

On Alliance: Nigeria, Others and the French Intervention on Boko Haram

The subject from last Saturday's class was Institutions. Under Institutions, the class focused on the issue of alliance, regional institutions and the United Nations as one among the how or strategy for attaining security. From the beginning, the class set out to address the four fundamental questions (4FOs) of security as outlined by P.D. Williams in his book *Security: an Introduction*.

In answering these questions from the point of view of the West – Europe and America – with established security and security studies tradition, I offered to use discourses from their experience and practices to speak to the uncharted and ungoverned security space of Nigeria. Nigeria's "security" space, I argued, lacked philosophy, legislation and policy frameworks.

The absence of these frameworks negates the emergence of security in Nigeria and thus the practice of security studies by scholars. Security Studies in particular would use these platforms – philosophy, legislation and policy – to investigate, interrogate and theorise security in Nigeria. In view of these lacunas, it is necessary to begin to put issues of "security" in Nigeria in perspective using the established security tradition of the West.

In the class in question, I discussed alliance formation as one strategy used by countries to attain their security objectives; that alliance is a formal/informal and bilateral/multilateral relationship of security cooperation among sovereign countries. I proceeded to argue that there were two theories of alliance formation to include international and domestic determinants. The former was derived from the realist tradition and argued that countries form alliance in order to pull their military capabilities together to improve their security position. This was in the condition of balance of power.

The domestic determinant argued that threat perception, itself derived from vulnerability perception, depended on the internal characteristics of countries. Thus domestic determinants of alliance focused on similarities and differences in the culture, ideologies and political institutions of countries. From this view, the argument is that countries would align to others whose political orientations are similar. It is more likely that dictatorship, monarchies and liberal democracies would align with each other on the basis of similarities rather than differences of their institutions.

I cited couple of examples to buttress the international and domestic determinants of alliance formation. From the domestic determinants type I cited the formation of the D8 or Developing 8 Group in the mid to late 1990s. The D8 included Nigeria, Turkey, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia and Pakistan countries whose political institutions were anything but democratic at a time the West was focused on globalising

the democracy ideologies. It was these countries perceived vulnerabilities and thus threats that informed their decision to come together in order to improve their security in the face of the United States and the West.

During the interlude of questions and answers, one student – a female – asked a question whether it was possible to regard the alliance formed by the countries bordering the Boko Haram axis as based on one of the two determinants. It was an interesting question not only because the alliance against Boko Haram did not fall within the two determinants. The question provided an opportunity to speak to the uncharted and ungoverned security space not only in Nigeria (the Nigerian situation being of prime interest to me) but also to the region since I would like to assume that the same uncharted and ungoverned security space problem bedevilled these countries.

Let me note that the push to form the alliance was not muted by any of the countries – Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroun – bordering the Boko Haram area even when, on the surface, the security in question and to which they espoused necessitated this alliance. I cannot rule out the possibility that each of the countries may have tried to form such an alliance and failed and/or it was also possible that none of the countries saw any need to form the alliance.

The push to form the alliance came from France, a former colonial master to three of the four countries. France is one country with established security tradition and with security interests to protect and advance all over the world including the West African region. Since these security interests were threatened by Boko Haram, France felt the need to push for the formation of the alliance.

The most important security interest for France is its economic interest spread across these countries but in particular Niger Republic where Ariva, a French company control the Uranium mines. Aside from this interest, France may have acted on behalf of the European Union whose southern borders extend to the West African sub-region particularly Mali and the activities of Boko Haram could spell problem for the EU in its attempt to curtail migration, drugs, weapons, militants of diverse persuasions in the Sahel and access to uranium in the Nigerien mines.

The inability of these countries to form alliance is not only reminder to their peripheral status as far as security is concerned. Their exposure to this security fits into the model that lacks indigenous origins and frameworks. Their reception of security is taken from globalised security model of Europe and America making where they served as appendages to fulfilling Europe and America's security objectives. The French brokered alliance activated the logistics of security i.e. the Military, Intelligence and Law Enforcement (MILE) of these countries, the only security known to the countries of

Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroun, in the service of French security pursuit – a pursuit primarily driven by economic interests.

The French brokered alliance on Boko Haram did not fall into the international determinant theory of alliance formation. This is because the countries concerned are not players in the state-military-external environment security model that drives the pursuit of national interest by the developed countries of the world outside their national boundaries. Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroun did not see any need to combine their military capabilities in order to improve their security since they have no national interests couched in security interests to pursue beyond their national boundaries. These countries have always served the security objectives of these developed countries because they have no economic interests, the prime driver of security for developed countries, beyond their borders to protect and/or advance.

The French brokered alliance against Boko Haram did not fall under the domestic determinants of alliance formation either. While these countries – Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroun shared the similarities of being electoral democracies (the minimalist requirement of democracy), desirous of safeguarding the regimes in power and are vulnerable and thus threatened by the Boko Haram menace, they either never felt this sufficiently and/or are too deeply divided and lacking in initiative to initiate the process of working together to checking this menace on their own turf until the French intervened.

The French intervention was not to assist these countries. All or most security cooperation between developed countries and countries of sub Saharan Africa are almost always at the instance of these developed countries with security interests and objectives to protect or advance. In most, if not all cases of this security cooperation, the developing countries come to the table of security cooperation with the only idea of security they knew via the globalised security orientation they learned from these developed countries. This security was built out of the history, experience and reality of these developed countries.

The developing countries have no security idea developed from their history, experience and reality and no philosophy, legislation and policy on the "security" they subscribe to. They have never been known to initiate such security cooperation arising from their own needs. They, as I argued in one of my post, are in the security cooperation to hold the cow (their countries) down to enable those (developed countries) behind the security cooperation to milk the cow.

Holding their countries which is the function of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) is the single line philosophy of security they understand and nothing

else. This sold out perspective of security fits into the role carved out for these countries by the countries behind this globalised security perspective. This role fits into the second phase - provision of the logistics of security - for these developed countries by these developing countries. And in return, the political and MILE elite or the coalition in power can maintain their hold on power by getting recognition from these developed countries, funding and military hardware often the discarded types. The discarded military hardware comes with a catch: the parts to service the hardware will have to be imported from the benefactors to keep them working. This, in itself, further enhances the benefactors' security interest the more.

The French intervention was to protect and advance the several security interests of the French and the EU. Where these countries benefited from the French intervention, it was incidental. The so-called benefit is not the primary purpose of the French. The primacy of the incidental benefit is to the extent that the French need these countries governments to be strong to work in the direction of protecting and advancing their security interests.

Unless Nigeria wakes up to the reality that what it calls "security" is playing its role in the fulfilment of the security interests of the developed partners since Nigeria has no idea of security let alone having one of its own making that meets its history, experience and reality (HER), Nigeria cannot be in a position to broker the type of alliance the French intervention brokered between Nigeria and its neighbours even as the problem in question - Boko Haram - originated from Nigeria. The Boko Haram issue is beyond the "security" model Nigeria is familiar with. With this mindset, Nigeria will never be in a position to initiate security cooperation of its own from its need based on the desire to protect and advance its security interests.

The prevailing practice Nigeria describe as "security" failed, is failing and will continue to fail because it is not the security Nigerians and Nigeria need. This "security" is empty of Nigeria's history, experience and reality (HER). The sole content of this "security" serve the needs of the developed countries pushing this phase of security on the one hand and the Nigerian political and MILE elite on the other hand.

The tragedy of the Nigeria experience is that the political and MILE elite behind this "security" are not students of history. Most Nigerians, by political design, are not students of history. If the political and MILE elite and most Nigerians are students of history, they will not persist in continuing to foist and accept this failed "security" model bereft of the nature, meaning and purpose of Nigeria over and over each time it failed.