

Matters Arising for Nigeria in President Trump America First National Security Strategy (2)

I ended the first edition of the series with the question: What would Nigeria learn, imitate or copy, should Nigeria choose to imitate, copy and not learn, from inside the America First Strategy of President Donald Trump?

There are questions inside this question. Is Nigeria willing to learn? Is Nigeria not content with imitating and copying? Given the choice, wouldn't Nigeria imitate and copy rather than learn? Given Nigeria's historical antecedents and fault lines, in whose interest would anyone, group and/or institution learn to build rather imitate and copy for quick short-term gain?

However, and regardless of Nigeria's disposition, there is plenty to learn from the America First National Security Strategy. Nigeria should note that this is a strategy or ways and means to accomplishing national security. The implication is that there is a philosophy cum policy called national security which the strategy feeds on. Therefore, the first sphere of learning is the framework for the making of America First Strategy. President Trump didn't create any new framework for national security. Instead, President Trump tapped into the existing framework for national security. This national security began with the foundations laid down by America's founding fathers and mothers that culminated into the making and adoption of the unified doctrine called National Security Act of 1947.

In his contribution to the *National Security Strategy* titled "My fellow Americans", President Trump said "over the past nine months, we have brought our nation – and the world – back from the brink of catastrophe and disaster. After four years of weakness, extremism and deadly failures, my administration has moved with urgency and historic speed to restore American strength at home and abroad, and bring peace and stability to OUR (emphasis mine) world..."

It is important to study this statement in all of its nuances and in doing so, it is also important to know that this is squarely and simply about Americans and America and nobody else. As President Trump noted in the concluding part of his contribution, "in everything we do, we are putting America First".

President Trump is certainly in a hurry to rebuild Americans and America after what he considered as President Biden's four years of weakness, extremism and deadly failures. This urgency and historic speed could be seen and felt in his works for Americans and America all over the world.

President Trump is clear about the intention of the America First Strategy. Accordingly, "what follows is a *National Security Strategy* to DESCRIBE (emphasis mine) ... This document is a ROADMAP (emphasis mine) to ensure that America remains the greatest and the most successful nation in human history, and the home of freedom on earth. In the years ahead, we will continue to develop EVERY DIMENSION OF OUR NATIONAL STRENGTH (emphasis

mine)– and we will make America safer, richer, freer, greater, and more powerful than ever before.”

When President Trump declared that what follows was a “*National Security Strategy* to describe”, he leveraged on established traditions and customs of codified principles that goes way back to the founding of America but above all else that began concretely after the Second World War when Pax Americana was born. The document, he equally declared, was a roadmap – Trump’s roadmap – to ensuring that America remains the greatest and the most successful nation in human history, amongst other resolves.

President Trump promised (and this promise cut across every administration before Trump’s and impervious of parties) to DEVELOP EVERY DIMENSION (emphasis mine) of America’s national strength. Trump, like other presidents before him, promised to make America SAFER, RICHER, FREER, GREATER (emphasis mine) and more powerful than ever before.

I cannot emphasised enough the need to deploy nuances and the tool I called studying, thinking, observing and comparing (STOC) in the bid to making sense of President Trump statement vis-à-vis what we called national security and national security strategy in Nigeria since 2014. What does President Trump mean by SAFER and why safety first? What does President Trump mean by RICHER? What does he mean by freer, greater and more powerful than ever before?

The world is the United States of America’s theatre of operation and by SAFER (which in Nigeria we call national security, security or both translating into the name and work of the military, intelligence and law enforcement), President Trump and those before him are not unaware of the ambivalence of the world towards Americans and America within America and in their global enterprises. Thus, safer is to create the environment that would enable America to operate anywhere and everywhere without let or hindrance in the pursuit of its national security. Safer is assured by the largest defence budget of any country in the world with cutting edge technologies powering its army, air force, navy, marine, space forces and intelligence community on land, sea, air and space.

What does safer confer on America? SAFER brings riches and makes Americans and America richer because the foundation of national security is the economy. The United States economy remain unrivalled in terms of sophistication owing to cutting edge investment in research and development. The world is America’s economy. When America is safer, richer, America is freer, greater and more powerful than ever before. Ironically and for the copy and imitating cats of the world including Nigeria, what makes America SAFER and its outward appearance – the military, intelligence and law enforcement – epitomised everything national security. In Nigeria’s blind imitation and copying, it escaped Nigeria’s short-termed wired policymakers’

thinking that without economic resources, national security, in all ramifications, is an empty idea.

This is America First Strategy with which President Trump would govern in the next four years. Governments and populations can visualise and can feel the impact of *America First Strategy* in action everywhere in the world on the road to making America safer, richer, freer, greater and powerful.

It is necessary to STOC the Forewords of the 2014 and 2019 National Security Strategy written for President Jonathan and President Buhari by their national security advisers. I am sure that Mr. Nuhu Ribadu's foreword for Mr. President will not be different from these forewords when eventually their national security strategy comes out. In these forewords, one would realise that Nigeria has never been on the queue for the journey of national security let alone for one to make a determination how far back Nigeria is on the queue.

This is because the journey of security or national security (and these two ideas are not the same in their historical evolutions) begins with a vision of security or national security. The vision starts with an enduring and most-Nigerians' agreement on what is security, whose security and what is a security issue prior to individual administration worrying about how can security be achieved or the strategy. The first three questions, which are questions of philosophy and policy, are for most Nigerians to address. The last question or how can security be achieved belong to individual administration's leadership to articulate and execute for most Nigerians.

With reference to the United States on these questions, there are milestones in the people of America asking and answering these first three sets of questions, in the course of America's evolution, beginning with the foundation of 1617 creating Virginia. The United States signed and sealed these questions into law when Congress passed the National Security Act of 1947.

What has Nigeria's version of the National Security Strategy of 2014 and 2019 delivered to most Nigerians and Nigeria in the course of those years? For those who followed the two Strategies, in the periods of their implementations, would they say there were marked relationship between their contents and the programmes of the governments on the ground? In the Strategies minimalist, parochial and reductionist view of national security, security or both i.e., the safety of most Nigerians from what the Strategies called insurgents, terrorists, herders, bandits and kidnappers, did the two Strategies deliver?

The difference between security and defence is so confounding to Nigeria's policymakers that Nigeria's entire conception of national security, security or both takes its cue from the SAFER contained in Trump's *America First Strategy* and thus begins and ends with the name and work of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE). The policymakers are oblivious of what I called the Forest conception of security and the Trees conception of health, education,

infrastructures, defence etc. The former's health is determined by the health of most of the latter.

The Nigerian case get confusingly opaque with national security, security and/or both working simultaneously in what is a clear case of distinctions without differences. Check the provisions of the 1999 Constitution. In the minds of the framer of the Constitution, there is no difference between national security, security or both and/or that the difference is to situate one as covering Nigeria's external affairs and the other Nigeria's internal affairs. The reality of the evolved histories of security and national security says otherwise. Security and National Security, from etymology, history and philosophy, are two distinct ideas with the first i.e., security set in 15th century European histories, experiences and realities and the second set in 20th century United States of America history, experience and reality. What is similar in security and national security is that both shared security's founding meanings of *feeling secure, something which secure, condition of being secure* and reducing or eliminating *feeling no apprehension*.

It is disturbing to realise that the SAFER of Trump's *America First Strategy* is the ESSENCE of Nigeria's national security, security and/or both. It is disturbingly disturbing that the RICHER of Trump's *America First Strategy* did not exist in Nigeria's national security, security and/or both. This is even when America declared times without number that economic security is foundationally fundamental to national security. Even in Nigeria's craze to imitate and copy, we let go of the fundamentals as we seek the easy short-term roads.

It is distressingly disturbing that beyond the two provisions on national security and security in the Constitution (section 5 subsection 5 and section 14 subsection 2b couched in literary sense as other references inside the Constitution would validate), these ideas do not exist in philosophy, policy and legislation under any framework in Nigeria. Thus, Nigeria operates an opaquely confused and confusing framework of national security, security and/or both.

It is disquietingly disturbing that Nigeria's civil rule democracy and governance, after twenty-five years, has no philosophy, policy and legislation of its national security, security and/or both, in tandem with civil rule democracy and governance frameworks.

To this end and tragically too, for most Nigerians and Nigeria, it is the military rule-era philosophy of national security, security and/or both in tandem with their mandates of defence, intelligence and law enforcement that operate in a supposed civil rule democracy and governance environment.

Most Nigerians particularly the older ones who were socialised under military rules worldviews including security and have since remained the governing elite have succeeded in passing their ideas down to the generation born in the mid-1990s and during civil rule thus continuing with the traditions. These Nigerians are bereft of a sense of community which the deliberate

construction and inculcation of civil rule ideologies including security ideology would have bequeathed. Thus, they do not know let alone see anything wrong with the prevailing national security, security or both conditions which canvasses and advances interests detrimental to their overall wellbeing.

- Dr. Adoyi ONOJA is of the Department of History, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. He can be read on <https://www.adoyionoja.org.ng>