

A Security Theory based on Nigeria's History, Experience and Reality (HER)

Introduction

The idea behind proposing the construction of security from Nigeria's history, experience and reality (HER) was informed by the fact that the current security theory and practice, (if one can call this theory, certainly practice will do) has several shortcomings which increases the insecurity of Nigerians and Nigeria. In several posts, I tried to examine these shortcomings in order to underscore the need for a security of the type I am proposing. I began the series with the question what is security? The series continued by sampling views or perspectives of security held by the military, politicians, intellectuals and most Nigerians. In these, I argued that security is a one-dimensional narrative constructed by the military and embrace by most Nigerians.

The foundation of this security was defence. Defence is the role of the military within the security complex as enshrined in section 217 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999. There are other institutions and roles that cumulatively sum up security. The one institution that is the fulcrum of other institutions of security is the economy. To have elevated defence as the face of security, as the experience since the military usurped political leadership in the country demonstrated undermine other issues that made security.

There is a problem with the way we see and do security in Nigeria. This way, focusing on physical safety of state and person, does not address Nigeria's security. Nigeria's security is the wellbeing and welfare of most of its people. This wellbeing and welfare is founded on the economy. This way or security as the focus on the state disadvantaged Nigeria and most Nigerians. This way profits the elite of law enforcement, defence and politics. The day Nigeria would begin to see security exclusively from the law enforcement and defence perspective has not come yet. The day we begin to see security from this perspective is the day governance begins to work at the local, state, federal levels and in most institutions of government.

Governance is not working yet. Indeed there is not even an awareness of governance on the part of the governing elite. Nigerian elite are too absorbed by the struggle for power and survival to spare time for governance. To this extent, Claude Ake posited that the contemporary African state is not a public entity but tends to be privatized in the sense that

it is “appropriated to the service of private interests by the dominant faction of the elite.”^[1] More interested in political survival than in development, the leaders of Africa gave precedence to political domination over social transformation.^[2] This is what drives the focus on security that engenders this process.

Nigerians need to re-examine the type of security theory and practice out there and determine if it is solving or compounding Nigeria’s problem. More importantly, they should determine if the security knowledge and practice is in tandem with Nigeria’s history, experience and reality. If it is not, it is time to begin to learn, teach and build security that should reflect Nigeria’s history, experience and reality.

Background to Constructing Security on History, Experience and Reality

History, Experience and Reality is a concept I am developing and proposing. The need to construct a Nigerian security theory and practice different from the prevailing imitative theory and practice which emanated from the histories, experiences and realities of cultures outside Nigeria prompted the proposition of the concept of a security based on Nigeria’s History, Experience and Reality (HER).^[3]

The History refers to the manner the British created Nigeria from hundreds of nationalities to serve the British security interest first; the Experience since independence is of the failure of governance, the inability to create inclusion among the nationalities in order to lay the foundation for the emergence of a Nigeria nation and the elite’s conversion of Nigeria into their own security interest and; the Reality is the poverty that drives contest among nationalities for space, the making of perpetual crisis and conflict inevitable, the socialisation of Nigerians into a security theory that only seek to quell the crisis and conflict with the elite profiting from this security type.

Not long ago, the National Security Summit held at the International Conference Centre, Abuja, ostensibly to find lasting solution to the insecurity in the country and in particular the farmers-herders variety. The Summit did not set out to tackle the root of the conflict. The root of the conflict was the desire of farmers and herders to safeguard their farm and cattle, their security. Instead, the Summit was about the failing view of security.^[4] This security was the type introduced and popularise to Nigeria by the military when Nigeria was

under military rule. It was the one-dimensional defence-inclined security that has come to define the face of security in Nigeria and by Nigerians.

Until the military usurped political power, security was not a subject of conversation in the manner it was in contemporary times. The military played the defence role as enshrined in section 217 subsection 2a, b, c, d of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999.^[5] Security is political as it encompassed all aspect of human endeavour. The foundation of this endeavour is economic. Other endeavours arise from the economic activity. The military, in failing to engender governance of the type that unleashed economic activities, was confronted with law and order challenges of epic proportion. These challenges partly play into the internationalisation of security. Thus was born the construction of security of the type that was inclined towards the professional role of the military, as the last line of defence internal security, and had come to define the face of Nigeria's public security governance.

The historical juncture of the epic law and order crisis in Nigeria was the mid 1980s. One of military rule's legacies to Nigeria was the destruction and/or pervasion of institutions. One such institution that suffered the neglect of military rule was the police. Indeed the inability of the military to manage the economy and consequently the society unleashed the progressive erosion of most institutions beginning with the family. The family's role in moulding young Nigerians was significantly devalued. Nigerians became hardened that existing civil institutions including the police, as the first line of defence in internal security, found it difficult to tame.

This was where the military stepped into the fray to provide what it dubbed "security". Security, justified by subsection 2(c) of the Constitution was thus born and the military stepped into this role in collaboration with the police with the establishment of joint patrols. Most acts of lawlessness exhibited by Nigerians – and there were many as Nigerians were dissatisfied and disgruntled following the inability of the regimes to address their economic problem – was described as insecurity. Most acts of correcting this lawlessness by the military and the police was described as security.

Overnight security was robbed of its political meaning and robed in the narrow defence/law enforcement role that the military^[6] and other law enforcement agencies played in the

security umbrella. With little knowledge of security from a theoretical perspective (after all most of the military and law enforcement people did not study security in schools and indeed their first exposure to "security" was on their enlistment into the services and thus from day one they were biased in favour of the protection of the state), in power as government and thus in control, with a practice that gave teeth to the version of security knowledge in vogue and with the international environment grappling with its own challenges using methods that chimed with Nigeria's view of security, the Nigerian military albeit unconsciously began the process of socialising Nigerians into the defence-inclined security theory and practice.

Nigerians learned security from an institution, the military which was itself in need of security knowledge. Nigerians, like the military, had no prior exposure to security from local or international knowledge base. Until recently, no institution of higher learning taught and researched security^[7]; there was no body of local knowledge on security built by scholars of Nigerian descent; and there was no group of scholars and scholarship in existence that can be described as Nigeria's security experts. The body of security knowledge and practice that existed and from which Nigerians learned security derived from other societies particularly the western societies. The security deriving from this body of knowledge represented these societies own histories, experiences and realities.

When domestic^[8] and international^[9] enabling environment coalesced to foist a security type on Nigerians, the knowledge and experience available to the Nigerian military, to tap into was not of Nigerian origin. Thus they were compelled to rely on the knowledge primarily derived from their defence role in the security umbrella first and secondly from the western tradition which did not speak to Nigeria's history, experience and reality (HER). The overwhelming majority of Nigerians had to rely on this knowledge and practice to learn security.

Security or secure conjures up two images. These images gave vents to some of the security theories and practices in the public domain. The first of the images derived from what was the face of the practice of security that was internationalised by the leading countries of the world. They were mostly western countries. It was "protection against harm" and it was directed at the "state."^[10] We must emphasise that this version of security spoke to their specific histories, experiences and realities.

The second image precedes the first. To “secure” meant to have what it take to be in the capacity to harm a state or individual. The first act of human being on earth was to secure their livelihood – food, cloth and shelter.^[11] It was only after they were able to do this or in the process of doing this that they had the capacity to harm. Thus security of the type that was available internationally and associated with the welfare of the state was the secondary type. While I argued that this type of security was in tandem with the histories, experiences and realities of the societies in question, it was pursued to aid their search for the primary type of security – food, cloth and shelter. To a large extent, governance which provided this type of security worked in these societies and they can afford to pursue the type of security that stand in the way of the pursuit of the first type of security.

This was not the case in Nigeria. This explained the view that security in Nigeria does not speak to Nigeria’s history, experience and reality (HER). As a testament to the assertion that security is primarily about food, cloth and shelter, Nigeria was a British security idea. It was Britain that created Nigeria first to meet its pressing economic needs before it addressed its political and imperial concerns.

The task of Nigerians from 1960 was to convert this “British security” idea into a “Nigerian security” idea. To some extent they succeeded in accomplishing this hence we have the prevailing security idea that served the interest of few Nigerians. The few Nigerians in question were the military and the political classes. Failing to convert Nigeria into an inclusive security idea for most Nigerians, we have had to reap crisis and conflict in all dimensions ever since. This was the rationale for advocating for the construction of security based on Nigeria’s History, Experience and Reality (HER).

Defining History, Experience and Reality

Nigeria’s History was that of nationalities cobbled together by the British for their own security interest. This cobbling act was conducted without the consent of the nationalities. At the time of the enforced union, these nationalities were at various levels of development. Their independent evolution and development was arrested. The policies put in place to administer the nationalities in the course of colonialism created a relationship of subordination and super-ordination. These relationships served British interest anchored on divide and rule. They were policies designed to deliver the type of security the British wanted. Consequently, at independence there was hardly a viable basis for coexistence among the

groups. It is therefore important that in evolving any security theory, this history should be taken into consideration.

Nigeria's Experience was that of the failure of post independence leadership to create the foundations for inclusion of the type that would transform the British patchwork of forging a country out of these nationalities into Nigerians. The method for accomplishing this is governance.^[12] Governance is the effective and efficient utilisation of human and material resources for the benefit of most people. The leadership at all levels and in most public institutions failed to provide this type governance that would create opportunity within the framework of justice and fair play. Governments at all levels and in most institutions had instead succeeded in excluding most Nigerians from the security provided by governance. In building security, governance of public institutions must begin to deliver. Indeed pursuing security that focuses on governance and pursuing governance that focuses on security are approaches to attaining both objectives – security and governance.

Nigerians' Reality was poverty of all type beginning with material poverty. Material poverty breeds other types of poverty. Material poverty was the foundation of the prevailing insecurity that necessitated the type of security in practice. This was owing to the failure of governance at all levels and in most public institutions. In spite of the immense human and material resources that Nigeria was endowed with, Nigerians were the poorest in the world lacking access to the most basic necessities of living.^[13] This leaves the nationalities almost at the level they were when the British brought them together. They were not only dissatisfied with their state of existence. They were disgruntled.

As a result of this state of affair, the country had perpetually reaped harvest of crisis and conflict.^[14] This crisis and conflict had since been converted into the money spinning security theory and practice that lined the pockets of the military and political elite. Having succeeded in socialising^[15] Nigerians to their view of security, they profited from pursuing this view as Nigerians, not knowing any other view of security, did not see anything wrong in the prevailing security view. The class that profits from the prevailing security practice have an abiding interest in perpetuating poverty which drives crisis and conflict. Evolving any security theory and practice should first tackle the poverty prevalent in Nigeria.

The political and military elite ensure Nigeria did not evolve its own theory of security, did not create a sense of "national" [16] in security resulting in the nationalities to increasingly cling to their ethnic/religious affiliations, did not evolve a security policy that would guide the security objectives of first security and other policies and contrived into existence "security vote" with its concomitant inelastic latitude and lack of accountability. Most of these were to the advantage of the military and political classes. This was Nigeria's history, experience and reality in terms of the prevailing security practice. This was the security type that should change in tandem with Nigeria's history, experience and reality (HER).

[1] See Claude Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*, Washington DC, The Brookings Institute, 1996

[2] Guy Martin, *African Political Thought*, New York, Palmgrave Macmillan, 2012, 138

[3] As an idea, the H.E.R. is a work-in-progress. Nigerians particularly the few serious minded scholars of security must first critically study and understand the security type in practice in Nigeria and from this develop a Nigerian type to speak to Nigeria's culture. See Adoyi Onoja, *Security: A Brief Encounter in Nigeria* (manuscript for forthcoming book, Department of History, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, 2016)

[4] The National Security Summit typifies the face of the type of security in practice in Nigeria. The Summit paraded the face of law enforcement and defence as the be-all and end-all solution to insecurity. The political class including the president and governors ironically called the chief security officers of their respective jurisdiction were in attendance to listen to the recycling of a failed model of solution to insecurity when they held the key to creating security in their respective jurisdictions. The exercise ensued since it was a conspiracy that united the law enforcement and defence people and the political class.

[5] 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

[6] I recalled presenting a paper in the Nigerian Army Resource Centre on "Enhancing Effective Synergy and Collaboration between Community Based Security Members and Government Law Enforcement Agencies." After the presentation, Brigadier General O.N. Ugo invited me to his office to explore avenue of working together. Unknown to me a participant whom I would assume was of my host's rank or higher heard my presentation and was unhinged to the point that he followed me to the office to confront me. It was this man's view that government should not waste its resources in promoting the teaching and learning of courses in the humanity "because we had nothing to contribute to society other than problem." Instead government should promote science and technology for growth. I listened to his ranting after which I replied to the effect that it was unfortunate that he harboured this line of thinking at this age. More unfortunate was that he read one of the sciences and did not deem it fit to establish business in order to promote growth but to join the army. I informed him that what was science and technology today did not come in that form. The foundation of science and technology particularly the type he advocated was laid by men who had no education other than to produce goods, sell and make profit. It was technology on the basis of necessity. The British Industrial Revolution was the work of men driven by necessity and not science and technology. Nigerian government had spent huge some of money promoting science and technology for this reason and Nigeria has nothing to show for it. For example those who were making progress in manufacturing did not study science and technology in universities. One example was Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing. His example was a recast of the British industrial revolution. To my mention of Innoson, he snorted that he was his village man and an illiterate trader. I reminded him that Innoson was an illiterate but was doing what the science-inclined educated people with generous government support like him could not do and instead chose to be a soldier on the payroll of the public.

[7] There are few universities offering undergraduate courses in security studies and few others offering courses in security and strategic studies and strategic studies. The inclination of these few institutions would be to teach security in tandem with the existing practice. This, in the light of the HER proposition, should not be so. There is need to build a curriculum of security from Nigeria's history, experience and reality in the undergraduate and post graduate courses of study. For now there is no connection in the existing facility for undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Most of those in the postgraduate programmes are from different background and like most Nigerians learned security first from the streets – the military practice.

[8] This was the failure of governance at local, states and federal levels. It was the persistence of decay and decaying public institutions. The result was unemployment, conflict and social collapse.

[9] It was the mid 1980 and the Cold War was beginning to crack. It was first noticed with the ascension of Mikhail Gorbachev and his twin policies of perestroika and glasnost to the fall of the Wall in 1989 and the subsequent dissolution of the USSR in 1991. All these development set the stage for the securitisation of security of the Western type, the result of the vacuum created. What happened subsequently such as the 9/11 attacks and the launch of the War on Terror would chime with the crisis within Nigeria to provide legitimacy for the consolidation of the prevailing security practice.

[10] See Han J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. Fifth Edition Revised, New York.; Alfred A. Knopf, 1978

[11] Karl Marx entire thesis centred on this. The UNDP reinforced this dimension of security in 1994. See UNDP Human Security Report, 1994, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/human_security_guidance_note_r-nhdrs.pdf

Accessed 27/12/15; The World Bank's view that governance was behind the litanies of Africa's development problem was chip off this block. See World Bank, *Sub Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth*, Washington DC: The World Bank, 1989; The Critical Security Studies (CSS) was about this type of security. See Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams., eds, *Critical Security Studies. Concepts and Cases*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997; See Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007)

[12] Not only did the World Bank identified governance as underlying the litanies of Africa's development problem, it defined governance as the effective and efficient utilisation of human and material resources for the benefit of most people. See World Bank, *Sub Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth*, Washington DC: The World Bank, 1989; World Bank, *Governance and Development*, Washington DC: World Bank, 1992; Thomas G. Weiss, "Governance, Good Governance and Global Governance: Conceptual and Actual Challenges", *Third World Quarterly*, Volume 12, Number 5, 2000: 795-814.

[13] Ironically, in polls after polls, Nigerians have been noted to be the happiest people on earth!

[14] Karl Maier, *This House has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2002; John Campbell, *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink*, Ibadan, Bookcraft, 2010; Adoyi Onoja, "Groups' Resort to Arms in Negotiating Space in Nigeria: The Central Nigeria Exception?", C.S. Orngu, T. Wuam, E.T Ikpanor (eds.) *Ethnic Minority Agitations and Political Development in Nigeria* Volume 1, Abuja: Donafrique Publishers, 2015, pp. 24-58

[15] 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, pp. 83-108

[16] Adoyi Onoja, "Concept of Nationhood: Nigeria in Perspective", presented at Course 1/2016, 16th-27th February, 2017, Air War College, Makurdi, Nigeria; for paper visit adoyionoja.org