1

Introduction: A Preface to the Understanding of the Aesthetic and Ethical Imperatives for Viable National Security in the Post-colonial African State

Dapo Adelugba

This study emerges on the intellectual landscape and gains its significance because it has become imperative for us as scholars to re-examine the intellectual, moral and social foundations of our lives, especially with regard to the idea of security. We can achieve this re-examination by recognising the human ability (and not necessarily the desire) to consider new possibilities, and to deepen the understanding of things. This rethinking of national security in Nigeria has compelled the aggregation of a number of intellectuals from a multi-disciplinary background in the humanities. The investigators seek to offer a national spread both in terms of geographical location and in terms of disciplinary focus. The aim is to achieve a more systematic and broad-based research for national development. This group comprises researchers having the requisite knowledge and experience in their core disciplinary concerns and they will bring this epistemology to bear on the quest for security. The researchers are from a wide variety of fields such as Theatre Arts, European Studies, Philosophy, African Studies, etc. They share the courage to escape from restrictive and received doctrinal engagements as these affect security. Given this new template of discourse, the scholars retain the capability to enhance the theoretical viability and consistency of the vision and mission of the project on rethinking national security.

This project, as it exists, is geared towards fostering national security and, ultimately, national development. Indeed, it opens the opportunity for a more creative interlinking of disciplinary methodologies. It recognises the need to develop certain aspects of our traditional ways or ideas on security, and, more

significantly, it insists on the need to blend such traditional concerns with the realities and security needs of our modern society. In this sense, the study is a project on the conditions or machineries for the emancipation and transformation of the discourse on security, especially in post-colonial Nigeria. This study, which focuses strongly on the empirical, conceptual and historical approaches to the idea of security, combines rigorous comprehensive rhetoric with a realistic analysis of the wider social and political processes that define the contexts of the security problematic. These approaches, therefore, pave the way for a more systematic analysis of the problematic.

The study of the problem of national security in Nigeria is compelling because of the hitherto restrictive analysis of the nature of national security and the unexplored character of the critical conceptual and empirical interfaces between the ethical and aesthetic dimensions as key contributors to national survival and integration. The important point must be made that to a large extent the aesthetic value relies on ethical values. In most cases, we become aware of the aesthetic value by means of a recognition and consciousness of immanent ethical values. More than anything else, this project is a search for new strategies of research and action-based interventions that are capable of defining and establishing a new kind of public policy. The idea of policy that we are interested in is one that takes the interest of the people or the majority into consideration. Such a principle will depend on the redefinition of the meaning of the value of life, among other core notions. We seek a strategy by which people's perception will blend with government action in order to create a new system of social re-engineering. This study examines the ways by which we can facilitate the urgent imperative of establishing viable and rational patterns of socio-political action. It is a contribution to the quest for defining the vital socio-cultural norms and doctrinal imperatives needed for responsible cooperative human action. It examines the roles of dominant works of philosophy, literature, plays and performances in the creation of a philosophical basis for political stability and social reconciliation in the society. It extends the boundaries of previous aesthetic studies. In short, it redefines the roles of ethics and aesthetics as crucial contributors to security, human development and world civilisation.

At the heart of the entire project is a re-conceptualisation of the ideas of security and political community. This study places the failure of existing approaches to national security within the real context of the spectral insecurity that has continually plagued the Nigerian state. We insist that a restrictive militaristic conception of security cannot lead to the desired form or level of social and economic advancement required by a country confronted by diverse post-colonial socio-cultural challenges. This policy is not only limited in its scope and method, but is prone to perversion. The point is that even the military approach to security that has become a feature of Nigerian national security and state policy has not

been attained due to the lack of a viable ethical and aesthetic foundation. This is a significant point and the reason is simple. Over the ages, virtually every arm of the military has played a role in the political tyranny and corruption of past military regimes. This has led to endemic social violence and national decay. At the professional level, the internal contradictions occasioned by ethnic politicisation, the generational gap and ideological tensions have led to the vitiation of the military's integrity, and its capability to attain operational efficiency. At the social level, the pervasive pattern of employing the military to act aggressively, extort and oppress the citizens is unassailable evidence of a certain entrenchment of institutional disorder and anomie. The diminishing stature and capacity of the military model for the maintenance of personal and collective security is a reflection of the failure of the state to assure conditions for safe and peaceful human life. This has diminished the opportunities for individuals to seek their well-being. The lack of faithful implementation of the favoured security model is not only the outcome of its inherent deficiencies, but also due to the institutional failure in the promotion of complementary models of educational and technological growth as the critical drivers of social and ethical transformation and security.

The current situation is that the state and its agencies have not been able to manage such a virulent fluidity, and the malignant contradictions arising from these have led to spiralling insecurity. This is seen in the inability of the government and society to establish social values such as trust, dialogue and tolerance. There has also been a deficit in the state's potential to provide the basic amenities of life, infrastructures, etc. At another level, there has been the problem of antinomies and the real context of the repudiation of political obligation, as seen in the regress in people's disposition to obey laws made for ensuring that human life is interesting, rewarding and manageable.

Central to this tragedy is the post-colonial situation that Nigeria confronts. It has been suggested that over the years insecurity has prevailed because different governments, individuals and institutions have systematically entrenched a culture of marginalisation within the social order. This has led to the reproduction of widespread violence, arbitrary hierarchies and avoidable deprivation. This situation has often led to the perpetuation of poverty, widened material inequalities, sustained militarism, fragmented communities, subordinated groups, and fervid intolerance. The prevailing injustice and exploitation have created a regime of marginal peoples, whose defining feature is their structural irrelevance. Structural irrelevance is highlighted and engendered by the realities and consequences of the notions of difference and dichotomies, dependence, disorder and discriminatory power, contestation, tension and genocidal oppression.

From the above, we must agree that this study contains the potential for ensuring liberation and transformation, to the extent that it insists on the need to conceive viable ideas of security. It is the view of the researchers that a new

security theorising can be nurtured by the interlinking of the ethical and aesthetic approaches that examine the wider context of the security imperative and show the value and need for viable alternative theorising that acknowledges the roles of epistemological spaces and multi-disciplinary discourses. Therefore, aesthetic and ethical imperatives for national security in Nigeria require the establishment of vital normative foundations that interlink the ideas of action, vision, purpose, responsibility and justice, as well as their impact on the security problem.

Conclusion

Finally, the significance of this study lies in its power to facilitate better insight into national security and political morality by appropriating the creative inputs of ethical and aesthetic analysis as a new theoretical basis for the understanding of the national security problem. It can have the potential for translating the concrete conceptual reconstruction into empirical and practical solutions to the problem. The combination of aesthetics, ethics and anthropological accounts can go a long way in enhancing the quest for more imaginative ways of fostering positive human values and social reconciliation. The study can contribute significantly to national development by redefining the multi-disciplinary basis of a genuine search for a resolution of the problem of security. It provides the potential for generating new conceptual and methodological trajectories in tackling the issues of national security. More importantly, such a detailed study of the national security imperative and the role of ethical citizenship in the attainment of a just and harmonious society will go a long way to restore public confidence in the capacity of the government and society to attain national development and national survival. This project will help to foster intellectual analysis and reconstruction of the basis of national survival and peace and progress for those in society. It will mitigate the potential for socio-political and economic crises besetting the country and lead to an appreciation in the quality of human life, greater public trust and a collective adherence to the rule of law.