PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING AND THE CONCEPT OF SECURITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN SOCIETY[#]

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Abstract

The paper seeks to unpack the essentially contested concept of security, exposing its deep philosophical bases, for a better understanding of the concept by theorists involved in its interrogation. Relying on analytic and reflectively interrogative methods of social inquiry, the study has two inter-related objectives. First, it attempts to raise philosophically fundamental questions that border on the metaphysics, ethics, epistemology, and logic of security, which frame the underpinnings of the concept. Second, the study attempts to connect those philosophically fundamental questions to the praxis, practically showing how either security deficit or gain could be promoted, depending on the answers supplied to the philosophically fundamental questions, in the contemporary African society. Drawing on the latter, the problem statement of the study is that there is substantial security deficit in the contemporary African society because the philosophically fundamental questions involved in the concept of security have not been seriously considered and conscientiously addressed. The study concludes that it is when the issues framed in the questions are addressed that one would know what security truly is and the best practice for its promotion.

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Résumé

Cet article vise à démontrer le concept de sécurité qui est généralement contesté, en exposant ses éléments philosophiques introduits par des chercheurs théoriciens en vue de pourvoir une meilleure compréhension du concept. S'appuyant sur des méthodes analytiques et réflexives de recherche social, l'étude a deux objectifs étroitement liés. Tout d'abord, elle tente de soulever des questions philosophiquement fondamentales touchant à la métaphysique, l'éthique, l'épistémologie et la logique de la sécurité. Deuxièmement, l'étude tente de relier ces questions philosophiques à sa pratique, en montrant concrètement comment soit le manque ou la présence de sécurité pourrait être promu dépendamment des réponses fournies aux questions philosophiques fondamentales qui se posent dans la société africaine contemporaine. En se basant sur ce dernier point, l'énoncé du problème de l'étude est qu'il y a manque de sécurité concrète dans la société africaine contemporaine parce que les questions philosophiques fondamentales impliquées dans le concept de sécurité n'ont pas été consciencieusement adressées. En effet, c'est lorsque le fond des questions sera abordé que l'on saura ce qu'est la sécurité au vrai sens du terme d'abords et discernera les meilleures pratiques pour sa promotion ensuite.

Key words: Africa, Concept, Contemporary, Philosophy, Security, Society

I. **Introduction and Problem Statement**

The rising waves of deadly terrorist attacks by the ethno-religious *Boko Haram* sect in recent times in Nigeria aptly question the seriousness usually attached to the value of security to the life and dignity of human beings in society. The attacks have actually caused what Obadare (1999: 203) calls the 'problem of order' or the 'Hobbesian problem' (the latter obviously referring to the popular Thomas Hobbes' anarchic depiction of the pre-social life of man). Most fundamentally, the palpable threat to

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lives and property constituted by the attacks and such-like nihilistic behaviour give us here in particular, and other parts of Africa in general, good reason to re-assess our understanding and practice of security on the continent; hence, the centrality of the question: what is security?

From a more or less marginally evoked concept, according to Burgess (2010: 587), 'security' has expanded in the course of a half-century to cover a wide range of phenomena and practices, and to fuse scores of other concepts (health security, information security, gender security, job security, human security, environmental security, food security, etc.). The foregoing proves the malleability as well as popularity of the concept of security in the contemporary era, which is largely wracked by conflicts and crises of multitudinous nature, ranging from ethnic and religious, to political violence. In addressing the problematic of violence to human existence and flourishing, much scholarship has been dissipated on the concept of security, considering the plethora of attempts to 'redefine' security since the end of the Cold War (Baldwin, 1997: 9). Furthermore, preliminary literature search in the course of the present inquiry shows that discussions of the concept and nature of security have mainly emerged from different disciplinary perspectives, especially from the social sciences, and this trend suggests that other disciplines in the humanities have not done much, or have nothing at all to offer, in contributing to the understanding of the ontology of the concept of security. This present study reacts to this challenge by philosophically looking at the concept of security, focusing on the contemporary African society. The basic philosophical questions, which must be seriously addressed in Africa before providing any reasonable answer(s) to the first question, are: What is the metaphysics of security? What are the epistemological considerations involved in security? What are the ethical issues involved in security? And, why is logical reasoning relevant at all in security? Answers generated by these highly philosophical questions greatly shape answer(s) supplied to the earlier query: what is security?

The present discussion has five sections. Following the introductory section, Section II conceptually clarifies philosophy, and also examines its socio-practical relevance, before specifically showing how security and philosophy merge in the present

discussion; Section III discusses the contested concept of security as well as the state-centric and the non-state centric accounts of security; Section IV philosophically interrogates security in the contemporary African society, and Section V summarizes and concludes the study.

II. Philosophy: Conceptual Understanding and Socio-Practical Relevance

There are two inter-related objectives in this section. The first is to clarify the concept of *philosophy*, and the second is to generally justify the socio-practical relevance of philosophy as well as to specifically justify it in the present context of security discussion. The first step is a tradition in serious scholarship and, therefore, calls for no debate. However, the second step needs further elaboration. What is called security deficit in this study is a practical, social problem, and it is also usually examined from the social scientific perspective, the perspective that mainly appeals to empiricism and pragmatism as methods of social inquiry. Therefore, failure to justify the socio-practical relevance of a philosophical approach in the present context, *ab initio*, renders philosophy useless in constructively discussing a practical, social phenomenon such as security.

Without the trite etymological background, one could commence the task of conceptualisation by noting that philosophy has been used in different ways over the years. Lexically, philosophy may be understood as the most basic beliefs, concepts, and attitudes of an individual or group (Merriam-Webster's, 2007:930). In this sense, philosophy may be a system of worldviews of an individual or a group of people. This descriptive sense of philosophy is outside the focus of the present study.

For Blackburn (2005: 276), philosophy is, 'The study of the most general and abstract features of the world and categories with which we think: mind, matter, reason, proof, truth, etc.' Also, Yarza (1983: 4) states that philosophy is a purely rational explanation of the totality of reality. If one considers the two understandings, then one could take philosophy as essentially a generally abstract discipline as well as merely a rational exercise that has no practical utility, a discipline with no concrete output. However, on a different and deeper level of reflection, we could see that philosophy has a practical

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utility, when we note that most, if not all, abstract concepts which frame the diverse concerns of philosophy (on the present reading) usually transcend the realm of reason to influence our behaviour and action in practice. For example, our idea (an abstraction) of the human person deeply influences the way we socially relate (a practical action/step) with others.

For Quinton (1997:925), philosophy can be defined as rational critical thinking, of a more or less systematic kind, about the conduct of life, the general nature of the world, and the justification of belief. This view is also somewhat consistent with the ones articulated earlier in that it also emphasizes the role of reason and criticality of thinking in doing philosophy. But, this present conception also improves upon the earlier understandings of philosophy, given by Blackburn and Yarza, in a specific sense. Just as critical thinking may be about abstractions (as in the conception given by Blackburn), it may as well be about social practice, that is, the conduct of life and belief-holding in society (as it is rendered in the present conception). Thus, just as it is abstract (and theoretical), philosophy could as well be made practical. It is this practical understanding of philosophy that informs its relevance in the present discussion.

Philosophy has four basic branches, the understanding of which is significant in the present exercise of explaining its relationship with the concept of security in terms that make it comprehensible to scholars outside the discipline of philosophy. They are epistemology, ethics (or moral philosophy), logic, and metaphysics. According to Singer (2002:383), epistemology is the branch of philosophy that aims to determine the nature, basis, and extent of knowledge. It explores the various ways of knowing, the nature of truth, and the relationships between knowledge and belief. For Lillie (1948: 1-2), ethics is the normative science of the conduct of human beings living in societies—a science which judges this conduct to be right or wrong, to be good or bad, or in some other similar way. As a branch of philosophy, according to Badru (2009: 1-2), logic can be defined as a normative science of reasoning. It is normative because it prescribes norms of correctness for right reasoning. It is scientific because it systematically investigates and foregrounds errors, which may impair the ability of man to engage in right reasoning. Back to Singer (2002: 383), metaphysics is the

study of the fundamental nature of reality and existence and of the essences of things. Additionally, Blackburn (2005:232) states that metaphysics as a term is now applied to any enquiry that raises questions about reality that lie beyond or behind those capable of being tackled by the methods of science. Metaphysics is composed of *ontology* and *cosmology.* The former is a philosophical study of the nature of being or what is or what exists, and the latter is a philosophical study of the totality of the cosmos. The former is highly relevant to the present study.

Generally, it is noteworthy that the four branches of philosophy focus on different fundamentals that aid human beings to appropriately order their lives and flourish in society. Epistemology focuses on human knowledge; ethics is on human conduct; logic trains human beings in the art of right reasoning that is otherwise called deep or critical thinking, and metaphysics systematically attempts to help human beings to recognize and distinguish reality (what is) from mere appearance (what appears to be, but is not). In the present study, the four branches of philosophy contribute in different ways to our specific understandings of different dimensions and levels of analysis of the concept of security, on the one hand, and on the other, our general understanding of what security as well as securitization on the whole are about and the best practice to its pursuit in society. Metaphysics exposes what it is that constitutes the nature of security and securitization within any given context; epistemology focuses on the knowledge and information system that underpins security; logic deals with the critical analysis and deep thinking relevant to proper security analysis, policy decisions and implementation; and ethics is concerned with the right behavioural disposition to duty that is expected of people involved in the making and implementation of security policies. The foregoing would be expounded upon later in relation to the contemporary Africa. However, before turning to this, we should be clear about what the concept of security is all about.

III. Unpacking a Contested Concept of Security: Exploration From State-centrism to Non-State-centrism

Conventionally understood, according to Der Derian (2002:3), security refers to a condition of being protected, free from danger, and to safety. However, on further

reflection, defining the concept of security is not that simple. There is much support in the scholarly literature of security studies to argue that that the concept of security does not lend itself to easy understanding; there is no generally agreed definition of security, and this graphically proves its contested nature; though, some other scholars have argued to the contrary on this position (see, for instance, Baldwin, 1997:10-12). The malleability of security and lack of precise definition, according to Carolina Echeverri (2010:52-53), has made it become a plastic word. According to a Report (2007:6), 'Despite the numerous efforts by scholars of security studies to conceptualise 'security' in a coherent and systematic way, no single, generally accepted definition of security has been produced.' For Buzan (1991:15-16), security is a contested concept which defies pursuit of an agreed general definition. On the view of Dalby (1997:6), security has many meanings, some of which are not necessarily logically linked to conventional understandings. For McSweeney (1999: 1), security is an elusive term which resists definition. It is employed in a wide range of contexts and to multiple purposes by individuals, corporations, governments and academics. But, the malleability and lack of univocal conception of security do not mean that scholars have not attempted at all to define it.

Traditionally, security has been defined as protection against the undesirable, risky or injurious, usually with respect to the existential continuity of the state. In other words, the larger concept of security is reduced to merely a sub-set of it, that is, national security; security *per se* is somewhat de-emphasized (see Echeverri, 2010:3). Within this tradition, Bellany (1981:102) thinks 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.' Waever (2002) also supports the state-centric account of security by noting that the concept is located within the traditional logic of military behaviour in protecting the state. For Waever (2002:5), the basic definition of a security problem is something that can undercut the political order within a state and thereby 'alter the premises for all other questions.' He further notes that in naming a certain development a security problem, the 'state' can claim a special right, one that will, in the final analysis, always be defined by the state and its elites. Hence, he regards security as a speech act (Waever, 2002:6), perhaps, of the state elites. In light of this, Waever (2002:7) tautologically defines security as a situation marked by the

presence of a security problem *and* some measure taken in response, while insecurity is a situation with a security problem and *no* response. In the final analysis, one could state that the traditional account essentially renders security as the establishment and maintenance by the state of self-defense mechanisms, instruments of force, against external threats or internal dissentions as well as effective capacity to successfully wage wars to protect cherished values of the state, as defined by the elites.

The traditional account of security has some salient features. First, this account is highly state-centric: it emphasizes on the protection and survival of the state. Second, security is taken as speech acts of major state actors, elites or representatives: the presence of security problem is an articulation through the institutional voice of the state actors, elites or representatives, who also see to the specific measures to counter the security problem. Third, the concept is traditionally a buzzword in the military. Fourth, the concept is always defined against a given unpleasant *other*, which may be substantial damage, subversion, threat, terror, etc., be it real or imagined. Fifth, this account is realist in orientation, given its emphasis on the possession of a coercive power to guarantee the stability and survival of the state. But, why is the state significant in conceptualising security?

Historically, the significance of the state in the concept of security has a rich philosophical support, starting from the classics in philosophy. Both Plato and Aristotle contend that the state exists to supply the necessities of life to man (Badru, 2010:48; see also Coplestone, 1962a: 251 and 1962b:92). Thus, according to Aristotle, each citizen must possess a plot of land near the city and another near the frontier (so that all may have an interest in the defence of the state) (Badru, 2010: 48; Coplestone, 1962b:98). Also, a Renaissance philosopher, Machiavelli, upholds the idea of a strong state. Relying on historical and comparative methods of inquiry, Machiavelli argues that a state (read as a republic) needs a strong and fearless prince to keep it from being subverted either from within or from the outside (see Adams & Dyson, 2007: 35-36; 38). For Hobbes (1968), since the state emerged to address the problem of security in the state of nature, or provide order that was grossly lacking in the state of nature, it, understandably, must be powerful enough to do just that so as not to revert to the chaotic state of nature; hence, his whole idea of leviathan-ruler. As for Hegel, "The

State is the embodiment of rational freedom, realising and recognising itself in an objective form…The State is the Idea of Spirit in the external manifestation of human Will and its Freedom." "…the individual only has objectivity, truth, and morality in so far as he is member of the State…" (Russell, 1961:710). Thus, since the individual realises his/her being and worth within the state, so to speak, drawing on Hegel's submission, it behooves individuals to do everything possible to protect the state.

Contrary to the traditional state-centric account of security and, of course, constituting a critical challenge to this thinking, non state-centric understanding of security has emerged over the years. In fact, it is within the historical moment of the 1990s that the concept first took root (Christie, 2010:171). This new thinking has applied the concept of security to the politics, the economy, and the environment, all in relation to the life of the individual in society, as distinct from the state *per se*. This conception of human security, as is popularly articulated by the proponents, emphasizes, among others, democratic protection of some of the core political and social rights of the people within the state, guarantee of the economic well being of the people, a good built environment (that is, humanly structured part of the general environment, as distinct from the natural environment, where human beings have not encroached upon) for the people, to mention a few. Giving a working definition of the concept of human security, in Alkire's (2003:2) work, it is averred that the objective of human security is to safeguard the vital core of all human lives from critical pervasive threats, in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfillment. Although, Alkire (2003:25) notes that the phrase "vital core" is not a precise philosophical term in spite of its intuitive appeal, there is an attempt in the work, nonetheless, to render the phrase as a non-technical term for the concerns that lie behind human security. The scholar states further that it may be defined in the space of capabilities, the freedom people have to do and to be. Moreover, elements of the vital core are fundamental human rights which all persons and institutions are obliged to respect or provide, even if the obligations are not perfectly specifiable. The rights and freedoms in the vital core pertain to survival, to livelihood, and to basic dignity. Persons who enjoy rudimentary security as to their survival, livelihood, and dignity even during terrible circumstances of poverty or war or disaster, would be better off than billions are today (see Alkire, 2003:3).

Expounding upon the concept, Kofi Annan, in his 2000 Report to the United Nations, *We the People*, gives a broad description of human security thus:

> Human security in its broadest sense embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her own potential… (cited in Alkire, 2003: 14).

One could see that Annan has an expansive account of human security. However, according to Alkire (2003:3), human security is still conceptually restrictive, since it does not cover all necessary, important, and profound aspects of human living. Rather, it identifies and protects a limited vital core of human activities and abilities. These may be variously described by certain fundamental human rights, basic capabilities, or absolute needs (as explained above). Alkire (2003:3) concludes that human security is a condition that results from an effective political, economic, social, cultural, and natural environment, and not from executing a set of administrative procedures. In short, the non-state centric account of security is an emancipatory attempt, shifting the referent object of security away from the state to individuals, thus allowing us to focus on issues that have been occluded by previous state-centric security practices (see Christie, 2010: 177).

The differences between the two accounts of security given above are worthy of a brief elaboration. The state-centric account gives a rigidly reductionist, mono-causal understanding of security: the issue of security is only caused in the minds of major state actors when they feel that there is a threat, real or imagined, to the existential continuity and stability of the state. On the contrary, the non state-centric account offers a flexibly polymorphous understanding of security, all taking as central the welfare of the people within the state. Moreover, the state-centric account is realist in nature because it prioritizes over other things the possession of a coercive power by the state as essential to its survival. However, the non-state centric account is normatively committed to the well being of the people within the state. Also, Hammerstad (2000:399) has noted that the coercive power and authority gathered by

the state to provide internal and external security for the community is the same coercive power that can be-and often is-employed to make some (or, in few cases, most) of the members of that community insecure. The latter thus shows that the two accounts of security might sometimes be counteractively competing against each other.

Nonetheless, the two accounts of security are similar in some respects: protection and survival of the object of focus. In the former, the emphasis on protection is in relation to the state; while in the latter, the welfare of the people within the state is advanced for protection. Moreover, both accounts take security as a value, the latter being morally understood here as an object of desirability: both regard it as a value for the pursuit and achievement of other values. In the state-centric account, political stability (a value resulting from security) ensures the existential continuity of the state (another value) as a coherent political unit. In the non state-centric account, protection of the welfare of the people (a value) ensures the survival and flourishing of the people (another value) within the state. Also, it could be reasonably argued that both accounts of security could sometimes be complementary (as distinct from when they are counteractively competing): a consistent promotion of the welfare of the people in the final analysis leads to a minimal internal dissention within the state, and this invariably contributes to much internal stability of the state.

But, how and where does the conceptual exploration made so far merge with the discussion of the concept of security in Africa? Or, properly put, which of the two accounts of security really figures and, therefore, ought to be promoted in Africa? What critical role has philosophy in the discussion of the concept of security in Africa? These significant interrogatives would be addressed next.

IV. Philosophical Interrogation and the Concept of Security in Contemporary African Society

The position that is advanced and would also be fully justified in the present study is that, as noted earlier, though both state-centric and non state-centric accounts of security could be mutually inclusive (complementary but not competing) in some

specific contexts, they could also be mutually exclusive (competing but not complementary) in some other different contexts; promotion of one may negatively affect the promotion of the other. Thus, there is a strong case that the account of security that ought to be promoted, within a given period, in the contemporary African society should be context-dependent. It is the context that determines whether security thinking should largely support state-centrism or largely support non state-centrism. However, to effectively support this context-specificity of security understanding in Africa, there are some underlying philosophical questions that must be conscientiously considered and duly addressed. Before that, we should first examine some hitherto dominant security understanding and practice in Africa with respect to the central position that is advanced in the present study.

There is much support in the scholarly literature and from general experience in Africa to argue that the hitherto dominant security understanding and practice is largely state-centric, whether in the sense of protection of the existential continuity and stability of the state, or in the sense of protection of the elites of the state in power, regardless of the contextual impropriety of this thinking. For example, it could be logically argued that the civil war (1967-1970) in Nigeria was not primarily fought by the Federal Government to protect the Igbo people, who were being killed in the northern part of the country. Rather, it was fought to protect the existential continuity and stability of Nigeria as a political unit; though, the secession bid, on the part of Biafra, was an epi-phenomenon of the killings of the Igbo people in the northern part of Nigeria. Furthermore, when many of the military and civilian dictators that we have experienced in Africa have tried all they could by both covert and overt force to oppress and suppress their political opponents, due to the latter's activism, and claimed that all was done to maintain the existential continuity and stability of their states (so as to remain in power), they were state-centric in their securitization: that is, pronouncing on the existence of security threat and making deliberate efforts to address it. On this reading, the leaders are essentially interested in keeping themselves in power; hence, the necessity of existential continuity and stability of their bases. However, they care less about positively addressing the grievances that underlie the activism of their political opponents. According to Obadare (1999: 201), there was a general phenomenon from the mid-1980s in Africa of the resurgence of civil society

and its emasculation by authoritarian African leadership, the repression of which, in the final analysis, has always been premised by the leadership on the maintenance of social stability, threatened by the activism within the civil society.

Perhaps, a paradigm case in Nigeria was the late Gen. Sanni Abacha's massive oppression and suppression of Nigerian activists, who were clamoring for democratisation, in the name of ensuring public order in his days. Ibrahim (2003:25) aptly details a series of parallel security agencies established by Gen. Abacha to achieve his aims, such as the Office of the National Security Adviser, under Ismaila Gwarzo; the Office of the Chief Security Officer to the Head of State, under Major Hamza Al Mustapha, who also controlled a Special Strike Force that was not integrated into the Army; the Directorate of Military Intelligence, under General Ibrahim Sabo; the Defence Intelligence Agency, and the Brigade of Guards. Furthermore, the scholar states that the security outfits were given the 'licence to kill,' which they apparently used liberally, especially with the assassinations of notable opposition figures (see Ibrahim, 2003:25-26, & 27).

Now, the insistence of the Nigerian dictator on maintaining public order or stability in the polity of his days could be philosophically analysed. First, one could argue that the dictator had epistemic deficit, that is, he was epistemologically deficient in spite of all the military intelligence agencies surrounding him: he (or they collectively) did not truly know what was to be secured and the best practice towards it in the given context. This epistemic deficit was caused, one could still argue, because of his (or their) inability to critically (or deeply) think and come to a reasoned conclusion that the satisfaction of the wishes of the people should be prioritised, within the specific context, over the state-centric security steps he actually took. If he had done this, there would largely be public order or stability in the polity. In other words, the dictator with all his security agents and agencies rather unthinkingly treated the effect, but not the cause, in the given context. This, by extension, brought up the question of moral impropriety, apart from the contextual impropriety of the dictator's action. Thus, his action would further be ethically evaluated. In the utilitarian moral sense, one could state that he acted in a morally wrong way, since his action was not in the interest of the greatest number in the polity.

In the analysis, we should duly note the significance of the *context* in proper security understanding, analysis, and practice. We should also note the high relevance of *epistemology, logic,* and *ethics* involved. A conscientious application of this "philosophical mix" within the given context would have resulted in a proper understanding of security and best practice to ensure it. The foregoing analysis brings us to the philosophical interrogation of what security is, and the best practice to ensure security in Nigeria, a paradigm of African state. The point here is that what is true of Nigeria, an ethno-religious plural society, would also be largely true of the majority of other ethno-religious plural states in Africa. Nigeria has also been chosen as a focus of analysis because of the extant security deficit in the country. It may seem contradictory to argue that what is true of Nigeria as a plural state in terms of security deficit is largely true of the majority of plural states in Africa, and, at the same time, contend that security should be taken as context-dependent. The explanation is that the context-dependence of security, as it is being advanced here, is to be understood as a rational step within every African state, though not across boundaries of African states. To this extent, the issue of contradiction does not arise. Whether or not this proposal could also be applied in cross-border security thinking is not a focus of the present study.

Ontological, Epistemological and Logical
Interrogation of the Concept of Security

Since ontology as a sub-set of metaphysics deals with the nature of being or what exists, certain questions that border on the nature of security as a concept would be posed here, given that security is a form of social existent. Moreover, this ontological interrogation has some epistemological and logical undertones as we shall soon see.

1. What is the nature of the thing to be secured?

This ontological question demands of the policy-makers in Nigeria a proper situation analysis, yielding a good knowledge of what is to constitute the focus of security attention, within a given context. Is it the state, or, the well being of the people within the state? If the former, then security policy should be extensively and intensively

state-centric; if the latter, then all efforts should be directed towards a security policy of non state-centrism. We must note here that critical / deep thinking is highly needed to do a proper situation analysis for effective security policy-formulation and security policy-implementation.

2.   Who are to secure what is to be secured?

After clarifying the nature of the focus of security, the next rational step is to determine who (or sometimes what) is to secure it? This question demands of policy-makers in Nigeria a sensible appreciation of the qualitative and the quantitative nature of the human factor and the non-human (material) factor of the security policy implementation. In this regard, for example, it may be asked: is the police force being motivated enough, in terms of state-of the-art training and equipment, to maintain domestic law and order? Presently, this question is highly relevant in view of the domestic security deficit created by the *Boko Haram* ethno-religious movement in the northern part of the country, which the police force in Nigeria has largely failed to effectively tackle. Another relevant question is: Are our security personnel capable of critical or deep thinking, as against uncritical thinking, in meeting the challenges of our present security deficit or in meeting the challenges of security deficit generally? Or, do they base their calculations of adequate security measures on mere guesses, which is to be expected in the absence of critical thinking, backed up by effective techno-scientific information system within the force to frontally address criminal activities? Is there any deeply coherent prospective thinking by the State on the welfare of the dependants of security operatives, who die in active service in Nigeria, where pensioners, not to mention their dependants, suffer to obtain their pensions? In other words, how secure is the future of security operatives or their dependants? Reason tells us as rational beings that just as a secure future highly encourages present commitment to service, a bleak future discourages service commitment.

3.   What constitutes security for what is to be secured?

This is another ontological question since it concerns the nature of the *being* of security. This is consistent with the earlier questions in that a good knowledge of what is to be secured and who are to secure it helps us to discern what actually constitutes security for what is to be secured, and this is also a function of the context. What

constitutes effective security in *X* may not be so in *Y*, taking the two as different contexts. Presently, Nigeria's internal security deficit is largely constituted by the activities of the *Boko Haram* movement, and this has repeatedly made some demands, which in the final analysis, reduce to the fact that the so called 'fundamentalists' are one of the grassroots responses to bad governance in Nigeria (Albert, 2011:1).

The human component of the administrative leadership (elected and appointed) in Nigeria should know that good governance has a fundamentally positive impact on the life prospects of the citizenry. In this regard, we should recall Kofi Annan's earlier inclusion of good governance in his conception of human (non state-centric) security. Likewise, they should know that bad governance, or what one could call political mismanagement of the state, has a far-reaching, negative impact on the life prospects of the citizenry, and bad governance is common in Nigeria. Resultantly, the citizenry would be forced to engage in massive anti-state activities. Therefore, the answer to the question is that the human component of administrative leadership in Nigeria should make practical efforts, using the non-human aspect of administrative leadership (resources) to ensure good governance; this constitutes security in the present context, since the massive anti-state activities and outcry of the citizenry would naturally subside, without much deployment of armed security operatives. We should note that this, in the final analysis, accords with non state-centrism in security understanding and practice.

Ethical Interrogation of the Concept of Security

The ontological, epistemological and logical interrogation of the concept of security, as we have seen, has yielded some ethical (or moral) questioning of the official conduct of the human component of the administrative leadership in Nigeria, the major formulators of security policies. These ethical questions are properly formulated here:

1. Are the policies of the human element of the administrative leadership of the state ethically motivated in the interest of the people, or is it just lip-service that Nigerian leaders pay to the concept of ethical leadership? This question is relevant in

the sense that the unwillingness of political administrators in Nigeria to fully embrace the concept of ethical leadership, which is value-virtue-grounded, is tantamount to leadership insincerity, and this is a moral vice. Given a plausible stance that leadership is a mix of values and virtues, it logically follows that administrative leaders in Nigeria generally seem to have entirely missed the moral ontology of leadership, considering the high level corruption of leadership in Nigeria. According to a commentary, it is recently estimated that over N5trillion has been looted through various avenues under the watch of the current government (see *The Nation*, 2012:19). Another case in point was the general outcry that followed the partial removal of oil subsidy in early January, 2012. This problem and the attendant huge economic loss could have been largely averted if the leadership had frontally confronted and investigated the moral rot of the actors in the Nigerian oil industry, in the first instance. In some other African countries, we have practically seen how the loss of what Robert Putnam (1993:173-175) calls *vertical trust* in leadership, a moral virtue, caused the revolutionary death of Col. Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, and the forced resignation of President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, to mention a few, in 2011. If the leaders had been ethically-minded in dealing with their peoples, they would not have stayed too long in power, given their atrocities; there would not have been any massive, domestic outcry and instability such as what eventually led to their inglorious exit. This practically shows the mutual inclusivity of ethical leadership, people's welfare, and domestic stability: absence of one leads to absence of the others.

2. A related question is: Is the human element of administrative leadership morally upright enough to demand moral rectitude from the citizenry in serving the nation in different capacities? This question is highly and generally relevant in people's service to the nation in that a reasonable person trusts and actively works with a leader who is obviously morally upright. However, no reasonable person trusts and actively works with a leader who is obviously morally deficient, a leader with no moral capital, as we have repeatedly seen in the case of Nigeria. In fact, corruption of leadership has a host of negative effects one of which may be a compromised domestic security. For example, how could one in Nigeria possibly explain the January 2012 escape, from police custody, of the mastermind of the *Boko Haram* Christmas Day bombing of Saint Theresa's Catholic Church, Madalla, Niger State, in December, 2011, if not

professional incompetence, resulting from the moral diminution of the political leadership generally in Nigeria that has deeply impacted on the police in Nigeria. And, the police is a part of the executive arm of Nigeria. Although, there are presently unconfirmed claims that the suspect has been re-arrested (see Ehi James, Jan., 20: 2012), perhaps, in response to the President's ultimatum to the former IGP to produce the suspect at all cost, a right-thinking person still needs to critically question the escape of the suspect in the first instance, given the magnitude of the crime involved. The point is that the corruption in the police in Nigeria could only be stamped out and domestic security thereby improved if the leadership in Nigeria itself is morally upright. Without a moral regeneration of the leadership in Nigeria, the problem of corruption in the police would never be firmly and positively addressed. This submission further shows the ethical dimension of the present security deficit in Nigeria.

Epistemological Interrogation of the Concept of Security:
We now come to a proper epistemological interrogation of the concept of security. The epistemic base of security should be generally incontestable in the modern society. In fact, it is reasonable to contend that a solid knowledge system provides the base material for subsequent security analysis, policy formulation and implementation. The famous Greek moral philosopher, Socrates, knew the centrality of knowledge in right conduct when he argued that "to know what is good is to do what is good." Although, it could be countered that the foregoing does not always follow, and be correct about it, nobody could however reasonably argue that a well-informed moral agent is not better in action than an uninformed moral agent.

By the 'epistemic base of security' in this study, we mean the totality of knowledge and information infrastructure that underlies the systematic process of security policy-formulation and security policy-implementation within a given context. The infrastructure includes, but is not limited to, the intelligence gathering agencies, the equipment deployed for intelligence gathering, and the state agents responsible for intelligence gathering and analysis, as well as other tested and reliable informants in society. Certain questions are important here.

1. Does Nigeria have reliable communication systems, supporting the techno-scientific, intelligence systems in the police force (assuming this exists in the force) in monitoring potential crime locations and thereby aid security operatives in prompt action? Assuming we have good communication systems, what is the integrity level of those that man the systems? These questions are related in the sense that, no matter the sophistication of the surveillance systems, if they are manned by people of low level of integrity, people who could be easily bought over, there would still be a high level of security compromise and deficit in Nigeria. Here, we see once again the correlation between epistemological and ethical dimensions of security analysis.

2. Do we have any reliable data-bank on every arms and ammunition shipment into the country, the identities of the importers, as well as what they are imported for? The question is imperative at this material time in Nigeria because there are many rogue politicians in Nigeria who distribute arms to thugs to terrorize their political opponents, and these must have been largely imported. Furthermore, these thugs are given the 'license to kill' by their sponsors.

3. Related to the above is the question: What general information do we have on who is truly privileged to import arms and ammunition into the country? Officially, the Federal Government may be the sole importer of arms and ammunition. Thus, what concrete measures are being officially taken against unofficial importation of arms and ammunition into the country? Some might be quick to argue that those illegal importers or illegal users of guns are legally dealt with. But, this is rationally doubtful, when it involves important personalities, who sponsor thugs in society, if one closely observes the political space in Nigeria, where sophisticated guns are openly used by party thugs. It is either that these sophisticated guns are locally made or are imported. It could not be reasonably argued that these sophisticated guns are locally made; therefore, the only option left is that they are imported. However, if our reasoning is invalid (which is highly improbable), and the earlier stance is correct, then we need to publicly know the names of the rogue politicians and others in the same league, who have illegally imported arms into the country or/and give underground support to local terrorist groups, and the concrete measures that have been legally taken against them. Without this information being made public, it is impossible to vouch for the sincerity of the human element of the leadership in their policies against illegal arms importation into the country, as well as their use. Even,

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assuming these sophisticated guns are locally made, then the government still needs to unravel the identity of the local manufacturers as well as establish whether or not they are officially registered. The services of such manufacturers ought not to be bought over by rogue politicians or suchlike socio-political pariahs to actualize their nihilistic tendencies in society.

4. Do we have any reliable information from time to time on the integrity level of our top security personnel in Nigeria? If we have, then this information must be judiciously used to decide whom to trust as patriotic security personnel and whom not to trust, given their sensitive positions. If we do not have, then it is apposite to find a way to covertly conduct occasional checks on their integrity level and their observance of professional ethics. Once again, we see how epistemological and ethical considerations shade into each other in security understanding, analysis, and practice.

5. Have our security operatives fully cultivated the security virtue of protecting the human sources of their intelligence reports? Protecting the human sources of security information, which is technically called *source protection* in information ethics, greatly encourages social informants to secretly disclose requisite information on crime and criminality to relevant security agencies as well as aid security agents in intelligence gathering, analysis, policy formulation, and implementation, since the social informants know that their safety is guaranteed.

6. Have our security operatives also cultivated the security virtue of occasionally checking on the reliability and trustworthiness of their established informants in society? Do they really know when the informants themselves are engaging in the moral vice of double-dealing because of pecuniary benefits: serving as informants to state security services and, at the same time, fore-warning criminals, because of monetary rewards, about impending actions against the latter by state security services? Double-dealing in this sense is counteractive to the effectiveness of security policy formulation and implementation of the relevant authorities within the state.

All the epistemological questions posed so far, and similar ones, must be duly addressed in order to develop and maintain a highly functional epistemic base for effective security policy formulation and implementation in the contemporary African society.

V. Conclusion

This work has attempted a philosophical examination of the concept of security in the contemporary African society. We first explained what philosophy is all about, before generally arguing for its practical basis in society. Additionally, we specifically touched on its applicability to security analysis in practice. We further examined the concept of security from the perspectives of state-centrism and non state-centrism. On security, we argued that what is to constitute security understanding and practice within the contemporary African society should be context-specific. Moreover, we engaged in an interrogative dialogue with the security concept, showing the epistemic, the ethical, the logical and the metaphysical dimensions of security analysis and understanding. This philosophical approach directly connects the concept of security to other areas of life of the human person. We also showed in the study that though, all the philosophical questions posed are lexically distinct, they are yet interwoven in the sense that answers given to one could help in supplying answers to the others. At length, we submitted that it is when the administrative leadership in contemporary Africa seriously considers and conscientiously addresses the philosophical questions posed in the study that we could deeply understand what security entails and the best practice to achieve it.

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