

Matters Arising for Nigeria in President Trump America First National Security Strategy (5)

The capture of President Nicholas Maduro by America's special forces was justified on the grounds of defending, protecting and advancing America's national security interests. The development was part of the Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine of the *America First Strategy*. America's national security interests cuts across economic, cultural and political values – values it believes should permeate its Latin America spheres of influence.

In announcing the capture of President Maduro, President Trump declared that the United States will manage Venezuela until it was practical enough to allow Venezuelans to resume managing their country. In the interim period, America's economic, cultural and political interests, embodied in its national security, would have been consolidated. The quest for national security and President Trump's mission for attaining national security as contained in his national security strategy drove this effort.

In reversing the coup in Benin Republic, most Nigerians are still at a loss the national security, security or both interests Nigeria expound and thus seek to defend, protect and advance in that country and in the West African sub region. Nigerians were not addressed by their leaderships on the reason(s) for the adventure in Benin Republic – adventure in the name of defending democracy. Most Nigerians would recall that the adventure fits into the pattern of throwing Nigeria's proverbial values-bereft big brother weights around the region and beyond. Nigerians were not told how much it cost the treasury and what and how much we hope to gain in that exercise.

This is indicative of the lack of Nigeria-wide agreement that will drive who we are, what we want, where we want what we want and how we go about getting what we want. In arguing that Nigeria's national security, security or both is at stake, in the actions we take inside and outside Nigeria, there is no universal agreement on the constituents of this national security, security or both amongst the leaderships let alone the generality of most Nigerians.

If the 1999 Constitution's descriptive/associational position on national security, security or both constitute the sum total of national security, security or both ideology and doctrine and thus the answers to the questions what is national security, security or both, whose national security, security or both and what are national security, security or both issues, then the military strikes by the United States against terrorists bases in the north west state of Sokoto not only violated national security, security or both. The attack put on the agenda the question of national security, security or both and open the can of worm on what should be national security, security or both under civil rule democracy and governance frameworks, whose national security, security or both under civil rule democracy and governance frameworks and what are the issues of national security, security or both under civil rule democracy and governance frameworks.

The development should have constituted interesting times for Nigeria's myriad of national security, security or both experts, Nigeria's legislatures, executives, the civil societies and academia. However, what interested vocal Nigerians was whether the attack infringed Nigeria's sovereignty and whether the attack had the consent of the Nigerian government. These concerns were not only diversionary. These concerns fed into the divisive politics that reigned across Nigeria hindering the pursuit of common purpose. The concerns demonstrated the absence of Nigeria-wide agreement of a system of belief on whose back governments would craft their strategies for the attainment of Nigeria's short, medium and long terms goals inside and outside Nigeria.

The post Sokoto attack hues and cries that "Nigeria's sovereignty was violated" and that "the Nigerian government was in the picture of the attack" countered each other. If the Nigerian government was in the picture of the attack, the widespread views that Nigeria's sovereignty was violated would not have emerged. If the government was not in the picture of the attack – and most Nigerians believed this view, a belief that could not be refuted by the uncoordinated buukum responses of government's spokespersons and issued statements, it confirmed the violation of Nigeria's sovereignty by the United States of America.

To buttress the claim that the Nigerian government was in the know of the attack, the government claimed they provided the intelligence that facilitated the attack. It is one thing to provide the intelligence. It is another thing to be in the know of the day of the attack. The former might be tenable. The latter is certainly not tenable. There are myriads of sources that can provide intelligence for the Americans including from inside Nigeria's official sources without the knowledge of the custodians of this intelligence. There are official and unofficial Nigerians on the payroll of the United States intelligence that provide intelligence for the United States with or without the permission of the Nigerian government. The reality is that the United States cannot and will not trust the Nigerian government to the point of disclosing or sharing its military, intelligence and law enforcement operational details including the day it planned to launch the attack. The reason is that Nigeria is a risk factor as every pore in Nigeria's governance fabrics leaks in the name of politics.

As for those claiming that Nigeria's sovereignty was violated, they should admit that Nigeria is a disgraceful transactional country for allowing the crisis to persist to the extent it is now threatening the exercise of the sovereignty of countries with head on their shoulders especially the United States. In Nigeria's undefined, uncharted and ungoverned national security, security or both, the conception of sovereignty is rather limited when compared to a United States of America whose national security space is the world and whose conception of sovereignty differ from Nigeria's.

In "what should the United States want" and "what do we want overall", *America First Strategy* provided the lists and was clear about what it wanted in order to attain national security for

Americans. The lists began and ended with most Americans when it asserted that “this cannot be accomplished without growing numbers of strong, traditional families that raise healthy children”. In Nigeria’s undefined, uncharted and ungoverned national security, security or both and in the 2014/2019 *National Security Strategy*, the foundationless ideals they espoused excluded the foundation of security – growing and raising healthy children through strong family. Security or free from care, something which secure, condition of being secure and feeling no apprehension begins in the family. What are the state and condition of families in Nigeria?

In “what do we want in and from the world”, *America First Strategy* itemised them to include: we want to ensure that the Western Hemisphere remains reasonably stable and well-governed enough to prevent and discourage mass migration to the United States; we want a Hemisphere whose governments cooperate with us against narco-terrorists, cartels and other transnational criminal organisations; we want to halt and reverse the ongoing damage that foreign actors inflict on the American economy...; we want to support our allies in preserving the freedom and security of Europe while restoring Europe’s civilisational self-confidence and Western identity; we want to prevent an adversarial power from dominating the Middle East, its oil and gas supplies, and the chokepoints through which they pass while avoiding the “forever wars” that bogged us down in that region at great cost; we want to ensure that U.S. technology and U.S. standards – particularly in AI, biotech, and quantum computing – drive the world forward.”

In all of these items, *America First Strategy* is working hard to deliver as demonstrated in various spheres – restricting migration including border walls, deportations and working with governments in the Hemisphere; rise of right wing governments buoyed by the Trump effect even if it is driven by pragmatic reasons; attacks on boats supposedly transporting drugs and President Maduro the so-called head of Cartel de la Soles; tariff programmes, trade renegotiations and reindustrialising America; pressure on Europe to check its migration policies, increase contribution to its defence and maintain the essential attributes of western identity; checking Iran’s menace in Yemen, Palestine, Lebanon, ensuring that strategic sea route remain open and unhindered and the push for Trump peace process including the Abraham Accord; actions in driving United States technologies all over the place.

Accordingly, *America First Strategy* concluded that “these are the United States’ core, vital national interests” noting that “while we also have others, these are the interests we must focus on above all others, and that we ignore or neglect at our peril.”

In the 2014/2019 *National Security Strategy*, do the governments – Jonathan, Buhari and Tinubu – that traversed the period mapped out areas of priorities and thus interests they must focus on above all others, and that they ignore or neglect at their peril? Even in the military,

intelligence and law enforcement driven national security, security or both, their actions were transactional and guided in the main by their own administrations' survival.

America First Strategy did not stop at outlining what it wants in and from the world. *America First Strategy* outlined the available means of getting what it wants. In "what are the America's available means to get what we want", *America First Strategy* while observing that "America retains the world's most enviable position, with world-leading assets, resources, and advantages..." dimensionalised these into two parts. The first part represents what is on the ground and the second part represent President Trump's addition to what is on the ground. The former constitutes National Security and the latter constitute *America First Strategy*.

The first part include; "a still nimble political system that can course correct; THE WORLD'S SINGLE LARGEST AND MOST INNOVATIVE ECONOMY, WHICH BOTH GENERATES WEALTH WE CAN INVEST IN STRATEGIC INTERESTS AND PROVIDES LEVERAGE OVER COUNTRIES THAT WANT ACCESS TO OUR MARKETS (emphasise mine); the world's leading financial system and capital markets, including the dollar's global reserve currency status; the world's most advanced, most innovative, and most profitable technology sector, which undergirds our economy, provides a qualitative edge to our military, and strengthens our global influence..."

Others include "the world's most powerful and capable military (unlike Nigeria where the military would be the first showcase of what constitute national security, security or both, the military came fourth after the foundation of national security – the economy); a broad network of alliances, with treaty allies and partners in the world's most strategically important regions; an enviable geography with abundant natural resources, no competing powers physically dominant in our Hemisphere, borders at no risk of military invasion, and other great powers separated by vast oceans; unmatched "soft power" and cultural influence; and THE COURAGE, WILLPOWER, AND PATRIOTISM OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE." These are the "assets, resources and advantages" that President Donald Trump met on the ground.

In Nigeria's undefined, uncharted and ungoverned national security, security or both, what constituted the "assets, resources and advantages" on the ground that successive governments inherited particularly across the period of the compilation of the 2014/2019 *National Security Strategy*? What have successive governments, under civil rule democracy and governance, accomplished to spike the courage, willpower and patriotism of the people of Nigeria? This question should be considered in the context of the absence or lack of a Nigeria-wide agreement on the constituents of the ideas and ideals that cuts across most fault lines and that would spur courage, willpower and patriotism of most Nigerians.

The second part or the Trump addition to national security comprised what *America First Strategy* intended to implement. They include "re-instilling a culture of competence, rooting

out so-called “DEI” (diversity, equity and inclusion) and other discriminatory and anti-competitive practices that degrade our institutions and hold us back; unleashing our enormous energy production capacity as a strategic priority to fuel growth and innovation, and to bolster and rebuild the middle class; reindustrialising our economy, again to further support the middle class and control our own supply chains and production capacities; returning economic freedom to our citizens via historic tax cuts and deregulatory efforts, making the United States the premier place to do business and invest capital; and investing in emerging technologies and basic science, to ensure our continued prosperity, competitive advantage, and military dominance for future generations.”

In the end, *America First Strategy* was of the view that the combination of these two – the “assets, resources and advantages” and President Trump’s rejigging and reinvigoration through his programmes enunciated in *America First Strategy* was meant to make America excel beyond limit. Accordingly, “the goal of this strategy is to tie together all of these world-leading assets, and others, to strengthen American power and preeminence and make our country even greater than it ever has been.”

In Nigeria’s 2014/2019 *National Security Strategy* anchored on the framework of national security, security or both defined as military, intelligence and law enforcement, what had the governments within the period added to protect, defend and advance the descriptive/associational national security, security or both of Nigeria? Where would we place the Christmas day attack launched by the United States against insurgents, terrorists, bandits etc. vis-à-vis Nigeria’s national security, security or both anchored on the military, intelligence and law enforcement? What does this condition say about the persistence of the oxymoron hand of Esau national security, security or both and the voice of Jacob civil rule democracy and governance frameworks?

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