

## BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

**Armand Mattelart**, *La globalisation de la surveillance. Aux origines de l'ordre sécuritaire*, Paris: La Découverte, 2008, 266 p. (978-2-7071-5292-3)

**A**rmand Matteredart's books, throughout the past 40 years, have one overarching theme: a critique of the incessant attacks against the principles of democratic societies and liberal norms. Deciphering Disney's globally promoted Donald Duck as an effective ideological spearhead of the American hegemonic order in a book jointly written with Ariel Dorfman (*Para leer al pato Donald: Comunicación de masa y colonialismo*, Buenos Aires, Siglo veintiuno argentina editors, 1972) turned him into one of the leading figures in the Latin American debate at the time. The military dictatorships dominating Latin America in the seventies pushed him and other bright scholars into exile in France, where they became internationally renowned analysts of the mutations of the global hegemonic order.

His recent book *Globalisation of Surveillance* is a substantial contribution to the debate about the "global war against terrorism" and its devastating effects on the balance between the state and individual liberty. It sets itself apart from the increasingly redundant flow of critical publications, firstly by meticulously tracing the ideological roots of the diverse political discourses culminating in Ludendorff's "total war" and Carl Schmitt's "exceptionalism." They are laid out in the first section entitled "Disciplining/guiding." This section also covers the early debates, in the emerging field of criminology, about the psychology of masses, on propaganda and on technocratic modernization.

The second section "Maintaining hegemony/pacifying" records extralegal hegemonic practices during the Cold War sustained by the prevailing dogmatic "religion of national security." It offers a concise record of the stunning growth of globally operating military and intelligence agencies of the United States and their open, as well as clandestine interventions following World War I. Military dictatorships, Brazil being a case in point, designed their own hybrid national security doctrine which tasked the armed forces to act as the lead agent of modernization. The role of French expertise in counterinsurgency, obtained in colonial warfare during the formation of the American interventionist doctrine, and the international spread of torture are frightening details of the

hegemonic politics at the time. Mattelart also investigates the profound American influence through training programs for military and police forces in more than 100 countries, which became often instrumental in managing coups d'états in the interests of the United States.

The final section of the book, entitled "Securitizing/creating insecurity," identifies the sudden end of the post-WW II growth model, in the wake of the oil price shock in 1973, as the beginning of crisis, exception, security as the defining amalgam of politics in advanced industrial countries. Violent attacks of small groups presented in the mass media as terrorist acts profoundly changed the internal order. September 2001 dramatically changed the scale, but to a lesser extent the nature of trends eventually moving towards the "garrison state." Matellart shows that securitization creates insecurity, which in turn speeds the expansion of securitization into all spheres of life. This blends with the promises of technology ever more capable of commodifying security and increasingly making techno-apartheid a major characteristic of modern societies.

Since terrorism is perceived as a global threat, securitization becomes a contagious process transcending national borders and leading to more and more powerful international agencies with a security mandate. In this process the administrative data of the individual citizen loses its protection and is being freely interconnected as the widespread inclination to prioritize securitization over individual rights prevails.

The last chapter comprehensively explores the traceability of bodies and commodities in all spheres of life on the basis of rapidly advancing technological devices. Mattelart is concerned that all commercial and public snoopers will eventually converge. Finally in a short epilogue he identifies various manifestations of resistance and suggests that the premises of the current order must be challenged in order to overcome the political paralysis incited by the constant reproduction of fear.

This book merits many readers, particularly the current generation of students who tend to believe that they witness an extraordinary time. But as Mattelart convincingly argues, similar political configurations can be identified throughout the 20th century. Understanding our current social order dominated by constantly expanding securitization activities in historical perspective provides for better strategies of resistance and the creation of a more consensual social order capable of mitigating conflicts without relying on techno-apartheid. The encyclopaedic character of this densely written book is usefully stressed by separate bibliographies of 20 different themes treated within the book.

The new feature of the current global context is the rapidly growing capacity of technologies of surveillance and identification. These technologies alter the power relationship between the state and the globally

operating private sector. In contrast to innovation of military technology, which is based on public funding and driven by the state, it is the global demand from the corporate sector that drives the innovation of surveillance and identification technology. Mattelart points to the market dynamics in the field of commercial profiling on the basis of RFID (radio frequency identification device) and credit card records among others.

To this date, the main body of social science literature on surveillance focuses on the role of the state and to what extent it is in danger to acquire Orwellian dimensions. At one point Mattelart refers to the parallel networks of surveillance in the private sector, but does not elaborate. But the combination of the utility of comprehensive surveillance and biometric identification for the corporate world and the regulatory weakening of the state in the wake of neoliberal economics, suggests that the personal sphere is severely threatened by corporate snooping. Future research on global surveillance should also scrutinize activities in the private sector.

HAMBURG

PETER LOCK

Peter Lock is the research coordinator of a nonprofit organization supporting joint Russian-German research. Degrees: MA in sociology and economy, doctoral degree in international relations. Career: country director Ecuador of the German Voluntary Service, research and teaching at the universities of Hamburg, Berlin, Bremen and Kassel. Current research focus: shadows of globalisation and the diffusion of war into other forms of violence. For his most recent publications see [www.Peter-Lock.de](http://www.Peter-Lock.de).