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**The Anthropology of Security: Perspectives from the Frontline of Policing, Counter-terrorism and Border Control**, by Mark Maguire, Catarina Frois and Nils Zurawski, London, Pluto Press, 2014, 224 pp., £22.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-74-533457-8.

Security and defence agencies in ‘the West’ are interested in anthropology. This has been the case in the United States (US) since the early days of the Cold War, and is increasingly becoming so in the United Kingdom (UK). The commitment of the UK agencies to engaging with anthropology has been evident since at least the late 1990s: from Mils Hills’ recruitment to the Ministry of Defence research agency in 1998 to the very recent advertisement for an anthropologist to join the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory. Anthropologists are also considered suitable for recruitment to the UK Security Service (MI5) Behavioural Science Unit, which supports the operational activities of the service and undertakes longer term ‘in-house’ research on a range of issues relating to national security matters. A top secret document released by the US whistleblower Edward Snowden also revealed that the UK’s signals intelligence agency, Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), runs a ‘Human Science Operations Cell’; a unit that employs an array of social scientists, including anthropologists and sociologists.<sup>1</sup> For those of us who perhaps presumed that cyber agencies such as GCHQ were inhabited by techno-geeks and computer boffins, the suggestion of a commitment to ethnography was one of the more surprising of Snowden’s revelations. *The Anthropology of Security* – a collection of essays edited by Mark Maguire, Catarina Frois and Nils Zurawski – begins to reciprocate this interest. The editors of *The Anthropology of Security* are clear from the outset of this volume: “Security demands anthropological attention.” (p.1).

*The Anthropology of Security* opens with a valuable account of the disciplinary development of the anthropological perspective on this subject matter. Maguire et al. contend that since emerging as an ‘inchoate cluster’ of studies in the latter stages of the Cold War there has been a noticeable, if tentative, turn in the anthropological study of security in the period since (p.8). This edited volume seeks to further consolidate, and galvanise, the growing number of critical anthropological studies of security, and in doing so de-familiarise both security and insecurity by viewing these subjects from multiple perspectives. The commitment to de-familiarisation is assisted in *The Anthropology of Security* by the diversity of the contributions; evidenced in the range of subjects, methodologies, and levels of analysis collated in the volume. It is notable, however, that there is a focus on European settings, reflecting the genesis of the volume (emerging from a 2012 workshop in Ireland on ‘Securing Europe’). Future anthropological studies of (in)security may seek to further diversify the geographies in question, including further work at the ‘periphery’.

Beyond a (relatively) narrow set of geographical settings, the editors recognise that the eight substantive chapters in this volume do cover many domains. The topics under discussion – from the Roma crisis in France in 2010 to the securitisation of migration in a Greek island – can seem disparate and distinct. Indeed, each deep ethnographic description offers a unique perspective on its central subject matter. In a volume such as *The Anthropology of Security*, however, there is a requirement for a central theme to bring a consistency to the contributions. Fortunately, the reader does not have to work hard to find common ground between the chapters. Each author, in their own way, explores how security is *experienced* in contemporary societies. Didier Fassin’s exploration of the policing of the urban poor in Paris region is both powerful and important in this regard. For Fassin it was the routine interactions between law enforcement and residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods that were of interest (p.111), and the experiences of security described by Fassin resonate well beyond Paris region. His description of the disproportionate impact of stop and search – as a form of ‘proactivity’ – will be familiar to observers of policing practices in other cities; from New York and Los Angeles to London and Glasgow.

Other chapters in *The Anthropology of Security*, such as Mark Maguire’s contribution on counter-terrorism measures in European airports, break fresh ground for ethnographic enquiry. As an exploration of counter-terrorism Maguire’s work is useful in itself. Obtaining research access to counter-terrorism practitioners and their working lives can be difficult, due to the dual concerns of secrecy and danger that (self-)define such fields. Maguire navigated these challenges by discussing the subject matter ‘in the abstract’, following a ‘brief period’ of access to classroom-based counter-terrorism training and live field deployments in the UK, augmented by desk based research and practitioner interviews (p.124). Maguire goes on to describe the importance of ‘skilled vision’ to the

counter-terrorism practitioner engaged in behavioural detection at airports; a conceptual construct that seems in some ways analogous to Bourdieu's *habitus*, or 'feel for the game'. This exists in tension with 'new techno-scientific developments' shaping counter-terrorism measures at airports (p.134); perhaps invoking Bourdieu's notion of change in the *field*. Maguire's work is clearly important, but, crucially, it also opens new research possibilities for critical anthropological research on security in airports. A germane topic for anthropological investigation, for example, would be on the experiences of vulnerable persons who pass through these liminal spaces and are targeted for recruitment as covert informants by police, security and intelligence agencies. Following Maguire's work, and through the contributions of each chapter in this volume, the anthropology of security is now well-placed to develop such insights in the future.

Following some concluding remarks by the editors *The Anthropology of Security* concluded with the words of an academic from a discipline beyond anthropology. Didier Bigo, maître de conférences in International Relations (IR), provided an afterword that assessed the conditions for the development of a common research agenda between scholars approaching the topic of security from different disciplinary backgrounds (p.189). This was a useful step, particularly given the contrasting approaches to security from anthropology and IR. Bigo memorably described the type of anthropology that relies on ethnographic methods as 'the most adversarial episteme' to IR (p.192). He continued, however, to look for common ground between a critical anthropology of security and international political sociology, the latter of which is critical of the equation of 'security' with 'survival' in much mainstream IR. Ultimately, the aim of *The Anthropology of Security* is to open space for future projects (p.10). In this regard, the volume is an unqualified success. The future (inter)disciplinary development that will undoubtedly follow *The Anthropology of Security* is likely to produce valuable and enlightening research.

## References

Greenwald, G., 2014. *No place to hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA and the surveillance state*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

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<sup>i</sup> A discussion of the role of GCHQ's Human Science Operations Cell can be found in Glenn Greenwald's 2014 account of the Snowden revelations *No Place to hide* (see especially pages 193-195). A copy of the original document leaked by Snowden can be accessed at <http://www.cryptome.org/2014/02/gchq-psychology.pdf>.