

RE: The Geography of Security

The lecture, titled "Geography of Security", was an interesting treatise on the relationship between geography and security. The lecture was interesting in what it revealed, in what it did not reveal and in the implications it has for the practice called "security" in Nigeria moving forward.

The lecture was a tour de force of examples of the "geography of security", from the perspective of what is security in Nigeria, whose security in Nigeria and what is a security issues in Nigeria, in different parts of world, in order to inform on Nigeria's experiences.

The treatise is interesting and intriguing to me for what has always been the assumption, by state-centric personalities, as a given and unquestionable knowledge, for the audience. To assume, in a discourse of this nature, is to obfuscate the conversation that is primarily directed at elucidating what is arguably a seminal discourse in a new area for the audience.

The first example of this assumption, in the lecture, is the conceptualisation of terms. There were two central terms in the paper. They were geography and security. Of these two concepts, security is the independent variable. Geography is the dependent variable. Geography was conceptualised. Security was not conceptualised. The reason, as was the case with other presentations in a similar fashion, was the assumption that the audience knew this security. Do they?

The second example was to assume that all countries particularly in the examples provided of the relationship between geography and security subscribe to the same perspectives of security and, were driven by the same histories, experiences and realities (HER). There was no room allowed for what I called the country-culture-development-specific construct of security. I wrote an article entitled "Imagine an Israeli teaching Nigerians security" [<http://www.adoyionoja.org.ng>] to buttress the influence of HER and country-culture-development-specific construct of security.

If Nigeria practices security, in its literary form, as the name and work of the executive agencies of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE), a development that was inherited from Nigeria's time under military rule and, this security in the image of the military, was retained under civil rule for reasons one of which I called political economy of "security", the audience did not come from these agencies and even if they work for Nigeria's transient state, may not necessarily subscribe to this perspective of security and so should be

treated to perspectives of security other than the supposedly familiar and accepted conception within state-inclined circle.

Suppose we admit that this "security" in the image of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) failed and continues to fail under civil rule democracy and governance frameworks because this "security" goes after the EFFECTS and that whatever we attribute to this "security" particularly those in the state-inclined circle was driven by their enlightened selfish interest which itself has a life span that do not exceed 35 years of service and/or 60 years of age and that afterwards the realities come crashing into their faces as has been evident in their reminiscences in the course of their lectures thus far;

Suppose we admit that the scorched earth-like intensification of the privatisation of public wealth favouring few persons and not the democratisation of public wealth for the benefit of most Nigerians and that one of the conduit for this, if not the major conduit, in the last fifteen years of civil rule democracy is this "security" and this is responsible for the flowering of this failed and failing "security" which in itself threatens the goose laying the golden eggs;

Suppose we take this discourse out of the commonised perspective of security as the "absence of danger or threat" knowing that in the environment (danger and threat is akin to when the only tool in your hand is a hammer, all problems takes the appearance of nails) we live in, any reference to "danger" or "threat" conjures up the image of the MILE in name and work since "danger" or "threat" in this MILE-centric "security" do not come from poverty, inequality and unemployment which abound in Nigeria of the last nine years and/or hunger, anger and hopelessness of the last one year;

Suppose we admit that tackling poverty, inequality, and unemployment - the CAUSES - is not the work of the MILE-centric security, and it is not the justification for their venturing into restoration of law and order when they took power. Their justification comes under the EFFECTS, of not dealing with the CAUSES, of the lack of security defined in the Nigerian context as wellbeing in all of its forms for most Nigerians;

Suppose we take this discourse out of the undefined, uncharted, and ungoverned yet familiar and dominant security narrative in Nigeria, i.e., security as the name and work of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) because as I argued its continuation not only negates the etymologies, history and philosophy of SECURITY but Nigeria's history, experience and reality (HER) and the civil rule democracy and governance frameworks;

Suppose we take this discourse into security constructed in the image of civil rule democracy and governance frameworks where security is wellbeing in all of its forms for most Nigerians and this security performance begins with a "hierarchy of security needs" where the MILE will, with most things working accordingly, come at the bottom of the hierarchy because there is food, shelter, education, short, medium and long term opportunity for most Nigerians etc. and thus few dissatisfactions and disgruntlements for most Nigerians and that crises generating conflicts subside;

For once, let us be Nigerians and for once let us take ownership of Nigeria like the countries and cultures we love to imitate took ownership of their countries and conducted affairs under a security framework that worked and is working for them. Let us take the discourse of "geography of security" out of the discomfort zone of the failed and failing MILE-centric security because we are under civil rule enroute to democracy where the mandate of those we elected on what should be security, whose should be security, what should be security issues and how should security be achieved is different from the mandate of the military that usurped power using their guns;

Taking security or free from care, something which secure, condition of being secure or feeling no apprehension out of the failed and failing MILE-centric security under civil rule democracy and governance frameworks was replete in the submissions of Mr. Seiyefa, even if implicit. This line of submission was implicit in most of the presentations in the plenary, since my debut on 3rd June 2024, including the presentation "exploring contemporary security issues" by the former Director General, Founder and Chairman of the Board of the National Institute for Security Studies;

For instance, Mr. Seiyefa's "Geography of Security" deployed two perspectives to underscore the notion of security is wellbeing in all of its forms. The first was the slide titled "Robert McNamara (1966)". The second was the slide titled "Barack Obama's concurrent remarks are also a spot on". Back in 1966, McNamara talked about the relationship between security and development, to which Obama in the 2000s endorsed in its totality.

It is important to note that both McNamara and Obama spoke from their histories, experiences and realities (HER), history, sociology and geography and, in relations to their country's conception of national security which is a total package that covered all of America's interests anywhere and everywhere in the world. Their contentions, on security and development, first and primarily privileged their country's national security. Their statements

were NOT meant as MODELS for other countries and cultures, much as the National Security Act of 1947 to which Nigeria copied copiously and made its national security in totality.

The content of the National Security Act is NOT national security but one of the STRATEGIES for the attainment of national security. In the first place, the Act was conceived under the ungoverned international system where power albeit military power mattered for countries pursuing their interests. In the second place, the Act was conceived in the age of the Cold War. The Cold War was the turf for security or freeing people from care, providing people with something which secure, creating condition of being secure for people and/or reducing or eliminating feeling of apprehension for most people. This was between the defunct Soviet Union sponsored socialism and the United States' capitalism. The visible and arguably the most important manifestation of the competition for the souls of the world's populations on the socialist or capitalist type's security took on the military dimension between these two superpowers. This is quite different from Nigeria's copied conception of national security and security. If there was something in their statements for Nigeria, it was never intended.

While Mr. Seiyafa dwelled on Robert McNamara and Barack Obama's perspectives of security and development, he commented that the KINETIC ASPECT WAS A MERE 20 PER CENT OF SECURITY. The interpretation of this is that the military, intelligence, and law enforcement-centric security covers only 20 per cent. This is glaringly insufficient for security to be wellbeing in all of its forms for most Nigerians.

This leaves the other 80 per cent unclothed, i.e., undefined, uncharted, and ungoverned in security's philosophy; in security's legislation and, in security's policy, under civil rule democracy and governance frameworks. What does Mr. Seiyafa called the other 80 percent, which comprised most areas of development, assuming we chose to define development, including the McNamara and Obama types, in the language of Dudley Seers, i.e., development is the reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, when Mr. Seiyafa argued that "you must provide hope for people always".

In the language of the dominant purveyors of the MILE-centric security, the 80 per cent is not classed anywhere near their "security" or the esoteric "national security". The other 80 per cent is simply called NON-KINETIC. They – purveyors of the MILE-centric security – deliberately deny using national security, their preferred securitisation term, for this non-kinetic 80 per cent and, worst of all they designated the non-kinetic "security", the lesser

securitisation term, which has been and remained the basis for the political class's entry into the exclusive security club under the ubiquitous Section 14 subsection 2B.

In the slide on "impact of geography of security and lessons for Nigeria", the so-called non-kinetic and thus not-deserving-of-national security-or-security classification covered the contents of the slide. They included educational gap between the north and south, desertification in the north, the huge cost of historical and unmitigated underdevelopment, greater cooperation and collaboration within ECOWAS and Africa, greater flooding and prospects of disappearing coastal communities and threat of piracy and kidnapping. These were viewed in the lenses of the MILE-centric security, which goes after the effects.

As a consequence of indoctrination, they – the purveyor of the MILE-centric security – shy away from conceding to the HOLY GRAIL of security in its founding etymology, history and philosophy and/or are afraid of committing CLASS SUICIDE even when in their twilight years they are inadvertently drawn toward one of these two options.

One or two of these options were evident in the conclusion of Mr. Seiyafa's "geography of security" treatise. It was that "no country chooses its geography". This does not apply to security. Countries can choose, do choose, and have chosen their security. Countries have created or constructed their security to fit their history, experience, and reality (HER). The United States of America and the Peoples' Republic of China are two examples of countries that carefully choose their security. There are others within the global landscape, including North Korea, Pakistan, India, and Rwanda post 1994. Their choices of security were derived from interplay of their histories, experiences and realities (HER) and history, sociology, and geography. The State of Israel did work from these premises to choose its own security.

Where is the role of HER and history, sociology, and geography in the narrative called national security and security in Nigeria, particularly in the last almost a quarter century civil rule democracy and governance frameworks?

To this end, Nigeria, under civil rule democracy and governance frameworks, must move away from the failed and failing security confined to the MILE worldview, which, according to Mr. Seiyafa, is 20 per cent of the content of security even if the other 80 per cent was denied inclusion in security.

Nigeria should go in the direction of the 80 per cent so-called non kinetic and not-so-national security-or-security in the tradition of the MILE-security and, cloth this philosophy, legislation and policy of security under civil rule democracy and governance frameworks. This

is because the effective and efficient management of the 20 per cent kinetics of Mr. Seiyafa's "geography of security" treatise in Nigeria will come from this unmanaged and ungoverned 80 per cent.

This will enable most Nigerians and Nigeria to be in the position to be able to manage the "geography of security" in line with what we construct or create as security because, as Mr. Seiyafa quoted from a book "man not geography makes civilisation".

-Dr. Adoyi ONOJA