

Is Political Violence and Thuggery and Security and Peace the Siamese Twins of Nigeria's Democracy?

The last twenty years, in the sixty odd years of Nigeria's statehood, is the longest period of rule by elections. In this twenty years and in particular since 2007, one thing is becoming clearer everyday of this rule by elections. It is that violence and thuggery has not only come to stay as long as rule by elections remained. Violence and thuggery on the one hand and "security" and "peace" on the other hand are the raw materials for the trade of the politicians in Nigeria.

Violence and thuggery are features of representative rule or democracy in the third world. They define the landscape before, during and after elections. While it is common in less developed societies, it is not the exclusive preserve of the developing world. The developed worlds have their versions which are more institutional and psychological.

In Nigeria from 2007, there emerged compelling political economic reason for deployment of violence and thuggery in elections. Correspondingly, the project of "security" and "peace" complement the necessity to ply the trade of violence and thuggery. This is necessary if representative rule is to continue in Nigeria.

Those managing this trade are the political classes made up of elected/appointed, the bureaucracy of the ministries, departments and agencies and the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE). Of these three groups, the first and the last have signed an unwritten pact for the sustenance of the democratic process using violence and thuggery and "security" and "peace". How does this work?

The grand scale manufacturing of thugs for violence and in the process for the venture called "security" and "peace" began systematically in 2007 when Boko Haram and militants made their debut in Nigeria. This launched the grand hunt that would justify the exponential growth of the portfolio called security. The 2011 and 2015 general elections were distinctive in terms of the deployment of violence and thugs by individuals, parties and section of the state.

In the lead up to the 2015 elections, the novel idea of importing thugs from outside Nigeria to unleash violence was introduced by individuals and parties. The coalition that became the All Progressives Congress (APC) led the way in the importation of Fulani for the purpose of winning elections and/or causing mayhem should they lose the elections. This singular act has since metamorphosed into the Fulani Menace in Nigeria. The spectre of banditry, kidnapping and attacks by AK 47 wielding Fulani all over Nigeria are the offspring of this import. They are now the supportive raw material for the venture known as "security" and "peace".

The type of "security" and "peace" the political class set out to create for most Nigerians and Nigeria is different from the type of security and peace most Nigerians opted for when they voted out military rule in 1999. The political class set out to replicate the "security" and "peace" internationalised during and after the end of the Cold War. The "security" and "peace" projects championed by the developed world and the international non-governmental organisations and civil societies addressed their concerns primarily in the developing worlds. The received perception of the internationalised security concealed more than it revealed that which they – developed world – set out to secure for themselves.

For the political leadership and their MILE advisers in Nigeria and beginning in 2007, the received perception of security or military prowess represented the be-all and end-all of security. Thus in enlisting to champion "security" and "peace" post military rule Nigeria, the concerns of the political class and the MILE occupied centre stage in this process.

Most Nigerians and the political class have never had conversation on the type of security and peace they wanted when they chose to drive the military back to the barracks and institute civil rule in 1999. This conversation is long overdue. This is for two reasons. The first reason is the disputed paternity and/or maternity of the 1999 Constitution. The only certainty of the 1999 Constitution is that it came out of Decree Number 24. The 1999 Constitution is Nigeria's number one source of crisis and conflict including its position and/or lack of one on the issue couched as security.

The second reason is the successful failure of this security in the last two decades. With the possible exception of the beneficiaries of this security – the political and MILE classes – most discerning Nigerians are agreed that this "security" failed, is failing and will continue to fail unless there is a town hall meeting among Nigerians and their rulers to construct security within the representative rule framework.

Most certainly most Nigerians did not opt for the security and peace characteristics of the Cold War and/or the received perception that dominated military tradition and military ruled Nigeria. A sample of the views of most Nigerians would indicate that the security they need is wellbeing in all of its forms in most if not all aspect of their lives including the physical wellbeing that represent the name and work of the military, intelligence and law enforcement or "security." The latter form, based on the sampled views, would be the last on the Hierarchy of Security Need (HSN) and/or Security or Wellbeing Scale of Preference (S/WSP) of most Nigerians.

What is the connection of political violence and thuggery and security and peace? Since winning election is a life and death issue in Nigeria, politicians, parties and the state prepare to use thugs before, during and after elections to unleash violence and intimidation against

opponents and their supporters. For this, the political classes have the manpower to recruit from in abundance having refused to create opportunity for persons without employment.

Violence and thuggery serve them in two ways. One, they win elections at all cost and/or unleash mayhem in the polity. Two, the prevalence of violence in the polity create the need to deal with what they now mouthed as "security" in order to bring "peace." Governance since 2007 has revolved around the issue of security and peace and nothing else.

The period 2007 signified the commencement of the transition within transition. This period marked the first time nonmilitary civilian will assume presidency of Nigeria following the 1999 transition where a retired four star general was on the saddle. The lingering question of the place of the thoroughly politicised military has not been addressed effectively even with the spate of retirements under President Olusegun Obasanjo. For the civil political class, the threat to their hold on power remained credible and embedded in their psychology.

This is because the military had invested in the infrastructure of governance from the mid-1980s when military rule reached their peak and when they emerged as the dominant institution of socialisation for most Nigerians. The military and those that wish to join the services did not factor the transition of 1999 even as there was sign of this worldwide especially with the end of the Cold War. There was need for the political class to settle this unsettled crisis if they were to believe that civil rule had come to stay.

If the MILE will have to adjust to the reality of power leaving them, they cannot adjust to the lives style they have designed for themselves in the years they were in power. They cannot afford to lose power and wealth at the same time. This was where the raw material of violence and thuggery unleashed in the course of elections and its aftermath on the one hand and on the other hand the inability and/or unwillingness to deliver opportunity for most Nigerians served to justify the deployment of the MILE into the "security" and peace spaces.

As observed in the preceding, the 1999 Constitution has the dubious reputation of engendering crisis and conflict since it was inaugurated in 1999. As Decree Number 24, what is not in doubt about the 1999 Constitution is that it was crafted by the military. The Constitution thus addressed the worries of the MILE to the extent - with hindsight - it did provide for their every role in the democracy process.

The Constitution did provide adequately for this "security". Amongst this provision is Section 14 subsection 2b that made "security" the primary purpose of governance for the civil authority. If "security" is interpreted as the name and work of the MILE, the MILE is the single most credible threat to the political class in the democracy underway since 1999. This provision not only empowered the elected/appointed political class. The provision made

"security" sacrosanct and above every other item of governance. For the military or the MILE, Section 217 subsection 2c became their entry point into post military rule reckoning.

The Constitution did not provide any explanation on this "security" and/or "national security". By the way the 1999 Constitution mentioned security fifteen times either as security and/or as national security. The socialisation of most Nigerians to the notion of security as the MILE leaves large the belief that the "security" referred to in the 1999 Constitution is the MILE. The internationalisation of security as the military, intelligence and law enforcement without the benefit of that which the MILE seek to secure anywhere and everywhere for the powers with this profile made security as the MILE inviolable for most Nigerians. The media convenience of security as the name and work of the MILE sold out this perception unquestioningly for most Nigerians.

With these and the Constitution putting "security" first before welfare made the MILE in name and work priority over all things. This "security" merely masks the priority of the two profiteers in the security business in Nigeria. They are the elected/appointed political class and the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE). In their actions since 2007, they have made their needs the "security" that most Nigerians must play second fiddle to provide.

Since this "security" secures the interest of the political class, the civil elected class from 2007 did not bother to question the framework for the construction and/or insertion of this security in the Constitution. The framework was military rule. If the first president was a military man that did not see anything wrong with this security, those that took over in 2007 should know that there is a representative rule framework in place that should question this security. The representative rule framework should define security differently from the military rule framework. This lack of governance of security and in the process security governance under representative rule is the reason security failed, is failing and will continue to fail. However, security and peace served the political economy of civil rule in their attempt to secure selves and the only threat to their rule, the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE).

Since political actors in most States of the federation employed violence and intimidation in their elections amidst residual of old conflict mixed with the disappointment of citizens with governance, the polity was engulfed conflict. The Nigeria Police have been incapacitated since the beginning of the voracious military rule of the mid-1980s and the structural adjustment programme. The commencement of representative rule should have reinstated the Nigeria Police at the lead agency of law enforcement most things been equal. However, the police were sacrificed to assuage the greater threat that the military represented in the psychology of the political class. The confidence of the operators and large swathe of Nigerians reached its lowest ebb on the police with the unfolding conflicts. This leaves the space for the military

type intervention. With Section 14 subsection 2b and with Section 217 subsection 2c, the military is currently deployed in 34 out of the 36 to aid civil authority.

The cost of the military's presence outstripped their annual budget considering their appetite for guzzling fund. The constitutionally stipulated budget included those of the ministry of defence and ministry of police affairs, the army, navy, airforce, police, civil defence, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Department of State Service (DSS), National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) to mention a few. To sustain this so-called first charge of governance, extra-budgetary provisions became the new normal. The extra-budgetary intervention in the name of "security" began on a grand scale with the provision of \$2.1 billion that was expended by the ONSA in the last administration. Nigerians are familiar with the manner of the distribution of this money. The expenditure of this money was once the subject of President Buhari's relentless fight against corruption or theft of public fund.

The insatiable desire and request for fund for "security" stepped up and escalated under the watch of President Muhammadu Buhari or "security" himself since 2015. It should be recalled that of the credentials paraded by Candidate Buhari for the presidency, his profile as a retired general of the Nigeria Army led the others as he was the metaphor for "security". Not anymore. The President reneged on his promise to secure Nigeria much as he did with revamping the economy in order to create opportunity for youths. Under President Buhari's watch since 2015, "security" became his and his functionaries' number one money making venture.

On the one hand is the cycle of violence and thuggery of elections, the creative addition of imported Fulani and the beginning of the Fulani Menace that consolidated the enabling environment for the need to restore "security" and "peace." On the other hand, the military, intelligence and law enforcement as "security" are waiting in the wings to restore "security" and "peace." This way both parties go home smiling with the billions so-called devoted to "security."

The political class profit from keeping their opponent out of power and/or providing reason for lining their pockets in the name of "security and "peace" with "security vote" and spending on "security" as they instigated violence and thuggery. Armed with Section 217 subsection 2c, the political class invited the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) as "security" to assist in quelling violence and thuggery and restoring security and peace. They are thus content and protected psychologically from the threat of the MILE to their power. "Security" enabled the MILE to access fund to live the luxurious and ostentatious lives they would have had were they to be the political authority. This time they access the fund without worrying about the backlash from most Nigerians.

There lies the political economy and the passion of the elected political class for all things "security" since 2007. The executives and legislatures sometimes work hand-in-gloves and other times outmaneuver one another in their attention and intervention on "security". Thus violence and thuggery will continue and since governance is about "security" first before all else, the need to restore security and peace will also continue.

This democracy, its survival and continuation is thus about taking care of the wellbeing or security of the political class made up of elected/appointed officials and the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE). In violence and thuggery and in "security" and "peace", they both found their pay dirt.