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Review of Security and Everyday Life edited by Vida Bajc and Willem de Lint

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Book Review
Security and Everyday Life
Edited By
Vida Bajc and Willem de Lint

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Routledge, 312 pp.

Security and Everyday Life describes evolutionary government worldviews about why and how security data is gathered, and how information is shared in the quest to track ‘suspicious human activities and behavior’, or those deemed hostile and contradictory to perceptions of safety in everyday life. Bajc and de Lint, as well as their contributors show that the "security apparatus and the modern states that use it advance problematic visions of social situations and phenomena." (8) They argue that the current security apparatus is narrow and perhaps paradoxical for achieving “security” deemed the “organizing principle of everyday life.”(4) The authors furthermore present masterful scholarship that breaks through a clutter of security political discourse and explains how social order/disorder and the modern state stakeholders shape public action and reaction. The authors also deconstruct critical and complex components that shape the events, forces and issues surrounding public debates about security, and the underpinning ideas that drive assumptions about social order and disorder. The main thrust of their argument, conceptually and operationally, is a concept called security meta-framing, which describes how nations make “their decision as to which situations and phenomena constitute a threat to security, legitimized by their claim to expert knowledge not only about what is safe and what is dangerous but also which action should constitute a response to their classification of threats." (2) Their paradigm compels the reader to consider the functionality of security rationale and methodical public organized responses.

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The book leaves no doubt that human behavior tracking is a fundamental reality for day-to-day security interaction and transaction. The security tracking apparatus rely on countless real-time technologies and personnel data analysis, which may create unreliable profiling and a false sense of predictability. In addition, the authors point out that these security notions are rooted in vast historical as well as cultural assumptions regarding appropriate public human behavior. Vast security apparatus, thought to be signs of pre-emptive success, are used by nation-states to assure the public that they are secure. In the mean time, the public sacrifices and abdicates privacy, rights and freedoms in lieu of sovereign protection. While many in the public may be aware that the nation state cannot control or predict the next disruption or threat to security, some citizens accept a public servant assistant role to aid and support the nation state. The writers contend that mass media reinforce some public participation and roles to achieve “security.”

Each section reflects upon the idea that presently “security {sic} is the organizing principle of everyday life.” (4) For example, *Public Spaces and Collective Activities* is a chronological account and a reflection about the everyday social, political, and economic impacts of rationalized security beliefs and value systems. Beginning with the airport analogy, the most public space for security in modern times, the reader is presented with sovereign reasons that legitimize extensive governance through surveillance procedures. These unyielding security apparatus then follow, map and maintain records that generate categories for security. Moreover, *Struggle and Resistance* discusses and describes the modern state constructs, sovereign practices reflective of historical events and ongoing, present-day conflicts in Israel and the role of transnational nation states. *Law, Citizenship, and the State* offers a rare review of exceptions which pose significant challenge to security meta framing and notes infinite contexts that modern states prepare, inform and engage the global public and its representative nations, agencies/organizations about definitive acts, meanings and messages driving “order and insecurity, safety and chaos.”(18) For those familiar and unfamiliar with international stories of security and the tragedy associated with organized government security apparatus, *Global Agendas, Local Transformations* presents Europe’s leadership role against the

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backdrop and increasing presence of China and Latin American countries on the world stage. The authors argue that as newly empowered world members emerge, the security institution and debate will change. Other nation states challenge the conceptual relevancy of security framing as these new members bring unique and distinct fears and uncertainties. In addition, they identify key national and global examples of territorial spaces (areas in the world where security presents unique challenges) where conflict and unrest may occur because of unwise economic, political development practices. Moreover, they detail the security apparatus and means of surveillance as well as the multiple understanding that drive public expectation that "something must be done to control forces of chaos." Still, the means to achieve security in global spaces is shaped by Western worldviews due to sufficient and sophisticated political, economic and military power, and their ability to negotiate and manage some adversarial relationships.

Security and Everyday Life poignantly describes how modern nation states determine, negotiate and justify wholesale categorizations/notions of suspicious activities, hostile acts and contradictory behaviors, while also utilizing allied, credentialed professionals whose knowledge may be subjective, speculative and circumspect in many cases. These actions, they argue, create linear categories, subcategories, exclusionary classifications, taxonomies and problematic generalizations that sustain systemic domains for insecurity.

In conclusion, the author's demonstrate that there are far too many binary and paradoxical inconsistencies prevalent in current discourse and deliberation about national and international security. Their notions about how and why we develop security join the growing cacophony calling for rational economic and development strategies to prevent insecurity approaches to security from becoming the norm. They present distinctive, well-reasoned perspectives of the entire security phenomena; from the historic and personal perspective, to the unfolding of the sovereign territorial problems that will continue to plague modern states grappling with appropriate practical approaches to maintain peace, order and protection. Policy makers, security professionals and modern state officials should become familiar with this work. It may serve critical basis for future discourses

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about negotiating public spaces, territory, the modern state and security.

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