

Security is the "Known Unknown" in Nigeria

Imagine an Israeli¹ coming to Nigeria to teach Nigerians security!!!

I entertained this thought as I worried on the methods/methodologies of conveying the perspectives of security in Nigeria to students. Security is about knowledge – what is the state of theoretical knowledge of security among the students? Security is about method – what methods do one use to make the students understand the constituents of security? Security is about comparative experience – how many countries with or without established security theory and practice have we studied in order to put Nigeria into perspective? All these dominated my thoughts to prompt the opening statement.

The Israeli analogy was facilitated by my chanced conversation with a student of this programme. I thought it was an example to drive home the point to students of the course Seminar on National Security Policy and Security and Strategic Studies programme generally of what was required for understanding Security and Security Studies.

What constitutes security for the state of Israel i.e. what is security, whose security, what is security issue(s) or security legislation and policy comes from OUTSIDE and not INSIDE Israel. The state of Israel was established in 1948 through the displacement of over 700 hundred thousand Palestinians. Palestinians called the day Israel was created Al-Naqba or the catastrophe. The month of May-June this year commemorated the 70 years anniversary.

Several wars have been fought by Arab neighbours of Israel to destroy Israel. In the broader Arab-Israeli conflict since 1948, Israel has fought eight recognised wars, two Palestinian intifadas and a series of armed conflicts. These wars included 1948, 1967 and 1973. Arab states of the Middle East are united in their hatred and resolve to destroy Israel.

¹ This idea of comparing Israel and Nigeria came after an encounter with a student. One Saturday after my seminar on national security policy class with PhD students, one student approached me for an audience. The student's question was on security and that the student operate a company that provide security services. I asked the student whether it was security or private guard company and the answered security. I asked her what the enabling law creating the framework for her engagement was titled. The student didn't remember. I reminded the student that it was the Private Guards Act and that as far as security was concerned we – Nigerians – have not developed our conception of it yet. I told the student that the course seminar on national security policy has been addressing the question of the lack of a security philosophy in Nigeria. Well as you would imagine the student shrugged off the issue as the student was not equipped to handle it. The student's concern however was with the threat from the CG of the Civil Defence who had warned that they cannot engage experts from outside the Civil Defence to provide refresher courses for them and that the Agency was working towards ensuring this did not happen. It was the student's view that the CG was making the business environment difficult for the private sector involved in "security" services. According to the student they had engage an Israeli expert who came to deliver paper on security. I told the student point blank that an Israeli couldn't have had the knowledge to equip Nigerians on security as the two countries have different experiences. I briefly lectured the student on the reality of the state of Israel since it was created in 1948 amidst neighbours who vowed to destroy it. This reality was the foundation of everything security in Israel and indeed in Euro-Atlantic countries. Nigeria and Israel's security cannot therefore be the same as Israel built its security from OUTSIDE and Nigeria I argued had no idea of its own security dynamic and certainly it did not come from outside hence it has to come from INSIDE. I assured the student to ignore the CG of Civil Defence because his was an empty comment without reality in legislation and policy – it was spurred by the event of the moment. I told the student that the CG had too much on his plate including trying to fend off others within the system trying to take his job from him. I told the student that this particular worry was uppermost on his mind and the threat to sanction private "security" service providers engaging expert from outside was forgotten no sooner it was said.

The survival of Israel amidst enemies in the Middle East is what constitutes security for Israel.

In spite of the peace processes including the Camp David Accord of 1979 between Israel and Egypt and the Oslo Process of 1993 between Palestinians and Israelis, the resentment of Arab people has never abated. The fear and hatred of Israel resolves internal contradiction for most Arab governments and societies. The existence of Israel provides most militant Islamic groups in the Middle East and Iran post 1979 their *raison d'être*.

The survival of the state is therefore crucial as referent of security in Israel. Security issues arise from the multiple issues associated with the survival of the Israeli state. It includes determining the types and levels of threat posed by most Arab states of the Middle East in general and specifically Egypt post Camp David and the Shia state of Iran post 1979. There is therefore range of issues to draw from in determining what constitutes security issues for Israel.

Collectively, these determine the strategies employed by Israel to achieving security. Among the strategies is barring or exempting its Arab minority of under 20 percent from joining the armed forces/denying them employment in enterprises associated with the military, working through alliances, regional institutions especially regional security institutions and Israel's designation as a security state.

One of the strategies is the shared interest between Israel and the United States of America and the security guarantee that the latter provide Israel since it was established in 1948. By virtue of being the Middle East's only democracy and number one military power, Israel is United States number one ally in the area where the United States itself elicit the type of hatred reserved for Israel by the Arabs.

Insecurity in the state of Israel is not the result of deficient governance i.e. the effective and efficient utilisation of human and material resources for the benefit of most Israelis and thus did not come from INSIDE Israel. Israeli governance is a class of its own in the region and rank among one of the best in the world.

The factors prompting security for the state of Israel provides a glimpse of Security and Security Studies among Euro-Atlantic countries where security all began. I alluded to balance of power and rivalling alliances as factors that caused instability and wars in European history and thus instrumental to the construction of the prevailing Security and Security Studies.

Security is anchored on country to country relation. Security is about the survival of the state in this country to country relation. In the absence of a regulator or government i.e. the so-called anarchy on the international arena, the determinant of the ability of

country to pursue its objective described as interest or national interest is the power of the country. This power is first and foremost economic which translates to the narrow military power on which the state rely to get its way on the international arena. Apart from power – military power – countries use alliances and regional institutions as strategies for attaining their objective on the international arena.

Now most things one sees or reads about security – what is security, whose security, what is security issue (s), how security can be achieved – were produced to explain the Euro-Atlantic experience only. Most if not all the theories used in security and security studies derived from International Relations. It is therefore not possible to disconnect security and security studies from International Relations. Indeed security and security studies emerged out of International Relations.

Nigeria lacks this enabling environment in order to conceptualise security and study security. There is need for innovation and creativity on the part of students and scholars taking up security and security studies in the application of existing tools towards not only domesticating existing tools but also improvising new tools fitting the Nigerian conditions.

Nigeria was never part of this narrative and if the Nigerian narrative fit this Euro-Atlantic narrative, it was a chance happenstance and nothing else. And if the Nigerian narrative – there is none at the moment – did not fit the Euro-Atlantic narrative, it is left for Nigerians to begin to build their own narrative of Security and Security Studies. What exist as material evidence of Security and Security Studies from the Euro-Atlantic perspective can only provide GUIDE to Nigerians wishing to build Nigeria's security narrative.

At the moment there is need for mental liberation of Nigerians in matters of security. This mental liberation comes from the realisation that for too long we have imbibed and is imbibing all there is that exist theoretically on Security and Security Studies as if they explained Nigeria's perspective. We have been hooked to the idea that the work of statutory agencies of state such as the police and the military constituted the "everything" of security. In as much as security includes this narrow aspect as it is the aspect that the Euro-Atlantic countries presented to Nigeria in their bilateral or multilateral security cooperation in their bid to attain one among many of their security objectives, it is NOT everything in their philosophy of security.

Once we have been released from the vice-like hold of Euro-Atlantic narrative of security and security studies and the narrow perspective – deploying armed personnel to crisis spots – we have reduced security to in Nigeria in the absence of legislation and policy, Nigerians will begin to construct their own Security and Security Studies narrative.

Unlike the Israeli security narrative that is constructed based on OUTSIDE enabling environment that factors domestic, regional, interregional and global dynamics into the determination of security for Israel, Nigeria's security enabling environment come from the INSIDE. Unlike the Israelis who spent their entire time watching the approaches of danger and harm from their Arab neighbours (regional) and strategising while keeping an eye on other regional and global institutions (the rest of the world) as it affects Israel's security, Nigerians do not have neighbours threatening their existence.

Instead Nigerians are threatening the existence of each other. If this is Nigeria's security dynamics (and there is no other domestic dynamics than this for now and the degree to which this domestic dynamics generate and/or key into regional, interregional and global dynamics is quite insignificant and yet to be determined and theoretically established) what exists out there as material evidence of the practice of security and theoretical construct of security studies cannot explain and is not meant for the Nigeria experience.

Thus to most, if not all Nigerians, "security is the known unknown". It is KNOWN because there is a narrative out there we call security that imbue in most Nigerians the conviction that they know security. It is UNKNOWN because as one **study, think** and **observe** security and security studies using the Euro-Atlantic knowledge based in the absence of a Nigerian knowledge base on security, an enveloping realisation continuously dawn on one of the magnitude of the unknown about security in Nigeria.

The unknown cannot remain this way for students of security studies. It is among their academic mandate to grow the discipline of security studies for Nigeria.