

Teaching Security

In the last two academic sessions – 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 – I have had the rare opportunity to put into practice teaching one of my post doctoral interests. The interest is security. My interest in security preceded the establishment of the security and strategic studies programme in the Institute of Governance and Development Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. I have researched into security actively since 2007. The programme was created in 2015. I teach security in the MSc and PhD classes.

This column would be about my interactions. It would cover interactions that I have had and will continue to have with students in the programme. It will also carry my views on issues as well as my vision for the programme. I will begin with the first encounter I had with the two classes – MSc and PhD – I was assigned to teach. But before doing this let me recount excerpts that stayed with me from the inaugural address of the Vice Chancellor to students and resource persons of the security and strategic studies programme.

The Inaugural Address

The Vice Chancellor, Professor Muhammad Akaro Mainoma, addressed students and resource persons in the lecture theatre of the postgraduate school on the programme of security and strategic studies. He informed that the programme was new. It was one of the first if not the first of its kind in Nigeria. He noted that students and staff involved in the programme were all new. They had no previous degrees as a taught programme anywhere else.

In other words, none the persons present had degrees in security studies. They were from different background with interest in security studies either as students or resource persons. To this extent, there was going to be a lot of learning on both sides. Both sides should keep an open mind as the programme evolved.

Security studies rather than security and strategic studies resonated in the address of the Vice Chancellor. The primary focus of the programme is security studies. Of this, there was none in Nigeria's public tertiary institutions. Of strategic studies, many universities run MSc professional degree programme. Thus the claim to knowledge of security derived from the exposure to strategic studies. Strategic study in the context of Nigeria is restrictive. It is focused on military issues.

There is a world of difference between security and strategy. The former precedes the latter in most if not all sense. Strategy feed on security. Strategy derives its *raison d'être* from security. Security is therefore the focus of the programme and it is new as a course of study in the Institute.

My take and guiding philosophy in the Vice Chancellor's address was the newness of the programme and the fact that students and resource persons had no prior university degrees on security studies. Above all there was going to be plenty of learning on both sides and that both sides should keep an open mind.

With this injunction at the back of my mind, I had proceeded to applying myself to teaching and learning on the job. However, I have had a head start of over ten years in learning and studying security and to this extent I was pretty much prepared to put into practice what I had learned. My association with security began in my formative years as a graduate student and in my dissertation, thesis and articles. I was influenced by the same enabling environment that nurtured most Nigerians' knowledge of security. This became my entry point to critically examining the epistemology of security in Nigeria and my subsequent submission on the need to construct a Nigerian security philosophy.

The Birth of Security and Strategic Studies

The idea of the security and strategic studies component of the Institute's programme was that of Professor Olayemi Akinwumi. He enlisted me into working on the proposal knowing my interest in security. The programme's initial title was "strategic and security studies". I argued that the strategy part was secondary and the security part was primary. I noted that security was everything and should come before strategy, if we have to add strategy to the name. Security, I noted, should be the focus of the programme particularly in view of development in the last three decades in Nigeria. Security has featured in the development that it was high time we study the phenomenon. We redesigned the programme and title into "security and strategic studies".

At the inauguration of the resource persons at the PG boardroom of the Faculty of Administration, I drew the attention of participants to the fact that there was need for a basic core course on security knowing that most of the prospective students' interest was security and that they had no prior programme of study on security.

This was what informed my suggesting "introduction to security and strategic studies". Argument ensued about the title and eventually the rest of the participants settled for "fundamentals of security and strategic studies". I was assigned the course to teach. For me it was an entry level core course that dealt with "introduction to security and strategic studies" regardless of the title preferred by other resource persons. This course was for the MSc class. I was also assigned to teach "security and strategic theories" in the PhD class. My take was and still is that the PhD class require the introductory class on security studies knowing that they were and are not better than the MSc class in terms of taught knowledge on security. Thus I combined the introductory aspects of security and the theories in my interaction with the pioneer set of PhD students.

With the first sets of MSc and PhD classes, I tried to keep the appearance of teaching and learning security and strategy simultaneously. I said appearance because it was difficult from the point of view of logistics to teach security and strategy at the same time. The focus of the programme is security and my interest is security and not strategy. It was obvious – at least to me – that security was the main menu for the class. The primary difficulty I experienced was the contact time. The time was short and there was so much to do. Since there was so much to do and I had little time I was keen on devoting my time and energy to the security part which was not only primary. It was also new.

In the course of teaching and learning with the second set of students I had cause to concentrate on the security studies side while I put up a proposal for the floating of a course in introduction to strategy or fundamentals of strategic studies. I informed the students about the development while I wait for the approval to come. To some extent, I was able to teach and learn security without overburdening me and the students. Until the completion of the first semester programme, decision on the proposal by the Institute had not been taken.

How did the first encounter in the two classes go? How did I introduce the courses to the students? These will be the subject of my next post.