into the fears of minority groups in the Niger-Delta, and how to assuage same. In other words, the oil industry was still at a fledgling state, such that the problems of the industry were yet to be very visible to anyone. Despite the immediate foregoing, one of the results of the Willink Commission was the establishment of the Niger-Delta Development Board.

However, the Board was not established until 1960. The Board was given the mandate of managing the developmental needs and challenges of the region, then segmented into the Yenogoa Province, Degema Province, the Ogoni Division of Port-Harcourt; and the Western Ijaw Division of Port-Harcourt. But in the six years of its

existence, it made no significant mark. Subsequently, it was consigned into oblivion with the military coup of 1966.

Following the return of the country to democratic rule in 1979, the region re-entered the national consciousness in the wake of agitations for a special focus on the development of the region. By way of response, the then civilian administration of Shehu Shagari set up a Presidential Task Force (PTF). The task force was given the mandate to address the peculiarities of the region. It was allocated 1.5 per cent of the Federation Account to carry out its assignment. The successive coups that brought to power Muhammadu Buhari and Ibrahim Babangida, did not immediately lead to its death. But a few years into the Babangida regime, it was abandoned.

It is apposite to point out here that the 1.5 per cent allocation clearly represents the neglect and indifference which attended the crises in the Niger-Delta area. In previous eras, from the first republic onwards, what accrued to the then Eastern region was much more than this paltry amount. Indeed, what is not highly appreciated was that, it was at the height of the civil war that the then military government took a number of measures, which substantially reduced the fiscal resources which were due to the Niger-Delta area.

The high-point of these measures was that, in order to remove any doubt as regards who should receive oil revenues, in 1969, a special covenant was structured between the Federal Government and the Oil Companies. For those who may wish to recall, the immediate trigger for the special covenant was the tussle between the Federal Government and the then Republic of Biafra as regards who was the lawful recipient of revenues from the then oil company Shell-BP. Among other things, the covenant stipulated that the Federal Government was the only lawful authority in Nigeria to whom payments of oil should be made at all times. The irony here is that a

Saro Wiwa, who jumped on the bandwagon of the winning Federal side, found that by 1970, when the war ended, the winners knew themselves. And Saro Wiwa as a social force, was certainly not one of them.

As pointed out earlier, the government in its attempts to address the crisis in the Niger-Delta, has attempted a mix of methods, which range from coercion through cooption to the establishment of commissions. These various responses will constitute the subsequent focus of our analyses.

One method which the Government has used to address the problem is the forceful descent on the various communities. In Ogoniland and other troubled areas of the Niger-Delta, thousands of regular and mobile policemen, complemented by battalions of soldiers and plainclothes security agents were in combat readiness. Moreover, in the attempt to contend the challenges of a conscious and mobilized citizenry in the Niger-Delta, the Government established the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force, under the leadership of Major Paul Okutimo.¹¹

According to credible reports, the Task Force was well known for terrorizing the communities in Rivers State and part of what is now Bayelsa State. But rather than diminish, militancy continued to rise in the Niger-Delta. Moreover, in strategic terms, the militants seemed to have effectively learnt from the fate of the Ogonis, who were over-run by the military. The various fighting forces have vowed that, the Ogoni mistake would never be repeated. It has been decided therefore that, if and when war breaks out, the land access would be secured, with a view to stranding the enemy.

Besides, the other flashpoints are almost totally encircled by water. And if the Warri experience was anything to go by, it was shown that the Nigerian Navy has a lot to learn about the mangrove creeks of the

Niger-Delta. It has been contended that the militants' mastery of the thousand and one water ways, through the intricate mangrove creeks, stupefied the Nigerian navy. It is important to stress here that the State has not always acted alone. Its efforts have always been complemented by those of the oil companies. As reported by Ken Saro Wiwa in one of his books, a major stakeholder like Shell even goes as far as providing arms and ammunition for the Nigerian State.

There has also however been, a less militaristic attempt to solve the problem. This can be observed in the creation of agencies like OMPADEC, the PTF, the NDDC, and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs. The first of these i.e. the Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC), was established in 1992 by the Babangida administration. The then military President gave OMPADEC the mandate of transforming the region.

Specifically, through the 1992 Decree, the Commission was charged among other things, with the responsibility of:

- rehabilitating and developing the oil producing areas;
- tackling ecological problems that have arisen from the exploration of oil minerals; and
- liaising with the various oil companies on matters of pollution control.

However, by 1999, when it was wound up, OMPADEC had as achievements, projects which had no bearing on poverty reduction, which is considered a major challenge in the region.

It has even been asserted that OMPADEC turned out to be a huge fraud. According to reports, it was brought to its knees by the top brass of the Commission. By the time its pioneering Chairman was removed, billions of naira had been sunk into either white- elephant or non-existent projects. Similarly, billions of naira were sunk into

Buguma, the home town of this top functionary, while Nembe with four flow stations and one pipeline was largely ignored.

On his own part, General Sani Abacha established the Petroleum (Special) Trust Fund (PTF), headed by Major-General Muhammadu Buhari. The PTF as it turned out, confined its activities mainly to the Northern part of the country. This in itself was ironical, since the Niger Delta, where the oil came from, was in more need of development.¹²

It must be pointed out here however that, some two years after its establishment, the people of Nembe came into contact with the (PTF). On September, 1, 1998, they woke up to find that in the dead of the night, a giant PTF sign-board had been mounted in the community. To ensure that it was not removed, the sign was securely cemented to the ground. The giant signboard promised the community a water scheme soon!¹³

Following the failure of these interventionist bodies, the government proceeded to establish the Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC). But the intervening years witnessed an upsurge of restivity among the peoples of the Niger-Delta. Thus, by 1998, the Niger-Delta, had become a volatile zone, characterized by protests, agitations and communal conflicts.

This was the predominant scenario, which impelled the federal government to establish the Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The main objective of the Commission is to formulate and implement programmes for the development of the region in the areas of transportation, health, education, industrialization, agriculture, housing, telecommunication, etc.

The funding of the NDDC derives from various sources like: The Federal Government; Oil and Gas processing companies; the Ecological fund and proceeds from other NDDC assets. In

collaboration with the various stakeholders like the oil companies, development agencies and civil society, the NDDC facilitated the production of the Niger-Delta Regional Development Master Plan. And a Partner for Sustainable Development (PSD) forum was established to implement the Master Plan.

It remains to be seen however, whether the NDDC will be able to deliver, and thus hopefully end this particular nightmare of the Nigerian state. At the moment, such hopes are very dim, if only because the violence until recent times continued unabated. Moreover, it has assumed other novel and frightening dimensions, which spell doom, not only for the Niger-Delta, but also the Nigerian state itself. Meanwhile, NDDC itself is bedeviled by problems of poor funding and corruption. The latter feature is of such magnitude that helmsmen of the NDDC usually seek to transit from its corridors to the various Government Mansions across the Niger-Delta.

This pessimistic note is clearly inconsistent with the fact that a social force from the Niger Delta currently presides over the Nigerian state. On this score the point to note is that the problem goes beyond the character and inclinations of the social force in the Villa.

Another way in which attempts have been made to manage the Niger-Delta problem is through the policy of co-option. Co-option involves a situation in which important social forces are given top positions in the political hierarchy of the country. It is arguable that co-option appears to have reached its zenith with the selection of Dr. Goodluck Azikiwe Ebele Jonathan as the running mate to Musa Yar'adua in one of the presidential elections. His consequent appointment as the Vice-President of Nigeria ensured a situation in which, probably for the first time in the history of Nigeria, there was esconsed in Aso Rock, a critical social force and a number of aides, who hail from the Niger-Delta.

This co-option seems to have paid off since Goodluck Jonathan, in his capacity as the then Vice-President, visited the various militants in their dens at Okerenko, Oporoza and other communities. Moreover, he has had to chair the Federal Government Committee, which was negotiating with the youths. But even then, this strategy of having Dr. Goodluck Jonathan as Chairman seems to have backfired. It has backfired in the sense that some perceptive observers have commented that, should the Yar'adua government fail to transform the situation in the Niger-Delta; the blame would be on the then Vice-President, and not the system.¹⁴

But as if to indicate that God is indeed a Nigerian, the situation has been transformed such that Goodluck Jonathan is now the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. And, indeed, one of his immediate and influential aides is Oronto Douglas, who has since moved from the barricades of civil society to an opulent office in the Presidency. What this suggests is that the Nigerian problem in relation to oil is not hinged on psychological variables; rather it is a structural problem.

We will now turn, if only briefly, to how the Nigerian state through legislations and policy organs, has attempted to contain the environmental hazards spawned by the oil industry. The institutional framework for environmental protection centres around the then Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA), and the National Policy on the Environment. The other relevant agency is the Natural Resources Conservation Council (NRCC). This is apart from a body like the Ministry of Environment.

The NRCC was established to coordinate policies related to the conservation of habitats, species and natural resources. In broad terms, it is committed to a national policy that ensures sustainable development, based on proper management of the environment, in

order to meet the needs of present and future generations. It further provides for the replication of environmental protection agencies at other levels of government, that is, at the state and local government. The implication of this is that, as regards the Niger-Delta situation, the various states and the local governments in the region ought to have been sufficiently equipped to contend with the environmental hazards in the place.¹⁵

Meanwhile the framework for managing the Nigerian environment is set out in the decree setting up the FEPA and in about 26 laws. But the environmental policies and laws regulating the oil industry are replete with drawbacks. Regulatory agencies like the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR), and Petroleum Inspectorate Commission (PIC) lack both *the autonomy* and the resources needed to regulate the very sophisticated operations in the oil industry. In other words, as far as the Nigerian state and other subnational forces are concerned, money or better still, cash is the main preoccupation. And this may well explain why, the Nigerian state, in managing the crisis of the Niger-Delta, has also attempted to use the policy of increased funding to the various governmental agencies in the Niger-Delta.

As regards funding, it will be recalled here that in an earlier phase of this lecture, attention was drawn to the fact that the civil war ensured a situation whereby the principle of derivation was relegated to the background. In its place was a highly centralized system of fiscal federalism, whereby all the monies derived from oil exploration accrued to the Federal or Central Government. This lopsidedness constitutes one of the major pillars of the Niger-Delta crises.

Incidentally and ironically enough, it was in Stavanger, Norway, that the Federal Government was advised to give the people of the Delta their fair share of the oil revenue. This may well explain the transition from 1.5 per cent to 13 per cent. In the process, it is arguable that

although the current 13 per cent falls far short of what the various Niger-Delta peoples are clamouring for, yet observers are of the view that if the famed 13 per cent had been judiciously utilised, something of a turnaround would have been occurring in the Niger-Delta by now. This is moreso, if a prudent use of the 13 per cent is complemented with similarly prudent policy organs like the NDDC and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs.

Two different observations seem to have validated the contention that the funding that has gone into the Niger-Delta has merely been frittered away by the various status quo forces in the region. The first was a study conducted by the Port-Harcourt based Centre for Africa Social Studies (CASS).

In this illuminating study, it was revealed that the increased funding in the Niger-Delta, has been hall-marked by features like: plunder, financial recklessness and a monumental misplacement of priorities. More recently, it was also revealed in a less hallowed context that, what has gone into the Niger-Delta by way of funding has simply been wasted. In this respect, the observations of a columnist are very instructive:¹⁶

...The traffic at Eleme junction continues to be an embarrassment to everybody as the proposed flyover bridge refuses to become a reality. Yenagoa continues to be largely a one street city. Means of transportation to Bonny is still the Flying boats with outboard engines

....

Replicate this situation in almost all spheres of life and you have the Niger-Delta.

The writer went on to use the year 2006 (alone) as a benchmark. In that particular year, the total allocation to Rivers State was 153 billion naira. Bayelsa State got 116 billion. By contrast, non oil-producing

states like Kwara and Ebonyi got 23 billion and 21 billion respectively. Indeed, it has been revealed that each of the dominant oil bearing states got about five times, what accrued to some other states.

In this respect, the columnist went on to ask some pointed questions: What did they do with the money? What did they provide for their people with the resources allocated? ¹⁶ The observer might be tempted to counter here that these questions in themselves do not address the roots of the Niger-Delta crises. This observation, as true as it is, clearly shows that all along, the various policy options as earnest as they seem to be, cannot address in any serious way, the crises of the Niger-Delta.

Indeed, what is clearly evident is that, there are larger and much more fundamental issues, other than funding, which should have been addressed at the inception of the Nigerian oil industry. Vice Chancellor Sir, Ladies and Gentlemen it was the failure of the Nigerian state to address such fundamental problems that has ultimately brought about the Niger-Delta crises.

In this respect, it is apposite to ask here: What are these fundamental problems? Perhaps the main one is that right from 1958 till date, the productive base of the oil industry has continued to elude Nigeria and Nigerians.

This productive base centres on the fact that the technical knowledge which underpins the industry is still alien to the country. This is something of a paradox, if only because, this is a country with over one hundred and twenty five (125) universities and equivalent number of Polytechnics and Technical Colleges. Yet, and despite the lacuna identified above, Nigeria and Nigerians have never refrained from basking in the glow of being an oil power.

It is in reality an oil power status which thrives merely on the stupendous petro-dollars flowing into the nation's treasury. By

contrast, we do not know much about the oil industry, and if we do, we have continued to behave as *ignoramus* outsiders in the oil industry.

Meanwhile, the oil power status has seen Nigeria and Nigerians going around with bloated ambition and aspirations, and misguided priorities. Such euphoria can be observed in chest-thumping and narcissistic rhetoric like Nigeria being the giant of Africa. At a more sickening and materialistic level, the cash-induced-oil-power status sees the country importing everything and anything from toothpicks to rice. Indeed, and as regards the latter, no less an authoritative person than the Central Bank Governor has revealed that in the year 2010 alone, Nigeria imported rice to the tune of one billion dollars. And, I tell you, the figure has been on the rise since then.

Vice-Chancellor Sir, ladies and gentlemen, it is this dismal and pathetic scenario which has brought about what I have chosen to call the 'Yamani Syndrome'. By way of a brief explanation, Zaki Yamani was the famous and flamboyant Saudi Oil Minister. At the height of the 1973 oil embargo, which saw the Arab world virtually re-defining the nature of international economic relations, Yamani cautioned at the peak of the euphoria that, if the oil resource and the oil weapon are not used properly, one was behaving like the foolish soldier, who fires a bullet in the air, only for the self-same bullet to be inflicted on the source.

In broad terms, the immediate foregoing constitutes the tragedy of the Nigerian condition or non-condition. Such is the perverse links between oil and Nigeria that, owing to the prophetic insights of a Zaki Yamani, oil has turned into a feature which has helped to orchestrate the worst aspects of our existence. The indices of such existence include a magniloquent profile that is in a sharp and sad contrast to our productive base. For instance if a car is produced in the US today, in a few days, such a car will be cruising our streets in Lagos and Abuja.

Meanwhile, as if to completely fulfill the apocalyptic prophesies of Zaki Yamani, oil which if properly handled should have been the basis of our prosperity, has become one of the main sources of our instability. Unfortunately, this instability has potentially mortal consequences for the Nigerian nation. Indeed, the grim reflection in some scholarly circles is that, a book is waiting to be written-and this book will probably be titled: Oil and the Mortality of the Nigerian State.

Yet, a critical look reveals that the mortality of the Nigerian state is not an inevitability. This is obvious enough in view of the fact that some countries have been able to use the self-same variable, i.e. oil, as the basis for re-defining and re-validating their existence.

In saying all of these, it was not as if there was no struggle to reclaim what ought to be Nigeria's soul in the oil industry. As revealed by Terisa Turner, there was indeed a struggle between two factions of the then ruling elite, as regards the direction in which the Nigerian oil industry should go. According to this radical oil analyst, there were the bureaucrats on the one hand, and the technocrats on the other. The former wanted a cosy relationship with the oil companies, while the technocrats envisaged a situation in which, in the course of time, an authentic oil industry would emerge in Nigeria. But given the post-colonial contraption, which was the hall-mark of Nigeria, the bureaucrats carried the day and in the process, the technocrats and by extension, Nigeria lost out. In losing out thus, other indices in the Nigerian nation also lost out. Perhaps, the most obvious of these was the Niger Delta. As the oil money flowed in, issues like the environmental damage and stunted development of the Niger Delta were relegated to the background, until activists and visionaries like Boro and later Saro Wiwa came along.

However, such is the tragic inevitability spawned by oil that, even a

Ken Saro Wiwa could not grasp the depth of the tragedy spawned by oil in a stunted, post-colonial social formation like Nigeria. At a point in time, when Ken Saro Wiwa was asked what he wanted done for the Ogoni, in particular and the Niger Delta in general, he replied, 'we want more money and a restructured Nigerian polity'.¹⁸ Incidentally, these two interrelated demands constitute the kernel of the solutions, which are being offered as panaceas to the Niger Delta crisis. We might as well address the viability and implications of these solutions in turn.

As regards the issue of more money flowing into the Niger Delta, observers will agree that, since Saro Wiwa made this statement, more money has indeed been pumped into the region, and yet the Niger Delta continues to wallow in squalor. The reasons for this interesting outcome are not so much that the governors and top functionaries in the region are corrupt, but that it simply reflects the classic maxim that: **THE WAY A STATE EARNS ITS MONEY WILL DETERMINE THE WAY THAT MONEY WILL BE SPENT.** A newspaper editorial captures what is being said here with this poignant title: **"A fool and your money"**.

But beyond this visceral dimension is that unearned and unmerited oil revenues also have a way of rupturing the civic linkage, which ought to exist between the government and the governed in Nigeria. How does one, for instance, explain the fact that despite the monumental corruption by the Niger Delta governors and their counterparts in the rest of Nigeria, there is hardly a whimper of protest from the Nigerian populace.

The answer to this unusual situation lies in the fact that the stupendous revenues, which came to the Nigeria state, were mere rents and not owed to taxes from the populace. Rather, they were owed to the exertions of social forces like Shell, Statoil and other associated

variables. If these revenues, which are being plundered and stolen, had been generated from the Nigerian populace by way of taxes, chances are that, there would have been a very spirited reaction from the Nigerian populace.

In this kind of situation where providential revenues constitute the mainstay of the Nigerian state, what you have on the one hand is apathy, and a maddening rush on the other to have a privileged access to the petrodollars. And this is why, what was quoted in the opening of this piece becomes relevant: **“Aren't we all parasites? For a country which consumes without producing, it is just about time that we refocus the debate”**.

In order to fully appreciate that the central issue of taxation is partly the problem, we only have to recall that, at a point in time in Nigeria's history, a particular regional government, i.e. the Western regional government, was locked in a battle with farmers over the issue of taxation. It was an epic encounter, in which the government was virtually worsted.

Thereafter, the government simply withdrew, and fell back on the expedient of relying on oil revenues for its sustenance. In any case, and at that point in time, oil prices were on the rise. What this episode clearly demonstrates is that, taxation is at the heart of the civic rigour, which exists in most democratic societies. As we shall see, in most democratic societies, including Norway, it is this critical issue of taxation which partly explains the different outcomes that the oil industry has generated in Norway on the one hand and Nigeria on the other. And in focusing on Norway here, let me begin by acknowledging my intellectual debt to Terry Lynn Karl, a Professor at Stanford University.

In Norway, the structures which received oil were radically different from those of Nigeria and other developing countries. The oil

companies did not encounter a weak state, a poor country or a predatory, post-colonial, cum authoritarian ruler. Instead, Norway in the 1960s was already one of the world's wealthiest, most equitable and most democratic countries. The most thinly populated country in Europe was characterized by relative cultural homogeneity, relatively low levels of urbanization, and a diversified economy based primarily on agriculture, forestry, fishing, shipping, and manufacturing. Unemployment was close to nil, growth had been steady for two decades, and poverty was virtually eliminated by a welfare state supported by a diversified tax base.

First, in Norway was, in Olsen's words, “**a typical civil servants' state**,” which came remarkably close to what Weber labelled an ideal bureaucracy operating under rational legal authority. Its strong roots could be traced back to at least 1680, and its legal status was enshrined in the first independent constitution of 1814. In the absence of competing political and socioeconomic elites, this long continuity firmly established the tenure of civil servants, their professional qualities, their career paths, and their unity. After the 1840s, state officialdom became more heterogeneous, more specialized, more expert, and more open to those groups most affected by public policies. By the 1970s, when oil was discovered, civil servants were considerably entrenched in a long bureaucratic tradition, and they formed the core of a lean, autonomous, and highly efficient public-sector apparatus.

Several features of this civil-service state were especially notable. First, recruitment was solely by merit; thus civil servants were the best educated of all major elite groups and among the most prestigious. Because they were an elite group, they realistically perceived their opportunities as better inside the state than in the private sector.

Second, civil servants were unusually insulated from and impervious

to influence peddling. Advancement depended on nominations from the top civil servants, and outsiders rarely could sway those choices. Although bureaucrats were more engaged in political parties, interest organizations, and other public activities than the population at large, strong norms made arbitrary intervention by political leaders or organized interests illegitimate.

Actions of this sort were likely to be strongly criticized in the parliament and the mass media. Third, corruption was simply nonexistent. Since the eighteenth century, strong mechanisms of accountability, including ombudspeople, special courts, and public access to documents, and even stronger norms ruled out such behaviour. Fourth, the behaviour of civil servants was predictably cautious and incrementalist and was based on expertise and strong organizational routines.¹⁷ In sum, this “civil-service state” was the complete antithesis of Nigeria.

This unusual high degree of stateness was complemented by Norway's open and participatory democracy. Its regime, though well known for the predominance of a single party, was characterized by an unusual combination of high participation and stability, as well as an orderly system of “corporate pluralism”, in which associations of workers, employers, farmers, and fishermen bargained with each other and with the state over development priorities. The resulting balance of forces moderated pressures toward politicization and also prevented Weber's “dictatorship of the bureaucrats.” In this exceptionally favourable environment, the prevailing policy style emphasized caution in the face of change, respect for standard operating procedure, segmentation according to issue area, consensus building, and egalitarianism.

The discovery of huge oil and gas fields occurred in this context. In marked contrast to the situation in Nigeria and other oil-exporting countries, multinational companies were forced to bargain with the

representatives of a highly developed state bureaucracy, who felt no strong need for a qualitatively new revenue base. Organizing a framework for controlling the oil industry required a high degree of sophistication in planning and administration, which Norway, unlike other oil exporters, possessed in abundance.

Thus, as the companies negotiated with the state, they came up against top civil servants, whose lack of knowledge about petroleum matters was counterbalanced by their expertise, prudence, and incorruptibility. In contrast to their counterparts in the developing countries, they were in no rush to start oil production, which was initially viewed as adding marginally to an already healthy growth rate, and they could not be pushed to proceed until they were institutionally ready.

The contrast with Nigeria is also evident in Norway's superior capacity to control the impact of petroleum on its existing institutions. This ability was due not only to the professionalism of the civil service, but also to the existence of non-oil-based “vested” interests, who were able to present their concerns in a democratic context.

Indeed, most organized economic and political forces professed some hostility to this potential threat to the Norwegian way of life (even as they welcomed its benefits), with the fishing industry, environmental groups, and farmers, who were the most consistent opponents of oil-led development.

Norway also stands in marked contrast to the other oil exporters in its ability to ward off the insidious rentier behaviour that accompanied booms elsewhere. Its governments could thus retain the historically acquired flexibility that permitted them to limit lock-in and to engage in timely (rather than postponed) adjustments. Therefore, oil revenues were not dissipated through corruption and white-elephant projects.

Perhaps most indicative of its different behaviour, the Norwegian government sought to protect the state's non-oil fiscal capacity. As corporate revenues from petroleum shot up, it resisted the strong temptation to permit oil revenues to replace its normal revenue base by lowering taxes. Unlike all other exporters, it managed to sustain its domestic tax base, although it did suffer some erosion.

Taxes remained progressive, and they contributed to another unique outcome: petroleum revenues, which produced wider income disparities in most other oil exporting countries, contributed to a more equitable distribution of income there. Rather than replace non-oil taxation, Norway put much of its recent bonuses into a “petroleum fund,” set up to store wealth for the next century, when its oil starts to run out. Taken together, these factors cushioned the adjustment necessary in the face of oscillating oil prices and generally protected Norwegians from the tremendous swings that citizens in other exporting countries experienced.

Moreover, with the advent of oil discovery, Norway also revamped its educational system, to meet the demands and requirements of the then emergent oil industry. Lastly, it must be said here that Norway, although deficient in oil technology in the sixties, was able to adapt its technology in the area of ship-building to fashion a home-grown oil technology of its own.¹⁹

It is arguable, however that comparison with Norway is a misplaced one. A more relevant comparison can be made with a country like Malaysia – a social formation which shares broad similarities with Nigeria. In this particular country, an authentic industry has developed, courtesy of its national oil company, Petronas. The upshot is that Malaysia, courtesy of resource nationalism, has been able to give the multinationals a good run for their technical and 'creative' devices.

6.0 Conclusion:

The immediate foregoing speaks to the deadly impasse, which is currently the lot of the Niger Delta and Nigeria. In essence, therefore, all the various solutions, which have thus far been proffered, cannot address in any meaningful way, the various malformations and distortions in the Nigerian oil industry, which have spawned the Niger Delta crises. What is therefore needed is an overhaul of the subsisting policies, which have generated, over time, the monumental crises in the Niger Delta.

One central feature of this policy lies in the fact that till date, the productive dynamics of the oil industry continue to elude us. What is probably not well known is that from the crude oil alone, Nigerian has the capacity to generate gasoline, kerosene, chemicals, polymers, and naphtha, such that in a well managed state, Nigeria would not have to import anything from the outside world.

When this bleak scenario is complemented with the fact, if we had in place, viable steel industries, then Nigeria would have been on her way to being a Super-power in the authentic sense. Unfortunately, the Nigerian steel industry has merely followed on the heels of the Nigerian oil industry. Who knows, the foregoing may well and partly explain why one of the then presidential candidates was reported to have wept for Nigeria.

And I do not wish to sound blasphemous here, yet we only have to remember that the greatest human being, who ever walked this earth, was also reported to have wept at a point in time. “Jesus Wept” at the grave of Lazarus (John 11:35).

Vice-Chancellor Sir, Ladies and Gentlemen, beyond the lachrymose exertions is that outsiders have also had to tell us openly and pointedly that at a fundamental level, there is something seriously wrong with Nigeria. In this respect, the depositions of a French Professor of

International Relations are worth recalling.

In the course of a Seminar on Nigeria's Foreign Policy in 2004, at Oxford University, the French Professor declared tersely that: *the threat potential to Nigeria is Nigeria itself.*

In the euphoria of a new dawn which has been largely occasioned by Nigeria's recent birthday, it is tempting to dismiss the French Professor as a mere alarmist. After all, the crises in the Niger Delta seem to have abated in view of the fact that social forces like Goodluck Jonathan and Oronto Douglas are now calling the shots in Aso Rock.

However, to think along this line is to mistake the woods for the tree. For all said and done, and as I speak, the bankrupt relationship between Nigeria and the oil companies continues to exist. Similarly, the creaky contraption called the Federal Republic of Nigeria is still in place. Whereas, everyone knows, the social formation called The Federal Republic of Nigeria is neither Federal nor Republican!

Thus, if the three-year old administration of Goodluck Jonathan hopes to give Nigeria a new lease of life, it must urgently address the fundamental problems which bedevil the Nigerian oil industry on the one hand and the Federal Republic of Nigeria on the other. Otherwise and for a very long time, the Yamani Syndrome will occupy a permanent seat in the cockpit of the Nigerian state.

But even then, Yamani was not the only social force who warned about the counter-productive currents which govern oil. Perez Alfonso, the Venezuelan Oil Minister also demonstrated in a graphic way the Paleolithic destiny which awaits Nigeria, in view of her feeding-bottle reliance on oil revenues. And this is why, Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, with your kind permission, I wish to close this public lecture with this short but true story, about an aspect of Perez Alfonso's life, which speaks in a painful and ominous way to Nigeria's past, present and

future.

Perez Alfonso returned to Caracas to take up the position of Oil Minister in Venezuela. He was struck by how much more affluence the Caracas of 1958, buoyed by oil earnings, looked than the Caracas he had fled a decade earlier. His response was not altogether favourable. Oil wealth, he believed, was the gift of nature and politics, and not of hard work, and he soon found a perfect symbol for what he saw as its pernicious consequences. While still in exile in Mexico, the family had managed to get the money together to buy a 1950 Singer, a British motorcar that looked rather like an MG. Perez Alfonso treasured the car; it was one of his indulgences. When he came back to Venezuela, he arranged to have the Singer shipped after him. The car arrived at the docks, where it sat for two months, rusting away; no one bothered to tell Perez Alfonso that it was there. At last, hearing of its arrival, Perez Alfonso sent a mechanic down to the harbour to drive the car up to Caracas. Along the way, it broke down. The mechanic had forgotten to check the oil, and it turned out that there had been no oil in the engine. The car could no longer be driven at all; the engine was completely burned out. A truck had to be sent for it. Eventually, it was delivered to his villa in the suburbs. But the corrosion had eaten through the car. Perez Alfonso viewed it all like a sign from heaven; he had the car installed near a ping-pong table in his garden, as a corroded, overgrown shrine and symbol of what he saw as the dangers of oil wealth for a nation – laziness, the spirit of not caring, the commitment to buying and consuming and wasting.

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As any body can see from my citation, I am a wholly made Nigerian product in terms of my educational background. This means, between the two PPs, i.e. from Primary School to the Ph.D, I was educated throughout in Nigeria. It is therefore appropriate that I use this forum to thank all my teachers and lecturers at the various levels of their Nigerian educational system. At the risk of sounding immodest, I happen to embody all that was noble in the then Nigerian educational system. What the then Nigerian gave me by way of education enabled me to access all those international and academic fellowships in the later part of my career.

On this note, I wish to particularly remember two gentlemen, the late Mr. R. S. G. Agiobu Kemmer, who awarded me a full scholarship for my secondary school education at the King's College, Lagos. The second gentleman, also now late, is Professor Ralph Iheanyi Onwuka. Professor Onwuka, supervised my Masters and PhD degrees and in the process, he turned out to be non-biological Uncle which God provided for me. In those unsteady and uncertain days of academia, Professor Onwuka turned out to be a pillar of support. May the souls of these two gentlemen continue to find repose in the Lord, and I pray that their own children will meet with help and goodwill along their respective paths of life.

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It is also truism that, a man's life can be summarized thus: He is passed from one woman to another, the first one being the mother; the second one is the wife. I am not an exception to this rule. My wife; Dr. Rebecca

Soremekun has been a strong source of support and inspiration over the years.

A lot can also be said for her tolerance. After all, it is not really easy to live without a nomadic academic who has combined that career with journalism. And if the audience must know, it is not easy to live with a journalist.

My children continue to give me joy and in the process, I have been able to focus on my career. The storms of life cannot but blow, as they must. Such a storm blew in my life around 2010. I wish to thank all those who stood by me during that testy period. Professor Bolaji Owasanoye, Dr.G.S.M.Okeke, Dr. Kayode Eesuola, Engr. and Professor Cecilia Igwilo, Professor Coker, Professor Bandele, Professor Omolehinwa, Professor and Mrs. Adekunle; Professor Otubanjo and the late Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos; Professor Adetokunbo Sofoluwe come readily to mind here. God will also stand by them too, at all times.

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The lecture which I have just delivered owes a lot to the interaction with the Vice-Chancellor, Professor C. K. Ayo, Professor S.K Adeyemi and Dr. Abioye. Between and among these eminent individuals, they did a lot to neutralize the howlers in this piece.

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father who died at the age of 37 years, HE i.e. Christ, effectively stood in the gap for me

I thank you all for listening.

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