

"Security": Nigeria's Permanent Political Economy?

Let me begin by observing that the title of this article was inspired by the recent headlines of news outlets one of which was captioned "FG raises alarm over Boko Haram threat to attack Nigeria with nuclear weapons". The Nigeria authorities had warned that Boko Haram was planning to deploy chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons to attack targets in the country. This was in furtherance of Boko Haram's war with the state in Nigeria.

In making this pronouncement, one in the series that characterised the government, since the fight against what it variously described as terrorism, insurgency and/or both began, the government was putting most if not all Nigerians on notice about what it termed "security". The subtext in the message was the need to appropriate resource for this "security". This is the language of the day. In the pursuit of this "security", every public sector issue should be deprioritised in favour of "security". This "security" is known only to two groups within the public sector. They are the political class and the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) class.

When "security" is mentioned, the issue of the ungoverned condition of "security" is put on the front burner of discourse for discerning minds even as the authorities do not buy into this view. If the authorities were aware of and considered the view that "security" lacked governance or what I described as absence of Governance of Security, the recent public presentation of the *National Security Strategy (NSS)* by no less a person than Mr. President would have been unnecessary. The presentation gave stamp of approval to one of the biggest fraud being perpetuated in public sector governance.

While I noted in a post on <http://adoyionoja.org> on the link "stripping" and entitled "security scramble for Nigeria" that the relevance of the *NSS* began and ended in the public presentation by the President, the unveiling of the brand new *NSS* may have become sufficient ground to sound the latest warning about the plan by Boko Haram to deploy strategic weapons in its fight against the state.

For those that packaged the *NSS*, it was the height of the limit of their knowledge as far as the relationship of philosophy, legislation, policy and strategy in public sector governance was concerned. It was also the reflection of the worldview tied to their narrow role in the public sector area to which they professed competence. Above all else, it was the consequence of the lack of and/or willful disregard for the histories, experiences and realities (HER) of nationalities in the country on the one hand and on the other hand the lack of the benefit

of studying, thinking, observing and comparing of the history of security to inform their narrative of "security" in Nigeria.

The necessity of "security" becoming and remaining a permanent political economic tool is a requirement for the survival of Nigeria's latest occupants of the state in this phase of Nigeria's post-colonial experience. This permanent political economy began rather innocuously and surreptitiously under military rule. The military elite had invested hugely and enormously in the political economy of the country. This is particularly so for those that enlisted into the officer corps in the period of the 1980s and 1990s when military rule was virulent.

For most in these sets of people, politics rather than defending the country was their prime motivation for joining the services. The shape and form of the permanent political economy began to be consolidated with the emergence of the 1999 representative rule enabling environment which truncated the investment of the military in the political economy of Nigeria – at least temporarily.

By 2007, the permanent political economy that began rather tactically and shapelessly had taken shape and form strategically. In matters of strategy, the military lives and breathes strategy. There has to be a place for the military in representative rule system that is arguably the face of the future of governance for the foreseeable future in the country, they reasoned. This was consequent on the seeming collapse of the ambitions and dreams of its officer cadre. There were huge expectations from the people and there was the realization of the inability of the emerging political class to meeting these expectations.

In tandem with the lifting of the restraint that military rule had imposed on the people, the representative rule enabling environment set the stage for a more freer society compared with the authoritarian environment of the military era. The stage, they must have rationalized, was set for conflict of all types. There were the Niger Delta crisis, the secessionist clamour, the Middle Belt crisis and the birth of Boko Haram. Within these conflicts profiles were other criminalities associated with them and deriving from the crass incompetence and insensitivity of the political elite to meeting the needs of an expectant population. The military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) set out to use these crises to negotiate with the political class. Thus was born "security" as the permanent political economy of the MILE and political class.

“Security” as the permanent political economy involved two classes as its beneficiaries. The first is the political class. The second is the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) class. It is on the latter that the permanent political economy of “security” is anchored.

The MILE is the strategists that not only exploited the inexperience, greed and self-interest of the political class. They had laid the groundwork and/or exploited it without seeming to do so consciously, in the years past, through socializing the political class and most Nigerians to their “security” worldview. They had impressed on the political class their indispensability as well as destabilising ability to the survival of the representative rule system in the country. The political class thus sees the MILE as the only opposition party that should be appeased. And appeasing them is what they have resorted to doing since 2007.

Nigeria had never had Governance of Security. By Governance of Security I mean the conscious creation of security out of the histories, experiences and realities (HER) of nationalities in Nigeria through raising and answering questions of philosophy or nature, meaning and purpose of security and secondly, by putting this philosophy into legislation in order to support policy. The questions that should form the core of philosophy of security include what is security, whose security, what is security issue and how can security be achieved. The answers to these questions constitute the philosophy or nature, meaning and purpose of security. The first three questions constitute what I called the Governance of Security or Policy and the last question constitute Security Governance or Strategy.

The consciousness of the prevailing “security” arose from the role of the military in the politics of the country on the hand and on the other hand their copying the aspect of the Globalized Western Security Philosophy (GWSP) that appealed to them. The military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) constitute the core of the defence and public order fraternity and therefore the coercive arm of the state. Their function as stipulated by the enabling laws including the constitution is defence and public order maintenance. Their function is not “security” as they now claimed.

For Euro-America, the relevance of the military is in its international engagements. The military played additional role of supporting their enterprise beyond their borders in the ungoverned international space. The military was and is used to enhance their ability to access economic and strategic resources for their countries anywhere and everywhere in the world. As William Appleman Williams put it the “lust for land, markets or security” was the reason for the United States in particular and other global power moving beyond their borders to other parts of the world. It is the military that guarantee the ability of these countries to

achieve their security or lust for land, markets and resources objectives. The military is not security. Security is the lust for land, markets and/or resources.

In Nigeria, "security" is the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) and the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) is "security". There was nothing in manner for the quest for land, markets and resources in the use of the military in Nigeria. In the absence of philosophy of security in Nigeria, Nigeria's "security" is for the MILE to suppress internal dissent against the lack of security in the lives of most nationalities and to protect the governing ethnic/religious/regional/MILE coalitions in power at any given time. Whereas the relevance of the military in the Euro-America tradition is to support their quest for security or land, markets and resources in different parts of the world, the MILE in Nigeria is to advance and protect the ruling elite and is domestic.

However, this was the worldview of the military on "security" while it was the governing elite. What is the worldview of the elected representatives on security since 1999? Should the elected representatives particularly the legislatures continue in this worldview of security? Should the elected legislatures not review, update and evolve new ideas in the pursuit of governance of Nigeria? Should the elected legislatures not examine "security" as it is practiced following its repeated and successful failure in the course of the last twenty years? Should the elected legislatures not pronounce this failed and failing "security" for what it is: a successful failure? Should these conditions not elicit thinking outside the box on security by the legislatures? Are the legislatures aware that most nationalities voted them into office to provide them with security? Are they aware that the security in question is not the type represented by the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) which most nationalities rejected by pushing the military back to barracks on the account of the failure of the military's version of "security"?

The onus for setting this right belonged to the elected legislatures at the states and central levels whose schedules of duty included the generation of novel, creative and plural ideas, based on the histories, experiences and realities (HER) of the nationalities, for the governance of the country. One area that requires this intervention is the failed and failing "security" in Nigeria.

What has been glaring since 1999 is the satisfaction of the legislatures with the prevailing failed and failing "security". They have never bother to ask questions at the heart of the failure of this "security" and when they do ask question it is about "how" and not "what". This

could only be because of their collective ignorance, greed and self-interest in continuing with this "security" tradition.

As for the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE), the continuation of this failed and ungoverned "security" tradition from the point of view of philosophy, legislation and policy fit into the reconceptualisation of self and role in the representative rule enabling environment. Without the chaos and conflicts that underpinned this "security" tradition, the largesse they manage, enjoyed and will continue to enjoy would not find justification anymore. Both the political class and the MILE class are united in the mutual continuation of the "security" tradition for their mutual benefits.

For the political class, "security" is a portfolio for managing the politically active but pretending-to-be apolitical MILE class whose *raison d'être* for enlisting in the services *ab initio* was to govern. This, the political class will accomplish, by appropriating resource in the annual budgets of the MILE and in extra-budgetary requirement as the occasional constructed threat on "security" will engender. The largesse from the budgets and extra-budgets will be managed by the MILE authorities as they deemed fit since even the power of the legislature to tamper and/or examine their budgets was ousted in the function of the legislature over the MILE. A check of the *Standing Orders of the House of Representatives* ninth edition published in 2016 will confirm the view about the limitations and/or ouster clause on the powers of legislatures on the MILE or the so-called national security and intelligence institutions.

For the political class, the MILE and their requirement offers opportunity for appropriating resources for themselves in the name of the first line charge called "security". The political class – executives and legislatures – have fought on who preside over the failed and failing "security" and over who gets what in the budget and extra budgetary allocations directed into the sector. They have fought among themselves on the content of "security vote" and have converted the "security vote" into slush fund beyond scrutiny as they continuously endeavour to stock the ember of enmity that justified the appropriation of "security vote". They executives and the legislatures have maintained their first line interest and hold on areas bordering on their definition of "security".

There is therefore mutual understanding and interest of the MILE and political class on "security". This is the permanent political economy of "security" in the making. For these two classes, "security" will continue to remain the way it is out of their self-interest.

Only a concerted interest of studying, thinking, observing and comparing (STOC) security traditions worldwide in the context of the histories, experiences and realities (HER) of nationalities in Nigeria and consequently campaigning by the civil societies, non-governmental organisations and academics will create the awareness necessary to call this mutual pact between the MILE and political class to order in the matter of the prevailing "security" tradition. This "security" tradition is not founded on a Nigerian-wide philosophy; it is not anchored on legislation; it is not based on policy; and the strategy on which it is driven is therefore flawed. The continuation of the pact is detrimental to the wellbeing and welfare of most individuals and nationalities and detrimental to the manufacturing of Nigerians and Nigeria.

Security or wellbeing and welfare of the individual and people should replace security as wellbeing and welfare of the MILE and political class only. It is worth re-presenting excerpts from the sketch of what should be security in the paper "understanding peace and security as critical factors in national development¹":

Let me sketch the image of security most Nigerians had in mind when they were compelled by internationally created domestic circumstances to drive the military back to the barracks. This image did not differ from the "secure" origin of the word security, from the knowledge woven around security by the developed world and from the nature, meaning and purpose that can be infuse into the word security.

Security is wellbeing and welfare of the individual. Wellbeing and welfare is the function of the availability of opportunities. The availability of opportunities translates into money in the pocket of the individual. With money in the pocket, almost anything that promotes wellbeing and welfare is accessible.

Whether you are a creationist or evolutionist, the first act of man/woman on earth is to secure him/her through the provision of food. The first act of man/woman on earth was not to fight. To fight implied having the strength and strength comes from eating food. If man/woman fought at all, it was to secure food and/or protect access to food. Security is therefore the ability to access food and everything else that promotes wellbeing and welfare of the human being.

¹Text of paper prepared for the workshop on the theme "Training on Cultural Differences, Conflicts and Its Resolutions for Peaceful Coexistence" organised by National Institute of Cultural Orientation (NICO), Assembly Hall, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, 5th- 6th December, 2019

Nothing secures a person like opportunity to make money and/or money itself. It is the economy that provides the opportunity to make money. The opportunity to make money is a double edge sword. On the one side, it keeps the individual busy, focus and thus productivity and in the end puts money in his/her pocket. On the other side, the boundless energy of the individual is devoted into productive venture which kills boredom, the devil in the person that translates into conflict and at the same time grows the society.

Security is money and/or opportunity to make money. With money or opportunity, a person has access to most if not all the things that makes life worth living including Nigeria's so called "security" – provision of safety. The reason Nigeria's "security" is booming is because of the lack of security or the money and/or opportunity driven security. The reason most Nigerians want to join "security" is because they lack security in their lives.

The emerging permanent political economy of "security" between the political class and the MILE class should be exposed and disrupted before chaos and confusions overwhelm the country.