



Covenant University

1st Convocation Ceremony Special Lectures and Speeches

...The Release of Eagles

July 24 - 30, 2006

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**Issues of Governance for Nation
States of Africa: Pathways for Leadership
Development.**

A Lecture delivered by
His Excellency
General Dr. Yakubu Gowon GCFR,

AT THE
FIRST CONVOCATION CEREMONY OF
COVENANT UNIVERSITY, OTA,
THURSDAY, JULY 27, 2006

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Introduction:

1. The convocation ceremony is one of those solemn academic rituals that provide graduands/graduates with the opportunity to reflect upon their stay in the hallowed towers of academia, and for them to carry out a realistic assessment of life before and after school. It also affords them the opportunity to chart a new course for life after school, having been fully equipped with skills and competencies for a world of service and integration of the individual into the wider social sphere of life. This convocation lecture is meant to top up those skills and competencies you have gained from this higher institution of learning, as you advance into the next stage of your development and path to leadership.

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2. I wish to thank the Chancellor, My Lord Bishop, Dr David Oyedepo, the Governing Council and the organisers of this ceremony, for the honour of being asked to deliver the very first convocation lecture of this world class citadel of academic excellence. I consider it a great honour, because it affords me an opportunity to share with this very rare breed of talented Nigerian youths, and Nigeria's future leaders, the dynamics of governance and leadership, and for me to also share with you some of those personal experiences which I consider to be key success factors for enthroning good governance and leadership, to which you all aspire to in life, having been fully endowed with the requisite academic and moral training that will make you excel in life.

3. Some few weeks ago, I visited the chancellor of this university, Bishop Dr David Oyedepo in his office at Ota, to discuss issues pertaining to an International programme that I am organising that requires his blessings and involvement. I have been to Canaan Land, Ota, before, and was impressed by the development and facilities existing then, but this time I was to discover, to my surprise, some great valuable hidden treasures lying in and around Ota. I was not only impressed, but was amazed at the rate at which age-old trees were going down, and bricks, iron-rods and mortar taking their place. What immediately came to my mind were the words of the great French philosopher, Victor Hugo that "*no army can withstand an idea whose time has come*". The hidden and valuable treasures I found, rising like Neptune out of the sea of Ota forest, was the Covenant University, certainly an idea whose time has come, and no army can withstand it. No one can stop this idea, its progress and development. This is a prayer for now, and a prayer for the future, and we shall all be witnesses to the greatness of this

institution for very many years to come. You can see, therefore, why I am both delighted and excited to have the honour to deliver your first convocation lecture.

4. I was given a topic for the lecture vis: *Issues of Governance for Nation States of Africa: Pathways for Leadership Development*. Upon a deep reflection, the theme for this lecture is indeed captured in the vision of this university which is, "to raise a new generation of leaders, through qualitative, life-applicable and value-based leadership skill development education, embedded in sound biblical principles, thereby restoring the dignity of the black race". Incidentally, the answers we seek to unravel the mystery of governance and leadership are carefully embedded in this vision, and ordinarily therefore, I feel my task has been accomplished. It only remains to spice it with an ideological basis, and to garnish it with ones experiences and what one will recommend for effective leadership.

5. The leadership opportunities I had came both by normal democratic and non-democratic processes. The early opportunity at school and other institutions were democratic, but the later opportunity came through the military when the military got involved in political pursuits, which is clearly undemocratic. My elevation to the headship of the country in 1966 no doubt drew from an appreciation by my peers, colleagues and subordinate officers, of ones innate capacity and quality to be fair and just to all, irrespective of where you come from or belong. Thus, my path to political leadership was via the military, which, in a democratic setting, is perceived to be undemocratic as it is bereft of popular participation. However, at that time, once the military

intervention was successful, and became '*de jure*', it was accepted, and grudgingly tolerated. The accepted practice of democracy at that time was the democracy practiced in countries like the UK, USA, and France et al. What was happening during the 1950's and 1960's in many parts of the world, especially in Africa, was a reaction against undemocratic practices in those countries, and the desire by groups of young officers/men, who thought that they had the reforming zeal, and the means to bring it about, and did so by the use of force. The military organisations at that time believed, rightly or wrongly, that the military could provide the best leadership and system to unite the country, and bring about the much needed National cohesion and integration. This is certainly not accepted military ethos; that is not the way they were instructed at any of their training institutions, whether in Nigeria or abroad, but that was the reality at the time. Since then, things have changed, and in the last few years, under the Charter of the African Union and general world opinion (United Nations), military intervention and military rule is not acceptable, and as such, leaders of Nations should only emerge through democratic ethos.

Issues of Governance for Nation States

6. The object in considering issues of governance in nation states of Africa is to identify the problems of governing nation states, or how nation states ought to be governed. I would like to adopt Nigeria, a country that I know best as that typical African nation state, and attempt in this lecture to find out the problems of governance, and how leadership contributes to the effective and good leadership of the state.

An Introspective insight

7. Nigeria, as most other African states, emerged from the ashes of colonialism. The colonial leaders administered what is now Nigeria, as the Protectorates, and it was only in 1914 that the Northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated into the geographical area now called Nigeria. The word amalgamated is in itself divisive. An amalgam is a mechanical process of binding objects, without necessarily dissolving their individual characteristics into one. At amalgamation therefore, both the Protectorates carried on as two different entities, although under one authority. Most importantly however, the master did not prescribe any form of government.

8. It was the Richard's Constitution of 1946, which provided a central legislature for the first time, in which people of the territory could meet and deliberate on issues affecting the country as a whole. It also legally established three regions, North, East and West. It provided for a central legislature and regional legislatures, unicameral for Eastern and Western regions, and bicameral for the North. Political power was concentrated in the hands of the Governor, later Governor General, in Lagos, and Lieutenant Governors administered the regions, assisted by their subordinate officers.

9. The constitution initially received knocks from Nigeria's fledgling Nationalists, because it was drawn up without consultation of the Nigerian people, and also because it ascribed greater roles to chiefs who were unelected, and seen as 'errand boys' of their colonial masters, and furthermore because of the very few and limited political units created.

10. The outcome of the opposition to the Richard's Constitution was a later constitution, The MacPherson's Constitution, which gave greater autonomy to the regions, appointed Nigerians into a

council of ministers, and established a 142-member house of representatives. This unitary form of government persisted until 1951, when a quasi-federal form of government was established within the colonial framework.

11. The period between 1951 and 1960 witnessed a flurry of political activity in Nigeria, dominated by intense ethno-regionalism. The North, West and East clearly stood out as ethno-regional ideological divides, with each protecting its own ethno-regional identity, in spite of the preponderance of minority groups in each region. Nigerian nationalism turned into intense lobby to project particular groups and interests over and above those of others. The intense struggle for independence gave way to the struggle for the soul of the emerging country, and Nigeria virtually wobbled to remain as one up until its Independence in October 1960. We will not go into the details, but you may recall the various threats by various regions to end the tenuous relations between them. However, good sense and judgement, combined with the maturity of the political leadership and patriotism, helped to hold the nation together.

12. In the face of Nigeria's diverse interest, arising from varying ethno-cultural backgrounds, ideological leaning, motives and drives, there needed to be a compromise solution in this multinational setting between two types of self determination; the determination provided by a National Government which guarantees security for all in a Nation-State on one hand, and the self-determination of component groups to retain their individual identities on the other. The Nation had to find what system or type of governance could satisfy and guarantee the various hopes and

aspirations of a multi-national, multi-religious, and multi-cultural interest like Nigeria. Looking at the variables on offer, our political leaders opted for the federal system of government.

13. When it later came to the ultimate test, I also strongly shared the view that only Federalism correctly reflected the diverse political, social, cultural and economic interests within the broader framework of National unity. K.C. Wheare defined Federalism in its purest sense as *"the method of dividing powers so that the general (central) and regional governments are each within a sphere, coordinate and independent"*. Thus, practiced in the forms described by Wheare, it becomes yet another call for chaos. Federalism is best practiced in the context of a dynamic process of cooperation and shared action between two or more levels of government, with increasing interdependence and centrist tendencies, especially in security/defence, international relations and diplomacy.

14. However, several political analysts and scholars have noted that it is not possible to have one universal brand of federalism. I believe that they are right. The particular ingredients of each Nations federal structure are anchored on the peculiar experiences and lessons of each country, which cannot be applicable across the board. Nevertheless, there may be valuable lessons to be learnt that may be adopted or modified to suit ones circumstance. Consequently, the practice should reflect the settings and peculiar nature of each and every country.

Independence and Beyond

15. At Independence, our political leaders in Nigeria adopted a parliamentary democracy with a federal structure. This

guaranteed the relevance of all groups within this structure, and more or less provided a stable arrangement for both Regional and National growth and development. Party formation and sphere of influence at pre-Independence was ethnically based, and that gave rise to intense struggles to dominate aspects of the economy and political power, which led to a thick air of mistrust, and the very fragile federation was held together by what can only be described as the tenuous strand of the name Nigeria, which was susceptible to both dismemberment and disintegration. This development occasioned the first misguided military intervention in January 1966. If, as has been posited earlier, that only a federal system of government guarantees the relevance of the constituting parts of the country, the unitary decree No.1/8* of 1966 may not have been a good idea. I believe the intention was to weaken the strong regional structures, and have orders flowing down from the top and the centre; the military style of command and control. For a country and people that have just won their independence, and have just exercised their elective rights, subjecting them to a type of meritocracy that dampened their political rights and morale, would have amounted to a new type of neo-colonialism. The situation was grudgingly accepted as a *fait-accompli* then.

16. Thus, when fate thrust the leadership of the country on me by mid 1966, I felt it was the duty of the leadership to ensure that the restoration of a modicum of trust and confidence in our system of governance was achieved. I also further ensured the restoration of law and order, and quickly reverted back to our federal system of government, although a federal military government, to underscore the relevance of the entities that made up the federation. Although my government was military, I endeavoured to ensure respect for democratic principles and practice, because I believe that every soldier, by upbringing and training, is a 'democrat', having been trained to be apolitical and loyal to the government, irrespective of the ideologies of the individual soldier.

I was now required to give leadership, not only to my constituency, the military, which I am conversant with, but also to both the bureaucrats, erstwhile politicians and the general Nigerian populace. This I did by ensuring that I won the peoples trust and confidence, their support and cooperation, in addition to that of the International community. I am grateful for all for their support and cooperation.

17. What followed was an intense effort at restoration of trust and confidence in one another by endeavouring to remove the various areas of mistrust and fears on the one hand, and of domination on the other. The creation of a 12-State structure was one of such efforts, to simmer down the fears of political domination and ethnic sentiments, and provide a common platform for the development of National infrastructures to support a promising emerging economy of a newly confident federated Nigerian State. This could not be achieved before the Nation went through acts of self-inflicted and harrowing experiences of ethnic blood-letting and heart-wrenching attempts and the break-up of the country, culminating in a Civil War, fought to keep Nigeria as one. By the grace of God, and Nigeria's good fortune, Nigeria was able to successfully end the war with a reconciliation, second to none in the annals of world history, and that gave the Nation the opportunity to start rebuilding its infrastructures, and plan for the future of Nigeria's economy and politics. National cohesion and integration followed, and not long after, Democracy in Nigeria was restored and governance was ultimately to return to the people, and the soldiers to their barracks and their intended role. The emergence of a civilian democracy was a welcome development, but the relapse into another long period of military rule soon after, was considered by all as unfortunate.

The Governance and Democracy

18. One needed to undertake this tortuous excursion into our historical development in order to bring about the best form of governance that guaranteed the expression of the full potentials of a Nation or State, and the leadership required of it. Most other countries in Africa share a similar experience with Nigeria in terms of ethnic regional entities within the nation. They also have common political experience from colonialism to independence, military excursion in politics and governance. Varieties of democratic practices have been tested and are still being tested. Various styles of leadership have been attempted based on the ideological belief of the leader. Thus you have leadership with a socialist/ welfarist tendency to those with conservative or rightist inclinations; also the military with a bias towards dictatorship, or a limited democratic system, which is often designed to short-circuit constitution that guides democratic governance. With the Nigerian military, attempts were made at the unitary and federal forms of governance and structures. I opted for a democratic federal system of governance, as the only form of governance that can guarantee an acceptable democratic federal system of government that suits Nigeria. This system could fit both the military as well as the politically multi-party democracy. The truth is that it is only under a multi-party democracy that true democracy can be achieved where various National interests and groups are able to find the best platform for adequate expression and representation. A true multi-party democracy clearly distinguishes between the party and the government. It respects the wishes of the people. That is what our political founding fathers proffered, and hoped that it would endure. They accepted the ideas and principle of separation of powers, both in party

politics and in governance such that the powers of the executive and that of the party do not translate into one and the same thing, as this often signals the early stages of party dictatorship and a one-party system. They also believed that in governance there should be a distinct separation of powers between the executive and the legislature, with both the executive and the legislature respecting the judiciary.

The Imperative of Governance

19. Governance has strong normative overtones: it is the practice of good government, and it remains a fragile process that depends on the restraint of the ruler or leader, and the tolerance of the ruled. The concept of governance is not new; it is a popular subject for political and academic discourse, and refers in a generative sense to the task of running a government or any other appropriate entity. It has gained prominence in governing the constraints to Africa's development and the crisis of African development has been put squarely at the foot of governance.

20. It is important to distinguish governance from such related terms as government and leadership. Governance is more useful in consideration of developmental dynamics, as it does not pre-judge the locus or character of real decision making. For while government presumes that authority is vested somewhere within the state, leadership assumes that political control necessarily rests with the head of state or head of government or political leaders or elites.

21. What then is the challenge of governance? The challenges of governance lie, in the main, in the conscious management of regime structures with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of the public run. Legitimacy is one of the products of effective

governance; and it can never exist where there is:

- i) Extensive personalisation of power.
- ii) Denial of fundamental human rights.
- iii) Widespread corruption.
- iv) Prevalence of unelected structures.
- v) Disrespect to rule of law.
- vi) Unaccountable government.

22. Legitimacy is not defined here in the context of ascension to power, but in the context of how power relates to the people who have voluntarily surrendered and offered to support the powerbase (the party and the leadership) in return for nothing but an opportunity for self-expression, and the realisation of their full potential. Government that manipulates its way to power cannot be legitimate, as it rides on a false mandate. Expecting such a government to filter down dividends of democracy would, consequently, be a pipe dream.

23. At another scale of resolution, governance is concerned with how political and party rules and regulations affect political action and the prospect of solving specific societal problems. Governance involves the identification of conditions that facilitate effective problem solving. This includes:

- i) Citizen influence and oversight in the context of citizen participation in political process, and expression of preference for public policy.
- ii) Public accountability.
- iii) Social reciprocities in the context of political equalities; inclusiveness in associational membership etc.
- iv) Responsive and responsible leadership; the attitude of political leaders towards their roles as public trustees.

24. Governance is also performance oriented, as it examines how well a polity is capable of mobilising and managing social capital to strengthen the civic/public realm, and the organisation of political relations.

Good and Bad governance

25. The intention here is not to identify particular nations, but simply to point out indices that would qualify one form of governance as good and another as bad. Governance that lacks legitimacy, in the context of not delivering on its promises, cannot, for example, be said to be good. In the majority of cases they are characterised by:

- i) Personalised rule; where public policy lacks logic and empirical content, with governance and structure largely informal and subject to arbitrary changes. It encourages clientele relations and discourages new forms of trust that transcends narrow relations.
- ii) Frequent violations of human rights.
- iii) Lack of delegation of authority by central institution; that is the tendency to curb independent political activity outside of an institutional network controlled by the ruling party.
- iv) Tendency to withdraw from political activities; individuals evade, rather than engage, political authorities.
- v) Absence of a succession plan, where succession planning is virtually absent and leaders leave after their tenure only where public opinion is strong enough or by an 'act of God'.

Governance and the challenge of leadership

26. I would like to define leadership as the opportunity,

situation or location that inspires, enables and empowers the individual to exercise control, vision, direction and solution to complex or particular situations. If governance is hinged on performance, performance should reflect the quality of leadership. Good leadership is most likely to sustain good governance, and some of the qualities that one looks for in a leader should include all, or a combination of: high morality, self-confidence, charisma, good character, commitment, competence, courage, focus, generosity, initiative, security, willingness to learn coupled with the ability to teach and instruct, compassion, vision, humility. However, above all they should radiate truth, justice and fairness, love and respect for their fellow human-being and love and fear of the Almighty.

Pathways to leadership development

27. Having established that governance and leadership are intertwined, and that good leadership is 'sine qua non' for effective governance, how is leadership developed to deliver on good governance? My pathways to leadership development are as follows:

i) Education: Education provides a solid foundation for knowledge, and knowledge empowers leadership. Each one of you possesses leadership qualities, but it manifests itself more in some than others; education can provide the edge. Academic or conventional education however, is not sufficient alone. It must be buttressed by religious and social morality. Being Godly should ensure that the leader is fair and just to all. The Covenant University is one such Institution where one can hopefully find this kind of education and upbringing.

ii) Continuous Improvement: The day we stop learning is when the rot sets in, and one begins to deteriorate. There is need to expose oneself to other experiences and learn

how difficult situations were managed in various circumstances. Leaders must always continue to learn, both from within (their team government) and from without (society and other influences, both at home and abroad).

- iii) Ability to delegate: A leader must be able to 'delegate, share and accept responsibility individually or collectively for any act of commission or omission.
- iv) Endeavour to do the right thing: The leader should always endeavour to do the right thing for the country and her people, race and humanity. In my own leadership experience, I tried to do what I felt was best for the country and the people, never for personal consideration/gain.
- v) Always think of the people: The leader's thoughts must continually be about the good of the people, asking himself the question whether what he is doing and the laws he is making for the society are fair and just, and that he/she protects their interests, progress and development above all to guarantee peace, law and order.
- vi) Leadership development: This should not be limited to just training, but about how to tackle problems pragmatically not through imposition, but through due consideration and proper reasoning.

Conclusion

28. In conclusion, this lecture has sought to discuss the main issue of governance for Nation States of Africa and Africa's leadership development. The ultimate desire is to make suggestions and find pragmatic solutions to the problems confronting the development and leadership of African Nations. Touching on governance, we have posited that most effective

governance in a multi-regional, ethnic and cultural society as Nigeria is best guaranteed in a multi-party democracy within a federal structure of government. The pitfalls of bad governance have been highlighted, and the pathways to leadership development have been established. However, it remains an assessment of the challenges of governance in the context of how it improves the lot of Nigerians, and African people as a whole.

29. In responding to these vital issues, governance must strive to frontally attack poverty by adopting effective strategies, put in place conflict management strategies and prevention of violence, creating and sustaining the legitimacy of State Institutions and upholding public trust, leading large-scale socio-economic transformation and capacity to adjust to the condition and the paradoxes of social, political and economic life. Herein lies the true test of effective governance and leadership.

30. I hope you, my good audience, especially the graduands, have gained something from this lecture on how Nation States are governed, and particularly in the case of Nigeria, and how Nigeria arrived at the choice of system it adopted from the myriad of systems available world wide. From Colonial unitary to bi-cameral legislation, to federal parliamentary, to military unity, back to federal military to the current presidential Federal Democracy. We have simply followed political theories, but have adopted a system to suit our situation. That is the essence of learning; theory gives you the idea and groundwork. It is up to you as a future generation of leaders, to ensure you adapt the theory to practical use suitable to you Nations' need.

31. African leaders have two choices to make; to offer good

leadership and take their country, and by extension, their Nations to the promised land of rapid growth and development, or to give bad leadership and return the Nations of Africa to the cess-pit of poverty, disease and squalor. Any right-thinking leader would choose the former; that is my choice too. I did just that during my time.

32. You have been taught well whilst you have been here, and been given the rudiments for your future success as future leaders of your country. Make good use of the opportunity given you here, and give a good account of yourselves in the years to come. My congratulations to you all, successful graduands, and I wish you well for the future. To those of you still pursuing your Golden Fleece of graduation, I also wish you well and pray that you emulate the success of your peers just graduating.

33. Finally, from what I have learnt of this young university, and the present kind of covenant education being given here by the brilliant and efficient staff and lecturers, will help to meet the challenge of good leadership, always bearing in mind the ethos and ideals necessary for good leadership. I thank you once again for the opportunity to deliver this lecture.

Thank you Mr Chancellor, Bishop Dr. David Oyedepo.

Thank you Madam Vice Chancellor, Members of Council, Staff and Students of the Covenant University.

God Bless the Covenant University, Ota.

Well done, and God Bless you, enlightened graduands.

God Bless Nigeria and God bless you all.

Thank You...