

Security contest of conceptual lens

Anthony Sichei Naibei

Ph.D candidate department of security and correctional science, school of security studies, diplomacy and peace studies Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya

Email – asichei97@yahoo.com

Abstract: Security as a concept is indistinct noting that the framers of security definition is subjective and objective at the same time. The challenge faced by scholars and practitioners is how to ascribe framework of screening lens for proper analysis. At the same time, from the same screen of lenses, what attributive threat does it connote to the framer? It is this that has raised the aspect of preemptive securitization currently seen in the war between Russia, Ukraine and NATO. Each has own framework of screening lens defined by them. All of security concept is about existentiality of the security referenced object and projected anticipated threats thereof. However, it is more of the calculated possibility of recovery stage once threat has materialized

Key Words: Security, security means, ways and ends and Vectored directional reality.

1. INTRODUCTION :

Brennan (1961). defines security from state point of view as, protection of national survival in the process of creating peace, stability, order and progress. Therefore, Brennan point of view on security is survival referenced in peace whether relative or actual peace which are brought about by creation of stability through order and progress. Buzan (1991) defines security as pursuit of freedom from threats¹. Prabhakaran (2008), Security means untroubled by danger and fear. It is a conditional state of mind that makes one feel secure. It is hidden within the ambit of life, and is the essence of existentialism and survival². Ray (1987). defines security as desires and capacity for self-defense. Ochoche (1998) refers to amassment of military armament and personal expenditure. Asad, (2007). looks at ways in terms of socio economic, cultural, development, modernization and national integrity. The assertion that security is a combination of systems stability in terms of socio economic, cultural and national integration, reflects the surety that the issues of means were then non issues as there was no likelihood of a country to country confrontation of means. The focus of this definition is the internal survival as ends but the means takes back seat while ways to security takes prominence. This definition addresses the 'how' of security. In as far as the scholars have defined security, the core aspects that come out are whether security is the verb, adverb noun and adjective of reference. Security as a noun focuses on something that secures or makes safe making it an 'Identity'. Security as a verb is used with object in action making it the 'means' of reaching end state. Security as an adverb qualifies the noun or verb in this case security giving value to the noun or verb thus becoming 'ways' to the end state. Security as an adjective refers to the attribution of a noun in this case security 'ends'.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW :

The scholars view of security seems to have been influenced historical as their definitions refers to the challenge at the time or what had just happened. Brennan focuses on the desired ends as peace, stability, order and progress. Indeed 1961 was just period after second world war and the struggle to get the outer space was real. Coupled with the effects of nuclear war, one can simply infer that the fear of devastation was the focus lens illuminating the definition of security. Thus, peaceful coexistence, stable world without turbulence, ordered way of doing things and the need to progress to discovery of the outer space. The period 1987 to 1998 looks at what had happened during cold war and in the breakdown of the USSR together with the uncertainty there after of unipolar system. Thus, Ray (1987). assertion that security is

¹ Buzan, B. 1991. People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era. Essex: Longman

² Prabhakaran, P.(2008). National Security Imperatives and Challenges. Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited, 7 West Patel Nagar, New Delhi 110 008

desirous of capacity for self-defence and Ochoche (1998). assertion that amassment of military armament and personal expenditure guarantees security. Indeed, the military might by USA and her individual expenditure had contributed greatly to drawing the collapse of USSR. Amassment of military armament worked as deterrence and coercion force, whereas expenditure gave out political signalling on how difficult it will be to bring down USA. The two scholars, (Ray,1987; Ochoche,1998) focused their lenses through the means to security which are the capacities and military armament amassment. This moved the debate from ends to means. Hence, Prabhakaran (2008). assertion that realization of the possibility to attain the ends through specific means is a conditional state of mind that makes one feel secure. It is hidden within the ambit of life, and is the essence of existentialism and survival³.

Looking at the various definitions proposed, security concept can be dangerously ambiguous should it be used without additional specifications, (Wolfers, 1952). In agreeing with Wolfers assertion of ambiguity of the security concept, (Baldwin, 1997) answered through the series of questions; security for whom, security for which values, how much security, from what threats, by what means, at what cost, in what time period⁴. It seems in the quest to know what security is, the need to study security arose. As such, (Walt (1991), in Buzan, Waever and de Wilde, (1998). defined security studies as the studies of the threat, use, and control of military force. This raises the ontological question of what security should be or ought to be. It brings onboard the aspects of social relations generating threats in the process. This is where economic security falls in among the aspects of human security. If there is a state of being in security discourse, then there should be methodological approach to that state of the issue. The question goes to the epistemologists to discern in which way can it be qualified as a possible means to solve the problem. It is this aspect that the other scholars came to define security in a methodological way. So the question is which methods are best to address the definitive problems set out by Baldwin definition of serial questions. The methods have generated the aspect of how wide or deep should security be defined. It is the methodological aspect of security that has brought about the theories to assist in form of tools for communication as a social discourse with methods as sense giving or making, (Matt McDonald, 2011)⁵.

In linking the ontology of security, epistemology of security, methodology of security and theory of security, (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde, 1998), concludes that, security is about survival; it is when an issue, presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object, justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them. The danger in this definition is whether issues that are not existential threats are part of security. It thus negates the existence of graduated aspect of security in management of security. The entity retains the bias of defining what it is and identifies what aim does that definition seeks to attain. The multidimensionality of security might not be accommodated in this definition in the world that has scarce resources with multiple demands. Thus, (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde, 1998), further posits that Security is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics⁶. It is the definer of the security that shapes the discourse. As such designation of an issue as security is a matter of choices by the privileged through manipulation or coercion depending on what kind of power one has in terms of agency or principal. But this decision is both externally influenced while internally orchestrated through iterations(Alger et al.,1965)⁷. At times the iterations takes centre stage for the principal actors controlled by their personality predispositions key being drives, defenses and fears, Errika(2005)⁸. It is the interaction of these that determines the acceptability of the consequences of their action in securitizing an issue. The behaviours of states after all, represents that of individuals (Alger et al., 1965)⁹. This is so because the truth about reality is not available and thus methods used to draw conclusions is positivism to empathic interpretation. Essentially one tries to understand social phenomenon by grasping and interpreting implied meaning given by the actors' social interactions. It is this multitude of interpretation that raises the contestation of security terminology and concept. Therefore, lack of peculiar criteria that separates security issues from the rest makes the concept of security trivial rendering the whole process muddled. The contest of security in clear terms emerges with the classification of perceptions from the various operational lenses used by the practitioners and policy makers. This brings about schools of security studies taking specific assumption and running in that presumed direction.

³ Ibid

⁴Baldwin, D.A., (1997). The concept of security: Review of International Studies, volume 23, p5-26

⁵ McDonald, M. 2008. 'Securitization and the Construction of Security', European Journal of International Relations, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 563–587.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Alger, F., Deutsch, w., Guetzkow, g., Janis, l., Katz, k., Kelman, c.....Richard.(1965).International behaviour: a social-psychological analysis, p29

⁸ Erika M. Karohs, Ph. D., Ed. D., (2010). General Analysis Guide: Trait Descriptions I. Pebble beach 4080 Sunset Lane, Pebble Beach CA 93953-3050

⁹ Ibid

3. DISCUSSION :

Contest of Security Conceptual Lens

Security as a concept attempts to reflect about what ought to be understood by the term security and gives the perspectives likely to define the conceptual security. It attempts to give the explanation of what means one has to use to gain the specific ends; What ways must be used to fit the existing means; and what ends are commensurate to the existing means.

The answers to these fundamental questions can be answered by referencing the problem as verb, noun, adverb of adjective. Looking at this three approaches that are varied in definition, it becomes critical to enumerate what likely perspectives exist in defining security concept. This is what many scholars have tried to answer in the many definitions. To define the concept, one has to look into the actors in terms of individuals versus individual, individual versus states, state versus systems and finally systems versus systems. The idea of object of focus seeks to answer the current situation with the prevailing resources both human resource and capital resource disposable. However, it becomes even more harder to define the concept. Thus say, (Vladimir Šulović, 2010, October 5) states that,

“The starting assumption of the conceptual analysis is that the meaning of the notion that is being examined is more or less familiar, but also that it usually isn’t expressed in the explicit manner. Making it explicit by eliminating its ambiguities and inconsistencies in the different uses is the sole purpose of the conceptual analysis”¹⁰.

The determination of these answers bring on board theoretical approaches like Realism, Human security, Global security, Collective security, Collective defence and Political security¹¹. Realism focuses on the ends and means relegating the ways as subordinate considerations. Collective security looks at ways to attaining security as the point of focus with ends as the last. This is what is seen in the NATO expansion approach while focusing on article Five (5) that is, an attack on one is an attack on all. Defence security looks at the means to attainment of security. This seems to be the approach that Russia has taken thereby applying pre-emptive securitization of NATO expansion. Understanding the reasoning behind the rational actions by security actors, generates challenge of ambiguity of rationality. It is the rationality that defines the lens of focus. The complication of security concept become even more vague when one tries to define the torch bearer of the lens of focus in security definition. When this rationality combines with personality at the point of interaction of torch bearer and state, a complex matrix of decision making process iteratively ensue. This is what is can be said of clash between heads of states of Ukraine and Russia. The individual personality predisposition come to play complicating the security frame of thought. The multiplicity of definition and theoretical framework required to define security concept cannot get one straight jacket answer because of the multiplicity of personality at play and reference of security. The same varied personality assumes a mathematical permutation approaches whereby, a single aspect like making security a verb or noun changes the approach entirely. The unfortunate aspect is not the singularity of interaction but a multilevel system with clashing reactions and counter-reaction at the state level.

4. ANALYSIS :

Once these are understood, it is then that the direction of questioning emerges followed by the leadership approach to the prevailing circumstances and means disposable to attainment of the referenced questions. The classical example to elaborate this notion is the varying actions by two presidents of USA towards Iraq in 1990 and 2001 at different timings with different disposable options. President George W Bush had the latitude to act unilaterally without approval by UN in 2001. A thorough examination of the time of that decision, you will realize that end of cold war had stabilized with no likely formidable threat by former USSR. The strength that binds the two system proponents and supporters had waned and many states were trying to reorder their direction politically in the international arena. In comparison to when George H. W. Bush in 1990 was addressing the challenge posed by Iraq, the binds were still quite strong and the likely reaction from former USSR was not clear. While personality could have played to the decisions by the two leaders, the prevailing circumstances gives even more rationality as to why George W Bush had the latitude and the audacity to defy the security council and act unilaterally in Iraq. It is the distinction of the approach to concept that could tilt the balance tending to the temporal conceptual justification. Self-preservation based on strategic roadmaps to state’s or system’s objectives matter in weighing the chance to act. In other words, it is the interpretation of ‘what are you aiming at gaining or eliminating with reference to what aspect of the current or future status’ that will guide the opponent of another state action or the rationality of any state action. So, security conceptualization has to look at the mirror effect and apply the same in retrospect to be able to determine whether it will be escalation of security challenge or de-escalation. The choice here will be more determined by the vector effect of the action that has been securitized

¹⁰ Vladimir Šulović. Meaning of Security and Theory of Securitization (2010, October 5). Belgrade center for security policy, Volume 48

¹¹ Noel Israel khokhar. Perspectives on Pakistan national security. NDU journal -2015

and from which lens of focus. It is the vector effect that justified George W Bush unilaterally action in Iraq presumably aware that the value attached to Iraq by Russia was not that impactful to the level of self-sacrifice.

So, security can be seen as self-iteration on risk management to the state or system. The inputs on the iteration takes a systematic approach moderated by personality defense mechanism and drives of leaders with disposable means within the organizational bureaucracies as moderators. These aspects thus reinforce the notion that security definition or conceptualization is a focus of perspectives which thus define securitization course of action at individual, national and international levels. While realists propose the issue of self-interest as driving the process of securitization, it can be further reinforced by the 'vectored directional reality'. Vectored directional reality, for this paper refers to the oscillating interests' trajectory defined by the circumstances prevailing when applied to the self-interest or preservation in a chaotic world. Fast forward to the Syria and the approach eventually changed and bore no tangible results. By the time USA was to take a destabilizing approach, the level of sacrifice that Russia had, was way far beyond the expectation of USA. This lead to conversion of Syria to weapon testing ground and emphasis of technological securitization.

"Russia tested over 320 types of weapons in its operations in Syria, the country's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu announced during his visit to the Rostvertol helicopter manufacturing factory in Rostov-on-Don, Russia. The helicopters manufactured at that very factory were also part of their operations in Syria"¹².

It became proxy wars through other means. The dynamics of weapon testing painted to USA a picture that had not been expected. Russia was ready to sacrifice all to preserve president Assad regime. While USA was forcing herself to Syria, Russia had the legitimacy of sovereign invitation thereby having the freedom of action within her level of self-preservation. What concept does this bring about? It is the vectored directional reality that drove Russia to seize the opportunity of deterrence using weapon diplomacy, a system that USA and her allies NATO have been practicing under collective security when they deploy defence weapons in weaker states that could be threatened by Russia.

"Polish missile defences would serve as a deterrent that would make Putin less likely to attack in the first place. If he cannot hope to stop NATO's wall of steel from coming to the defence of the Baltics, then he has no feasible path to victory"¹³.

The second security concept here is that security is transient as it is time sensitive. In order to see the contest of the concept, we could reduce the international behaviours to that of individuals at the core of national decision making. Through this process, it is then possible to run the trajectory of psychological derivatives of behaviours. As such it can be asserted that rationality or irrationality of human being can occur concurrently as a conceptual aspect. The core to this discussion is the idea that human beings or in these case decision makers conceive a situation and establish the situation to reality. It is this situational making that rationality and irrationality converge to create a complex image of situational awareness. Pruitt(1962, p.394) on determination of situation as determinant of international action, three images that influence action towards another nation are: Behavioural prediction about other nations; Perception on basic characteristics of other nations; and Conceptions of appropriate ways for dealing with other nations in the security arena¹⁴. Methodological assumptions here focus on the strategic direction complicating the definition of concept of security. Threat perception raises the question, is perception universal, can country A leadership perceive the same scenario and come up with similar conclusions in classifying an issue as security? From power and capability disparities, can degree of a circumstance have same effects in decision makers' prescription of existential threat apply? Perception as a source of contestation is the main contributor. Perception again is influenced by the sociological connotation of an issue within the national discourse. The national discourse also can be historically influenced. Countries have varied history so are their leadership. It is this shaping of the leaders and national making of sense that the applicable theoretical framework will always differ.

The aspect of security concept contestation is the prevalence of trust or distrust among the interacting states or entities. Pruitt (1962) defines trust or mistrust as the perception of basic characteristics of another nation as generally trust worthy or untrustworthy. He concludes that distrust in the expectation that another nation will usually be harmful.

¹² Daily Sabah, (2021, July 15). Russia tested over 320 weapons in Syria shoigu says, (Blog). Retrieved from <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/syrian-crisis/russia-tested-over-320-weapons-in-syria-shoigu-says>.

¹³ Kroenig. M., (2019, August 19). Defense 24.com: Poland's Missile Defenses Are Critical for the Defense of Europe. Retrieved from, <https://www.defence24.com/polands-missile-defenses-are-critical-for-the-defense-of-europe-opinion#:~:text=Prof.%20Matthew%20Kroenig.%20Photo%3A%20matthewkroenig.com>

¹⁴ Pruitt,D.G.(1962).International behaviour: Definition of situation as a determinant of international action. USA, New York. P394

Thus, one can exist without the other¹⁵. States like people, have interactional feelings which oscillate from trust to mistrust. If there was to be a 'trustometer', then the degree of fluctuation will really be erratic. It is this erratic behaviour of trust among nations that bring contest of security conceptualization among nations or institutions. For instance, it is the perception that Iran can harm Israel that has put the two nations in competing parallel directions in pursuit of their national security strategy. It is the perception between Tanzania and Kenya of possibility of harming each other economically, that has strained relations of the two neighbours. Similarly, China and USA, North Korea and South Korea are in the same trend with problem of mistrust. Looking at the entire globe, examples are numerous hence generating the international flashpoints.

Another source of security concept contestation is the feeling of responsiveness of other states to each other's when in need. How should a nation offer help to the other nation? Tied with perception and trustworthiness of the interacting nation, certain circumstances despite how dire they are could be taken by other states as deserving help or not deserving. The classic example is the COVID 19 lack of response by international organizations and countries to assist Iran despite the desperate state the nation was in. Instead of easing the trade sanctions so that Iran can marshal resources to tackle the pandemic, greater enforcement measures were put in place for maximum pressure on the state to behave in a certain way. This challenged the trust and threat perception as to whether the sanction enforcers were meaning good for Iran or not. To Iran how should they perceive security as a concept and so is the USA and Israel. Possibly, Israel and USA saw the pandemic effects on Iran as contributing to their security discourse. To Iran, that was betrayal of humanity as human lives were reduced to mere numbers for gambling in the international security balancing equation. Hence, the statement, (Motamedi,2020)¹⁶.

"The United States is actively trying to prevent Iran's efforts to buy coronavirus vaccine through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access Facility (COVAX), an international initiative undertaken by the World Health Organization (WHO), according to the chief of Iran's central bank."

The question that could be posed is where was WHO in this whole process and does it serve all countries equally? Such scenarios negate the institutional credibility and they are likely to be grouped together with the opposing nations. Essentially, it is about welfare sacrifice and the more a nation can sacrifice on behalf of another the more credible as a security friend to a nation.

Sources of ambiguity is in the true evidence of an existence of threat. Who determines security threat and are there evidence that one's posture can be a security issue to another nation? The vagueness of effective discernment of the evidence and the interpretation of the evidence to security threat largely remain as a contest.

5. CONCLUSION :

Sources of security concept contest are mainly: threat perception in terms of predisposition to perceive threat and evidence of threatening intent; determination of the level of trust, determination of flexibility of trust and determination of complexity of trust; and development of responsiveness in terms of determination of level of responsiveness and mutual responsiveness. Bearing these aspects in mind, the contested lens of security concept will be there for a very long unforeseeable time. As long as the actors are individuals cascading to nations and finally systems, the consensus in the three levels of conceptual security definition will grow exponentially as convergence of peripheral sectors coalesce to form part of security definition. This is likely to create more theories as they try to find solution to the security concept. The role of theory in the entire process will remain offering explanations, assisting in rejecting pre-existing assumptions and modifying already held belief system. The likely approach that could bring the scholars to convergence of concepts is to build a mind map of the various security concept and theories with the aim of establishing the loci that whatever definition one comes with, shall gravitate to that locus. This is what human security scholars seems to be headed to but restraint by theoretical quality requirement of falsification.

REFERENCES :

1. Alger, F., Deutsch, w., Guetzkow, g., Janis, l., Katz, k., Kelman, c., Richard. (1965). International behaviour: a social- psychological analysis, p29
2. Baldwin, D.A., (1997). The concept of security: Review of International Studies, volume 23, p5-26

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Motamedi, M., (2020, December 7). Iran's top banker says US blocking COVID-19 vaccine purchase. Aljazeera. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/7/iran-says-us-blocking-covid-19-vaccine-purchase#:~:text=Iran%E2%80%99s%20top%20banker%20says%20US%20blocking%20COVID-19%20vaccine%20purchase>



3. Barachach, S.B. (1989). "Organizational theories: some criteria for evaluation", academy of management review (14:4),496-515.
4. Buzan, B. 1991. People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era. Essex: Longman
5. Daily Sabah, (2021, July 15). Russia tested over 320 weapons in Syria shoigu says, (Blog). Retrieved from <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/syrian-crisis/russia-tested-over-320-weapons-in-syria-shoigu-says>.
6. Erika M. Karohs, Ph. D., Ed. D., (2010). General Analysis Guide: Trait Descriptions I. Pebble beach 4080 Sunset Lane, Pebble Beach CA 93953-3050
7. John Boyd (2001). John Boyd and American Security.
8. Kerlinger, F.N. (1979). Behavioural research: A conceptual approach. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston
9. Kroenig. M., (2019, August 19). Defense 24.com: Poland's Missile Defenses Are Critical for the Defense of Europe. Retrieved from, <https://www.defence24.com/polands-missile-defenses-are-critical-for-the-defense-of-europe-opinion#:~:text=Prof.%20Matthew%20Kroenig.%20Photo%3A%20matthewkroenig.com>
10. Labovitz., s., & Hagedorn, R. (1971). Introduction to social research. New York: McGraw-Hill
11. McDonald, M. 2008. 'Securitization and the Construction of Security', European Journal of International Relations, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 563–587.
12. Motamedi, M., (2020, December 7). Iran's top banker says US blocking COVID-19 vaccine purchase. Aljazeera. Retrieved from [https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/7/iran-says-us-blocking-covid-19-vaccinepurchase#:~: text=Iran%E2%80%99s%20top%20banker%20 says%20US%20blocking%20COVID-19%20vaccine%20purchase](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/7/iran-says-us-blocking-covid-19-vaccinepurchase#:~:text=Iran%E2%80%99s%20top%20banker%20says%20US%20blocking%20COVID-19%20vaccine%20purchase)
13. Noel Israel khokhar. Perspectives on Pakistan national security. NDU journal -2015
14. Prabhakaran, P. (2008). National Security Imperatives and Challenges. Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited, 7 West Patel Nagar, New Delhi 110 008
15. Pruitt, D.G. (1962). International behaviour: Definition of situation as a determinant of international action. USA, New York. P394
16. Robert Cox. (1981). Social forces, states and world order: Beyond international relations theory, millennium, vol.10, no.2, summer, pp83-119
17. Vladimir Šulović. Meaning of Security and Theory of Securitization (2010, October 5). Belgrade center for security policy, Volume - 48