

Governing the Security Space in Nigeria: Providing Security Strategy

In several of my submissions I had argued that the *National Security Strategy* document compiled by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) was an exercise in error. In terms of implementation, not only does it lack the policy document that provided the strategy with its guide. The *NSS* was one document gathering dust on shelves wherever it was as it was not used by any agency of government. The existence of the document was shrouded in secrecy.

I am of the view that even the ONSA itself does not consult the document. I also noted that most of the strategies – the pre-eminent one being the deployment of armed personnel – do not represent strategies in the real sense of the word. The only one that resonated with the authority was the normal job description of the supposed agencies identified as constituting security agencies. The deployment of police and military personnel was the nadir of the strategy. To this extent there was nothing novel (perhaps the movement of headquarters to event scenes – even this was the President's decision) about their work in the effort to curb what they described as insecurity.

As far as strategy was concerned, I described it as multi-pronged approach involving most agencies based on a policy. In other words, there was a security policy which I considered the next most important document after the constitution. I had argued that a security policy was a reference point for every other policy in the country. In other words, every other policy in every area of human endeavour should have a security objective to be attained in its specific area. This security objective should be taken from the security policy. This was what made security an all encompassing area. Security was therefore found in every aspect of human endeavour.

To this extent and following this model, it became laughable that the ONSA came out with security strategy without security policy for use by all agencies of government. It was not the responsibility of the ONSA to say what was security or what was strategy. Perhaps it was under the military. Even then the military did not really need the ONSA when it was the governing authority since as I argued elsewhere the military was security in motion. The military government retained the ONSA for patronage. Although the ONSA was created by the Second Republic government, its development and transformation was entirely under the military government. The Second Republic government did not have the chance to unveil its vision and mission on security.

In the name of 'security' but more appropriately in the name what the military culture and mentality that staffed the ONSA understood as 'security', the ONSA's humble and hazy beginning was transformed into the agency in charge of all 'security' – police, DSS, military – i.e. all arms bearing agencies of government were under the ONSA. This was

not security. This was defence. In the absence of a policy or legislation stating the Nigerian conception of security, the Office of the National Security Adviser should be transformed into the Office of the National Defence Adviser (ONDA) for now. This was because the task the so-called the ONSA has performed since it was hijacked by the military government and establishment was defence.

With a security policy in place, a new Office of the National Security Adviser will be reconstituted that will coordinate the attainment of all security objectives of all agencies of government in all fields to ensure adherence and performance and to advise the government accordingly. The reconstituted ONSA will have offices in all the states of the federation to assess adherence and performance. Nigeria and Nigerians will stop to view security in its current narrow defence focus and to paraphrase Anthony Burke "security will not be seen as one good among many." "Security will be the good that guarantees all others".

To this extent, it is the responsibility of all agencies of government based on their security objective taken from the security policy to work out the strategy that will assist them to achieve security in their specific area of assignment. For instance, the provision of education should have a security objective taken from the security policy for attainment. It is the task of the Ministry of Education to work out the strategy for the attainment of this objective. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence as the coordinating agency all agencies of defence to have a security objective taken from the security policy for the attainment. It is the task of the Ministry of Defence in collaboration with its agencies to work out the strategy for attaining this objective.

On the strength of this analysis and of the two elected civil authority – legislature and executive – who is better placed to provide strategy? Since strategy is about execution, the executive is responsible for strategy. All agencies of government charged with particular area of responsibility are members of the executive branch of government. Perhaps, it explained why the armed forces move into conflict area on the basis of its perception of security and its constitutional role responsibility. With a security policy in place, agencies of government will work out the best strategy in order to fulfil the security objective in their own area of responsibility.

The task of providing security policy and security strategy is therefore a shared responsibility. It is a shared responsibility between the legislature and the executive. It is also a coordinated responsibility in order to attain the aim of governance. Governance is the task Nigerians entrusted to their elected representatives. They are to govern the Nigerian space. The end state of governance is the provision of security – security as all

encompassing and not security as salvaging Nigerians from conflict-inducing deaths, and destruction - the results of the failure of governance.

The elected institutions in place since 1999 is yet to take up the security responsibility entrusted to it through governance. To take up this task is to construct its security framework equipped with policy and strategy.