

On "Security" is "wide" and the State of the Class's "end-state" from the Course: Issues from the Inaugural Class of Seminar on National Security Policy Saturday 24:08:19

I noted that the course Seminar on National Security Policy should and will be interactive. It is a graduate programme for persons experienced enough in the public and private sector to contribute to growing knowledge for the benefit of the society. To this extent and considering the uncharted and virgin territory that is security in most if not all ramification in Nigeria, we cannot afford not to share experiences within the bounds of defined knowledge as it applies to Nigeria.

Following my setting the stage in the class, two members of the class made observations that are worth investigating and interrogating. The first was from the member of the class who seemed reluctant to submit his script following the test. When I asked if he had not finished, he noted that you cannot finish writing on "security" because "security" was "wide".

The second observation followed my statement concerning the course's end-state where I referred to the experience of previous classes. I informed the class that depending on the two objectives set out in the course, the class will either study the existing security policy if there was one to determine if it was achieving the objectives of security as set out in the policy and if it was not make input for improvement for submission or if there was no security policy, draft one for submission to the Institute at the end of the class.

To the second observation, another class member quickly intervened to offer the experience of his work place, the National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies under the office of the Vice President. The Institute's participants are expected to use their ten months to study issues and at the end of the day make submission that will guide government's policies and programmes. According this class member, this has not been happening as submissions from participants have been serially ignored and have not formed part of policies and programmes.

Let me begin with the first observation that "security" is endless and that one cannot finish writing on "security" because "security" is wide. There is always this conflict between perception and reality. This is the case with "security" in Nigeria. For now and as is the case with most issues straddling perception and reality, perception is always winning – seemingly until the contrary is proved. "Security" in Nigeria is in this situation.

The class must first determine what this "security" is in order to establish perception from reality. This was the exercise I problematised in the class and to which I noted the course seminar on national security policy was about. I argued that there were four questions that would be answered in the course. They are what is national security policy, whose

national security policy, what are the issues in national security policy and how can national security policy be achieved. I drew the class's attention to the need to disaggregate the words in the title of the course and determine each on its own merit. The key words are "national", "security" and "policy". Of these words, one is the independent variable and the others are the dependent variables. The independent variable is security. The dependent variables are national and policy. I also noted that the class will have to ask and answer the four fundamental questions of security – what is security, whose security, what is security issue and how can security be achieved. These four questions are sine qua non to answering those contained in the national security policy. The reason is that security and nothing else is the issue here.

The question to ask is: how did this member of the class know that writing about "security" is an endless exercise that one never finishes, if I get his point correctly? What is this "security"? From where did the idea that "security" is wide come from? Is it from perception or reality? If it is from perception, has it been established by the reality? If the assertion emanated from reality, whose reality is it? Did this reality come from knowledge and in fact indigenous knowledge?

One would notice that I put security in quotation mark. This quotation mark referenced what transpired as security in Nigeria. As you may have observed particularly from the pamphlet *Roads Untravelled...*, if you have read the pamphlet, this "security" has plenty lacuna that required filling including philosophy, policy, legislation and scholars and scholarships. Thus putting this security in quotation mark is treading carefully.

In countries – mostly in Europe and the United States – where security has been defined and pursued in policies, programmes and in scholarships for several decades, one is not likely to hear assertion such as one never finish talking about security and it is not "wide" and endless in discourse. The United States of America know what security is and so do the citizens of the United States of America. As is usual with most things America, security is customised. Security is known as national security.

The legislation creating the philosophical, policy and legal bases of national security in America was passed into law by the congress in 1947. This is the national security act. The first three questions of security – what is security, whose security and what is security issue have remained constant since the legislation came into existence in 1947. What has changed and is changing is the last question – how can security be achieved. This is because each government has its method of achieving the first three questions and for the incumbent Mr. Donald J. Trump, it is putting "America First" and this is contained in the strategy his government unveiled recently.

This is what is missing in Nigeria. This is why "security" is endless and "wide". If Nigeria had addressed the philosophical, policy and legislative issue confronting "security", the engagement with "security" will be concise and precise whether by government officials, individuals and/or people in the academia. The lack of these frameworks leaves "security" as a blank cheque.

Let me use a hypothetical situation to drive home this point. If in answering the four fundamental questions of security, Nigeria is to define what is security as wellbeing, whose security as Nigerians, what is security issue as every area that enhance wellbeing and how can security be achieved as all ministries, departments and agencies using their mandate to pursue wellbeing in their field of specialisation, a parameter would have been created for engagement on security.

The implication of this is that every ministry, department and agency's policy must and will have security objective taken from the security policy of the country for attainment in its area of jurisdiction. The observation regarding "security" as "wide" and endless will not arise. It is because this framework does not exist that this assertion becomes tenable.

"Security" in Nigeria for now is a BLANK CHEQUE. As a blank cheque, Nigerians with means particularly those presiding over this "security" today are taking advantage of the blank cheque to fill in the sums they desire. This is the atmosphere that informed this statement on "security".

What is your take? What do you think?

As to the issue of what happened to the previous end-states of the course and what will happen to the present one, it is a sad reflection of the perception and reality of governance in Nigeria. Those in power and authority view their position as the end of wisdom in matters of governing the public space. To this extent, they have maintained their distance from input from the academia towards addressing challenges in the country. Nowhere is this attitude most prevalent than in the system called democracy.

After two decades of representative rule and in comparative terms, the military should take the credit of utilising the best brains in Nigeria's tertiary institutions to drive its policies and programmes for the country. The regime of General Ibrahim Babangida stands out in this respect. The attitude of not engaging scholars and scholarships within the country's educational sector for solutions to problems by members of the executive and legislature is legendary.

The legislature in Nigeria is central to the success and/or failure of governance considering their role as idea generators for the executive. The period 1999 to present did not demonstrate their preparedness to take on the issue of making policies into laws for

the governance of the country. They have refused to grow out of the shadow of the executive. How often do they utilise indigenous solutions emanating from the universities to tackling problems of the country in their committees? In the package that constitute their emolument, certain percentage have been set aside for the engagement of specialists in the different sectors of the public spheres from the tertiary institutions in order for them to tap into their expertise to facilitate legislation for the governance of the country. Do these legislators use this fund for the purpose for which it is appropriated? Indeed how often do the executive and legislature even use institutions they created for particular purpose to accomplish this purpose? The intervention from the member of the class concerning the seeming irrelevance of the National Institute, Kuru, is one pointer to the reality of governing without the input of expert knowledge.

This is also not different from the pervading and growing attitude replete in the public sector where officials have converted their place and position into opportunities for themselves away from the purpose it is meant for. The attitude of "wait for your time" is the governing mantra in the public service. This attitude ensures that those who bow out of the service have no input again in areas where they have developed expertise over several years. Their experiences are wasted as those they left behind would not want to have anything to do with them. Recall the recent withdrawal of security clearance for former officials in the United States of America by President Trump. This action was instigated by their so-called criticism of President Trump's policies. The development demonstrated that even in retirement these officials' experiences were valued. This is rarely the case in Nigeria.

As regard the class's end-state, it is an intellectual exercise that will go on regardless of whether it is useful to the authority or not. As a class, we have a responsibility and we will accomplish this responsibility. As I noted in the class, Nigeria is not static. Since the enthronement of representative rule in 1999, attitude is changing gradually and incrementally. There will come the day when people with heads on their necks will take the studies and solutions in the country's tertiary institutions serious in driving governance.

In the realm of "security" and considering some of the issues raised in *Roads Untravelled: a guide to the state of security and security studies in Nigeria*, there is need to first create the critical mass that will sell the ideas that will emerge from the interactions on the programme. Creating the critical mass include investing in resources on security studies to develop self first in order to be in the position to challenge existing knowledge. Creating the critical mass include mainstreaming one's background in whatever field into security through innovation and creativity. Creating the critical mass include leveraging on the graduates from the programme to push through their views using advocacy. One strategy

to accomplishing this is to create lobby group in the executive and/or legislature to sell the products from their scholarships for possible application in governance.

What is your take? What do you think?