

In the Name of SECURITY? The DSS in the National Assembly

The occupation of the National Assembly on Tuesday 07 August 2018 by masked armed personnel of the Department of State Service (DSS) preventing principal officers, members and staff from gaining entry into the chambers and offices was widely condemned by sections of Nigeria and the international community. The basis for the condemnation was the belief that the action of the DSS threatened democracy and amounted to executive interference in the affairs of the legislature. In a world of separation of power and the rule of law, this action was condemnable to say the least.

The action of the DSS earned their Director General Mr. Lawal Daura the immediate sack by the Acting President Professor Yemi Osinbajo. It was believed that the sacked former DG had been rude and insubordinate to the Acting President defending his deployment of the personnel to be within his powers and that he was answerable to the commander-in-chief who appointed him. The termination of the appointment of Mr. Daura was commended as decisive and aimed at rescuing the image of the executive on whose behalf the DG purportedly acted.

The sacking of the DG not only dispelled the insinuation that the DG acted on behalf of the executive but that the recklessness associated with the leadership of the defunct DG had been condoned for too long. The DSS had ridden roughshod over the issue of jurisdiction and meddling in the affairs of other agencies of law enforcement since the Presidency of Muhammadu Buhari. Not only had the DSS lurked horns with the EFCC, the latest action of the Agency represented a flagrant interference in the affair that was within the jurisdiction of the police. If, as it was widely reported by the news media, the sacked DG had in response to a question from the Acting President on clearance for his conduct argued it was within his powers, it begged the question what was the safety issue at stake in the National Assembly to warrant the deployment of masked armed personnel of an agency saddled with covert task.

The DSS conduct has implications for the state of the state in Nigeria. If, as I argued in the preceding, that the sacking of Mr. Daura sent the signal dissociating the executive from the DSS show of shame at the National Assembly, it also demonstrated in clear term that there were several factions of the executive in the country. Thus it will be reasonable to argue that the sacked DG worked for or was paid to work for one of the factions that must have authorised the occupation of the Assembly. In other words which faction or factions of the state orchestrated the action of the DSS? How many factions of the state do we have in Nigeria? Who controls the police, DSS, NIA and the military? This development was reminiscent of what transpired when the late Alhaji Umaru Yaradua travelled abroad for medical treatment in the lead up to his eventual demise when different factions were

in control of different wings of the state. The plight of the Acting President Yemi Osinbajo in relation to Mr. Daura's insubordination mirrored the plight of the then Vice President Goodluck Jonathan with some of the service chiefs then. This recurring decimal begged the question do appointees of the president serve the person or the office of the president?

This brings me to the question of the justification for the conduct at the National Assembly by the DSS. What was the justification for this conduct? SECURITY, no doubt? The DSS would have defended its conduct in the name of security. A covert outfit uncovered planned treason or sedition and rather than acting in a covert manner and involving the police chose to take on the public order and law enforcement role of the police by occupying what would have been the supposed seat of treason or sedition! Security, their definition of security!!

What security type was involved here? Whose security was endangered to elicit the action of the DSS at the National Assembly? Should we not define this security that creates insecurity for most people and the country? Did not the action of the DSS create insecurity of a dimension they purportedly set out to prevent? Should the police have insisted on acting within their power – as the first line of defence in internal order management – what would have been the situation at the National Assembly?

Evidently security has one definition in Nigeria. The security involved here would have been the type that preoccupied agencies of state – police, DSS, civil defence and the military. It is about the security that has failed is failing and will continue to fail Nigerians because of its limitations towards addressing the reality in Nigeria. Even among these agencies, there are functional differences and thus jurisdiction. The police will not be doing the work of the DSS; the DSS should not be doing the work of the police; the army should not be doing the work of the navy; the navy should not be doing the work of the airforce and the airforce should not be doing the work of the army. No doubt there should be cooperation in the overall scheme of maintaining public order as the objective of these agencies. Beyond this cooperation between agencies in the overall effort of safeguarding the state and citizens, the DSS conduct is a clear case of interference.

What these agencies, official Nigeria and most Nigerians regard as the ultimate security, in an ideal situation, represent one of the objectives and as I have argued the least of the objectives of security. By ideal situation I mean where security has been defined in philosophical, legal and policy terms and where security operates in the context of interstate relations and presumed the existence of the objective realities that occasioned this. The Nigeria situation is NOT ideal from these two perspectives. Nigeria has no defined security philosophy couched in legal and policy perspectives. Nigeria does not

operate its security from the classical perspective of interstate relation even though its sole focus on security from the perspective of agencies of state – political and military – privileged the protection and survival of the state as the referent of security. In this instance, the state coalesced into the ethnic/religious/regional coalition in power at any given time.

Whose security was endangered to elicit what was clearly a desperate action on the part of the DSS at the National Assembly? In view of the preceding, it is the security of a faction of the executive/state that the DSS was out to protect and advance. It has everything to do with the leadership of the National Assembly. The alignment and realignment of interests and forces preparatory to the 2019 election provided the platform for this action. The personage involved in this scheming cut across ethnic/religions/regions. What counts as insecurity for the coalition that orchestrated the DSS occupation was their place in the interim, come 2019 and beyond.

Should we not define this security that creates insecurity for most Nigerians? Security of the type that caters for the interest of the political and defence establishment is the primary source of insecurity for most Nigerians. This security has its foundation in their quest to provide and sustain their livelihood. Secondly, the foundation of this security is to control the state and its instrument of coercion even when the purpose they seek this control is to cater for their primary security – food, shelter, health etc – the same security they (principally the political class in a democracy) deny most Nigerians.

I have argued that Mr. President got the conception of security that Nigerians voted for him in 2015 to provide WRONG. The security that has been lacking in the lives of Nigerians and that has been the source of the crisis and conflict is the one associated with food, shelter, health and opportunity and not the type associated with his first life as a military officer. Unlike the view manipulated into existence that Boko Haram constituted existential threat to Nigeria in the lead up to the election in 2015, the security type that is lacking and constitute existential threat to Nigerians and Nigeria then and now is the inability of most Nigerians to fend for themselves. It is this inability that gives birth the second type of security i.e. the least of the objectives of security that Mr. President took up as the major reason Nigerians voted for him.

I had argued that of the three agendas Mr. President set out to accomplish – securing Nigeria, fighting a relentless war against corruption and revamping the economy in order to create opportunity for youths – the one that represent security is not the first i.e. securing Nigeria. The one that represent security is revamping the economy in order to create opportunity for youths. Indeed if the order in which Mr. President lined them up represented their priority, then he got it WRONG. The order should have been revamping

the economy in order to create opportunity for youths, fighting a relentless war against corruption and securing Nigeria.

Indeed if Mr. President successfully accomplished the first two, securing Nigeria would not require the invitation of the military in aid of the police to maintain public order. That Mr. President had not pursued them in this order is the reason Nigeria is bleeding. Not only is Mr. President's conceptualisation of security of the secondary type, his conception of corruption – limited to theft of public fund – is narrow to say the least. Where do we place the action of the DSS within the administration's definition of security and corruption?

I argued that the action of the DSS acting as I presumed on behalf a faction of the state was either motivated by the larger interest of the DG and/or the immediate pecuniary benefit derivable for the DG as principally driven by his quest for the primary security – food, shelter, health etc. To presume that security is only about physical protection (and thus solely about the police, DSS, civil defence and military) in the light of the abundant evidence to the contrary demonstrate the urgency of imbuing SECURITY with a PHILOSOPHY or nature, meaning and purpose anchored on the LAW and POLICY.

Prior to the sin in the Garden of Eden, man and woman need not worry about this security – food, shelter, health etc. After the transgression in the Garden, man and woman singular effort and preoccupation – in all spheres – since then has been governed by the search for and provision of his/her security. The lack of this security is the CAUSE of the crisis and conflict in Nigeria including the occupation of the National Assembly by rogue elements of the DSS under the charge of its disgraced Director General.