

THE CONCEPTS OF SECURITY CHALLENGES, REGIONAL SECURITY, REGION AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

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The concept of security is characterised by its ambiguity. Security as a concept is easier to apply in the abstract to things than to people. It involves such factors as life, status, wealth and freedom, all of which are far more complicated, sometimes contradictory and beset by the distinction between objective and subjective evaluation. There is therefore a general vagueness in the definition of security and the ambivalence in its perception. Thus what constitutes security to one state or group of states might constitute insecurity to others.

Buzan (1983) argues that security is

“the ability of a nation to maintain its core values and avoid war if challenged, its ability to maintain such core values by victories in war”.

This concept of security is restrictive and lacks the aspects rooted in economic, social and cultural imperatives. **Imobighe (1991:40)** offers a broader vision and version of the concept, contending that security connotes freedom or elimination of

threat not only to the physical existence of the state but also to its ability for self-protection and development and the enhancement of the general well-being of all people. This definition is more comprehensive as it includes the main gamut of human being.

CHALLENGE

Challenge could mean objection, opposition, defy, offer resistance and thwart. This academic exercise, therefore, will understand security challenges as a summons of threats, obstacles or factors militating against stability, peace, security and socio-economic developments.

REGIONAL SECURITY

The “security dilemma,” arising from misperceptions and misinterpretations of certain acts of security, is a major source of regional conflicts. As **Waltz (1979:112)** observes; states, like people, are insecure in proportion to the extent of their freedom. If freedom is wanted, insecurity must be accepted. In this sense, insecurity reflects a combination of threats and vulnerabilities and cannot be separated from discussions on security.

Nevertheless **Buzan (1983)** argues that; the distinction between threats and vulnerabilities points to a key divide in security policy, namely that, units can seek to reduce their insecurity either by reducing their vulnerability or by preventing or lessening threats. These alternatives underlie, retrospectively, the ideas of national and international security.

Broadly defined, security is the relative freedom from harmful threats. However, this general and simplistic definition fails to convey the fears and concerns of weak states in particular.

Thus **Bellamy (1981:102-105)** goes further to state that; Security is a relative freedom from war, coupled with a relatively high expectation that defeat will not be a consequence of any war that should occur. Security in this context is not merely an absence of threat or war, but a capability to determine the outcome of such a war favourably.

This capability could be at state or national level, or at the international level which could be regional or alliance-based. The concept of regional security cannot be fully digested without some explanation of the dynamics of national security and international security. This is necessary in order to appreciate the impact of national policies arising from domestic concerns on collective or regional security arrangements.

NATIONAL SECURITY

National or domestic security broadly covers the protection of the complex collection of expectations associated with the modern state. It therefore includes traditional defence policy and also the non military actions of a state to ensure its total capacity to survive as a political entity in order to exert influence and to carry out its internal and international objectives. The implication here is that national security extends beyond the realm of a state.

Trager and Kronenberg (1973:36) agree with this international dimension when they posit that; ...national security is a part of

government policy having as its objective the creation of national and international political conditions favourable to the protection or extension of vital national values against existing and potential adversaries.

The protection of values was also advanced by **Wolfers (1962:150)** in his explanation that security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values and in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values would be attacked. There is in this regard an apparent consensus on what constitutes national security. Perhaps this conceptual agreement is best summed up by Wolfers's view that; ...a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged to maintain them by victory in such a war.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

The concept of national Security is now being challenged. Globalisation has rendered issues as economy and security part of international political agenda. The development of highly sophisticated weapon systems with intercontinental range capability has shrunk the world. Consequently, not even the most advanced countries can provide total security for their people. The entire concept of national security is therefore considered obsolete. National security, it is suggested, might demand the defence of other countries as well as one's own. Now, the defence requirements of a state, stretches beyond its own borders. **Luard (1990:19)** opines that the entire world has

become a single political / military complex of which all the parts interlock.

Therefore, purely national decisions on military matters have become increasingly irrelevant. The increase in interdependence in the developed world and the dependency of the Third World means that other issues such as ethnicism, resource conflicts and environment that were once the concern of national governments alone, have now become problems for the wider global community (**Luard, 1990:22-25**). Thus, it is international security rather than national security that is the main object of concern in the New World Order.

COLLECTIVE SECURITY

Since the traditional notions of national security have become inadequate to counter the various forms of threat and individual states are no longer capable of maintaining security for their populations, the obvious alternative is to seek a system of collective action. The United Nations and the League of Nations before it were set up to provide a more reliable form of collective security (**Collective Security: SEATO Pub. 1963**).

However, the UN Security Council which is empowered to perform this function has proved ineffective due to the lack of consensus on the part of the five permanent members; the few exceptions being the Korean War of 1950- 1953 and the Gulf War of 1991 against Iraq. In the absence of this universal protection, states join with their immediate neighbours in defence arrangements to protect their common security interests.

In collective security arrangements, the area of cooperation usually extends well beyond the needs of purely military defence. It also includes cooperative action in dealing with non-military subversion and the strengthening of economic and cultural relations. For such reasons, collective security organisations are regional in scope and supplement the UN instruments which pursue peace on global basis. They were thus organised in accordance with the UN Charter and are designed to strengthen the UN through what the Charter calls the **“inherent right of Collective Self-Defence”**.

Collective security arrangements may take different forms, each designed to serve a particular purpose. They are not limited to military considerations, but may embrace moral, political and economic cooperation. In addition, they are voluntary cooperative associations amongst “equals”, to which each member contributes and from which each benefits.

COLLECTIVE DEFENCE

Collective defence arrangements are an integral feature of regionalism. In Europe, for example, the most basic and important factor underlying regional cooperation has been the desire for greater security in the military sense **(Twichett 1980:7)**.

The same is true for South East Asia and the Gulf States. The states in these regions share common interests and values which they feel committed to protect. It is only when commonality of interests exist and transcend national boundaries that a “security complex” emerges.

A security complex is a group of states whose primary security interests are linked sufficiently closely together such that national security cannot reasonably be considered apart from one another. This presumes the existence of a common threat or adversary and the willingness to commit national resources jointly to counter such threat **(Calvert, 1988:8)**.

COMMON DETERMINANTS

Collective security and collective defence are generally borne out of common national interests and objectives, and are founded on common strategy. Other major determinants are force, military capabilities, political and ideological inclinations. These factors determine the success or failure of regional defence arrangements. Although individual national interests may still constitute the overriding consideration in entering into alliances, it is obvious that in the face of external influences and threats, countries within a geographical region or sub-region would expect to make sacrifices and total commitment to ensure survival.

Here, it is assumed that perhaps regional organisation of states that already share common interests and cultural values offer better prospects for dealing politically with the problems of conflict and war **(Kegley and Wittkopf 1989:483)**

Indeed, as contained in the OAU Charter and in the Treaty of ECOWAS, peaceful resolution of conflict is of special importance. It does not, however, contain aggression from external sources nor does it restrain internal conflicts within each state. This

latter form of conflict has been the predominant in Third World states and in Africa in particular.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONFLICTS AND SECURITY CHALLENGES

Nnoli (2006:60) posits that conflict is breakdown of security. Generally, conflicts generate socio-economic instability and political disorder within states. They also deepen economic underdevelopment of the sub-region and slow down the process of sub-regional economic integration. Security challenges also divert governments and people from socio-economic activities and focus their minds and efforts on security management and resolution with its attendant tensions and apprehensions. Moreover, conflicts leads to security challenges and the latter may contribute to conflict situation. The foregoing statement helps to establish the relationship between conflict and security challenges. The two concepts are, therefore, directly linked as they are causes and effects of and for each other, as they interact dialectically.

REGION AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Regional, sub-regional organisations and communities are sub-components of the global scene and they are relatively recent developments in the evolution of the international system. While nation-states, through the ages, had occasionally forged alliances, at times for national or monarchical survival, such were usually bilateral marriages of convenience, not informed by any deeper conceptions of collective economic, political and

security interests. Often narrowly conceived to address immediate military exigencies, such alliances never accommodated the wider and longer-term issues of economic integration, collective social development and long-term security. Accordingly, they were most often of a short-term nature, lasting only as long as it took to defeat a common enemy or ward off any threats that were common to the survival of both parties.

The 20th century, however, witnessed such rapid economic development that economic considerations gradually assumed preeminence in interactions between nations. Even during the Cold War, when many nations appeared to have formed alliances on the basis of shared ideology, the basic rationale for such association was that the said ideology offered a philosophy of social organisation that was regarded as most conducive to rapid and sustainable economic development. The elements of regional contiguity and collective security in the formation of alliances, was for the most part, clearly a secondary consideration.

However, the founding of the United Nations Organisation (UNO) and its operations over the last half-century, lent special impetus to initiatives towards regional cooperation and collective security. In strategic and international relations studies, relatively little attention has been devoted to regions within the dominant Anglo-American paradigms. During the later decades of the 20th century, however, regional integration became a powerful force in international relations. Much of the new emphasis on regionalism has been aimed at economic integration, following the European

and now the North American leads, as countries seek security in numbers from the vagaries of the international market and attempt to pool resources to become bigger players. In addition to these, the end of the Cold War has 'unfrozen' many regional security dynamics, tipping some areas into conflict (such as the Balkans and some parts of the former Soviet Union) but also creating opportunities for stabilisation and consolidation of integrative processes in some (sub-)regions (such as South East Asia and Southern Africa).

Given the novelty of the region as a relatively recent feature of the international system, scholarly definitions of the subject still show considerable diversity. What constitutes a region or a sub-region is still contested and unclear, while the distinction between the two remains particularly problematic.

Several criteria have been employed in defining the boundaries of (sub-) regions. Among these are geographic proximity or geographical distance from a (sub) regional 'centre'; cultural affinity; regularity and intensity of trade and economic interaction; intensity of military or security interaction; distinctiveness of an area, and historical patterns of amity, competition and enmity-defined in cultural, military or economical terms (**Cawthra 1996:14**).

In seeking to define the concept of region, however, **Simon-Hart (1993)** observes that the terms "region" and "regional organisation", as applied to international organisations are enmeshed in considerable difficulty and confusion. He asserts that "the term 'region, 'in the abstract, is politically meaningless.

It must be asked: in relation to what subject matter is the term used in a particular context? Even so, he goes on to define the region as:

A convenient geographical area controlled by sovereign governments whose interests in the particular subject-matter to be dealt with are sufficiently compatible for them to be able to enter into effective multilateral cooperation.

What this definition clearly implies is that what may constitute a “region” is very relative and not absolute. For the purpose of one subject matter, it may not be a region for another.

Other scholars, however, have defined regions variously either on the basis of common geographical or on economic, social, cultural and political grounds. Thus **Russett (1967:2)** defines the region as any “portion of the earth’s surface whose physical characteristics are similar” **Cantori and Spiegel (1970:1)**, consider regions

To be areas of the world which contain geographically proximate states forming, in foreign affairs, mutually interrelated units. For each participant, the activities of other members of the region (be they antagonistic or cooperative) are significant determinants of its foreign policy; while particular members of certain regions may have extra-regional concerns, their primary involvement in foreign affairs ordinarily lies in the region in which they find themselves.

Kaiser (2001:86), in his writings on regional blocs, emphasises the element of foreign relationships, defining the regional sub-system as:

a pattern of relations among basic units in world politics which exhibits a particular degree of regularity and intensity as well as awareness of interdependence among the participating units.

And Padelford (1998:25), combining the elements of geography and foreign policy, and adding to them the element of common behavioural attributes among groups of states, identifies;

Spatial areas which come to be spoken of as 'regions' as a result of usage stemming from the practices of groups of states, utterances of statesmen or the terms of treaties or agreements between groups of states.

In spite of these divergent formulations, however, it may be summed up that the concept of the region, as we know it today, refers to a group of states in geographical proximity, with similar political and economic aspirations and sharing external behaviours and security interests. Regional organisations would therefore refer to organisations whose membership is drawn from a region and whose objectives are subscribed to by some or all of such states.

Although Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is usually referred to in West Africa as a regional body, it is better conceived of, within the international system as a sub-regional organisation; Africa as a whole is regarded as a region while the continental body, African Union (AU) or the former Organisation of African Unity (OAU) is generally recognised as a regional organisation within the meaning of the UN Charter, along with the Arab League and the Organisation of American States (OAS).

But for the purposes of this study, however, the reference to regional organisations will be used to cover both continental organisations, like the OAU, now AU, OAS, and sub-continental bodies like the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), other organisations in Africa such as the Arab Maghreb Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), East African Community (EAC) and the Association of South East Asian States (ASEAN). ECOWAS therefore will be referred to as a regional organisation.