Chapter 1

The Concept of Security

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Introduction

Being secure is one of the most widely acknowledged components of a good life. Henry Shue (1980 [1996]) describes the right to security as the first of our basic rights. Political philosophers from Hobbes to Rawls consider the provision of security the key task of political institutions. The concept is central to historic political documents such as the *Déclaration Des Droits De L'homme Et Du Citoyen De 1789* and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Political leaders extol its virtues on a daily basis.

Security has also become an important concept in deliberations on the response to infectious disease emergencies. Some infectious diseases—such as HIV/AIDS, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, and pandemic strains of influenza—are hypothesised to pose a threat to security (in addition to the risk they pose to human health). Severe infectious disease epidemics could thus be instances of "supreme emergency", where threats to security justify measures beyond those normally regarded as permissible (Walzer, 2000). If a particular epidemic threatens security, then coercive public health interventions—e.g., compulsory vaccination and/or restrictive social distancing measures such as isolation and quarantine—might be justifiable (Selgelid and Enemark, 2008). On the other hand, the "securitization" of disease might politically legitimise morally unjustified rights violations (Elbe, 2006). The status of severe epidemics as threats to security and the justifiability of treating health emergencies as security threats are unresolved questions.

But what does it mean to be secure? Why is security valuable? Answers to these questions are imperative before we can begin to assess whether the securitization of certain infectious disease emergencies is morally justified. Despite the centrality of security to political philosophy and many modern moral dilemmas, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the concept of security by philosophers (c.f. Waldron, 2006). While discussion abounds on the balance between security and liberty (Waldron, 2003), and the permissibility of infringing generally inviolable rights when faced with supreme emergencies (Walzer, 2000: 251-252), very rarely is the meaning of "security" interrogated. There is therefore a lacuna in our toolkit of moral concepts, one which should be filled if we hope to properly assess the permissibility of actions claimed to promote or maintain security.

This chapter provides a philosophical analysis of the different meanings of "security" and, by so doing, identifies some key features of the concept of security.

I begin by establishing a number of qualities which this chapter's conceptual analysis should ideally possess. I then make an important distinction between security as a *practice* and security as a *state of being*, and argue that more attention should be paid to the latter if our goal is to interrogate the justifiability of using security practices in the context of infectious disease emergencies. The latter half of the chapter investigates three common features of contemporary accounts of security: (1) the referent object, (2) the conditions that object must satisfy to be secure, and (3) the distinction between the objective and subjective realisation of those conditions. I argue that accounts of the meaning of "security" identify a referent object and a set of conditions which must be *reliable* for that referent. I conclude by suggesting that a deeper engagement by moral philosophers with the concept and value of security (as a state of being) is required if we are to get very far in evaluating the justifiability of treating infectious disease emergencies as security issues.

Security and Essential Contestability

The modern concept of security has a long and complex genealogy. Antecedents of "security" in Latin (*securitas*) and Ancient Greek (*ataraksia*) described a psychological quality—an individual's calm acceptance of her predicament and place in the world—which was largely detached from the physical or political context (Arends, 2008). Early Christian use of the word "security" described an individual's sinful sense that she commanded her own life: an unwarranted certitude in the face of God's omnipotence.[1] The more familiar notion of security as the physical safety of individuals arose with Enlightenment and Napoleonic scholars, whose belief that individual security could only be guaranteed by social institutions provided their chief justification for the modern State (Rothschild, 1995). The discipline of International Relations, where national security is a key concept, has built upon this Enlightenment heritage by associating the term almost exclusively with the territorial and political integrity of the State (Walt, 1991). In recent times, "critical security scholars" have challenged this understanding, suggesting that being secure is a property not of the State *per se*, but of individuals (see United Nations Development Program, 1994; Booth, 2007). This tumultuous genealogy has produced a diverse set of contemporary meanings of the word "security"; evident in the multitude of conceptualisations of national security (Wolfers, 1962; Ullman, 1983; Walt, 1991), human security (United Nations Development Program, 1994; Ogata and Sen, 2003), ontological security (Giddens, 1991; Mitzen, 2006), emancipatory security (Booth, 1991; Wyn Jones, 1999) and securitization theory (Wæver, 1995; Buzan, Wæver et al., 1998).

1 See for instance the usage in Macbeth: "…security; Is mortals' chiefest enemy". (Shakespeare, 1988: Act 3, Scene 5, Line 31)

The greatest obstacle to clarifying the concept of security, then, is not that nobody knows what it means, but rather that "security" means many different things to many different people. The diversity of meanings is so great that security is typically labelled an "essentially contested concept" (Buzan, 1983: 6). In this sense it is claimed to be similar to other concepts—such as "health", "justice", "race" or "gender"—which have a multitude of competing definitions, none of which are accepted as correct by all.[2] Each definition of a contested concept emphasises different aspects of that concept and, by so doing, makes different claims about what is important or valuable about security. As Gray (1978: 392) suggests:

> [T]he major source of a concept's essential contestedness is the normative standard embodied by its criteria. This is to say that a concept is essentially contested if its rival uses express competing moral and political perspectives.

Thus, human security, national security, ontological security etc., could be seen as competing accounts of the concept of security which instantiate different claims about the value of states, individual wellbeing, psychological quietude etc. We cannot easily resolve the dispute between these definitions because we can reasonably disagree about the value of the goods which are emphasised by each definition.

The seemingly irresolvable contest between definitions of security has prompted some to contend that attempts to systematically analyse the concept of security are futile. Instead of conceptual analysis of security we should identify and critique the politics of its meaning (Huysmans, 1998: 232). This approach to essential contestability is, however, peculiar to discussions of the concept of security. The essential contestability of power, liberty and justice have not prevented philosophers from attempting to provide a structure that clarifies the value claims embodied within various definitions (see Lukes, 1974; Gray, 1977; Gray, 1978). Whilst it may not be possible to precisely define the content of an essentially contested concept through conceptual analysis alone, such analysis may identify what is at stake in the contest between definitions. Moreover, there may be a "common core" or structure to definitions, over which there appears to be broad agreement (Gallie, 1955). Finally, this common core might identify why we take security to be *especially valuable* and help elucidate the role that appeals to security play in justifying the use of extraordinary measures.

Legitimate Purposes

Bearing in mind that security appears to be an essentially contested concept, I begin by asking what goals an analysis of the concept of security should strive to fulfil.

2 For a general overview of "essential contestability" see Gallie (1955) and Swanton (1985).

One way of giving structure to a conceptual analysis of a contested concept is to explicitly identify the purpose of the analysis.[3] A conceptual analysis of "security" might, for instance, seek to identify those features of the concept which make it useful to theorists of international politics, or it might seek to identify features which explain the word's rhetorical power. This chapter is explicitly concerned with identifying those features of the concept of security which explain its role as a consideration in moral decision-making. This purpose suggests four qualities which this chapter's conceptual analysis should ideally possess.

First, the conceptual analysis should integrate the concept of security with theorising about our ultimate moral and political goals. As noted above, security is typically viewed as an especially valuable good: perhaps as an end in itself. A conceptual analysis which integrates security with moral and political theorising might reveal why this is so, and how the invocation of security operates to justify certain actions and political practices. Others have recognised that analysis of the concept of security must be normatively-sensitive: critical theorists explicitly acknowledge this consideration and some post-structuralists have begun to investigate an "ethics of security" (see Wyn Jones, 1999; Booth, 2007: 109; Burke, 2007). However, the analytic (or Anglo-American) stream of moral and political philosophy has yet to fully engage with the concept of security, and this leaves much of contemporary ethical theory ill-equipped to engage with security's role in moral decision-making. An analysis of the concept of security should thus attempt to explain the grounds for the special value of security in a way that is compatible with the language and theory of analytic moral and political philosophy.

Second, since security is a contested concept, an analysis of the concept should be ecumenical towards many different conceptions of the good. A panoply of different referents and goods constitute accounts of security, instantiating a variety of value judgements on top of a common structure. Any characterisation of this underlying structure should thus be able to accommodate a wide range of referents and goods.

Third, a conceptual analysis of security should attempt to identify what makes security a distinctive consideration in moral decision-making. If two policies are being considered, the concept of security should help distinguish between courses of action in ways which are not already served by other concepts such as utility, freedom, equity or justice. A conceptual analysis of security which failed to identify what differentiated security from these other concepts—because it was either overly vague or expansive—would not improve our ability to discuss the trade-offs which could be made between security and these other important goals. This is not to say that maintaining security will be simple; it may, to the contrary, require many different means which would simultaneously serve other goals. Ensuring health security may require us to increase access to primary health care, simultaneously promoting health equity. It is a mistake, however, to consider the various means by which we ensure security as synonymous with the state of

3 This approach to the analysis of concepts, and the notion of "legitimate purposes", is borrowed from Haslanger (2005).

being secure itself. Thus, while the complexities of ensuring or providing security should not be forgotten, the state of being secure should be conceptualised as specifically as possible.

Fourth, conceptual analysis should not be disconnected from ordinary language. Whilst a project of defining "security" could be purely stipulative, conceptual analysis should engage with the competing meanings actually held by individuals in the world. A broad engagement with accounts of the meaning of "security"—not just with academic definitions but also with the ways in which the word appears to be used in ordinary language—is wanted.

A complete argument for these four qualities would be extensive and is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that I believe these purposes are intuitively appealing, *prima facie* plausible and ultimately defensible. My goal in this chapter is therefore to provide a conceptual analysis of security which has these qualities.

Two Concepts of Security

One of the most under-recognised aspects of "security" is that the term does not refer to a single concept, but that it is a polyseme which refers to both a state of being and a set of social or political practices.[4] This is best understood by considering the different senses of the word "secure", from which the noun "security" can be derived. In some instances, we use "secure" as an adjective—as in "X is secure from Y", or "Y is secure for X"—to describe a characteristic of X's circumstances. In other instances, we use the word as a verb—as in "X will secure Z from Y"—to describe an action or process undertaken by X.

These two senses of "secure" can both be used to animate the meaning of "security." Consider, for instance, how a focus on one or the other sense of "secure" changes the criteria by which we determine which infectious diseases are security issues. For theorists who focus on the adjective form of "secure", certain severe epidemics become security issues if they rapidly and drastically undermine the wellbeing of States, communities or individuals.[5] For theorists who focus on the verb form of "secure", however, infectious diseases are security issues if they are "securitized"—if they illicit a response which employs the use of emergency powers, militaries or other traditional instruments of the national security apparatus.[6] Many claims and counter-claims are thus made about what

4 See (Zedner, 2003: 155). Also Bubandt (2005: 279): "security is simultaneously a political means and a political ideal: both a model *for* and a model *of* the new political imagination that has taken centre-stage in the global risk society." Also McSweeney (1999: 13), who contends that security "has an active verbal form which seems to take it out of the realm of the abstruse, and a hard tangibility in its nominal form which promises something solid and measurable."

5 See, for instance, the analyses of Maclean (2008) and Petersen (2002).

6 See Kittelsen (2009) and Elbe (2006).

constitutes a security issue, with largely unsatisfying results which remain silent on the different meanings of "security" held by discussants.

I suggest that separating our analysis of security as a state of being from our analysis of security as a practice is a more productive avenue for identifying when we are secure, what we ultimately value about that, and how best we can safeguard it. In particular, the value of a particular way of being secure should not be conflated with the legitimacy of the practices traditionally used to obtain it. While it may be valuable to be protected from violence, the process of securing an individual from violence might infringe on a number of distinct ends such as the liberty, autonomy or wellbeing of the individual. Where we think of security as a single concept, it becomes difficult to interrogate the costs we are willing to bear in order to obtain the state of being secure.

Security as a Practice

Let us turn, for a moment, to the concept of security as a practice: might this be where philosophical engagement with accounts of security would prove most fruitful? In the minds of a large swathe of current security scholars, security politics is defined as a special kind of political practice. The most prominent example of this type of thinking is the theory of "securitisation" which is associated with a group of scholars known collectively as the Copenhagen School (Buzan, Wæver et al., 1998). For these scholars, security issues are socially constructed, and demarcated from normal political practice by the use of "emergency measures" (Buzan, Wæver et al., 1998: 25). Likewise, other broadly constructivist scholars, such as Walker (1997), Huysmans (2002) and McDonald (2008), conceive of security as a politics of "exception" which signifies the core values of an institution and their extreme prioritisation. For McDonald "security is still that most powerful of political categories—defining political priority, a community's identity and its core values" (McDonald, 2008: 580). Some critical theorists are particularly excited by the prospect of turning such a powerful force towards the realisation of an emancipatory political system (see Wyn Jones, 1999; Booth, 2007). Security for these scholars "has become the indicator of a specific problematique, a specific *field of practice*" (Wæver, 1995: 50).

Whilst these accounts might define security practices, it seems problematic to suggest that this is all that "security" might mean. Unfortunately, normatively-inclined Security Studies scholars are sceptical of work on security as a state of being. Seeking a definition of 'being secure' is seen by some as an illegitimate "universalising" move, designed to reify one particular (usually Western) view of human needs and hence should be viewed with suspicion (Newman, 2010: 84, 88). Two potential problems emerge, however, if we neglect the concept of security as a state of being. The first is that those outside of Security Studies tend not to use the word to refer to a set of political practices, but to a tangible political or social good. Ordinary use of the term seems to suggest a property, a state of affairs, a condition or state of being of individuals, the State or other objects. To say that

a particularly valuable artefact is secure in a museum vault is normally to say that it is safe from theft. To say that my job is secure is normally to say I'm not likely to lose it. To insist that security only refers to a special kind of political practice seems to ignore a commonly held set of meanings and potentially neglects important factual and normative claims.

The second problem is that the actual justifications for the use of security practices frequently include reference to the value of being secure. According to the Copenhagen School, issues become securitised when they are "staged as existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor who thereby generates endorsement of emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind" (Buzan, Wæver et al., 1998: 5). Implicit in this "staging" is a declarative claim that certain actual or imminent threats to a referent's current state of being warrant the use of security practices (emergency measures). These threats aren't always existential (see Williams, 2003), but actors typically do claim that the referent object's level of security (as a state of being) is what is threatened. While we neglect analysis of the concept of being secure we seem to lack an important tool through which we can critically evaluate these declarative claims.[7] These two problems seem to recommend, not that we abandon study of the politics of security practices, but that we reinvigorate a parallel discussion of security as a state of being.

Security as a State of Being

If being secure is an important goal of our moral and political decision-making, then it seems we need some account of what it consists in. How, then, have scholars thought previously about the concept of security as a state of being? Perhaps the most influential and widely cited contribution to the concept of security is contained in Barry Buzan's *People, States and Fear* (1983). Every discussion of the topic of security since has had to deal with it, in some way or another. Although he considers security to be an "essentially contested" concept, he does suggest that the general character of it is definable as "freedom from threat" (Buzan, 1983: 11). If the state of being secure, in general, involves freedom from threat, then the precise conditions of security will be dependent upon the type of entity which is secure or insecure (the referent). For the individual, Buzan considers that:

> An enormous array of threats, dangers and doubts loom over everyone, and although the better-off can distance themselves from some of these (starvation, preventable/curable disease, physical exposure, criminal violence, economic exploitation, and such like), they share others equally with the poor (incurable disease, natural disasters, nuclear war), and create some new ones for themselves

7 At the very least, we require a language for expressing these declarative claims, and it seems apt to use "security" in order to do so.

> because of their advantages (air crashes, kidnappings, diseases of excessive consumption, and so forth) (Buzan, 1983: 19).

Of course, precisely why these events are threatening to an individual's security is unclear. They provide an answer to the question "What *threatens* security?" rather than the question "What *is* security?". In analysing the meaning of security, we should be careful to distinguish between accounts of the concept of security (as a state of being) and accounts of the most important threats to that security. Indeed, previous attempts to clarify the definition of security have usually been premised on the author's desire to include or exclude particular issues on the security agenda.[8] There have, however, been some attempts to provide formal definitions of security (as a state of being) for particular referents. Consider the following accounts:

1. [N]ational security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, [and] in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked (Wolfers, 1962: 150).
2. [A] threat to national security is an action or sequence of events that (1) threatens drastically and over a relatively brief span of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state, or (2) threatens to significantly narrow the range of policy choices available to the government of a state or to private, nongovernmental entities (persons, groups, corporations) within the state (Ullman, 1983: 133).
3. Human security means that people can exercise…choices safely and freely—and that they can be relatively confident that the opportunities they have today are not totally lost tomorrow (United Nations Development Program, 1994: 23).
4. [S]ecurity…comprises protection against harm to one's basic mode of life and economic values, as well as reasonable protection against fear and terror, and the presence of a positive assurance that these values will continue to be maintained into the future (Waldron, 2006: 320).
5. Human security is an underlying condition for sustainable human development…(and is measured by) a sustainable sense of home; constructive social or family support; and an acceptance of the past and a positive grasp of the future (Leaning and Arie, 2000: 38).
6. Security is the condition of being and feeling safe…Understanding security begins in conditions of insecurity, which equates with living a determined life (for individuals and groups); it is a category mistake to see security as synonymous with survival (Booth, 2007: 110).

8 See Ullman (1983), who was concerned with the destruction caused by natural disasters and the possibility of including them on the foreign policy agenda, and Buzan (1983), who sought to expand the agenda of State security to include environmental, economic and social issues in addition to military and political threats.

These and other definitions of security as a state of being provide us with the raw material to interrogate the structure of the concept. I argue that at the heart of the concept of security, as it has been defined since the middle of the 20th Century, there are a number of common features. By investigating these features, we might begin to differentiate between those parts of the concept of security which are generally agreed upon and those parts which are contested.

The Structure of the Concept of Security

Upon examining various accounts of security, three different questions seem to be essential to defining their content. First, which entity can be secure (or not)? Second, what does the security of that entity consist in? Finally, is that security realised according to an objective or a subjective standard? In what follows, I interrogate each of these questions in the hope of identifying the structure of the concept of security.

If there is a central claim to this chapter, it is that the concept of security (as a state of being) has a relatively simple structure which is shared by a great many of the different definitions. In particular, almost all accounts of security (as a state of being) make a claim that what it is for some entity to be secure is to hold a set of conditions or goods *reliably*. At the heart of this structure, its common core, is a shared notion of reliability. Modern accounts of security (as a state of being) are then specified around this notion by identifying a referent and a set of conditions which the referent must reliably hold. I investigate each of these aspects in turn below, before giving some content to the notion of reliability and the subjective and objective realisation of security.

Security of What? The Referents of Security

The first question which an account of security must address is which entity's security the account is describing. The choice of referent object—the X in the sentence "X is secure"—establishes the focus of the account and has radical implications for the role of security within our moral theorising. The securitization of infectious disease emergencies will, for instance, have radically different moral consequences depending on whether the security practices employed are intended to secure the state or its citizens. To investigate the role of referents within accounts of security, I outline four important features.

First, there appear to be few constraints on the kinds of objects which may play the role of referent within an account of security, even though the set of referents traditionally identified is relatively small. The standard referent objects of scholarly definitions of security are States, human individuals or, more rarely, societies and communities. The common feature of these traditional referents is that they are constituted by human beings, and it is tempting to think that the only permissible referents will be entities which are similarly constituted. When

we consider the basic structure of the concept of security, however, there appears to be nothing which limits the choice of referent to these entities alone. The term "referent object", in its original linguistic usage, merely denotes the objects to which particular sentences refer. When imported into the context of conceptions of security, sentences such as "X is secure" seem to admit all syntactically valid noun-phrases as referents (X). Indeed, the security of everyday objects (houses, safes, antiques), cultural phenomena (languages, events), supra-agential entities (communities, societies, "the globe"), and even abstract objects (the economy, democracy, "our love") is commonly invoked in everyday English. If we think there is a shared structure to the concept of security which is applicable across these various instances, then syntactic validity might be the sole constraint on which objects may occupy the role of referent object within an account of security.

Second, accounts of the security of different referents need not necessarily conflict with one another. It seem perfectly consistent to hold an account of security for an individual, as well as a parallel account of security for the State, as long as neither account claims to define "security" all things considered. In this sense, security (as a state of being) may not be as contested a concept as Buzan and others claim. Rather, we might be best served by recognising that accounts of security *in particular instances* are distinct and compatible concepts.

Third, conceptual compatibility notwithstanding, the choice of referent isn't just a claim about conceptual content but is also a claim about the value of the object. Typically, when a referent of security is identified, the definition implies that it matters whether or not the referent is secure. For example, Ullman's (1983) definition of security should be read not just as an analytic definition of what security entails, but rather an implicit appeal to the importance of the State. Likewise, Booth's (2007) account of emancipatory security appeals to the primacy of emancipatory communities, and conceptions of human security to the importance of individual human beings. Thus, the basic structure of the concept of security becomes animated by appeals to broader frameworks of value.[9] In any critique of an account of security, it is therefore necessary to identify why referents (particularly traditional referents such as the State) are seen as valuable. Through the identification of those referents which agents believe should be secured, and interrogation of standard justifications for the value of their security, we might be able to develop a picture of which referents *should* be secured.

Fourth, the referent need not be the beneficiary of its own security. It has been noted before that security is always for someone (Walker, 1997: 69) and which referents are secured reflects whose interests are held to be most important. Thus, it has been argued that the traditional focus on the state as the referent of security implies that security is *for* the interests of the state and not the interests of its citizens (United Nations Development Program, 1994). This insight has led

9 Booth (2007: 161) acknowledges as much: "When people speak about security, or carry out practices in the name of security, their words and actions are embedded in their deepest conceptions of the nature of world politics (even if they are not articulated)."

some to suggest that the "ultimate referent" or "subject" of security should be the individual (Buzan, 1983: 18; McSweeney, 1999; Booth, 2007: 225) and, in fewer cases, that the concept of security must have the individual as its referent (United Nations Development Program, 1994). Recognising, however, that security is valuable only in so far as it benefits individuals does not entail that individuals must be the objects which are secure. We might, for instance, think that the State is what should be secure because its security is valuable for individuals (even if those individuals are not the referents of security). Distinguishing between the referent of an account of security and the beneficiary of that referent's security is important if we are to integrate the concept with moral and political theorising.

What does Being Secure Entail?

Once an account of being secure fixes upon a referent object, it must still identify the conditions that must obtain if the object is to be secure. Is it that its existence is protected (Buzan, Wæver et al., 1998)? That its basic needs are provided now and into the future (McSweeney, 1999: 92)? That it isn't threatened by violence from other agents (Locke, 1690 [1924]: 120)? Whilst what it means for any particular referent to be secure varies widely, there is a basic structure to almost all accounts. In particular, definitions of security (as a state of being) detail a set of conditions which a referent must satisfy in order to be secure; and for most accounts, those conditions can be cashed out in terms of the referent holding a particular set of goods. Thus, an account of security for an individual human being might include physical safety, access to adequate food and shelter, and freedom to participate in the life of the community without fear of harassment or censure. On some accounts (Ogata and Sen, 2003), good health is considered an integral part of the security of individuals, whilst in others it is seen as an enabling feature which allows states to realise aspects of their security. The specification of a set of goods forms part of the basic structure of accounts of a referent's security, but there are at least two additional features of this structure.

First, many definitions imply that the set of goods they specify is *necessary* for the referent to fulfil the role of an object of that type. Thus an account of human security might suggest that particular goods (food, safety, water) are necessary conditions to function as a human being, and accounts of national security might suggest conditions (territorial integrity, political independence) which are necessary to function as a sovereign state. As McSweeney (1999: 92) notes:

> [S]ecurity is a choice we make, which is contingent upon a moral judgement about human *needs*, not just human fears; it is not simply an intellectual discovery based on objective observation of facts.

This clarifies our earlier observation that accounts of security instantiate existing moral and political commitments. The notion that security relates to the acquisition

or maintenance of necessary goods is an important way in which the security of a referent is distinguished from other components of that referent's wellbeing.

Second, definitions of security imply that the goods they specify must be *reliable* for the referent. Accounts of security identify sets of goods that a referent must hold, but it is not that the referent must hold those goods (or satisfy the conditions) in any way, they must be held in a particular way. An individual is secure not merely because she is free from violence today, but because there is a very high likelihood that she will be free from violence tomorrow, the next day and so on. To be specific, when we think of whether or not someone is secure we think about whether or not they hold the individual goods (or whether or not the relevant conditions are satisfied) *reliably*. Indeed, whilst Waldron (2006: 318) forwards his own full account of security as a state of being, he recognises that the word "security" also has an "adjectival" meaning—wherein it is understood as "a mode of enjoying other goods" rather than as a good in and of itself. Upon a more thorough examination of the concept of security, I believe we will find that this is what distinguishes security as a specific, and perhaps especially valuable, moral concept.

Reliability

If reliability is at the heart of the concept of security, perhaps we should attempt to give it some content. An exact formulation of what it means for a good to be reliable cannot be completed here. Nonetheless, several points about reliability are worth briefly mentioning--namely that it comes in degrees, is future-focused, and is concerned with possible, as well as actual, states of affairs. I provide a sketch of each of these, and the potential tensions they raise, below.

First, reliability likely comes in degrees, rather than as a binary state. The idea that security is a binary state seems to be recommended by the "secure/insecure" dichotomy, but upon reflection it seems obvious that security must come in degrees. Total security seems impossible, we cannot be secure against all possibilities and all threats, and conceptualising reliability as a binary state seems to present similar worries. Neither, as we shall see below, does reliability appear to be easily quantifiable. Perhaps the best we can hope for is an ordinal ranking of more or less reliable goods. On this account, to say that something "is reliable" is shorthand for a relatively high level of reliability, and "unreliability" a relatively low level of reliability.

Second, reliability seems to involve the future. We do not think that something is reliable in the present if we can foresee its destruction in the near future. In general, we might think that the farther into the future a referent holds (or is likely to hold) a good, the more reliable that good is for the referent. Of special concern is ensuring that even if we are temporarily deprived of a good we will be able to swiftly regain it. In this sense, preventing the irreversible loss of a good seems to be an important part of making that good reliable.

Finally, the reliability of a good seems to be concerned, not just with what actually occurs, but also with what could possibly occur. We might be tempted to think that the reliability of a good is dependent on what will, in fact, occur. Whilst initially plausible, this characterisation would suggest that a good is reliable merely if the referent holds that good in the future; and even if, as a matter of fact, it was highly unlikely to have turned out that way. It seems wrong to say that a good was reliable if the referent was extremely lucky to have held it. This leads me to suggest that a good's reliability is dependent on considering what could possibly occur (including what will occur). The exact relationship between reliability and future possibilities is complex, but there are at least two plausible characterisations. On the one hand, a good's reliability might be correlated to what is *likely* to occur. This appears to capture the intuition that the more reliable a good, the more insensitive to luck that good will be. On the other hand, a good's reliability might be correlated to how *robust* it is across the different ways in which the future might turn out. This captures the intuition that the more reliable a good, the more things will have to change before that good is no longer held by the referent. Upon further examination, both these characterisations might amount to the same thing: however, it is by no means clear that they will (see discussion in Pettit, 2007). I leave the resolution of this question to another time, except to note that this is the area where the distinctive "common core" of security is likely to emerge.

In sum then, the reliability of a good appears to capture the indeterminacy of that good in the future. An extended conceptualisation of reliability is required to define its boundaries, and to establish how it is related to concepts such as likelihood and robustness. I think, however, that we have good reason to suppose that some notion of reliability, and in particular the reliability of necessary goods, forms part of the underlying structure of many accounts of security.

Subjective and Objective Security

Related to the notion of reliability is the tension between the objective and the subjective realisation of security. Traditionally, a referent's security is characterised as an objective state of affairs, something which does not hinge upon the referent's state of mind (see Ullman, 1983). The word "security", however, has its etymological roots in the Latin "*securitas*"—which primarily denotes a kind of psychological quietude (Arends, 2008: 263). It is unsurprising, therefore, that some contemporary accounts of security (as a state of being) require that the referent *feels* secure in addition to being objectively secure (see Wolfers, 1962: 150; Booth, 2007: 110). Exactly what such a feeling of security entails is difficult to establish, but in general it seems to be associated with freedom from fear:

> [F]ear is not just a response to something called insecurity; it is partly constitutive of insecurity. A given degree of fear may not be a rational response to a given probability of death or injury, but we must still treat the fear as significant for

> security in its own right. Fear itself is something to be dreaded inasmuch as it can have a psychologically debilitating effect (Waldron, 2006: 315).

Whilst absence of fear seems to be an intuitively plausible part of being secure, we might worry that making it *constitutive* of being secure obscures some important distinctions. To illustrate, let us suppose an account of security which suggests that an individual is more or less secure depending on how reliably that individual is protected from life-threatening infectious diseases.[10] In determining the degree to which an individual is secure, so defined, there appear to be at least three relevant distinctions, between: (1) how secure the individual is objectively, (2) how secure the individual believes themselves to be, and (3) how secure the individual would be justified in believing themselves to be.

First, what constitutes an individual's *objective* security—the degree to which an individual is "actually" or "really" secure—should be relatively straightforward to grasp. On our imagined account of security, an individual's objective security is simply the reliability of their protection from deadly infectious disease. Objective security, in this sense, need not correlate with any beliefs an individual, or others, might have about their security—it is simply the fact of the matter. Neither must the objective security of an individual be knowable—even the best evidence and the most judicious science might be unable to tell, with any precision, the likelihood of a specific individual contracting an infectious disease. In this sense we can think of an individual's objective security as what God might know about the reliability of that individual's protection from infectious disease.[11]

Second, there are those beliefs about an individual's security which people *actually* hold. It should be obvious that these can be radically different to an individual's objective degree of security. A delusionally confident individual could believe that she is safe from an infectious disease, when in fact she is seriously imperilled, whilst a paranoid obsessive compulsive could believe that he is in mortal danger, even though there is very little risk. Neither are beliefs about security necessarily rational or sensitive to evidence: no amount of evidence might change the obsessive compulsive's mind. Nonetheless, it should be clear that beliefs about security, regardless of whether they are delusional, can have a profound effect on our quality of life. Whilst beliefs can thus be very unhelpful to those who hold them, having some language to describe them should be an important part of our conceptual toolkit.

Finally, there are those beliefs about an individual's security which an agent would be *justified* in holding. Identifying the precise criteria for a justified belief occupies an entire branch of philosophy but, in general, they must be rational,

10 The following distinctions should be generalizable across a variety of referents and goods, even those goods which might be inherently psychological.

11 Of course, God, who is normally characterised as truly omnipotent, would also know what would, in fact, occur – but recall that reliability is dependent on what could possibly occur, as well as what does actually occur.

sensitive to evidence, and ideally track the objective fact of the matter.[12] Indeed, because the objective security of a referent is frequently unknowable, our justified beliefs act as proxies for objective security. In this sense, to hold a justified belief, an individual or organisation needs to be epistemically diligent—i.e. they must seek out the *best* available evidence rather than accept the immediately available evidence.[13] On our imagined account of security, the best available evidence will be the latest epidemiological and microbiological research. A full understanding of such research might be out of the grasp of most individuals, but institutions charged with formulating policy (i.e. governments, health organisations) should aspire to hold fully justified beliefs. Whilst there might be some disagreement about the epistemic diligence we can require of individuals and organisations, it is apparent that we should think of justified beliefs as a distinct way in which security is realised.

All of these ways in which security may be realised appear to be important concepts to have within our toolkit. To begin with, it seems much more valuable to live in a world where individuals are (objectively) secure from infectious diseases than in a world were there is the constant threat of severe outbreaks (even if we don't know that we are objectively secure). Furthermore, a community's actual beliefs about its own security, and the impact that these beliefs have on the behaviour of groups, seems to play a major role in the control of infectious disease emergencies. Likewise, the beliefs about security which we would be justified in holding appear to be especially important for making rational changes to, for instance, policies on social distancing.

Whilst not conclusive evidence, I believe that the distinct importance of realising security in each way suggests that we should reject attempts to define a unified sense of what "being secure" entails. In contrast, I believe that we should treat each of these ways of realising security as distinct concepts—no combination of which fully captures what it means for a referent to be secure. In this sense, an individual might be objectively secure to some degree, believe themselves to be secure to a different degree and might be justified in believing themselves to have a different degree of security again. There is no unified sense in which such an individual is secure or insecure—only these different ways in which their security is realisable.

Of course, the *value* of being secure in these ways might be dependent on one another. It is appealing to think that the full value of being secure is realised only when a referent is both objectively secure and their beliefs about their own security are justified. If an individual feels insecure when they are, in actual fact, quite secure, then that individual will not be able to fully enjoy his objective security. In this sense, I can endorse Waldron's (2006: 315) claim seems that an

12 The literature on justified beliefs is vast. The three criteria I give here are similar to those of Lewis (1980).

13 This search for the best evidence is tempered by weighing up the costs of seeking more information.

absence of fear is sufficiently important to a person's wellbeing that we should take that fear seriously.

On the other hand, whilst our internal psychology plays a major part in whether we "feel safe", it does not create the conditions for our objective security and a sense of security will be foolhardy given grave objective insecurity. Indeed, the degree of congruence between our actual beliefs and objective security seems to be an important part of assessing whether those beliefs are valuable to begin with. In a similar vein, Giddens (1991) develops the concept of "ontological security" as a way of explaining our drive to have a *sense* of reliability over at least some important goods. Giddens suggests that actors need a sense of constancy within their social and material world, and consequently their identity, in order to act with confidence (Giddens, 1991: 36). The development of "routinized relationships" with places (home, town, workplace) and people (such as friends, family, colleagues) provide the security of knowing that one's set of choices is not infinite and that the "possible events which could threaten the bodily or psychological integrity of the agent" are limited (Giddens, 1991: 40). There is a recognition, however, that not all certainties are productive and that some routinized relationships can ultimately be self-defeating or destructive (Mitzen, 2006: 350). This is especially true if there is a large incongruence between the actual reliability of a good and an individual's beliefs about the reliability of the good. Ultimately, it seems clear that both objective security and beliefs about security should be recognised as distinct and important ways in which security is realised; and that there should be a deeper interrogation by moral philosophers into the way that these interact to produce valuable states of affairs.

Conclusion

Security is a politically powerful concept with a wide array of different meanings. This chapter has undertaken a conceptual analysis of security with the aim of integrating the concept with moral and political theorising. I began by distinguishing between the use of the word "security" to refer to a state of being and a set of political practices. I then sought to clarify the structure of accounts of security (as a state of being) by identifying three major features: (1) the referent object, (2) the conditions that must be reliable for a referent to be secure, and (3) the subjective and objective realisation of those conditions. Importantly, I argued that security is not itself a standalone good but that each account is constituted by reference to other goods. Moreover, by tentatively arguing that a notion of reliability could be the common core of accounts of security, this chapter has suggested a possible ground for the especially valuable nature of security. This chapter is, however, only a foundation from which much broader philosophical investigations should take place. Indeed, without a thorough engagement by moral and political philosophy with the concept of security (as a state of being), and an understanding of the place of security within broader conceptions of the good, we

will be unable to properly evaluate the justifiability of many practices which are performed in the name of security. Ultimately, moral and political philosophers need to engage more fully with discussions about what it means to be secure, what is valuable about being secure, and what processes or practices we should adopt in order to obtain security.

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