Security

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Security is critical to any society if it wishes to grow and even survive. It falls primarily under the executive branch but its foundation is found in the legislative and judicial wings of government. That is, the government executes the judicial infrastructure and is evaluated, fairly or otherwise, on how effectively it executes this critical process.

Without security, no society can survive because human nature and other uncontrollable external forces will ultimately overwhelm it, creating an environment of chaos and instability. Security is part of the glue that holds a collective group together – perhaps the most critical part. If members do not feel safe, they will either contribute to the chaos or leave the collective for someplace more secure. If, for example, a storekeeper opens a store but cannot be sure at the end of the day whether he or she will suffer a break-in at night or – as an even more brazen example - during the light of day, the business will not be successful. And, as I have stated before, where the small business goes, so goes society. The storekeeper cannot sell his or her goods in a safe and secure environment, trade will not prosper, goods will not move and ultimately food will not make it to the table. The owner will either take the business elsewhere or lose everything and become part of the security problem.

So, what is security? Metaphysically, it represents confidence in an individual's or collective's ability to circulate and communicate freely. Humans, in particular, cannot be free without security. When one feels secure, one has the liberty to speak freely and act according to one's value set. The implied danger here, is that a member of this group will speak or act freely to the point where he or she is impinging upon the freedom of another member, hindering the security and freedom of others. As an aside, freedom – vs security - is a topic of its own so I will not dwell upon it except to emphasize our responsibility towards defending it. Suffice it to say, freedom will not survive if we do not have the confidence in our society's ability to provide effective security. For example, I have mentioned the family unit, society's molecular building block (however you define "family" in today's diverse world); what if the leaders of a family held no surety that, upon leaving their dwelling, members were uncertain to return, either safely or at all? Bottom line, anything that hampers freedom of movement, hampers society.

In the more physical realm, the face of security is that of those policing bodies that exist in both the public and private domain. In the public domain, security resides primarily with our local and state police forces - and our National Guard and active military. Society requires these entities to address threats from both within and outside whatever boundaries by which our group is defined. In the private sector, security forces can be hired to protect basic liberties. The end result, is that when we as citizens say and do the things we want to and should, if we feel the security around us is enough to protect us from those who disagree with what we say or do – or if they desire something we own - we have the confidence necessary to achieve our personal goals.

Our thoughts and our deeds now need to incorporate variables which did not previously exist that will inevitably slow down and complicate our quest. These new distractors will also add a level of emotion where assumed rights and entitlements come under threat due to the loss of confidence in our sense of security. Lack of confidence often results in fear and mistrust; these new forces will us from our basic freedoms. We no longer can lean forward with a focus on the future as our gaze shifts to what is next to us and behind us. The formula we would typically use to calculate our next steps must now incorporate these two factors.

The results of this recalculation, at one level, is the minimizing of positive progress and, perhaps another, the more emotive response of anger. We become angered that we must now slow ourselves down because something that was supposed to help us and support us in our personal and collective progress is now, in fact, an impediment to our success. Oftentimes, this anger flows out in the form of protest which, frankly, is better for us as a society and as individuals than holding emotions inside. Or it can fester and bubble into something far more threatening and unpredictable. Effective protests can sometimes lead to change but the force must be steady and continuous with intermittent spikes to get and maintain the attention of those able to make meaningful change.

So, what are the causes related to this loss of confidence in our ability to feel secure? Security forces – particularly those in the public domain – are often given a free pass in obtaining our trust, unlike most other entities. It actually takes work to erode that trust. Typically, the seeds of doubt are sewn through ongoing, negative events by security personnel, most often individuals rather than the institutions that oversee them. However, those in charge of the institutions are also complicit in the loss of trust due to their ignorance, lack of action or simple systemic bias and character flaws.

Those people endowed by their constituents with the resources and faith necessary to keep us safe will sometimes misuse or abuse that very faith. As mentioned, in some cases the abuse is intentional and other times it is not. Sometimes, it manifests itself in outright violence by individual security agents (police, soldiers, etc.), impingement of the right to freedom of movement, favoritism to one individual or group over another based upon race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc., or simple indifference when faced with obvious security violations. Whatever the abuse, the resultant effect is the same – a reduction or complete loss of confidence in the institution. Unfortunately, once the loss occurs, it is very difficult to win back.

How do we fix the problem? Conceptually, the solution is not difficult – but, in practice, it is very difficult indeed, though not impossible. It first requires a will to make the necessary changes – this is the hardest part. Then the institution itself needs to be redefined from scratch as weaknesses are baked into the design. Security, beginning at the highest conceptual levels needs to be redesigned and rebuilt upon a concrete foundation – not an assumption - that all people are equal and, as such, deserve equal access to security. The new rules and definitions must be clearly communicated to all parties involved – including us, the customers of the process. Then those responsible for implementing and managing the implementation the processes must be trained – particular around the foundational dictate of equality. Individuals need continuous evaluation and training and the public must be included in the formation, communication and execution of the process. To regain public confidence in any eroded security system, we must feel – and see - that fairness is an intrinsic part of the system and that failure to practice fairness is dealt with harshly. The vast majority of security agents are honest, hard-working fair people – it is certain individuals succumbing to individual weakness and group pressures that make the mistakes. There need to be consequences to violations of the system we have imbued with our trust. The consequences also need to be fair and implemented consistently but firmly and promptly. If this is all completed in a manner that is continuous and organized then positive and enduring change is assured.

Let's get started.