

## **Defining Security and Charting Security Routes for Nigeria**

The debate on security in Nigeria is yet to begin. This is because the enabling environment for this debate has not been established even as the crisis in the polity points to the existence of a crisis in the theory and practice of security. The fact is security has failed, is failing and will continue to fail in Nigeria. Indeed the question still remains whether there is a theory of security in Nigeria.

In its reception in the country, it is evident that the perspective of security is that which coincide with the institution that sees itself as the sole voice on security. The institution is the Nigerian military. The military is the problem of security in Nigeria. Their intervention in government leaves plenty issues requiring resolution by the collective intervention of Nigerians. Of these issues, governance and security stand out.

The military did not see the creation and expansion of economic opportunity including infrastructural expansion and employment generation as the first line of security on which other lines rest; failing to do this, their defence role in the complex called security came calling and they military superimposed their limited defence role on society, christened and promoted this as security; they socialised Nigerians into believing it is the be-all and end-all of security; they benefited from this security type while in power; they cloned a political class into being and socialised them into their conception of security; the political class believe and adopt this security type only because it serves their interest of wanting and remaining in power.

The political and military classes proceed to reaching a blind consensus where the political class concede to the military's competence in managing this "security" and allocating resources as their share of the national cake in return for the military letting them govern; they commit to ensuring that this security type remains even as it cannot stand the test of time; they have not been honest to admit that they are failing in not realising that Nigeria has no security philosophy or the nature, meaning and purpose of security; the Nigerian military ensure, in their obduracy, that Nigeria has no security, no security sense and consensus; the military ensure there is no security policy to govern security; the lack of security policy means that all policies including defence do not have security objective that should come from the security policy; yet the military claim there is defence policy without security policy not knowing that defence ought to be one of the objectives taken from the security policy; that the military claim there is security strategy without security policy; all these are indicative of the confusion on state of security in Nigeria.

It would appear that the military, political and to a lesser extent intellectual establishment did not see anything wrong with this type of security. For most of

Nigerians, this is the type of security they have been socialised into accepting as one. It is a security type that leaves much to be desired in terms of addressing the worries of Nigerians. Nigerians have not woken up to examining this perspective of security to realise the huge lacuna that it has created. Increasingly, it is becoming evident that this perspective of security is the problem and not the solution to insecurity in Nigeria.

We can discern three perspectives of security which we can also describe as routes or paths to manufacturing security in Nigeria.

The first perspective is that which sees security as all encompassing incorporating the economy primarily and then other issues emanating from the economy including political, social, cultural and defence in its fold. Indeed in this perspective of security, security leads the way in creating relevance for the other dimensions. We have persistently argued that unless people can take care of their basic needs for food, shelter and health or what is the Marxian perspective, there will not be politics, defense, education, environment, culture, defence, etc.

We argue that the focus on law and order aspect of security by the Nigerian political and military establishment is because of their inability to fulfil this all encompassing perspective of security beginning with the economic dimension. The establishment was left with security as law and order or defense which represents the fallout from the failure of the all important security as economic-opportunity-first perspective.

Pursuing and implementing this security derives from the etymology of security. It is the word "secure" which owes its foundation from the first enterprise of human being to self - providing livelihood. This foundational security did not talk about a particular dimension but several dimensions beginning with food on the table. A country can proceed to domesticate this foundational route to creating security by adding others depending on its history, experience and reality (HER). It is also pointing to the first route to attaining security in the polity.

The second perspective of security locates security in governance. Governance in this instance stresses managerial ability and it is technocratic in orientation. Governance is effective and efficient management of public institutions to deliver services to most people on a continuous basis. It is a perspective that derives from the World Bank definition of governance. The Bank defines governance as the effective and efficient administration of human and material resource to produce the most benefit for the most number of persons.

In stressing effective management, it is to underscore the fact that this is Nigeria's biggest challenge from the central, state and local levels and to most

ministries, departments and agencies or public institutions. Governance crisis was exacerbated under military rule following their intervention in politics. As a result of defective governance, a major growth industry of insecurity prevails in most sectors. Individuals and groups are perpetually dissatisfied and disgruntled as opportunity is shrinking in most aspect of the public and private sectors. Getting governance right at all levels ensures that governance create security for people in the society. This makes governance the second route to manufacturing security.

The Nigerian situation indicates that neither the definition of security from the all encompassing perspective and/or the definition of security from the governance perspective prevail. There is no document that speaks to the theory and practice of security and that guides other policies in fulfilling the security component of their mission. In other words, there is no policy on security. The absence of a policy on security can be equated to the absence of a constitution for the country. Like the constitution, a security policy is the document from where all other policies get their security objective. What this implies is that all policies in Nigeria do not have security objective that should come from the existence of a security policy for the country.

To this extent, Nigeria is rudderless as far as security philosophy or theory and practise is concerned. Since Nigeria cannot provide or guarantee security from the two perspectives described above, Nigeria is left with operating the law and order perspective of security which is the third route. It is the consequence of the inability of government to deliver security from the two routes enunciated above – the security and governance routes. This leaves the country reaping crisis and conflict. Government is therefore left with relying on security as law and order. This is the biggest legacy of military rule. It is military rule that brought this type of “security” to the political burner for Nigerians. It is military rule that socialised Nigerians of all persuasion to the issue of security.

Military rule’s idea of security stemmed from its limited role of defence in the all encompassing perspective of security which it effectively appropriated as the governing elite. In the first place, the Nigerian military inverted the practice of realist security developed and perfected to serve Euro-Atlantic history, experience and reality. In the development and application of realism in Europe and the United States, it was in an environment where the governance route to security had been accomplished enough to support the perspective of security that enhances prosperity from foreign enterprises. International relation is predicated on the contending reality of pursuing national interest sanctioned essentially by the possession of strong military power in a supposedly anarchic system. The Nigerian experience is entirely different.

In the second place, failing to achieve the inclusion derivable from pursuing security from the security and governance routes which has the effect of generating minimal crisis and conflict among the nationalities of Nigeria, the military regimes, as the governing elite and the guarantor of realist security, felt increasingly threatened by the agitation from Nigerians demanding better services through the creation of opportunity on a rolling basis and thus better life. They invoked their defence role particularly in the aid of civil authority and police in the management of internal disorder following their inability to satisfy the yearning of Nigerians in economic and other realms and what they described as the incompetence of the police in managing internal order. Police incompetence was the creation of the military in their systematic neglect and pervasion of the role of institutions in the public spheres.

This is the origin of security as law and order in Nigeria. It was a view that was inadvertently reinforced by the lecture delivered by the former Deputy and Acting National Security Adviser and Director General of the Department of State Services (DSS) Lieutenant Colonel Kayode Aare (retired).<sup>1</sup> Retired Lieutenant Colonel Aare's position was not the first of its kind from the military institution and their supposed representative and authority on security matters.

In 2012,<sup>2</sup> the then deputy commandant of the National Defence College and a self styled representative of the Office of the National Security Adviser, retired Major General Inuwa Idris literally hijacked the conference hosted by the National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) on "complex insurgencies in Nigeria". In his intervention where the host Institution generously granted him undue recognition, General Idris clamped down on any contrary view from the so called eminent persons and expert groups gathered as he led the discussion in defining insurgency, path to resolution and the end state.

Retired General Idris's role in that conference represented and reinforced the condescending demonstration of the attitude of the military to entertaining alternative non military collective solution to national problem in areas they considered their exclusive jurisdiction. This was in spite of the admission of General Idris that previous approaches had been on the government to government levels without the input of nongovernmental stakeholders. The "eminent persons and expert groups" were after all people from the academia that were not so eminent and expert in the eyes of the military in security and allied matters. This is only because the military itself is ignorant of its pervasion and corruption of security and

---

<sup>1</sup> See Colonel (Dr) Kayode Aare, "Security Paradigms and the Nigerian Challenge", Guest Lecture Series, Institute of Governance and Development Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Postgraduate Hall, 08<sup>th</sup> October 2016

<sup>2</sup> See Adoyi Onoja, "What is Wrong with Solutions to Insecurity in Nigeria", *Sunday Trust*, 23/09/12, <http://sundaytrust.com.ng/index.php/comment-debate/5977-what-is-wrong-with-solutions-to-insecurity-in-nigeria>

the academia's complicity in creating and sustaining this pervasion in their works.<sup>3</sup> As I noted somewhere, Nigerian academics have been unable to appreciate the narrow ideological undertone of their complicity in perpetuating a completely ahistorical security tradition on Nigerians.<sup>4</sup> It was to his credit that the gathering dispersed without reaching an end state or communiqué.<sup>5</sup>

In a question and answer session following retired Lieutenant Colonel Aare's lecture on "Security Paradigms and the Nigerian Challenge", the perspectives and routes to attaining security described above was used to underscore the lack of security philosophy or theory and practice in Nigeria and thus the prevalence of security as law and order which his lecture encapsulated.

The point of contention was his use of "paradigms" which when examined in relation to the content of his lecture does not represent the "new thinking or new ways of looking at something" which paradigm represented. It was a reinstatement of the same old practice which stressed what we contended was the law and order view of security to which he erroneously described as paradigms.<sup>6</sup> The lecturer did not only disagree with this submission that questioned his views on security. He showed his displeasure by not leaving the audience in doubt about what he saw as an affront on his work pedigree, experience and knowledge of security in Nigeria. The lesson was not lost on the audience.

The guest lecturer was also taken to task on the issue of the lack of security policy for Nigeria.<sup>7</sup> Colonel Aare's response was that the fact that there was in existence institutions such as the Department of State Service, the National Intelligence Agency and Defence Intelligence Agency was indicative of the existence of security policy. The clincher, for me and hopefully for the audience, was when he asserted obviously in response to the questioners view that there were indications by several past occupants of the Office of the National Security Adviser of the existence of policies and that what was required was for "someone to put the pieces into a compendium", obviously to serve as security policy document.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> The role of Nigerian academics in this pervasion could aptly be described in the words of Ken Booth as "regressive realist hegemony...academics think about security". See Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 12. There are numerous articles and books published by different members of the academia where "security" and "national security" were used generously without definition and consensus on their meaning and in particular ideological connotation. The "security" and "national security" so canvassed by the academia in their publications were from their knowledge of what transpired under military rule and the political class they cloned. They did not seek to question the history, experience and reality of "security" and "national security" in existence and whether these derived from a national security policy. Indeed they did not question the purpose it serves in the lives of Nigerians.

<sup>4</sup> See Adoyi Onoja, "New and Evolving Trends at National and Global Security Arena", paper presented at the senior level manpower seminar, Department of State Services (DSS), at the Institute of Security Studies, , Usuna Dam, Bwari, Abuja, 21-26<sup>th</sup> November, 2016

<sup>5</sup> See Adoyi Onoja, "What is Wrong with Solutions to Insecurity in Nigeria"...

<sup>6</sup> See "Security Paradigms and the Nigerian Challenge"

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Abdullahi Mohammed of the Department of Public Administration asked the question.

<sup>8</sup> My thought then was that in a serious matter such as national security policy, should it be the task of someone to compile this bits and pieces to have a compendium? Did other national policies come about through this route?

It was the clearest indication of the absence of the moral will on the part of those who claimed to have knowledge of security theory and practice for Nigeria to admit their ignorance, the lack of security philosophy for Nigeria and proceed from that point to tackling the issue. Indeed the issue has been the preserve of the defence establishment which claimed monopoly on the issue of security. It is a firm and conclusive admission that Nigeria has no security policy and that in terms of security theory and practise, Nigeria has no direction.

The conclusion derived from the perspective on security and the routes to achieving this is three. The first one is the view that in pursuing security as all encompassing, it will produce the effect of having governance and law and order in the society. In other words, all encompassing security approach has the tendency to attaining governance of public sectors institutions. The net result of this development is the enhancement of law and order in the society. The second view is to argue that the pursuit of governance as security will produce security of the all encompassing type as well as law and order. Governance which is effective management of public institutions has the potential of producing security in the society. When there is security, there is law and order.

The third view is to argue that the pursuit of security as law and order, as the case is in Nigeria today, cannot produce all encompassing security and governance as security. In other words, security as law and order cannot produce all encompassing security with economic and other dimensions in this order. It will also not produce governance which entails effective and efficient administration of public institutions at all levels. The aim and objectives of security as law and order, as it works in Nigeria today, is solely geared to picking the pieces from the failure of all encompassing security and governance as security.