

# Over-Militarisation and Priviledging the Military, Intelligence and Law Enforcement in the Governance of Ideas, Institutions and Persons in Nigeria's Civil Rule/Democracy

By  
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## Preamble

The piece was one of the random recordings of my thoughts. I developed the habit of putting my thoughts down on the notepad of my phone. It was while doing this that Dr. Santas Tsegysu extended an invitation to me to participate in a conference at the Yar'adua Centre, Abuja. The invitation was to serve as one of the panelists. However, when the invitation card came to me, I was asked to be one of the keynote speakers. I called Dr. Tsegysu to inform him of the new development and to know what would be my role there.

Once I had this confirmed – that I would play duo roles of key note speaker and panelist – I used the theme of the conference to meandered my random thought to fit the presentation of the day. This was how the random thought crystallised into the keynote paper entitled "over-militarisation and privilegedging of the military, intelligence and law enforcement in the governance of ideas, institutions and persons in Nigeria's civil rule democracy."

The theme of the conference was "Securing Nigeria's Future: Addressing the Root Cause of Herdsmen-Farmers conflict through Justice and Inclusive Dialogue".<sup>1</sup> I was asked to speak on "human rights and accountability in conflict response." Owing to the short notice, I settled to target my keynote to addressing the conference's theme which in part addresses the questions of "human rights" and "accountability" in "conflict response" within the content and context of the focus of my presentation.

I had planned to preface my keynote with some questions for the audience to ponder on. The questions were: what came to your mind on reading this title in the context of the topic for my key note? Have the courses and causes of Justice and Inclusive Dialogue been served in the handling of the herdsmen-farmers conflict under civil rule/democracy IDEAS, INSTITUTIONS and PERSONS? To what extent do the dominant framework of analysis – over-militarisation and privilegedging of the military, intelligence and law enforcement perspectives – harming the courses and causes of "human rights" and "accountability" and thus the courses and causes of "justice" and "inclusive dialogue" in the herdsmen-farmers crisis in particular and others in general?

Arguably, the issue under contention has been over-flogged in the course of the last twenty-five years of civil rule/democracy. This issue has been over-dramatised in the last fifteen years alongside Boko Haram, banditry, terrorism, kidnapping and insurgency in what ex-President

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<sup>1</sup> The conference was organised by Leadership Hub, Justice and Economic Advancement, 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2025, Shehu Musa Yar'adua Centre, Abuja, Nigeria.

Obasanjo, during the launching of General Lucky Irabor's *Scars: Nigeria's Journey and Boko Haram Conundrum*, argued have virtually become part of daily life in Nigeria". In spite of the humongous resources expended and are being expended daily in the attempts to finding resolution, we are nowhere near the solutionisation of the issues.

## Introduction

Nigeria's civil rule and democracy suffers from the over-militarisation of ideas, institutions and persons (IIP). This over-prioritisation and over-privilegedging of issues, policies and strategies around what they called "national security" and/or "security" threatens and continue to undermine Nigeria's march first to civil rule and second to democracy. The centralisation of all things into military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) in policies and in strategies encumbers any transition first towards civilianisation of ideas, institutions and persons let alone laying the foundation for democratisation of ideas, institutions and persons. These are the fundamental foundation of the failure of attempts, should these attempts be considered genuine attempts, to the solutionisation of Nigeria's elites self-invited and self-inflicted crises.

## Delineating Key Notes

The first two words in the theme – "Securing Nigeria's..." is one example of the over-militarisation of issues in Nigeria. The "securing" and "Nigeria" parts, in feel, touch and optics, represents most, if not all things, military, intelligence and law enforcement. In policies and in strategies, all efforts towards problematisation and solutionisation of the herdsmen-farmers conflict rest on the MILE "national security" and "security" approaches.

To this extent, we failed and continue to fail in seeing, thinking and approaching the issue outside this narrow confine even where we seemingly convinced ourselves that military rule has been behind us for a quarter century. Where is the civilianisation let alone democratisation approaches to finding the way out of the conflict?

How do we make progress under civil rule/democracy when the foundation of the way we think and do things is over-militarised and over-privilegedging their – MILE – ideas?

The assaults on the ability of most Nigerians to move away from the military, intelligence and law enforcement is encumbered by the very law that is the foundation of Nigeria's operating system under the civil rule. The 1999 Constitution and the strategic insertion and positioning of Section 5 subsection 5, Section 14 subsection 2b and rather ironically the non-justiciable Chapter 2, is at the heart of the over-militarisation and over-prioritisation of the MILE, in most things.

Take the word intelligence that is central to every human sphere and endeavour. Intelligence is existentially usefully useful in all policies, in all strategies and in all operations. The mere mention of intelligence in Nigeria's over-militarised environment conjures up all things the MILE in the minds of most Nigerians. This is the level at which most Nigerians, beginning at

the level of the policy makers, especially the arm that should have been the agenda-setter for the executives – the legislatures, think when it comes to this issue. One only needs to listen to Senator Ali Ndume to be convinced that the thinking of demilitarisation first, re-civilianisation second and third democratisation has never crossed the thoughts of most Nigeria's law makers.

Most Nigerians do not think intelligence can be generated and used outside the MILE environment even when intelligence is the lifeline in all human driven affairs. Who collect the intelligence that drives policies, strategies and operations in the herdsmen-farmers conflicts to which governments use?

The executive agencies of the MILE are in charge of intelligence gathering in the mindsets of most Nigerians. They include the Department of State Services (DSS), the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) primarily and secondarily every other arm of both the military and law enforcement. These are the agencies that supplied intelligence to governments for the making of policies. They are not unbiased and disinterested collectors and processors of information into intelligence and regardless of utterances, they are not committed to the successes of the civil rule/democracy experience. They influence the intelligence to privilege their approaches to the governance of this conflict and others in Nigeria.

This attitude and disposition negatively impact ideas, institutions and persons governing and attempting to govern "Securing Nigeria...", in the domain of engendering "Justice and Inclusive Dialogue", in the herdsmen-farmers sphere.

In this, the STATE and NON-STATE actors and spaces – with the non-state actors/spaces mostly operated and funded by state actors to pursue their numerous covert and overt agendas – are complicity in the perpetuation of the Deep State mentality in the narration of ideas particularly SECURITY and INTELLIGENCE.

The Deep State has renewed its grip over the concept of Security re-presented as National Security first and Security second in Nigeria as encapsulated in the provisions of the Constitution.

Whenever the Deep State is spoken or written about, most Nigerians' thoughts go to the United States of America. There is and always has been in existence the equivalent of this Deep State in Nigeria across the ages – the Kaduna Mafia and the Langtang Mafia are examples. This Deep State is taking especially after the transition within transition in Nigeria in 2007. I likened Nigeria's Deep State to what I called the "political economy of security".

The Deep State is defined as a body of people, typically influential members of government agencies and/or the military, believed by some to be involved in the secret manipulation or control of government policies. The Deep State is a term used for (real or imagined) potential, unauthorised and often secret networks of power operating within a government, but

independently of its political leadership, and in pursuit of their own agendas and goals. The genre I referred to as the “political economy of security” combined these two strands.

If the audience agrees with the phenomenon of the “political economy of “security” – personally I do not doubt its existence – then conflict is here to stay. For me, I do not doubt the existence of an unwritten and unspoken understanding I termed a “political economy of security” that cement the relationship between the political class comprising civil political class, MILE class and their associates in the various sectors of Nigeria whose primary confluence is the perpetuation of crisis generating conflicts in order to secure their wellbeing in all of its forms. This is because conflict and endlessly endless conflicts is the oil that run the wheels of the “political economy of security”.

The herdsmen-farmers conflict is one amongst the conflicts – the others being banditries, terrorisms, insurgencies, kidnappings etc. that supply the oil wheeling the “political economy of security”. At the centre driving these conflicts is the decreasing quality and quantity of governance or the effective and efficient utilisation of human and material resources for the benefit of most Nigerians across all levels. The drivers of this ineffective and inefficient management of human and material resources include amongst others members of Nigeria’s legislatures and executives. Members of the “political economy of security” – compromising the civilian and MILE leadership elites – contribute to supplying all its takes to perpetually green the environment for these conflicts to continue.

Let’s consider SECURITY in ideas, institutions and persons (IIP) first under the military and now under military governed civil rule/democracy. Let’s consider INTELLIGENCE in IIP first under the military and now under military-ideas governed civil rule/democracy. Security and National Security have etymologies, history and philosophy that differs from the practice prevalent in Nigeria first under military rule and should the civil rule/democracy framework take control of its ideas, under civil rule/democracy.

In Nigeria, national security/security has history and philosophy under the military and military rule. We have yet to create/construct and/or recreate and reconstruct ideas, institutions and persons in tandem with civil rule/democracy worldview. So, we do not have national security/security’s history and philosophy under civil rule/democracy. We have yet to create/construct and/or recreate and reconstruct national security/security under civil rule /democracy thus giving these ideas NEW history and philosophy.

This is why I persistently advocate for the construction of ideas, institutions and persons in the IMAGE of civil rule and democracy in Nigeria. We need to construct security in the image of civil rule/democracy. This is the task before Nigerians. This is the task before discerning non-state actors advocating for civil rule/democracy excluding the packs on the payrolls of state actors and/or in cohort with state actors to perpetuate the status quo.

The space called SECURITY which is the vision and mission of all other ideas requires populating and/or repopulating with IDEAS outside the MILE worldview.

## Conclusion

The JUSTICE and INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE parts in addressing the root cause of herdsmen-farmers conflict will begin when civil rule/democracy begin to govern ideas, institutions and persons. Of the ideas that will engender Justice and Inclusiveness, SECURITY is the NUMERO UNO of these ideas. SECURITY begins and ends other ideas. Security should be recreated/reconstructed and/or created/constructed in the image of civil rule/democracy, in tandem with security's founding etymologies, history and philosophy and deferring to Nigeria's history, experience and reality (HER).

There is need to first civilianise and second democratise ideas, institutions and persons under this civil rule/democracy and governance system. To do this is to begin with the RE-CIVILIANISATION of ideas and centrally in the ideas is Security. From re-civilianisation, we begin the journey of DEMOCRATISATION of ideas, institutions and persons.

The work for advocating for this belongs in NON-STATE SPACES. The work is the turf of NON-STATE ACTORS – the discerning ones – to drive. The only impediment is if the non-state actors are members of the unspoken and unwritten “political economy of Security”.

Only in doing this will *Securing Nigeria's Future: Addressing the Root Cause of Herdsmen-Farmer conflict through Justice and Inclusive Dialogue* become the product of new ideas, institutions and persons OUTSIDE the political economy of security-controlled ideas, institutions and persons.

The effective antidote to addressing the MILE ideas, institutions and persons in the prevailing civil rule system is the building of a strong political system. The foundation of this system is not only in the careful creation/construction of civil rule/democracy ideas, institutions, and persons. It is also based on governance or the effective and efficient utilisation of human and material resources for the benefit of most Nigerians across all levels.

Collectively, these will engender security define as wellbeing in all of its forms. Without these, the MILE will continue to exercise its veto on the political system to its advantage. The MILE will do this knowing that most Nigerians will be perennially and permanently dissatisfied and disgruntled and thus support them. The MILE will prefer this state of affairs to remain in order for them to remain afloat.