

The Release of \$1 Billion from the Excess Crude Account to Fight Insurgency: A Security Perspective

The announcement by the National Economic Council that Nigeria's Governors' Forum had given approval for the release of \$1 billion to fight insurgency in the north east again reminded me of the questionable practice of security that was devoid of a philosophy. My attention was drawn to the release of the money from what was now an illegal fund called the Excess Crude Account (ECA) when I listened to the interview granted Radio Nigeria by a colleague of mine on the likely impact of the money on the economy.

The interview, as I noted in my rejoinder (see the link "AOviews" on adoyionoja.org for the article "My Take on Dr. Uche Uwaleke's Submissions in the Interview with Radio Nigeria..."), was granted without sufficient detail accompanying the announcement of the approval of the money beyond its use for fighting insurgency. The announcement was starved of details to enable comments on its likely impact – economic, political, social, psychological, security etc – by pundits.

Regardless of this lack of detail, Nigerians spoke for or against the approval of the money for the purported purpose of fighting insurgency. One of these was the All Progressives Congress national leader, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu. Most who spoke recalled the experiences from the recent past where money from the Excess Crude Account was released for the purpose of fighting insurgency that ended in the pockets of political and military bosses.

The political system in place since 1999 has yet to take a position on its own philosophy of security. In other words, the prevailing philosophy of security within which insurgency is being tackled derived from the military's philosophy of security. This philosophy defined security within the defence work description of the armed forces. To this extent, there are several shortcomings. I once noted, at the peak of the crisis in the north east, that one of the existential crises that confronted the armed forces in Nigeria was their inability, within their defence work description, to define and label the crisis in the north east for what it was. I attributed this inability to do this to their over-politicisation both as the governing elite and as professionals overly polluted by politics.

As the professional body responsible for defence, the task of the armed forces is to define the type of conflict in the north east. Is it terrorism? Is it insurgency? Is it terrorism and insurgency rolled into one? As I argued in the piece, their inability to define the conflict – a major failing on their part to date – in the north east had hampered the intervention of the political class in the provision of solution to containing the crisis. The armed forces had been unable to diagnose the problem largely because the military was a major factor in the problem. This explained why in spite of the resources appropriated within the

formal and informal channels for tackling a “technically defeated” foe, Nigerians were told that more resources was required to tackle insurgency in the north east.

The persistence of the problem is indicative of the larger problem of the inability or unwillingness of the political class to take up the task of providing a security philosophy in the context of a democratic framework for the first time in the history of Nigeria. Nigeria has no define security framework beyond the working frame that comes from the role of the armed forces as enshrined in section 217 of the Constitution.

Closely associated with the lack of philosophy, Nigeria has no security policy within which the conduct of officialdom would be regulated. Nigeria has not the tradition of administrations coming up with their security strategies which derived from the security policy of the country. With the exception of the former President, Dr. Olusegun Obasanjo, who deemed fit to provide a “Grand National Security Strategy”, for the duration of his presidency as his administration’s working document on security even without a policy, the rest of the democratic administrations relied on the military’s perception of security as their guide.

Yet so much has been done in the name of security. Yet so much is being done in the name of security. Yet so much will be done in the name of security using the military’s security philosophy for the political class in whose name this is being done. Yet the political class in whose charge is security have no philosophy of their own that serves as the framework of this security.

It is in the name of this security that \$1 billion was approved by the National Economic Council for the prosecution of a conflict that Nigerians were told was technically defeated. Why do you need such colossal amount of money for an enemy that does not use weapons better than the armed forces possessed in its arsenal? Why do you need such amount of money for the north east- if the money was for any other purpose other than the armed forces perspective on security - when there are several interventions to stabilise the area including the Presidential Commission on the North East and Operation Safe Passage? Why do you require extra budgetary fund for an enemy that could be dealt with by the conventional resources available to agencies such as the police, the Department of State Services, the army, navy and air force? Why do you need such amount of money at this inopportune time?

The political class are obviously comfortable with the prevailing security practice derived from the work schedule of the military to want to take on the task of providing a security philosophy in tandem with their mandate from the people. As I argued in my review of the recent national security strategy released by President Donald J. Trump which he christened the America First strategy, the strategy was conceived within the United States

security policy that was horned into being after the Second World War from military and economic standpoints. The Trump strategy followed a time tested line that seek to protect, project and advance America's security interests within and outside America. The difference was in style, time, space and personality. This strategy took into consideration President Trump's personality, style, time and space but it did not depart from America's core values, interests and aspirations espoused by different administrations within a consistent security policy.

I had asked some questions in the concluding part of the article on "Discerning Security Policy in Trump's America First Security Strategy: Lesson for Nigeria's One-off-for-all-time National Security Strategy bereft of Policy". One of these questions was directed at the political class in Nigeria. The question referred to the attitude of the political class in their collaboration with the military class in the prevailing security practice which I had variously and vicariously described as "common ground", "blind consensus" and "quid pro quo". The question drew attention to the refusal of the political class to seize the initiative to launch its stamp on security; away from the security philosophy it inherited from the dominance of the military class which did not express the needs of Nigerians that removed and replaced military regime with elected officials.

I had asked that "if the military define security within their job description of defence, how should the political class define security? Should the political class not define security within their job description of governance that encompasses most things beginning with the foundation of security, the economy? Should the political class not follow the security type advocated by Anthony Burke that "security should not be seen as one good among many. Security should be the good that guarantees all others"? Should the Nigerian political class define security in the context of their difficult experience in the hands of the military as the quid pro quo that security is today? Where is the difference between the political class and the military class in the definition of security? Of the military and political class, who owns security?

There was never a time that these questions require repeated asking and answers than now with the approval by the Governors Forum for the release of \$1 billion for the fight against a supposed vanquished enemy in the north east. Nigerians need to ask the political class to stick to its job description of governance – an all encompassing term – and to this extent define security which it was elected to provide to encompass most things beginning from tackling the basic needs insurgency confronting Nigerians everywhere. Nigerians need to demand that their political leaders come up with a position on security that reflects the history, experience and reality of Nigeria.

Nigerians should ask their political leaders to quit the alliance they have with the military whom they considered the only credible threat against their continual hold on power and whom they have agreed to relinquish the management of security in tandem with the military's defence mentality in so far as the military assures the political class of its leadership role. Nigerians should remind the political class that their only guarantee against destabilisation by the military is the support of Nigerians who remained the antidote against military intervention and the best way to be assured of this guarantee is to take the security of Nigerians for which they were elected to provide as the focus of governance. Nigerians should ask the political class to own security as they were elected to provide security which encompasses all things including the minor role of defence within the security umbrella provided by the military.

In the last seventeen years of electoral rule, the political class, the supposed owners of security, have played a second fiddle role in that they have refused to take ownership of their security role and have chosen to align with the military in order to guarantee their sole preoccupation to stay in power and benefit themselves. This is not the security Nigerians elected them to provide. This security they prefer is counterproductive to the political class and their military collaborators.

The Bola Tinubu and Governor Abdulaziz Yari defence of the approved money kicked in the face of this basic needs insurgency which the All Progressives Congress administration at all levels have been unable to fight to rather supporting the insurgents looming in the battle underway over who retains power come 2019.