

What is Security in Nigeria?

So much has been done, is being done and will be done for Nigerians in the name of security that Nigerians, at this juncture, should demand to know what this security is all about.

What is Security? A few instances will set the tone of this discourse.

The first instance of what has been done in the name of security was the revelation that came courtesy of the so-called fight against corruption. I say so-called because the fight is against theft and not corruption. Corruption is a bigger issue than theft. Corruption is the "abuse of public trust for private gain." Theft is an aspect of corruption and not the entire story of corruption. Defined as the "abuse of public trust for private gain", most Nigerians are culpable in the crime of corruption.

The government's fight against theft of public funds revealed to Nigerians that the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) under the last administration spent over two point two billion United States dollars (\$2.2billion) on arms procurements to fight the Boko Haram group in the North East. At the then exchange rate of about N150 to \$1, it was over N300billion. In today's recession-driven exchange rate, it is over N1 trillion.

Nigerians now know how this money was distributed to selected Nigerians for variety of services in the name of security. Is this the security? What is Security?

The second instance of what has been done in the name of security was when a governor of a north central state informed his constituency that since assumption of office in 2015, he had spent over ninety two billion naira (N92 billion) on security. It was, the governor argued, the reason for the lack of development for the people. The governor used one stone to kill two birds – account for money spent (Nigerian public officials are notoriously weary of accountability and this security thing is providing them with a convenient escape) and explained his non performance. Even as he was making this astounding revelation, reports of killing filled the air from different parts of the state. Depending on the governor's definition of security (which is why it is imperative to have one), did the governor establish armed forces (army, navy airforce) and other law enforcement institutions (police, political police etc)with this money? What exactly did he use the money for? What is Security?

The third instance of what is being done in the name of security is when a governor of one of the north east states informed his audience that he commits not less than five hundred million naira (N500 million) monthly on the security of the state. How is the money expended? What is the component of this security? Is the state safe because of this monthly expenditure? What is Security?

This is a tip of the iceberg of the colossal amount Nigeria's public officials spend in the name of security at all levels of public governance. Indeed all states of the federation commit resources in the name of security because they have one or another type of security issue to confront. This is the claim from the states and to some extent the local governments particularly those that have not been completely emasculated by their governors. Yet the states are not secured.

As a result of the importance of security and considering the abiding interest of Nigeria's public officials in security, Nigerians should request for a definition of security. Unless there is a definition of security, in the Nigerian context, Nigerians will remain in dark on the accomplishments of their governments in the name of security.

What is Security? What is Security?? What is Security???

Do we need a definition of security in Nigeria? Don't we need a definition of security in Nigeria?

As I await your contribution to this question and whether Nigerians, at this stage, need a definition of security, I would like to suggest that there is a narrative out there on security that represents the perceptions of the Nigerian public. There is a hierarchy of this security perception among Nigerians. This hierarchy includes the view of the military class, political class, scholar/intellectual class and the rest of Nigerians, in this order. I shall take turn to offer insight into these in subsequent posts.

So, what is your take on what is security in Nigeria?