

Minister Lai Mohammed's Town Hall Meeting on "National Security"

What has Minister Lai Mohammed town hall meetings since the inception of this All Progressives Congress government in 2015 achieved? What informed the choice of topic for the meetings? What method(s) do the discourses take? Are there Nigerian consensuses on the themes slated for discourses in the town hall meetings?

I asked these questions because the recent town hall meeting in Kaduna had national security as the theme for discourse. I was not aware that there was consensus on national security in Nigeria. Of the two words in national security – national and security – I was not aware of Nigerian consensus on any.

What is security? What is national? What then is national security? What was Minister Lai Mohammed's national security? What was Governor Nasir el-Rufai's national security? What was their guest speakers' national security? What was the audiences' national security? In the absence of any conscious and indigenously formulated philosophy of security and/or national security, was there consensus on national security in their deliberations?

For reasons connected more to the "Nigerian factor" and taking advantage of developments on the international scene of different dimensions to the Nigerian response, security and/or national security gained unparalleled currency in Nigeria's affairs. As a convergence of two currents, national security lacked grounding in Nigerian-wide conception of security and national.

The word security not only has history that started in the mid-15th century Europe. The Latin and English origins of word did not disguise its meanings. This is barring the country-specific construction and pursuit of security philosophy. In Latin, security is "securitas" and "securus" and in English, security is "secure". In the former, it is the "condition of being secure" and "free from care" and in the latter, it is "feeling no apprehension". The developed world not only moved to domesticate these in their affairs. They ensured they embedded security as central in their enterprises abroad. They developed world invoked security outside their borders because two-third if not more of that which is security lies outside their borders. The projection of military power, outside their borders, served as instrument for advancing, protecting, getting and delivering security to the people back home.

The decision by most Nigerians to kick out military rule in 1999 and return civil elected rule had an unconscious quest for security in all of its forms embedded in it even if undefined. Nigerians rejected the military type security for security in all its forms that they hoped civil elected rule would deliver to them. The civil elected authority instead reinstated the primacy of "conditions of not being secure", "worries from lack of care" and "feeling of complete apprehensions" in their rule. This is especially the case since 2015. As remediation, civil elected rule invited the military that most Nigerians kicked out as responsible for these conditions as the sole strategy for creating "condition of being secure", "free from care" and "feeling no apprehension."

Years down the road, these conditions – complete apprehensions, worries from lack of care and conditions of not being secure – have heightened as "security" and/or "national security" failed, is failing and continues to fail. Minister Mohammed's town hall meeting in Kaduna did not ask the question what was security, whose security, what was a security issue and how can security be achieved with the audience. Or preferably, Minister Mohammed's town hall meeting did not ask the question what was national security, whose national security, what was a national security issue and how can national security be achieved with his audience. Minister Mohammed's town hall meeting was called to continue the monologue on national security as with security and to blame unknown forces for the possible disintegration of Nigeria.

The currency of security and/or national security jumped to the roof in the last two decades. The absence of consensus on security, national and/or national security did not deter this currency. Arguably there were two sides to the coin of the national security that was the subject of Minister Mohammed's meeting. The first was Minister Mohammed's conception of national security as the representative of the All Progressives Congress government at the federal level. The second conception of national security was the snippets from the various phases of security and/or national security experienced by audience in the town hall meeting.

These two conceptions of national security itself came from somewhere where Minister Mohammed and his audience experienced their first initiation into security and/or national security. The popular conception of security and/or national security, of the two conceptions emanating from the developed world of the United States and Europe, provided the first grit of education on security and/national security for most Nigerians including Minister Lai Mohammed.

Of the international conceptions of security and/or national security, the one that projected the power of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) surpassed, for Nigeria and other developing countries, the purpose for the deployment of the MILE by the developed countries behind this security and/or national security. For the United States and Europe, the representation of national security and security in the military, intelligence and law enforcement is for power and purpose contained in the MILE for advancing, protecting and getting security anywhere and everywhere in the world. For Nigeria's officialdom, the power of the MILE is the fountain foundation of Nigeria's conception of security and/or national security.

The credit for the socialisation of most Nigerians including Minister Mohammed into the MILE conception of security and/or national security goes to the military governments in Nigeria. The MILE conception of security ought to have ended with the rejection by most Nigerians of this conception of security and/or national security following the enthronement of representative rule in 1999. The civil elected governments have refused to have roundtable conversation on security and/or national security with most Nigerians to address the question of what security and/or national security should be under representative rule.

Minister Lai Mohammed meeting did not explain security and/or national security to the invited audience. It was doubtful the conveners and the audience have the same conception of security and/or national security. It was plausible the conveners assumed everyone including their audience knew national security. It did not matter to the conveners that there were many versions of national security were on parade in this meeting that required harmonisation. Arguably, since Minister Mohammed was the lead salesman joined by Governor el-Rufai, Minister Mohammed and Governor el-Rufai's national security versions were the products sold to the audience.

The choice of Kaduna State as the venue of the meeting was auspicious in itself. Kaduna State under Governor Nasir el-Rufai is the hotbed of most of the un-Nigerian affairs that came in the wake of the APC administration in 2015. Governor el-Rufai is at the centre of these un-Nigerian affairs. Curiously, one of the issues that dominated the meeting was the disintegration of Nigeria. Kaduna State and the activities of Governor el-Rufai did set that ball rolling on the plan dismemberment of Nigeria by the All Progressives Congress since it came to power in 2015.

The entire issues that formed Minister Mohammed, his guest speakers and his audience conception of national security were created by the All Progressives Congress since it came to power in 2015. The abysses that stir most Nigerians in the face were in the plots orchestrated by the coalition making up the APC. To call this particular town hall meeting as Minister Mohammed did and to slate national security as the issue of discourse was to cry wolf when the Minister and his Party were the wolves pouncing voraciously on every bit of that which is Nigerian since 2015.

Beyond the united resolve to capture political power, the APC coalition ab initio had different focus on how to use power. The President and by no means his handlers amidst the prospect of presidency without identifiable platform hurriedly composed and constituted the three point agenda. The President and his handlers committed to using his and their slice of the power to: secure Nigeria, fight a relentless war against corruption and revamp the economy to create opportunity for the youths.

Securing Nigeria became the only item of governance for the APC led government at the federal level. The governments of the APC and the PDP joined this onerous task securing Nigeria from where security and national security were ensconced because of its political economic value. Securing Nigeria is the source of national security to which Minister Mohammed devoted his latest town hall meeting. After all Section 14 subsection 2b of the 1999 Constitution in Chapter II Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy made "security" and/or national security - for the added emphasis on national - the purpose of government nay the sole purpose of government.

The Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) ruled and stole for sixteen years and lost the appetite for governance because its functionaries had amassed so much stolen money they had trouble managing the loots. The All Progressives Congress (APC) has been stealing creatively, consistently and persistently in the less than seven years it has been in power. The APC's perfection of creative heist of Nigerians commonwealth built on what the PDP began. In the last six years of their rule, they have perfected the craft of using "security" and/or "national security" to loot public funds. To justify this, the military is in 34 states and consolidating. The APC reengineered political violence and thuggery and the project of restoring "security" and "peace" to drive their security and/or national security narrative to facilitate their theft of resources. The APC completely abandoned all forms of governance for just "security" and "national security" in all states and the federal level.

The All Progressives Congress leveraged on the Covid 19 pandemic to create the platforms for looting Nigeria's fund. They were joined by the PDP in the states they controlled. Their provision of palliatives in three tiers of governments enriched the political bosses, the ministries, departments and agencies and the military, intelligence and law enforcement in the less than one year lockdown. In this they reaped the country of over N2 trillion on the palliatives which they re-looted and stored in warehouses until Nigerians forced their hands to reveal their primitive accumulations. They are still counting with money devoted for vaccine. The APC is progressively mortgaging Nigeria to Chinese loan for infrastructures that are substandard to say the least. In these the executives and the legislatures at all levels are partners in the planned post Nigeria vision of the APC.

Nigeria, under the All Progressives Congress watch, occupied bottom position in major indexes measuring progress in different governance sectors in the world. This is regardless of Minister Mohammed's protestations. A look at the government's own Bureau of Statistics should have convinced the government that the international indexes were not far off the marks. Nigeria is the preeminent poverty capital of the world; created and owned the 4th deadliest terrorist group that now complements the raw material for security and/or national security sole governance agenda; has the most out-of-school children as ready recruits for the political economy of security and/or national security; ignored and/or silenced its law enforcement from enforcing the legislations passed by some states against open grazing to complement the raw material for security and/or national security; killed what was left of most productive activity in the economy, setting off the most aggressive inflation to hit the livelihoods of most struggling Nigerians in the last twenty years, in their non-regenerative and unproductive deployment of scarce foreign currency; all but forgotten it created the three point agenda platform and reneged on all; and in the process failed and is failing the Dudley Seers' test for development quadrupling poverty, inequality and unemployment.

Yet Minister Mohammed spoke national security and pointed accusing finger on Others as responsible. Minister Mohammed forgot that to "secure", "securitas", "securus" or security from whence the APC added "national" to make "national security" - denoting the existential nature of their self-constructed and inflicted threats - meant to significantly decrease poverty, inequality and unemployment that most Nigerians experienced daily prior to 2015 and intensively since 2015. The APC-induced poverty, inequality and unemployment caused apprehensions, feeling of absence of care and conditions of not been secured amongst most Nigerians. This is the SECURITY and/or NATIONAL SECURITY that Minister Mohammed and the APC should tackle in their governance.

Minister Lai Mohammed's town hall meeting merely stated the government's side on national security. There has never been the opportunity for Nigerians to state their case on the security they voted for beginning in 1999. So, when Minister Lai Mohammed and his host Governor Nasir el-Rufai talked national security, it was to plead their case before Nigerians and to protect their right freely given by most Nigerians when they voted them into office, to continue to rip Nigeria off as they planned for post Nigeria.