

Security Perspective from the Political Class

A disconnection exists in the evolution of the political class in Nigeria. This disconnection is the result of persistent intervention by their counterparts in uniform, the Nigerian armed forces. Six years after independence when the military first appeared in its self appointed mission of salvaging governance to its eventual stepping aside in 1999, the political class had lacked a tradition of consistent governance of Nigeria. Consequently, they have had to learn plenty things about governance from the military which was itself ignorant in the affairs of state. Imagine that in one instance the military have had to embark on a mission of manufacturing the political class – the new breeds- outside what it considered the tainted class of the old breeds!

There is a disconnect in that the politician was unable to fulfil its governance role (governance being the effective and efficient utilisation of human and material resources for the benefit of most people) and to learn in the process that governance is primarily about securing (from where security was begotten) the lives of the people. To this extent and in an ideal situation, the military whose job did not entail securing peoples' lives had nothing to teach the politician about security. The military's job is to defend the territory where the people live and safeguard the state from external aggression and internal subversion. Their job was not to turn the guns bought with the tax payers monies for their protection against them and to subvert the state. Indeed that aspect of their schedule of aiding civil authority when called upon to do so would not have been necessary if they had allowed the civil authority to preside over governance.

There is a difference between security and defence. Security is that umbrella that sheltered everything about the lives of the people. Security is therefore political. This was where the politician who offered self to the people for service took on the task of catering to all that entailed securing the lives of the people. In doing this, the politician tapped from the knowledge of specialists in all fields of human endeavours in advisory capacity. One of these specialists came from the defence field. Defence was one aspect of the security umbrella. The Constitution of Nigeria was clear on the role of military in section 217 subsection 2 a, b, c and d.

Security which was what the political class set out to accomplish in their governance endeavour was one of the affairs of state they have had to learn from the military class. Indeed as the last post pointed out, most, if not all Nigerians, learnt security from the Nigerian armed forces when they governed Nigeria. It was a lesson learnt from a military that had no idea of the broader political conception of security beyond the defence role they play in accomplishing that aspect of security. It was a false knowledge built and foisted on Nigerians by the consistency of their hold on political power. The effectiveness of their version of security resonated among Nigerians in their practise where they tackled the

essentially law and order issues emanating from their poor record of governance. This they then described as security.

As military rule festered on the Nigerian landscape, the political class came to the realisation that the only reason the military usurped power was because of their possession of the gun. This much was admitted by President Shagari when he argued that there were two political parties in Nigeria: the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and the military. The military had tested power and had become hooked to the trappings of power. That military rule ended in 1999 was not because of domestic opposition. It was more of a combination of international and domestic pressure that sent the military back to the barracks albeit reluctantly.

The political class might have theorised in the course of their years of hibernation on how to tame the military and their propensity to coup making. It was not governance – good or bad – that would stop the military. Indeed, the crop of officers who made it into the armed forces at the height of military rule was solely motivated by their political ambition. They did not join the armed forces to defend the country. It would seem the military in politics was here to stay. The only antidote was the international coalition.

A valuable lesson learnt by the political class was how to get and keep political power not from the other political parties but from the military. They learned this lesson from the Nigerian military itself which, at the height of their power, was not immune from coups and counter coups from within their ranks. This lesson encapsulated the meaning of security the political class learnt from the military.

Security was about the protection of the regime in power. Security was defence-inclined and this time inclined towards taming the one institution – the military – that stood in the way of getting and keeping power. On the initial commencement of the 1999 Republic, it was more or less a republic of retired military and paramilitary officers. Apart from the international opposition to military rule, the question of the military intervening was thought to be not feasible since it was led by one of their own. This safety valve phase of the transition ended in 2007. The civilians' mostly the new breeds that learned governance in the various military regimes took over power. In this, the lesson they learnt on security would come to handy in their administration of the country. Or so I thought.

The revelation from the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) on the so called expenditure on arms to fight terrorism-insurgency and the many other revelations as it concerns security expenditure clearly demonstrated the attempt to keep the military at bay through settlement. There was a compromise between the political class and the military class on matters of security. The political class agreed to surrender to the military class's wisdom on matters of security including voting the huge resources required to prosecute the security

venture. In return, the military class kept its distance from political power since it had its hands on the till as part of its share of the national cake.

Security in the course of military rule but especially from 2007 had become a big business. Security was big and lucrative business. The security in question was the welfare of the political and military class principally and their allies. The conventional wisdom that emerged in the business of security was that no amount was too big to expend in order to restore this security. This security expenditure was also immune from accountability. In other words, there was the securitisation of security by the political class.

Instances of the distribution of the largesse of security included the over \$2.2 billion expended on security from the ONSA. The devil of security was in the details of the distribution. It was to settle individuals. By the way, the military character of security ensured that the ONSA was led by a retired military officer, Colonel Sambo Dasuki, one of the people who knew this security. Others security expenditure included the one administered by the service chiefs with the former chief of defence staff, Marshal Alex Badeh presiding. Only recently, the "covert" operation involving the duo of Ayodele and Folashade Oke, in their Ikoyi "safe" house came to light. Ayodele Oke, was the former DG of the National Intelligence Agency and Nigeria's number one "spymaster". In this very highly classified operation, Ayodele could only trust Folashade, his wife of many years, to accomplish this mission. There were others involving the different security outfits at the national level including the Department of State Services, (DSS) and the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) that had no come to light yet.

No doubt these instances were the tips of the security iceberg involving officials at the national level in the different outfits dedicated to security. The 36 states of the country had their version of security expenditure as each state in Nigeria had one or two security issues, real or imagined, to address. Their chief executives may not have agencies dedicated to security as at the national level. However, they have supported the national defence and law enforcement agencies replicated in their states as well as individuals both military, civilians and allies whose welfare was central to the security of their states. The "no expenditure was too big" and "no accountability for security money" that applied at the national level also applied at the states level. If the 774 local governments had been allowed breathing space by their states chief executives, they too would have operated similar security portfolio in their bid to secure their local governments in the tradition prevalent at national and states levels.

In providing the local enabling environment for the emergence of Boko Haram, the national political class was unaware of the utility the group's existence would provide in the long run in national politics. Eventually, both the political and military class saw this utility and cashed it. They transformed Boko Haram into profitable political and security instruments serving their purposes. For the political class, they cloaked their settlement of the military class in the

name of fighting Boko Haram and restoring security. For the military class, the money they received was justified on removing a threat to "national security". "National security" was coined to emphasise the height of securitisation by this military inspired security culture. Remember "security" and "national security" were their signature construction and they alone knew what constituted security, national security and threat to national security. The military was aware of the fears of the political class and they fed fat on this. The military and security establishment profited from the political class's ignorance, greed and gullibility on the issue of security.

Ignorance because like the military and the rest of Nigerians, they had not studied, compared and had an independent assessment and appreciation of security particularly as it derived from Nigeria's history, experience and reality. What they knew was what they learnt from an equally ignorant military and security establishment that learned its defence-of-the-state aspect of security on-the-job. For most of the people in the military and security establishment, the first time they heard about security was when they enlisted into the different services and from the start of their job they were taught to be biased in favour of the state. It was therefore not surprising that their security and the security they made Nigerians imbibed was inclined to defending the state.

Greed because having suffered so much denial of power in the hands of the military in the course of several years and beyond protecting their power bases with the defence-inclined security they imbibed against the military and the generality of Nigerians, nothing else interested the political class about security. It was possible they were either unaware of security's diverse perspective to include principally providing for the welfare of Nigerians – the garri and sugar original dimension of security. Or they had not given thought to appreciating that in fulfilling the expectation of Nigerians in their governance disposition, Nigerians would guarantee their security against the military.

As a result of ignorance, greed or both, they became gullible and susceptible to the manipulation of the military and security establishment in the name of security as demonstrated by the revelation coming out everyday.

Their gullibility manufactured the Sambos, Bagehs and Okes of Nigeria's brand of security whose primary security concerns was to secure their now and tomorrow. These individuals, in their activities, firmly conveyed the impression that there would be no Nigeria tomorrow. They collectively ensured that in their actions in name of securing their material welfare, they created the insecurity that would drive the feeling harboured by most Nigerians of a balkanised Nigeria into fruition.

The most important lesson of security learned by the political class from the military was that that safeguarded their hold on political power. Security was first directed at the primary threat

to their hold on power, the military and to other identified threat as enunciated by those who benefited from the ONSA arms deal money. Security was principally geared towards providing for the welfare of these people. Secondly and from the perspective of the states, security was about replicating the looting of national resource at the states level and supplementing in terms of logistics what was left for their states from the thieving bosses of the uniform services at the national level.

The security type imbibed by the political class excluded the rest of Nigerians. This defence-inclined security sought to defend the interest of the political class and their associates against the interests of Nigerians. This security in question had no economic, social, cultural, political and intellectual dimensions. It was not a security that catered for the welfare of Nigerians. In constructing this security, the negotiation, contestation, structure, agency, change and securitisation excluded the vast majority of Nigerians. It was a security type loaded with recipes that would destroy the HOUSE that Lugard built and the political class have been unable to transform into a HOME for the nationalities in Nigeria since 1960.

The HOUSE is the prevailing security practice that is oblivious of Nigeria's history, experience and reality. It is a history of nationalities cobbled together to fulfil the British security idea that was Nigeria; it is the experience of poor governance by the political class and the failure to create inclusion; and it is a reality of poverty occasioned by governance which ensures that crisis and conflict persist. The HOME is the security that recognises Nigeria's history, experience and reality.