



Book Review

Mattelart, Armand. 2007. *La globalisation de la surveillance. Aux origines de l'ordre sécuritaire*. Paris: La Découverte.

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Armand Mattelart's new book, *La globalisation de la surveillance*, describes how surveillance in contemporary society is intimately linked to the obligation to provide security to its citizens, enabling the development of neo-liberal policies and ensuring the stability of a certain vision of democracy. Mattelart refers to this as a "society of security," which has its origins in the disciplinary techniques developed in Europe in the eighteenth century. The book provides a genealogy of surveillance from the beginning of the colonial security order to the expansion of surveillance and control in disciplinary societies. It also details the current state of affairs, now dominated by the "evangelical" spread of security after 9/11 in all its political, social and economic forms. This serves to highlight how security and economic policies established over the course of two centuries have come to be seen as the only feasible way to defend western nations.

Mattelart argues that European nation states and the security order emerged together in response to obligations to preserve life, which Foucault calls biopower. Through the development of security technologies – such as anthropometric identification, judicial photography and physiognomic types – new ways to collect, classify, and manipulate particular people were made possible. Since these initial developments, surveillance mechanisms have been positioned as indispensable in reducing risks and protecting the social order. However, because criminals, political adversaries and terrorists have each emerged at various historical moments as prime threats to security, it is also clear that the political climate plays a significant role in framing how security risks are understood.

During the nineteenth century in Europe, new mechanisms of control, administration and surveillance allowed for the visualization of national populations. In terms of identifying criminals as different kinds of people, Lombroso's work on physiognomic traits was significant. At the same time, these processes were accompanied by a punitive judicial system, which collected personally identifying information such as fingerprints and physiological types to improve surveillance capacities. In practice, these tactics were seamlessly incorporated into the surveillance and security machine to serve political ends in distinguishing between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' people.

However, the escalation of military interventions during the twentieth century ultimately enabled the consolidation of other security deployments, and strengthened the bureaucratic secret service and techniques of mass media propaganda. During the Cold War, surveillance and security dispositifs shifted the scale of threat from the national to international level. In concert with this transition, the discourse of "national security" took a more prominent role as concern over more localized crime was gradually displaced by anxieties over international communism. Mattelart argues that for modern societies this

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functioned as a dispositif that articulates exception, exclusion, control and surveillance, as well as acting as a force of modernization in Latin American, Asian and African societies. In the United States in particular, national security was defined by an emphasis on prevention through military intervention, which closely followed the European colonial tradition of accentuating the administration of risks, historically represented in the figure of the “foreigner.”

Hence, the text argues that colonialism played an important role in organizing surveillance and security dispositifs to the present. However, rather than suggesting a direct connection between contemporary surveillance and European colonialism, Mattelart argues that new security techniques were developed by the United States during the Cold War (particularly in Latin America). Under the banner of “national security,” the United States developed practices of espionage, torture, psychological warfare, border control, management of the masses, while also strengthening the police, military technology and intelligence services, and drafting legislation creating security policies and international treaties. For Mattelart, Latin America and parts of South East Asia served as laboratories for the articulation of surveillance technologies and social security, especially in “combating” guerillas and the war on drugs. The results of such experiments were crucial to the development of efficient national security institutionalization, which started in the United States and then Europe, eventually spreading to countries around the globe.

During the last several decades, the “society of security” has been further strengthened by developments in surveillance technology and computer systems, which allow for the administration of large databases of information on national and international populations, or on specific transitory groups such as migrants and tourists. Here Mattelart argues that Foucault’s concept of biopolitics explains the “techno-security paradigm” of contemporary societies as a response to population threats, which justify control over individual lives through social, biological and racial tactics. Clearly 9/11 has created new lines of articulation and application of surveillance and security technologies. In this sense, experiences gathered during the Cold War serve as a tool box for the United States and European community to draw from in facing new threats, which range from terrorism, organized crime, south to north immigration, and risks inherent in a global market. Taken together, these problems appear to recycle discourses of national security, modernization and theories of development about countries in the global south.