

## **The Importance of Prisation of Security: A Philosophical review**

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### **Abstract**

*Security is a complex concept. This complexity is rooted in its ability to enter into and define progress in all fields of human endeavour. For this reason, security requires special attention. A comprehensive view of security must go beyond military protection from external and internal threats to the inadequacies that gave birth to the security issues in the first place. This is where Public Relations (PR) with its orientation towards creating and sustaining harmony and effective communication comes in. This study adopts a method of philosophical review to project the importance of PRisation of security due to the central role philosophy plays in the analysis of all issues concerning humanity. PRisation of security here entails the recognition and integration of PR values and principles as essential components of security. This study finds out that within the logic and apparatus of security, PR is both an extension and an integral element of security. This study concludes that PRisation of security makes it possible to take in the big picture concerning the root causes of the problems that pose as security threat and how best to resolve them. That is, there is need to recognise and integrate PR values and principles as essential components of security and use them to both provide ideological direction and to develop coherent policy responses to long-standing security issues. In all, this paper underscores the PRisation of security as both healthy and progressive.*

**Keywords:** Public Relations, Security, Publics, Organisation, Philosophical analysis

### **Introduction: What is PRisation of Security?**

The PRisation of security entails the recognition and integration of

Public Relations (PR) values and principles as essential components of security. That is, within the logic and apparatus of security, PR becomes both an extension and an integral element of security. By adopting the method of philosophical review to project the importance of PRisation of security, this study underscores the central role philosophy “plays in the understanding of other disciplines and *all* issues pertaining to humanity.”<sup>1</sup> This is because philosophy as a discipline interrogates every aspect of knowledge with the aim of providing the best response to issues. Philosophy in this vein can be summed up as “a *restless* application of reason, rigour and reflection to get at the real essence of things in so far as is humanly possible.”<sup>2</sup>

Here, a philosophical review on PRisation of security can be shown to widen the concept of security in, at least, four crucial ways. One, it helps to highlight the necessity to include and prioritise the publics and the host community, as well as the environment in security issues. Two, it helps to demonstrate the need to understand that people's way of thinking or assessing issues can lead to social problems and as such should be made a key factor in devising appropriate strategies in handling security matters. Three, it helps to demonstrate how to employ communication to achieve the desired goal in handling security issues. This is particularly important given that communication “is so central to human affairs that in a situation where it is not well managed, there will be crises whether in social relationship, business relationship or even the relationship between government and the citizens and government of one country and

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<sup>1</sup>. M.S.C. Okolo, 'Ubuntu and COVID-19: A Philosophical Reflection', *Global Health, Humanity and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Philosophical and Sociological Challenges and Imperatives*, eds., Francis Egbokhare and Adeshina Afolayan, (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 34.

<sup>2</sup>. MSC Okolo, *Philosophy: Contemporary Concerns in Africa*, (Owerri: Book-Konzult, 2015), 22.

another country.”<sup>3</sup> Besides, even “when there is a definite will to communicate, there may be great difficulty in achieving success, for the mechanisms of communication are very complicated.”<sup>4</sup> Four, it helps to project the need for proactive and strategic measures to be put in place to forestall any issues that can pose as security threat to an organisation and its publics. PRisation of security, then, helps to take in the big picture that helps to trace the root causes of the problems that pose as security threat.

This paper aims to show how PRisation of security can help in advancing new thoughts on these two policy fields as well as strengthen the links between them. Understanding this will help in both the development of coherent policy responses to long-standing public relations and security problems as well as in the articulation of ideological direction for security issues. This should not, however, translate to neglect or collapse of competences of the two fields. To reduce every security function to PR will be overly ambitious. In all, this study is concerned with highlighting the PRisation of security as reflecting both the value of PR principles and the value of their incorporation in the securitisation of an organisation.

This study is organised into five sections, the first is this introduction. The others are: conceptualising Public Relations, Situating Security, Importance of PRisation of security, and the conclusion. Separately and collectively the sections demonstrate the urgency in both accepting and integrating PR values and methods as core components of security.

## **Conceptualising Public Relations**

Public Relations (PR) practitioners are of the view that there is no one

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<sup>3</sup>. M.S.C. Okolo, P. E, Ezenandu and E.R. Alor, 'Interrogating Communication: A Philosophical Reflection on Words, Meaning and Intention', *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development (JASSD)*, vol.6, no.1, 2023, 25.

<sup>4</sup>. S. Black, *Introduction to Public Relations*, (London: The Modino Press Limited, 1989), 5.

universally agreed definition of PR.<sup>5</sup> This is because practitioners are not in agreement as regards what its scope, overall goals, tasks, strategy, limitations, among others should be. This notwithstanding, there is a useful way of trying to understand what PR is. This can be accomplished by distilling its main attributes through the examination of some definitions from some notable experts in the profession.

From 472 different definitions of PR given between 1900 and 1976, Harlow defined PR as:

a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasises the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilise change; serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.<sup>6</sup>

Even though Harlow's definition attempts to cover most aspects of PR, the emphasis is on PR as a bridge builder between an organisation and its publics. To achieve this, the PR practitioner should belong to the

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<sup>5</sup>. J. E. Grunig, *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*, (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1992); J. L'Etang, 'Public Relations as diplomacy', *Critical Perspectives in Public Relations*, eds., J. L'Etang and M. Pieczka, (London: International Thomson Business Press, 1996); J. White, and L. Mazur, *Strategic Communications Management: Making Public Relations Work*, (Harlow: Addison-Wesley, 1996); K. Moloney, *Rethinking Public Relations: The Spin and the Substance*, (London: Routledge, 2000); R. Tench and L. Yeomans, eds., *Exploring Public Relations*, second edition, (England: Pearson Educational Limited, 2009).

<sup>6</sup>. R.F. Harlow, 'Building a definition of public relations', *Public Relations Review*, vol. 2, no.4, 1976, 36.

management cadre and is expected to be skilled in relationship building, attentive to changes and trends in the environment and conscious of ethical rules. PR understood from this perspective is a requirement in any venture where the interest of the participants is highly valued.

The Mexican Statement, signed by representatives of more than 30 national and regional public relations associations in Mexico city on 11 August 1978, defined Public Relations practice as “the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisation's leadership, and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organisation's and the public interest.”<sup>7</sup> Here the PR practitioner is made aware of the importance of ensuring that the organisation's interest aligns with the public interest and the need to continuously scan the operating environment of the organisation. There is also emphasis on planned programmes of action. This calls attention to the fact that public relations activities demand a great deal of hard work that requires conscientious effort.

For Sam Black “Public relations practice is the art and science of achieving harmony with the environment through mutual understanding based on truth and full information.”<sup>8</sup> Black's definition highlights the importance of mutual understanding if effective communication is to be achieved. Other essential ingredients of effective communication are truth and full information.

In Anne Gregory's view “Public Relations means what the words imply. It is about the relationships organisations have with various publics, both

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<sup>7.</sup> Cited in Black, *Introduction to Public Relations*, 4.

<sup>8.</sup> Black, *Introduction to Public Relations*, 5.

internal and external.”<sup>9</sup> This is in line with Cutlip, et al submission which defines PR as “the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends.”<sup>10</sup> The key notes here are on building and sustaining positive relationship between an organisation and its publics; and the recognition that the ultimate survival of any organisation rests with its publics.

The Department of Trade and Industry and Institute of Public Relations defined Public Relations as “influencing behaviour to achieve objectives through the effective management of relationships and communications.”<sup>11</sup> Here, the cardinal role of communication in achieving mutual understanding and enhancing good relationship is underscored.

Based on the above definitions, we can distil the main principles of good Public Relations. The basic function of PR in an organisation is to help the organisation's publics do their job and to maintain a conducive environment for them. To be able to achieve this, at least, nine principles should be adhered to: One, good PR is about establishing two-way flow of information to achieve mutual understanding. This implies that both the organisation and its publics should be receptive to each other's views and employ means to ensure that each other's message receive the right interpretation. Two, good PR depends on effective communication. This entails both the dissemination of accurate information and feedback on

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<sup>9.</sup> A. Gregory, 'Management and organisation of public relations', *Exploring Public Relations*, Second Edition, eds. Ralph Tench, and Liz Yeomans L., (England: Pearson Education Limited, 2009), 20.

<sup>10.</sup> S.M. Cutlip, A.H. Center and G.M. Broom, *Effective Public Relations*, 8th edition, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000), 6.

<sup>11.</sup> Department of Trade and Industry and Institute of Public Relations, *Unlocking the Potential of Public Relations: Developing Good Practice*, (London: European Centre for Business Excellence, 2003), 10.

how well the message is understood. This will help an organisation to strategically adjust to the needs and expectations of its publics. Three, good PR thrives on truth, knowledge and providing full information. This means that understanding should be established on the basis of letting the organisation's publics know the real facts of a situation. The Publics should not be deceived. This will go a long way in eliminating rumours and misinformation which are unhealthy for an organisation and can ultimately lead to security issues. Four, good PR relates to the Publics in an inclusive way. PR is not about exploitation. As such, care should be taken to ensure that PR programmes reflect the overall interest of the organisation's publics. This implies that programmes should be designed according to the specific profile of a particular public. In a university, for instance, the programme that benefits students may not necessarily benefit academic and non-teaching staff and vice versa. Even the programme that benefits academic staff may not benefit non-teaching staff. Five, good PR is conscious of maintaining good reputation and credible identity. Six, good PR is visionary. It is proactive in idea generation and strategy to use in crisis management. For instance, if a university management wants to enforce the wearing of ID by students and staff while on campus, the PR unit will begin a sensitisation campaign months before the actual announcement and implementation. Planting the idea in the minds of the publics before the event begins to unfold will help to gauge the public's reaction to the issue and, even, get their acceptance of the issue which will invariably go a long way to reduce the job of security in enforcing the law. Seven, good PR invests in and sustains relationship. The shift to digital environment is redefining the nature of relationship. What is called for is a hybrid that continues to nurture and sustain pre-existing relationship and at the same time opening up to new modes of creating and maintaining relationship. Eight, good PR is intertwined with emotional intelligence. The ability to understand one's feelings and control them and turn them into a source of

critical advantage in understanding and relating with other people, how to work cooperatively with them, and communicate effectively can act as vital tools for overcoming challenges, defusing conflict and building secure relationship. Nine, good PR is evaluated. Evaluation helps both in accountability and assessing the effectiveness of PR programme. In essence, then, the main purpose of PR is to develop and maintain understanding between an organisation and its publics.

It is important to bear these attributes in mind as the basis for making a case for the importance of PRisation of security.

### **Situating Security**

Human beings need to feel and to know that they are free to go about their businesses without any fear of molestation, threat, intimidation or violence both from their internal and external environment. That is, they need to feel secure. Security, then, represents a state in which people or things are protected from fear and danger and as such, people can go about their private and public life in a conducive and peaceful environment.<sup>12</sup> Ndubuisi and Onwudinjo, in fact, see security as “the first

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<sup>12.</sup> C.I. Nwagboso, 'Security Challenges and Economy of the Nigerian State (2007-2011)', *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, vol. 2, no.6, 2012; E.N. Besong, 'Noetic Propaedeutic and the Question of Insecurity in Nigeria', *Philosophy, Security and the Challenge of Development in Africa: Issues, Problems and Prospects*, eds., Alloy S. Ihuah, Anthony Idachaba, and Mark I. Shenge, (Nigeria: The Nigeria Philosophical Association, 2019); E.J.O. Ndubisi, and V.G. Onwudinjo, 'Existentialist Approach to Contemporary Security Challenges in Nigeria', *Philosophy, Security and the Challenge of Development in Africa: Issues, Problems and Prospects*, eds., Alloy S. Ihuah, Anthony Idachaba, and Mark I. Shenge, (Nigeria: The Nigeria Philosophical Association, 2019); P.S. Onwe, 'An Examination of Good Governance and the state of Security in Nigeria', *Philosophy and National Security: Interrogations in a Distressed Nation*, eds. Alloy, S. Ihuah and Anthony Idachaba, (Nigeria: The Association of Philosophy Professionals of Nigeria, 2021), vol. 1, 25-44.

law of life”<sup>13</sup> while Besong views it as “a basic condition for the survival of human beings.”<sup>14</sup> By implication, security has the ability to affect the daily activities of people whether at home, in their work place, community, country and, even, the world. That is, security can enter into and define the progress in other fields of human endeavour.

In a secured organisation, for instance, the publics are at liberty to pursue their goals. It is the duty of security officers to maintain law and order using necessary material elements such as tear gas, rubber bullets and, in some cases, real guns among others. This aspect of security, however, represents a situation where there is breakdown of law and order. This raises the issue of whether security itself needs help in the reduction of conflict. In an organisation where PR values such as relating to the publics in an inclusive way, giving prompt and appropriate information on the organisation, providing conducive working environment among others that make for harmonious working relations among members of the organisation are given priority, the likelihood of industrial conflict will be greatly minimised if not completely eradicated.

To illustrate, if the publics of an organisation are not given prompt and true information, they may resort to rumours which in turn may generate conflict and threaten the order in an organisation. Similarly, in the context of lack of welfare and poor working environment, the staff of an organisation may resort to riot and violent demonstration, thereby, undermining the law and order in an organisation. By helping to create harmony necessary for peaceful co-existence and effective and efficient co-operation among the publics of an organisation, PR reduces the work of security especially in the area of conflict resolution as well as provide

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<sup>13.</sup> Ndubisi and Onwudinjo, 'Existentialist Approach', 59.

<sup>14.</sup> Besong, 'Noetic Propaedeutic', 351.

<sup>15.</sup> Gregory, 'Management', 20.

it with more time and resources that can be channelled to the training of personnel in new and innovative ways of handling security issues that will benefit the organisation and the society at large.

A comprehensive view of security must go beyond protection from external and internal threats to the inadequacies in terms of poor PR that gave birth to the security issues in the first place. A well conceptualised security, then, must underscore the importance of the PRisation of security.

### **The Importance of PRisation of Security**

The importance of this approach is that it takes in the big picture that helps to trace the root causes of the problems that pose as security threat. That is, there is need to give adequate thought to the ideological direction of PRising security. This thesis is backed by, at least, six points.

First, PR helps to lower the cost of security because it prevents conflicts. The main purpose of PR is to establish and sustain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. This helps to instil loyalty and a sense of complete well-being in the publics. In a situation where the publics of an organisation identify positively with its policies and achievements the likelihood of conflicts that may pose security challenges to the organisation is minimised and, at times, completely eradicated. In this sense, PR helps in the more fundamental role of preventing conflict by establishing work environment that would permit peaceful resolutions of problems and conflicts.

The second point links to the first. PR plays an active role in the resolution of security issues. Security issues cannot be resolved by security means alone. In a work environment, alliances tend to be fluid, and conflicts often criss-cross relations involving different categories. A

university, for instance, is made up of variety of people – extremists, moderates, liberals, free thinkers, cultists, prayer warriors, among others and these interests are not always fixed. This complicates the security job. The communication skill of the PR practitioner is needed to reconcile these different categories.

Third, PR helps to reveal the quality of training security officers should receive and how often it should be updated to make them amenable to the dynamics and constant changes in human interaction. More than any other time, both the internal and external publics are demanding more accountability from organisations. The social media is making this both easy and fast. For instance, the student body – the largest internal publics of a university – has changed drastically from what it used to be in the past. The social media has empowered students to become part of influential decision makers for the university. PR with its focus on the day-to-day activities of an organisation and how well it is received by its publics is better placed to understand and anticipate the likely security challenges the university may face on account of this and advice the management on the best course of action. This will most probably involve the security reassessing its preparedness to meet the challenges. This review will invariably lead to retraining and updating the skills of the security personnel especially in the use of social media. Students aside, people are turning away from traditional media to embrace new internet media. Security officials will need to become adept at working with different publics with differing interests.

Fourth, PR helps security to understand its function better. The major emphasis of PR is on the publics of an organisation. The publics are made up of both the internal and external publics. For PR, these two entities are the life blood of an organisation and every care should be taken to ensure that the harmony between them and an organisation is protected. It is also

important to note that PR encourages the tailoring of activities to meet the needs of specific publics. Security needs to understand this to be able to function well. That is, to be able to act effectively as the guarantor of safety and order, security officials have the triple function of maintaining peace between an organisation and its external publics; maintaining peace between an organisation and its internal publics; and ensuring that security measures put in place to contain security issues match the specific publics it is intended for. For instance, security officials of a university can organise security sensitisation for students and staff of the university and also for the members of the host community. Equally the security measure designed to contain students' riot should be different from the one designed to manage non-teaching staff demonstration. This critically implies that security should pay attention to the peculiar dynamics of a particular organisation, and the distinctive nature of the different sectors in an organisation instead of adopting a one-size-fit all approach. That is, security issues and solutions should target audience analyses so as to direct intervention to the areas they are needed. This will go a long way in both encouraging the publics to participate and feel a sense of ownership concerning security efforts. In other words, security should be seen as a collective effort of all the organisation's publics.

Fifth, PR helps to widen the concept of security through its emphasis on the importance of effective communication. Security officials tend to see security from its technical angle of helping to contain threats to an organisation. However, given that most security issues are products of misunderstanding, effective communication is cardinal to enhancing security. Apart from what is communicated verbally, posture and body language can create a strong impact on the minds of the publics. Knowledge of this will help security officers to be careful not to send a wrong message. For instance, if a security officer adopts a threatening posture when suing for peace, it may likely produce an opposite result.

Also, during interrogation a security officer should constantly ask himself/herself what makes sense if he/she is using an interpreter. Equally important, the top-down manner security officials operate may pose problems in the area of new idea generation, consultation, and participation. For instance, a junior officer who comes up with a better initiative to solve a problem may be hampered if he/she does not have access to his/her superior. Effective communication, then, also entails providing enabling environment for the exchange of information and ideas especially between superiors and subordinates. As such, by recognising PR orientation to handling issues and incorporating them into security affairs, most security challenges can be averted.

Sixth, PR helps security to better appreciate the critical importance of paying adequate consideration to both the external and internal environment in which it operates. Environmental scanning is cardinal to PR activities. This helps organisations to identify emerging issues and plan ahead on how to meet whatever challenges they pose. Anne Gregory submits that the “external environment is vitally important for organisations because it determines the future. Smart organisations constantly scan the external environment to identify emerging issues.”<sup>15</sup> She insists that once issues are spotted early “precious time is bought for the organisation to adjust itself to those issues, to engage with them and to influence their development.”<sup>16</sup> By exploiting the full benefit of this, security officers will be able to both nip problems in the bud and to put in place effective long-term measures to address their future occurrence.

## **Conclusion**

The dominating concern throughout is on underscoring the critical role PR values hold in the tackling of security issues. This emphasis is

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<sup>16.</sup> Gregory, 'Management', 20.

particularly important due to the conventional way of viewing PR and security as belonging to two different entities, with one focusing on the logic of building and sustaining goodwill and harmony between an organisation and its publics, and the other on ensuring a violent free work environment. While the point here is not that the lines between PR and security should necessarily be blurred, the emphasis is rather that both PR and security can be viewed as different approaches through which an enabling environment for organisations and their publics to interact can be created. This view entails that we see each as reinforcement for the other. On one hand, security issues such as violence, internal and external threats to an organisation can be easily diffused by a proactive PR approach. On the other, PR problems such as an unforeseen crisis, employee conflict can be better managed by well-articulated security response. From this perspective, PR and security can be seen as two intertwining policy fields that are united in the establishment of peaceful co-existence and the resolution of conflicts of different kinds.

It is imperative, therefore, that security officers and PR practitioners work closely together, each contributing their special experience, knowledge, talents and skills to promote and maintain harmony, manage issues, resolve conflicts and tackle risks. Visionary security officials should welcome what the PR discipline has to offer through its knowledge of developing and sustaining relationship with the publics, stakeholder collaboration and its effective use of communications skills and channels. Conversely, smart PR practitioners should embrace what the security officials can provide through their expertise in containing threats and conflict resolution and their sophisticated use of arms techniques and strategy.

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