

Commonsensical Perspectives of Security

Security is a concept and/or idea. As with most if not all concepts or ideas, there are histories and cultures behind concepts or ideas. Security is one such concept or idea. The implication of security having history and culture is that someone somewhere constructed security to serve purpose or purposes. Security thus conceived and constructed answers the questions: what is security, whose security, what is security issue and how can security be achieved. Security is word, knowledge and philosophy.

Security has a history in Nigeria.¹ Unlike the United States whose beginning is tied to security defined as wellbeing and well-fare of the person and the continuous search for wellbeing and well-fare in different parts of the world and unlike other countries that have moved security from name and work by embedding philosophy or nature, meaning and purpose to their security, Nigeria remained glued to the literal security as name and work and is oblivious of the need to move towards imbuing philosophy into its "security" in tandem with its history, experience and reality (HER).² This is even in the face of the successful failure of "security" in the last twenty years. To this end, Nigeria persisted in imitating the civic public³ or outward face of the security culture of the United States, for its own.

There are several perspectives of security which is tied to the history, experience and reality of countries. The first of the perspectives is taken from the two dominant theories explaining the origin of life form on earth. They are creation and/or evolution. "Securus" and/or "secure" from where security and its founding meaning of "free from care", "being secure" and "something which secures" applied to the first act performed by humankind on earth. The first act of humankind is to secure self by feeding⁴ and sheltering from the elements. It is from satisfying these fundamental needs primarily that humankind derived the strength to fight. The first act of humankind on earth is not to fight.⁵ When the need to fight arose, it was directed at searching, protecting and/or advancing food sources.

¹ Adoyi Onoja, "Regime Type and the Established Notion of Security in Nigeria: Towards a Human Centred Security for Nigerians", In Olayemi Akinwumi, Mamman Musa Adamu, Patrick Ukase, *Nigeria at 50: The Challenges of Nation Building*, (Zaria: Historical Society of Nigeria, 2012) 83-108; visit the sub links – stripping, buzzing in town, aoviews and adonostra – on <http://adoyionoja.org> for perspective on security.

² Adoyi Onoja, for the idea of History, Experience and Reality (HER), read the article "Security based on History, Experience and Reality (HER)" on the sub link "stripping", <http://adoyionoja.org>

³ For this theoretical perspective, read Peter P. Ekeh. "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 1 (1975): 91-112.

⁴ Ekeh's civic and primordial public is at work in Nigeria with reference to "security". For the political class, their cohorts including the top echelon of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE), "security" takes the form of primordial public where they appropriate money in the name of "security" for their pockets. The clearest revelation of the primordial public of "security" is the disbursement of the \$2.1 billion appropriated under the former NSA, Colonel Sambo Dasuki.

⁵ For the most Nigerians, the civic public or fighting using fighter aircrafts, warships, guns and boots is "security".

Of the reasons that can be advanced for crisis and conflict between and among human beings in most places today, the bulk of this would be over question of searching, advancing and/or protecting food sources.

The second perspective is security's Latin and/or English word origin or etymology. The word "security" is from the Latin "securus" and the English "secure". The word emerged in the 15th century and the meaning ascribed to security included "free from care", "being secure" and "something which secures".⁶ The identification and association of security with the "safety of state" primarily began to take hold from 1941. Security's focus on the "safety of state" or the state centric perspective that increasingly became the "civic" face of security especially by officialdom coincided with the inroad of the United States of America in world affairs and the internationalisation of its ideas.

As we will see from the next perspective of security, beginning from the 1940s, the United States would come to the realisation that security which it defined as land, market and resources/opportunity can be found beyond its shores having exhausted these resources inside America and in its backyard and the state, using the military, intelligence and law enforcement would be instrumental in getting and accessing security. Security is thus the safety of state at the international level where countries such as the United States, Britain and France etc. operated in search of security or land, market and opportunity.

This is because the state is the only recognised representative of countries in the pursuit of national interest on the international space. In the absence of governance on the international space, the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) of countries became the bulwark of the state, the representative of countries, in their search for security or land, market and opportunity. This is the point security studies emerged as a distinct discipline out of the disciplines of International Studies and Strategic Studies. It is the search for the most effective way to protect the state in the pursuit of national interest on the ungoverned international space that gave security and security studies its biggest break. Security Studies is all-encompassing embracing Strategic Studies and International Studies.⁷

The third perspective of security is the type linked to the founding⁸ of the United States of America. The people that left England for Virginia in 1607 were in search of land, market and

⁶ See "security (n.)", <https://www.etymonline.com/word/security> accessed 27:01:2020

⁷ Paul D. Williams, *Security Studies: An Introduction*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁸ Those who founded United States left England in 1607 for Virginia, moved westward and thence the whole of the States, the Americas and the rest of the world, in search of what Williams called the "routine lust for land, markets or security..." See William Appleman Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life: An Essay on the Causes and Character of America's Present Predicament Along with a Few Thoughts about an Alternative*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) 62, and the most of the thesis of Oliver Stone, Peter Kuznick, *The Untold History*

economic opportunity or security. These pioneers moved westward as they colonised and created the United States of America in the search for economic opportunities to secure themselves and their families. After creating the United States, they proceeded to the rest of the Americas in search of security. From the Americas, they moved into the rest of the world still searching for economic resources or security.

The founders of the United States have not stopped searching for security or economic resources to better self and their country. This security birthed in America is not new. The United States merely elevated it into political agenda number one as human beings most enduring *raison d'être* on planet earth. This security is not peculiar to America. Security or the search for land, market and opportunity is the human story from creation and/or evolution. The only difference was that it was not called security until Europe and in particular the United States did.

The security associated with the history of the United States in its growth and development took on that which can be equated to Peter Ekeh's two publics,⁹ the civic public and the primordial public. The civic public is the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) representing the internationalised face of security. The primordial public is the land, market and economic resources/opportunity. The MILE merely paves the way for the acquisition of land, market and economic resources/opportunity anywhere and everywhere in the world. This is the version of security – MILE – that countries such as Nigeria take for security. The land, market and economic resources/opportunity are hidden for countries such as Nigeria.

The fourth of the perspectives derived from the civic public and thus state centric view of security. This is security as noun and verb.¹⁰ In Nigeria, security is a noun and a verb. As noun or name, most Nigerians beginning with the official people use the word security to refer to the military, intelligence and law enforcement agencies in the public sector and guard companies in the private sector. As verb or doing, most Nigerians refer to the work of the military, intelligence and law enforcement in the public sphere and guards in the private sphere as security. This is the "security" in practice that failed, is failing and will continue to fail because it is bereft of philosophy and of Nigeria's history, experience and reality (HER).

of the United States (London: Penguin, 2019). The heart of America's security – land, markets and strategic resources – represent the primordial public of Ekeh's two publics shielded from the perception of countries including Nigeria that imitates most things America and only the civic public or the use of military, intelligence and law enforcement – vehicle for accessing security or land, markets and strategic resources – fascinates countries such as Nigeria.

⁹ For this theoretical perspective, read Peter P. Ekeh. "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 1 (1975): 91-112.

¹⁰ Security as noun is the collective name used for the institutions that secure – the army, navy, air force, intelligence, police, civil defence etc. and security as verb refers to the work schedule of the institutions

The fifth perspective of security is the Buzan and Weaver's security as three orders. The first order is security as dealing with actual challenge; the second order is security as defining issue in particular way in order to tackle it or securitisation and; the third order is security as arena for state to seek recognition.¹¹

The sixth perspective of security takes off from the Buzan and Weaver platform where countries used any or all of the orders in situating their security.¹² This is the instance where countries construct philosophy for their security owing to their history, experience and reality (HER). Thus we have the security type that defined Israel in the Middle East amidst immense existential threats from most if not all its neighbours; we have the security type in Pakistan driven by the relationship with India since the partition in 1947 on the one hand and on the other hand its frontline position and positioning in America's numerous geoeconomic and geopolitical interests and; the security type in Iran underscored by its Persian civilisation, 1979 revolution, its leadership of Shia Islam and its relationship with Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United States in the Middle East.¹³

The seventh perspective of security is what I argued should be the three routes to security's evolution in Nigeria. This is only possible if Nigeria come to its realisation that what it termed "security" failed long time ago. The first of the routes is to define security as security i.e. "free from care", "being secure" and "something which secures" or all-encompassing security and pursue this in all its policies and programmes; the second route is to define security as governance and by governance I am adopting the World Bank perspective of the effective and efficient utilisation of human and material resources for the benefit of most people and; the third route which is security as law and order¹⁴ will be invoked only if the first two routes failed. At the moment, Nigeria is using the third route even as it has not recognised the need for the first two routes let alone pursues them.

These perspectives carries and should carry the history, experience and reality (HER) of these societies and countries.¹⁵

From the origin of the word (etymology), theories of existence and knowledge (metaphysics and epistemology) and nature, meaning and purpose (philosophy) that can be imbued into

¹¹ Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, *Regions and Powers: the Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 408.

¹² Read Adoyi Onoja, "Presenting Models of Security Constructed Off Some Countries' History, Experience and Reality (HER)" on the sub link "aoviews" on <http://adoyionoja.org>

¹³ Read Adoyi Onoja, "Presenting Models of Security Constructed Off Some Countries'..."

¹⁴ Adoyi Onoja, "Security: A Brief Encounter in Nigeria", Unpublished manuscript, Department of History, Nasarawa State University, Keffi; Read Adoyi Onoja, "Defining and Charting Security Routes for Nigeria", on the sub link "aoviews" on <http://adoyionoja.org>

¹⁵ See my article on the concept/tool/theory of security based on History, Experience and Reality (HER) on <http://adoyionoja.org>

security, security is wellbeing and welfare of individual and people. When considered from creation and/or evolution theories, the first act of humankind on earth is to secure self by feeding and sheltering from the elements.¹⁶ It is from feeding that humankind derived the strength to fight. The first act of humankind is not to fight. When the need to fight arose, it was directed at protecting and/or advancing food sources. This has not changed since creation and/or evolution. This will not change as long as humankind lives on earth.

This is security.

What is security? Whose security? What is security issue? How can security be achieved? Has the Nigerian government at the local, states and federal levels ever asked and answered these questions of policy and strategy and thus pursue these in policies and in programmes? Is it not overdue for the legislatures of the elected assemblies to ask and answer these questions and pursue these in policies and programmes?

¹⁶ Ken Booth's theory of world security argues for the return to this security focus on human being and being human. The book demonstrated in no uncertain term the failure of state centric security and the consequent human misery and conflict this has engendered and engendering. See Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007).