

## Raising Issues in Connection to the Programme "Security and Strategic Studies" and the Course "Seminar on National Security Policy": Takes from the Last Class

The class entertained issues/observations/comments from members towards the tail end of the period allotted for the class. The ranged from those that spoke in support of the military stabilising the country following the mess the political class created; the military providing opportunity for free speech for all and sundry; military regimes gave professors platforms to be part of the governments; professors' not criticising the democratic regime's malfeasance as much as they did during military rules and; that professors were not sacrosanct after all as they were neck deep in politics including rigging elections as returning officers.

These comments/observations/issues were seldom raised in the context of the programme "security and strategic studies", the course "seminar on national security policy" and in the search for "security" and/or "national security" policy framework. They represented reactions against the seemingly mistaken impression that members of the academia were above board in the mess the country found itself.

It should be remembered that the issues I addressed in the class were at the instance of the lectures and nothing else. There is nothing personal and/or class about the issues I investigate and interrogate in the course of my class interactionsto warrant the often barely disguised angry unrelated rebuttal from some class members. However, the expletives are welcomed in whatever guise they come as they provide raw material for continuous engagements.

Of these issues/comments/observations, one caught my attention and deserved my response. This is in the belief that my response would aid the purpose of this programme in general and this course in particular.

A member of the class had asserted that the military had always kept to its task within the constitution; that the presence of the military was the result of the invitation extended to it by the political class and; that there was a department of civil-military relations that handled issues between the military and the civilians.

The view is not new in Nigeria of the last twenty two years. The view represented the reaction of the military to the heat in the kitchen so to say. The last time I heard this same comment that the presence of the military was at the behest of the political authority was when I attended the conference of the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN)<sup>1</sup> at the Nigeria Army Resource Centre. I was among the panelists on the topic "security". This view was expressed at

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<sup>1</sup> "A Reflection on "Security" in Nigeria from the Perspective of Peter Eke's Two Publics Theory", text of paper presented at the 65<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) conference on the theme "Nigeria at 60: Trials, Triumphs and Trajectories", 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> October 2020, Nigeria Army Resource Centre, Abuja

part of the response of retired Major General Abdulwahab, the chairman of the Panel and the Director General of the Centre.

The view that “we – military – were invited by the civil authority” – is popular amongst members of this profession and smell of the feeling of indispensability in the process in place in the last twenty two years on one hand and on the other hand a disclaimer to the effect that without this invitation we would have remained in our barracks. This view only told one part of the story. The other part is the focus of this piece.

In starting this conversation from the beginning, it is to note that the military had never kept to its constitutional role. Beginning in 1966, they violated their constitutional role by interfering in politics. They repeated this interference on different occasions until 1999 when external and internal forces compelled them to relinquish political power albeit reluctantly.

Military interference in politics became rapacious in the decades of the 1980s and 1990s. This was aside from the virulent intrigues of the factions jostling for power and influences that so polarised the ranks of the military especially during the rule of General Sani Abacha. There were short, medium and long term implications of the military’s presence in politics on persons and institutions in the country. One of these was that those that enlisted into the services in the period – mid 1980s to late 1990s – did this for other reasons than to defend the fatherland.

With the realisation that the sun was setting on military rule, the military commenced the process of reinventing themselves. In doing this, they were not unconscious of the political role they enjoyed playing that would be jeopardised by the inroad of civil rule. Henceforth, playing this role would be through the backdoors. They accomplished this backdoor relevance through the type of constitution they bequeathed Nigeria and in the content of the constitution. Their view about the “imperfections” of the Constitution was because they were hurried off the political stage in 1999. With their obsession with strategy, they were not oblivious of the political blood that has come to define their existence since 1966. Thus their hasty departure did not affect the plan they had for themselves. The rest is history.

The 1999 Constitution represented the number one booby trap the military left behind that ensured they remained relevant in the body politics of Nigeria twenty two years after. The 68 provisions of the Constitution constituted enough booby traps for the civil authority in place since 1999. The Constitution and the structure of the country were fashioned on the command disposition of the military. This is in a country of diversities and where democracy is the governing framework. Any wonder the country is harvesting crisis and conflict! (See my Facebook post on “In Search of Immortality: the 1999 Constitution’s 68 provisions as Booby Trap Extraordinaire” of 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021)

The second area that ensured the military remained constant in the politics of this country even as the pretentiously claimed the political class would not let them remain in their barracks has something to do with the state of persons and institutions they helped to create and bequeath. They may have created institutions in the course of their unsolicited rulership and patriotic zeal to salvage the country from chaos – chaos they helped orchestrated. They also destroyed institutions and persons in their neglect and/or willful mismanagement. Their trademark destruction began with the family where in their inability to provide for persons, they instituted the progressive erosion of the centrality of family in laying the foundation for order in the community.

As if this was not enough they assaulted the police by underfunding, ill equipping and neglecting their welfare. The decayed and decaying state of the police was the trademark signature of military rules. The Shagari government was on the threshold of making the police the de-facto guardian of law and order and of democracy in Nigeria. This is the trend the world over. Mr. President worked with seasoned police officers including Mr. Sunday Adewusi, the Inspector General, to accomplish this.

The military was not happy with the development. The military saw and knew the implications of what was coming. They intervened in 1983 not because the political class was profligate with public resources as they claimed. Their record of misuse of fund had since dwarfed the political class in comparison. They intervened because a counterforce to their persistent meddling in politics was in the work. The police have not recovered from this intervention. The police, judging from the trend in the last twenty two years, may not recover for the foreseeable future. Therein lies the stage for the military!

The police graduated from one crisis to another leaving the force in its present state. The military was, either advertently or inadvertently, creating a place for itself. In subsequent crisis of law and order, the police performed poorly because the baselines for police effectiveness – strong and working institutions beginning with the family – were undermined by the effect of military rule.

There developed the psychology of violence among most Nigeria where only violence appealed to violence. The military is the manager of violence. Most Nigerians did not understand the functional difference between military – army, navy air force – and law enforcement – the police, civil defence etc. in their engagement based on their mandates. The military destroyed this distinction as the deployment of its resources seemingly contained and resolved the persistent crisis and conflict in the polity in comparison to the police. This was what I referred to as the search for immortality for the military. They have since occupied this place of immortality as they are presently in 34 out of 36 states on law enforcement duties albeit courtesy of Section 217 subsections 2c and 2d. (See my Facebook post on “in

search of immortality: the Nigeria Military's booby traps for Nigeria's Democracy 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021)

The psychology for preferring military resources as opposed to law enforcement resources of the police by most Nigerians in the management of disorder was two-ways. It was first on the individual Nigerian and second on the political class. The latter began life as individual before the move into the vocation of politics. As individual, they were brutalised, like most other Nigerians, by the military in their destruction of persons and institutions.

As the political class, the history of the travails of Nigeria's civil control of the political system was enough repositories of resources for them to look for ways of accommodating the military in order to remain in control. The blood of politics has taken hold of the military beyond their sworn oath to battle Nigeria's external enemies. This is where the idea of "security" and/or "national security" took on a life of its own in the last twenty two years (see my Facebook post on "in search of immortality: the Nigeria Military's booby traps for Nigeria's Democracy 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021)

With a repository full of the haunting experiences of the political class in the hands of the military and a now wounded and threatening military thoroughly politicised in spite of pretension to submitting to civil control, there was every reason for the political class to seek accommodation for them in the present political process. Thus Section 217 subsections 2c and 2d justify the role of the military inside Nigeria. It is not a role that is about to abate with the state of persons and institutions including the law enforcement institutions. With the military settled using this section, the political class built its own interest using Section 14 subsection 2b.

Both parties' – political and military classes – obsession with "security" and/or "national security" is unending in the last twenty two years. They have taken "security" and/or "national security" to a dizzy height. The political class – executives and legislatures – as the governing authority continuously reminded Nigerians that the single most important role of any government was to secure lives and properties – Section 14 subsection 2b. The Constitution has decreed! The political class continued to SECURITISE – securitisation!!

This is Section 14 subsection 2b in practice. This is the birth of "security" and/or "national security". With a captive audience suffused in the prevailing one-off narrative of "security" and/or "national security" as the work of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) in containing crisis and conflict, the ideological underpinning of this and the consequent demand for fund for "security" and/or "national security" require no other justification.

We should remind ourselves that in the context of our engagement in this place, issues we raised should assist in furthering knowledge and not interest. This way we will grow ideas that will impact and improve persons and institutions to the benefit most if not all.

Security is one idea in need of our collective intervention in this direction.