

Security Policy: the Missing Link in the Sudden Awakening and Growing Interventions

There are seemingly serious concerns raised by government – executive and legislature – at states and central levels on the issue of security. However, this serious concern has one fundamental lapse: it is that the concern about security has no foundation in policy and that the question of strategy canvassed at these levels was without basis in definition, philosophy and in history, experience and reality.

By the way, these concerns beg for one thing: the input of the present system of government in place since 1999 on the question of security. I had argued severally that what prevails as security was the job description of the military as enshrined in section 217 of the Constitution which, at the height of their mission as government, was elevated into security. In other words, the military's perception of security is NOT security. It was the military's intervention in the political process and their inability to solve Nigeria's problem which prompted their invoking their professional calling into the definition of security. To this extent and through socialisation, the military's defence-inclined security perception has come to define security.

Since 1999, the civilianisation process underway with the consistency of electoral democracy which represented the minimalist subscription to the tenet of democracy has been in dire need of democratisation of persons and institutions. Nigeria's electoral democracy is lacking in democratisation. One area that requires democratisation is security. My position was predicated on the continuous retention and practice of a security notion that has no basis in policy, in governance and in addressing the history, experience and reality of Nigeria. It was as a result of this consideration that I challenged the electoral democracy underway since 1999 thus:

"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?"

This is the central question confronting the present democratic system. The need to distance the present insipient democratic system from the persons and institutions inherited from the previous military government has become imperative if Nigerians and thus Nigeria is to make progress. According to a serving General, "the armed forces has since move on as far as the idea of intervention in government was concern". Accordingly, "my generation of generals represented the last of the group to remember anything about coup and coup making and for the present crop of officers and men they can only study this in the book." However, the General noted that it was the rest of Nigerians that was fixated on the idea of the military in government as they have refused to move on.

For Nigerians to move on there is need for the present democratic order even in its minimalist subscription to democratic tenets to set the pace in first demilitarising and second democratising persons and institutions. This process of democratisation of persons and institutions will not only "commence in the manner they governed at all levels", to borrow the words of the General. In my opinion, it will begin by providing a philosophy and policy of security different from the practice of the military the political class have wittingly endorsed because it served their pecuniary interest.

What is the understanding of the present governance system of security? The preceding quotation demonstrated in no uncertain term that while the military regimes had a sense of its intervention in security as derived from the constitution, the civilian democratic system saddled with the governance of the entire Nigerian space has not a clue on what its conception of security should be. The conception of security of the civilian democratic system should be based on its GOVERNANCE role since the constitution entrusted this responsibility to the elected persons in the legislatures and executives and, to a certain degree, the judiciary.

In the absence of a philosophy and policy of security, the interventions (strategies) of civil democratic system on security lacked foundation. Prior to the interest shown by the elected representatives, the initiatives for finding solution to the "killings and other security concerns" as a recently constituted House of Representatives Adhoc Committee on Killings and Other Security Concerns termed this came from the agencies in the executive branch such as the armed forces, the police and the civil defence. The interventions of these agencies – the most recent was the National Security Summit – convened by the police authority last year was within their constitutionally assigned mandates and NOT from any security policy put in place by the elected representatives since assuming office in 1999.

The elected representatives have seemingly woken up from their slumber from the point of view of the job description of the agencies of executive to lend their weight on the issues of persistent killings as demonstrated in Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa, Zamfara often described as farmers-herdsmen clash and other forms of "insecurity" to use the language of the day. Both arms of the national assembly have been engaged in this intervention with the House of Representatives convening a seminar and the Adhoc Committee and the Senate convening the gathering where the Vice President was a guest. In all these engagements whether from the legislature or the executive, the one thing missing is a security policy from which Nigerians would have a sense of the security from which these interventions were couched.

Is there a security policy in Nigeria? Are the strategies for tackling "insecurity" prescribed by the agencies of the executive, the Senate, the House and the Vice President based on a security policy? Or is it based on the practice of the law enforcement and defence establishment based on their constitutional mandate? Are the elected representatives in the executives and legislatures relying on the experience of a version of security they were socialised into under military rule as the basis for their intervention on security rather than fashioning a security policy?

What is a security policy? Security policy set out to answer four questions based on the history, experience and reality of a country. The questions are: what is security? Whose security? What counts as security issues? How can security be achieved? Any policy and not just a security policy should have these questions within its purview. As I have argued elsewhere, apart from the constitution of a country, the next most important document is a country's security policy. This is because in all of human endeavour, the one issue that resonates is the issue of the attainment of security.

A security policy should set out the answers to these questions in the context of a country's history, experience and reality. All other policies whether in education, agriculture, ICT, youth, communication, culture, children, disabled, infrastructure, defence, police, prison, women, foreign affair, grazing etc in the country should have a security objective to be attained in their specific area. This security objective should emanate from the security policy of the country. In other words, every policy has a security objective derived from the security policy that should be pursued and attained. Once the security objective is identified in a policy area, the strategy for its attainment is the responsibility of the agency of government concerned.

Now, can we argue that Nigeria has a security policy? And that this security policy is the basis for the interventions of all the concern arms and agencies of government – executives, legislatures and judiciaries, police, civil defence and the military? Or that

Nigeria has no security policy except the perception of security not founded on policy, history, experience and reality but on the practice of certain agencies of the executive (armed forces and the police) which catering to the specific "security" concerns of the civil democratic system has been elevated into an arbitrary policy on security?

What is security to which the Vice President spoke about in the Senate National Security Summit? Was his reference to "...what is new, is our approach and determination to contain these threats and protect the lives and property of all Nigerians" indicative of the existence of a policy? And "this determination can mostly be seen in the way our security agents in particular have dealt with Boko Haram and several of the threats in parts of the country"... the definition of security? If it was, was it derived from any policy? Or was it derived from the job description of the agencies of law enforcement and defence? What does the Vice President mean when he argued quoting the President "this is one attack too many, and everything must be done to provide security for the people in our rural communities, I have ordered the security agencies to find and capture the perpetrators, they must face justice."?

Was the President's strategy of ordering the security agencies including the defence or army headquarters to relocate to Maiduguri at one point and the police headquarter to relocate to Makurdi at another time derived from a policy on security? Is the civil democratic system's definition of security within the existing perception of security inculcated into Nigerians by the military when it was the governing authority? Couldn't the Vice President's question "what then is being done about security?" be regarded as reflection of the rudderless state of security under the prevailing democratic dispensation since 1999?

Another clue – and Mr. Vice President's address contained plenty indicating the direction to the question what is security – was when he asked "what then is being done about security?" He proceeded to answer that "the approach of the government has been to deploy mobile police forces to troubled areas and also both the army and air force, the Nigerian Army formations and units..." Again the focus of Mr. Vice President from where one can discern the definition of security was when he posited that the present security infrastructure cannot secure a country the size of Nigeria. Accordingly, "State Police and other community policing methods are clearly the way to go."

To all these assertions by the Vice President one needs to ask: what is the functional difference between the military and law enforcement views on security occasioned by its narrow role in the umbrella called security by virtue of section 217-218 and section 214-216 and those of the civil authority by virtue of their governance of all the Nigerian space? When Nigerians voted for the present administration and asked them to secure their lives, was this because they felt consumed by the so-called orchestrated existential threat the political and military authorities transformed the Boko Haram menace into?

Of Mr. President Three Agendas – securing the country, fighting relentless war against corruption and revamping the economy in order to provide employment for the youth – the one that represented security of all three is the last one – revamping the economy in order to create employment for the youth. Mr. President's idea about securing (fighting Boko Haram) the country or security to which he erroneously thought he was voted into power represented his erstwhile professional preference as a soldier which did not represent the "security" majority of Nigerians wanted. It was not Mr. President's type of war on corruption which focused on functionaries of the previous government and excluded functionaries of the present government that would revive the economy.

Mr. President got the security Nigerians voted him into office to provide wrong. In this Mr. President is not alone. Most elected representatives have no clue of this security and if they have they are more concerned about appeasing the military that they see as the greatest opposition and threat to the continuation of this civil democratic process underway since 1999. To this extent, they are ready to acquiesce to the knowledge and practice of the military on their perception of security in so far as it keeps the military contented, busy and out of politics.

Whose security are we talking about? Is it the security of the state to which the prevailing security perception swore to protect? Or is it the security of the people to which the civil democratic system was elected to enhance in all contexts? It would seem that the absence of a security policy which should ordinarily define the referent of security has left the arms of government and agencies committed to security that secure those in power and their interests.

What counts as security issues in Nigeria? The Vice President's address to the Senate Security Summit contained indications of what the executive and legislature deemed security issues except that it was not borne out of a policy and not based on the examination of Nigeria's history, experience and reality that define security. Some instances included the Boko Haram crisis, Niger Delta militancy, secessionist clamour in the east, restructuring in the west and the farmers-herders clash in central Nigeria. Prior to these events, what did successive government classified as security issues? Nothing!

For the regimes prior to 1999, security was ad-hoc and was therefore treated as such. Indeed for the military regimes that brought security into the consciousness of Nigerians and socialised Nigerians into its perception of security, it was tantamount to their job description and nothing else. Where is the view of the civil democratic system on security since 1999? Whose security should they be talking about? What counts as security issues? Unless and until these policy issues are addressed, the question of strategy to which most of the interventions seek to address has no foundation. The issues raised by the Vice President were those of strategies and without a security policy, the strategies would continue to fall flat.

Not even the *National Security Strategy* purportedly drafted by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) satisfies the yearning and gap in security. The ONSA document is NOT a policy. The ONSA document therefore lacked foundation in security policy. The ONSA has seemed oblivious of the fact that policy is the basis for strategy and proceeded to authoring security strategy single-handedly without a security policy. The *NSS* is not relevant. The irrelevance of the document was underscored by its lack of use by the previous government whose National Security Adviser authored it. The Nigerian tradition that did not recognise continuity in government made certain that the present and future governments that did not author the *NSS* did not notice its existence. The document was conveniently hidden from public consumption in name of being a classified.

The interventions first by agencies (armed forces, police etc) of the executives acting in consonance with their perception of their role in "security" and secondly the sudden awakening of the executives and legislatures at the national levels and in some states on the issue of security would remain an exercise in futility unless and until the civil democratic system distance itself from the prevailing practice of security without a policy and stamp its mark by providing a security policy based on Nigeria's history, experience and reality.