

A Perspective on General Lucky Irabor's "Contemporary Security Environment and National Development: Efforts of the Armed Forces" Lecture

On the 23rd August, 2022, I received a WhatsApp message from my friend with the title "NIIA is inviting you to a Scheduled Zoom Meeting". I read the message and dismissed the content as *de ja vu* in the annals of the failed and failing perspective on "security" in Nigeria.

Again, my friend personally drew my attention to the link and asked if I would link up. I was candid to inform him that there would be nothing out of the ordinary in the presentation and as such I won't be linking up. He persuaded me to listen as he intended to also listen. I didn't promise him I would. On the said day and feeling bugged down by the incessant rain droplets without electricity, I decided to hook up to the Zoom meeting and pass off the time. I became interested on seeing the advertised theme/topic – I didn't know which was which – and some ideas began to play inside my mind's eyes. I was glad I joined the Zoom meeting without which this article would not have come up.

There were two titles for the presentation to be delivered by General Lucky Irabor, the Chief of Defence Staff. The advertised title was "security, defence and development in Nigeria". This *title*, the *host* and the *presenter* sold out to me on the *de ja vu* nature of the day. In terms of what constitute "security, defence and development" in Nigeria, there has been only one narrative. This narrative was championed by military urged on by think tanks such as the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs and replicated by every Nigerian wannabe pundit of the state-external environment-military nexus of what is security, whose security, what is a security issue and how can security be achieved.

Penultimate 25th August day of the presentation, I joined the Zoom Meeting as the preparation for the presentation was ongoing. I noticed another title on the board reading "contemporary security environment and national development: efforts of the armed forces". Of the two titles – the one in the whatsapp and on the screen at the Institute – I thought the latter was the theme from the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) within which the Distinguished Lecturer's topic, the former, was hued.

I didn't need to wait long to know which was which of the two topics as the presenter himself, General Lucky Irabor, while introducing the lecture clarified the situation. General Irabor noted that he took the liberty to modify the title to "contemporary security environment and national development: efforts of the armed forces" from the original "security, defence and national development in Nigeria".

As this point I need to clarify on what I meant and noted somewhere on the *host*, *title* and *presenter* and the lack of originality of the presentation.

The *Host* is the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs. The mandate of the Institute is investigate and interrogate issues of Nigeria's development vis-a-vis its relations with the world at the sub-regional, regional and the global levels and to advise, where and if necessary, the government. It is Nigeria's foremost policy think tank in this sphere and to this extent the NIIA is modelled and operated more like similar think tanks of the developed world from where the idea emanated.

The Institute's operating environment, since it was established, was shaped by the predominance of military rule. Thus the Institute had little experience of operating under civil elected rule as is the case with other think tanks in Nigeria including and especially the National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS). The NIPSS in particular was created by the military government. In its entire existence, the NIIA experienced its longest operation under civil elected rule beginning in 1999. As far as the Institute's mandate and intervention in terms of investigating and interrogating issues of international types pertinent to Nigeria's domestic policy affairs, under civil rule framework, it has been a lacklustre experience of inconsequential consequences for Nigeria's development.

The Institute's interface is with the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) with the military as the governing authority on the one hand and on the other hand the protector of the state in the classical realist conceptions in its entirety even when the Nigerian environment did not belong in the classical realist tenets. As a result, there is degree of synergy between the NIIA and the military or the self-styled security and/or defence establishment. This is what I called the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE). In the context of the Institute's mandate on Nigeria's International affairs, the armed forces, as the guardian of the state, in the anarchic international system, work closely with each other in certain policy areas, in the pursuit of this objective.

However, in the light of Nigerians and Nigeria's extant realities before and particularly of the last twenty-three years, there has been little in the way of thinking outside the box, inside outside and outside inside and domesticating the mandate of the Institute in tandem with the changes evident in the polity locally and internationally. Thus the thinking, orientation and handling of issues of the NIIA do not reflect the history,

experience and reality (HER) of Nigerians and Nigeria and do not serve the needs of Nigerians and Nigeria since its creation.

In the coining and assigning of the original topic "security, defence and national development in Nigeria", what the NIIA hope to achieve that would be different from its fixated mandate, mindset and previous perspectives, was anyone's guess.

The modified title of the presentation "contemporary security environment and national development: efforts of the armed forces" was interesting in what it said and the lots it did not say, in the context of the preceding discourse of the host, its mandate and its relevance to an arguably changed and changing Nigerians and Nigeria.

One can discern independent and dependent variables in the *Title* and this is in the context of this presentation. Of these, the independent variable is SECURITY. The beginning of the conversation should be to ask the question what is security and embedded in this question are accompanying questions such as whose security, what is a security issue and how can security be achieved.

The others words in the *Title* are dependent variables. They included "contemporary", "environment", "national", "development" and effort". In the light of this, it is to ask what are contemporary, environment, national, development and what and whose effort. After addressing these questions, the next fundamental question is whose responsibility is it to determine "contemporary security environment..." in today's Nigeria.

The *Presenter* was General Lucky Irabor. The presentation was in his capacity as the Chief of Defence Staff of the Nigerian Armed Forces. He is a member of the military and specifically belongs to the army wing. The answers to these questions were informed by this background, the mandates of the armed forces particularly the military's role in enhancing internal political sovereignty by defending Nigeria's territorial integrity, in the supposed anarchic international system, and the belief and their portrayal – suspect and suspicious though – that there is imminent threat from outside that engenders their intervention, in Nigeria's domestic affairs. Amongst the constitutional provisions that justify the roles of the military include Section 5 subsection 5, Section 14 subsection 2B, Section 217 sub section 2A, 2B and 2C and any other references to "security", their preferred designation, as contained in the 1999 Constitution.

These issues were tackled from the perspective of the military by the General Irabor without recourse to the changes I referred to in the *Host* and the *Title*. Thus there were

plenty issues with the *Host*, *Title* and the *Presenter* in the context of the changes they deliberately chose to be oblivious to and/or lump into the worldview that drove their collective mandates - international affairs centred on the place of Nigeria and the place of military in safeguarding sovereignty by ensuring the enemies from outside were held at bay.

What are the changes that the *Host*, *Title* and *Presenter* chose not to reckon with, in order to drive their intervention, based on the needs of most Nigerians and Nigeria, in what should be truly Nigerians and Nigeria's "contemporary SECURITY environment"?

The first of the changes they - the NIIA and the Military - chose to ignore is in the independent variable called SECURITY or that which SECURE. To this extent and arising from this, the "contemporary security environment..." did not belong to the worldview that shaped the mandate of the military and the NIIA. The genesis of this development lies in the changed political environment beginning in 1999, the yearnings of most Nigerians for SECURITY different from "security" that occasioned this changed environment and above all else the 1999 Constitution's mandate for the new governing system.

The second of the changes reside in what constitute "national development" in the context of the new security defined, charted and governed based on the 1999 Constitution and in this the place of the military, intelligence and law enforcement in this national development.

The third of the changes arose from the "efforts of the armed forces" in "national development" under what should be the new security framework. This "efforts" I have repeatedly and consistently described as failed and failing every day and will continue to fail unless and until the military, intelligence and law enforcement find its place within the hierarchies of security needs of Nigerians as defined by the sovereigns mandate to the governing authority, the Constitution and the practice resulting thereof.

There is a wilful refusal on the part of the NIIA and the military to concede to the changed environment beginning in 1999 and that in the context of this changed environment, there is ocean-like difference between defence where they anchored their work and in which defence and security are synonymous and interchangeable and security which remained undefined, uncharted, ungoverned in the "contemporary environment".

The *Title's* are dependent variables included "contemporary", "environment", "national", "development" and effort". In the light of this, it is to ask what is contemporary, what is

environment, what is national, what is development, what and whose effort. After addressing these questions, the next fundamental question is whose responsibility is it to determine "contemporary security environment..." in today's Nigeria?

There are two frameworks for answering these questions. The first of the framework belonged to the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) security worldview. This worldview I have consistently and persistently described as out of date and thus failed and failing each time it was invoked as the "security" most Nigerians need, in the last twenty three years. This framework of "security" or that which secure was that of an agency of the government responsible for defence which once usurped political power.

Suffused in the aura of once-the-governing-authority, under whose watch the socialised perception of "security" took hold amongst most Nigerians, this agency of government has since refused to believe that its stake in governance is as enshrined in the constitution and thus not different from other agencies of government even if it is carrying gun. This agency is NOT the government and cannot and should not act as one in subtly insisting that its view of "security" is canon. This is what happens when Gecko, temporarily sharing the House, consequent on the ignorance, tolerance and/or the political economy factored into consideration by the Owner, begins to act as if it owns the House.

The MILE framework seeks to answer the question what is security, whose security, what is a security issue and how can security be achieved thus: security is the name and work of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE); the referent of security is the state and/or the ruling coalitions; anything and everything that enhance and/or threaten/undermine the state and/or the ruling coalitions and; security can be achieved using the resources of the military, intelligence and law enforcement.

In the last twenty three years, years that coincided with the period of democracy, the term "security" emerged as the self-styled preferred name (noun) and work (verb) of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE). Unlike when the military was the governing authority, the MILE, under representative rule and using the Office of the National Security Adviser, found new voice and power for itself and quadrupled its efforts to entrench, in numerous ways, its perspective of "security", including the publication of documents beginning with the 2014 *National Security Strategy*.

Within this context, "contemporary" would mean the last twelve to fourteen years of the intensification of the self inflicted and orchestrated crises and conflicts in the polity where the attention of the MILE as "security" is required courtesy of its role but specifically occasioned by Section 217 subsection 2C.

"Environment" refers to Nigeria, Nigeria within the purview of agencies of "security" or the MILE and the conditions of crises and conflicts prevalent and intensifying everyday. Therefore "contemporary security environment" could well have been "contemporary law and order environment" and/or "contemporary defence environment". This refers to the proliferating crises and conflicts within the work schedule of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE). The military refers to the three arms including the army, navy and air force; the intelligence refers to the three arms of domestic, defence and external agencies and; law enforcement begins with the police, civil defence, customs, immigration, drug agency etc.

In the context of the preceding, "national" embraced the entire country. The country is currently gripped by crises and conflicts which required fixing first ala Section 14 subsection 2B's "security..." is the primary purpose of government". The "security" refers to the name and onerous work of the military, intelligence and law enforcement whose accomplishment is sine qua non to the progress of every other sector in Nigeria. So, the MILE and the civil rule political elite, in their political economy of security, made most Nigerians to believe.

The "development" in question here could mean people going to their farms, markets and work places and to this extent conditional on the MILE engendering and proliferating the conditions contained in the second of the articles of Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution.

The "effort" is the tireless sacrifices of the military, intelligence and law enforcement in grappling with creating the conditions to enable farms, markets and works or "development" to take place.

The military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE), based on the preceding, is responsible for constructing and managing the "contemporary security environment" in Nigeria. The MILE did not talk about "contemporary defence environment" assuming it involves the military – the army, air force and navy. The MILE did not talk about the "contemporary law enforcement environment" assuming these issues falls within the purview of the police, civil defence, drug agencies etc. The MILE could have leverage on the hitherto existing hybrid operation of "contemporary law enforcement/defence environment" to push its case.

None of these matters except the designation "contemporary security environment" even as the entire anchors of the programme – the Master of Ceremony, the Director General of the NIIA, the Chairman and the Guest Lecturer on the one hand and the contributors on the other hand – struggled to distinguish between security, defence and law enforcement and particularly security and defence, in their interventions. Their struggles

to come to term with what is security as distinct from what is defence revealed the glaring "security situations of conflicts" in Nigeria.

The second framework of security or that which secure has remained undefined, uncharted and ungoverned. The responsibility for defining, charting and governing security i.e. what is security, whose security, what is a security issue and how can security be achieved is that of the elected government which would have clarified and rested the prevalence of the "security situations of conflicts". The responsibility for this is that of the legislatures primarily and the legislatures and executives if need be.

As government, they have the mandate, from the sovereigns and the Constitution, to determine SECURITY or that which SECURE and to provide this for the people. Their mandate covers the entire provisions of the Constitution as the government. Their conception of SECURITY or that which SECURE cannot and should not be the same as that of one agency of government operating based on sections of the Constitution which did not specify its functions as security or secure. The fifteen mentions of security in the 1999 Constitution as "national security" and/or "security" was associational and borne out of convenience of use. The schedule of the executive agencies of the military, intelligence and law enforcement contained their work prescription of defence, law enforcement, law and order maintenance and intelligence gathering.

When Nigerians voted for civil rule, they did so because their lives were not SECURED under military rule and military rule type security. The "security" they kicked against was the type provided by the MILE when they were the governing authority. Nigerians did not kick the MILE out of power, in their search for wholesome SECURITY or that which SECURE, in order to have the MILE, as agency under their elected government determine what should be security for the government they freely elected for the purpose of SECURING them.

It is the responsibility of the government through the legislatures to construct this SECURITY or that which SECURE based on the Constitution, mandate of the people, the pre-1999 yearnings for SECURITY in all of its ramification and within Nigeria's history, sociology and environment.

SECURITY or that which SECURE is political. Security is NOT defence which is professional. Security is NOT law enforcement which is professional. Security is UMBRELLA sheltering every other areas including defence and law enforcement. Security is FOREST and inside the forest there are trees that include defence and law enforcement trees. To this end, only the political authority, elected every four years, in the last twenty three years, by the sovereigns, can make the decision on what is security, whose security, what is a security issue and how can security be achieved. The decision on SECURITY

CANNOT and SHOULD NOT be sublet to and made by an agency (the military) or agencies (military, intelligence and law enforcement) of government whose constitutional mandates is defence, intelligence and law enforcement.

In the absence of philosophical, legal and policy framework on security, under civil rule, that ask and answer the question what is security, whose security, what is a security issue and how can security be achieved, I will use the framework that guide my intervention to address these questions. Security is wellbeing in all of its forms; the individual and group are the irreducible referent of wellbeing or security; any and every issue affecting the wellbeing or security of individual and group and; security or wellbeing can be achieved in the work of ministries, departments and agencies of government pursuing wellbeing or security as the vision and mission of their work.

To this extent, "contemporary" refers to the period beginning from 1999 to date. The framework of governance during this period is civil rule or rule by the people. "Security" is wellbeing in all of its forms and not just the physical safety of the state superimposed as the people. "Environment" refers to all the areas covered in the security is wellbeing in its entire forms framework. Therefore, "contemporary security environment" is the totality of the processes in place in the last twenty three years of representative rule that has not been able to SECURE most Nigerians.

In this context, "national" or what is "national" should refer to the sense and feeling of being member of a nation. The nation in question is the Nigerian nation. This sense and feeling should be endemic amongst the nationalities inside Nigeria which security is wellbeing in all of its forms engenders amongst Nigeria's nationalities. This will make crises and conflicts the exception and not the rule that the absence of this security enhances amongst nationalities.

The absence of security is wellbeing in all of its forms is the environment that the military, intelligence and law enforcement thrive on to justify their "security" vision and mission for Nigeria post military rule. Indeed the 1999 Constitution they designed is the first enabler of their desired environment. The second enabler of their desired environment is the dearth of governance or the effective and efficient utilisation of human and material resources for the benefit of most Nigerians at every level of government and in most if not all the ministries, departments and agencies of governments.

With security is wellbeing in all of its forms in place, what would constitute "development" would echo the Dudley Seers' question and answer of what is happening to poverty, inequality and unemployment. Accordingly, "if these have reduced overtime, then development has taken place." The purpose of pursuing security is wellbeing in all of its forms is to engender development which translates to the reduction and/or

elimination of poverty, inequality and unemployment amongst most Nigerians in Nigeria.

The "development" envisaged, in this context, would be the type Amartya Sen argued involve reducing deprivation or broadening choice. As Nafziger posited "deprivation represents a multidimensional view of poverty that includes hunger, illiteracy, illness and poor health, powerlessness, voicelessness, insecurity, humiliation, and a lack of access to basic infrastructure. These are the lots of most Nigerians, in the last twenty three years, engendering the persistence of the MILE security worldview.

The "effort" should be that of the governments, at all levels, through their ministries, departments and agencies, in engendering wellbeing or security, in their areas of specialty, in order to create and proliferate security is wellbeing in all of its forms. The "effort" should not be about one agency or multiple agencies that sees itself as "security" and without which there will be no farming, no market functioning and no work can operate and to this extent, the agency or agencies should have charge over the Nigerian treasury whenever and however they wants it in pursuit of the provision of "security". Nigeria is not in the middle Ages. Nigeria is NOT and has NEVER faced any imminent invasion from outside except those imagined into existence by the NIIA and the MILE. Nigeria is NOT a Pakistan, India, Iran, Ethiopia, Egypt, North Korea, South Korea etc with geopolitical conditions that prioritise the military, intelligence and law enforcement in the governance of their "security".

To sum this up, "contemporary security environment" describe the totality of the period from 1999 to date that should provide security or wellbeing in all of its forms for most Nigerians. In the context of General Lucky Irabor's discourse and as Chief of the Defence Staff, his intervention should provide the perspective that covers the schedule of his department in its efforts to complement the provision of wellbeing or security in all of its forms. General Irabor should have urged for the construction of the governing authority's security perspective and not to think their – MILE – security perspective is the perspective for Nigerians and Nigeria.

The construct of civil rule perspective of SECURITY or that which SECURE, which cannot depart from the security is wellbeing in all of its forms framework, however the prevailing failed and failing perspective of "security" serves their interest, in the ongoing political economy of security between operators of civil rule in the legislatures and executives and the elites of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE), cannot wait any longer as it endanger, in the short, medium and long term, the continuation and perpetuation of civil rule itself. General Lucky Irabor and his inks stand to benefit from

the process whichever way it goes as they continue to fill the void with their "security" worldview because nature abhors vacuum.

The Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) and the Military, Intelligence and Law Enforcement (MILE) particularly the military wing will continue their immobility and fixation on their make-believe past centred on their mandates on the state, external environment and the military. The pursuit of this mandate flourished when the military was the governing authority.

To this end, they – NIIA and MILE – will find it difficult to adjust to the realities unfolding in the longest period of civil rule including the revelation that this worldview did not contribute to the debate on what is security, whose security, what is a security issue and how can security be achieved in the project to democratise and proliferate SECURITY and SECURING most Nigerians. They will continue to wish that Nigeria has the Pakistan, Iran, Ethiopia, Israel, North Korea, Saudi Arabia etc geopolitics fitting their conception of security and the place of the military in order to engender their collective enterprise against the making of new Nigerians and Nigeria using security is wellbeing in all of its forms.

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