States of (In)security: 
Coming to Terms with an Erratic Terrain

Zeynep Gambetti and Marcial Godoy-Anativia

The twenty-first century started off by undoing the promise of a New World Order. Announced by George Bush Sr. in the 1990s, the new order was expected to involve a multipolar world in which human rights, democracy, and peace would prevail. The one that is being delivered instead seems set to undermine the universality of rights and the legitimacy and desirability of popular rule. War, social strife, and structural violence are still haunting the planet. But so are protests that no longer take the visionary paths offered by a century and a half of working-class struggle. Occupy groups and the indignados of numerous countries are more anarchic than orderly, more spontaneous and local than any International can encompass. This double movement away from “order” elevates the categories of risk (Beck), control (Deleuze), precarity (Butler), thanatopolitics (Bauman, Membre), or state of exception (Agamben) to the level of ordinariness. In line with the dissolution of previous certainties, “security” seems to have become a preoccupying concern. In the words of one of its most vocal theorists, the “ending of the Cold War has created a remarkable fluidity and openness in the whole pattern and quality of international relations” (Buzan 1991: 432). Corresponding to the ambiguity that marks the dissolution of former institutional and material structures, “security” now takes on unexpected twists and instigates novel practices.

The present volume is not so much about how we ended up here as about what it means to be here. It is not, however, a mere extension of so-called security studies in the domain of international relations. We attempt, rather, to explore the ethnographic ramifications of the concern with security in
contexts as diverse as mushroom picking in the United States, civil society activism in Turkey, and forms of belonging in Cameroon. The reason why constituting a panorama that spans the globe appears necessary is that “combat cultures” (Tsing) functioning as forms of identification, threat dramaturgies that recruit citizens as vigilantes, and peculiar notions of freedom (freedom as survival, freedom as security) have become integral parts of dissimilar cultures. The essays at hand contend with such questions as how security discourses shape technologies of identity and how novel forms of entrepreneurial or risk-embracing citizenship create exclusion in India, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Turkey, Mexico, the United States, Russia, and the Netherlands. The red thread that runs through the reflections consists of the ways in which violence is inherent to processes of securitization that unequally but persistently affect local cultures and values across the globe.

In analytic terms, the volume is structured around two related binaries that emerge quite clearly from the contributions at hand. The first is an insecurity/security binary that may be derived from Rossana Reguillo’s definition of “rhetorics of security,” and which, to differing degrees of immanence and elaboration, is present across the texts. In her essay, Reguillo defines “rhetorics of security” as “that set of eloquent arguments that seeks to persuade and provoke emotive responses through tropes (reasonings and judgments) anchored in a principle of generalized insecurity.” The second binary is an analysis of the present conjuncture as a moment of articulation between two distinct sociohistorical projects—neoliberalism and neoconservatism. A reflection upon these two elements suggests that the insecurity/security binary may be articulated as a spatial dimension that marks the way social practices are ordered on a local or territorial basis, and the neoliberal/neoconservative binary as a temporal one that marks a specific moment in the history of (Western) societies, allowing us to speak of our approach as a space-time formulation. The underlying concern is to address the question of whether we are facing what might be called a global production of subjectivities of security—and if so, why now, at this particular moment in time.

These two axes enable us to ground one of the fundamental claims of this book: political liberalism is among those discourses that are destabilized through the paradoxical alliance between terms that constitute the very condition of existence of their contradictory “others” in the present era. Faith in the rule of law, in the autonomy of civil society, and in the rational-legal basis of citizenship cannot possibly be sustained under present conditions for a
number of reasons: first, paralegal or extralegal processes tend to become the underside of the maintenance of law and order; second, civil society tends to become indistinct from the state; and third, citizenship is no longer a merely legal concept but also an “insider” status whose boundaries are established through discourses and practices of autochthony, volunteerism, and vigilantism, and which share in the formal and informal distribution of globalized benefits. In other words, all of the observations presented in this volume focus on forms of de-institutionalization and disaffiliation, accompanied by a paradoxical re-institutionalization of the dismantled state through various “state effects” and cultures of securitization.

Political liberalism assumes that law is the most effective bulwark against power—the power of the masses as well as the power of the state apparatus. On a minor note, business law is considered to be the condition of possibility of fairness in the economic realm, since it regulates and enforces compliance with contracts, sets boundaries to accumulation so as to thwart the formation of monopolies, and assigns duties and obligations to employers as well as to employees. Law is therefore taken to be the universal that orders particularities in such a way as to allow for fundamental rights and liberties to take effect. The legalist-contractual approach, very much in line with the basic tenets of political liberalism, equates politics to law and democracy to procedure—that is, to a framework that allows for the rights-bearing individual to enjoy sovereignty as far as the decisions concerning his life are concerned. Likewise, problems posed by social and economic inequality are to be “solved” through legal arrangements. More often than not, this approach takes as given certain human capabilities or “powers,” as the Rawlsian concept of justice as fairness demonstrates. Individual citizens are free by “virtue of their two moral powers (a capacity for a sense of justice and for a conception of the good) and the powers of reason (of judgment, thought, and inference connected with these powers)” (Rawls 1996: 19). These capacities are thought to be the very ground upon which the public good may be erected and codified through law.

What shatters this seemingly harmonious universe is not, as is often argued, the rise of postmodernism or identity politics. Questions of identity and plurality can conveniently be settled through the Rawlsian notion of an overlapping consensus among reasonable beings. The historical conjuncture that reveals the flipside of law and reason is neoliberalism—the unconcealed acknowledgment of market logic as the sole arbiter of value. On the ideational front, Rawls seems to have been defeated by Nozick and Dworkin on the one
side and by Hayek and Friedman on the other. On the practical front, neoliberalism appears as “the solution at last found” to do away with the tension between political and economic liberalism, public good and private interest, citizen and man, sovereignty and necessity, by subjugating the former terms to the latter. This, we argue, could not have been possible without the two binaries (or alliances) around which the discussions in this volume are constructed.

Neoliberalism/Neoconservatism

The neoliberalism/neoconservatism binary is intended as a temporal marker, as a strategic analytic figure that will enable us to reflect upon why particular forms of affiliation and disaffiliation are emerging at this point in time. The historical confluence of a (more or less) consolidated neoliberal economic project with a neoconservative political program may be, for our purposes, the single most important outcome of the past three decades.

Although the attempt to come up with a standardized definition of neoliberalism may be futile, the contributors to this volume agree upon some of the basic features of the novel political economy. In this introduction, we outline these so as to bring forth the implicit background consensus upon which the texts are built. The aim is to avoid constructing neoliberalism as a kind of “empty signifier” that explains everything and anything; we wish, rather, to deploy it as a trope that represents practices and subjectivities enabling the generalized outsourcing and individualization of risk.

The regime summarily called “neoliberalism” has inherited from liberalism the faith in the market economy as an eventually self-regulating mechanism of exchange and distribution of goods and services, and also of rights and liberties. The prevailing Chicago school creed considers economic liberty to be the condition of possibility of political liberty. This assumption is based as much on pure hypothetical reasoning as on the claim that any interference with the market would inevitably lead to totalitarianism—a Hayekian proposition taken up uncritically by monetarists such as Milton Friedman. But one need not be a “market fundamentalist” in order to suppose that the retreat of authoritative institutions and clear-cut legalistic boundaries may provide opportunities for a creative reshaping of individual choices. The post–Washington Consensus belief is that a small but responsive state undertaking the function of safeguarding public order will empower citizens in novel ways by
transferring unto them the moral (and political) responsibility of constituting their own lives.

This outlook, however, is overshadowed by ways in which neoliberalism is being imposed through a hitherto unparalleled level of orchestration between multinational corporations, intergovernmental organizations, and states. According to scholars who emphasize the disempowering features of global market making, the basis of capital accumulation is being shifted from production to finance, not only owing to the latter’s potential for unrestricted expansion but also because financial instruments and institutions allow for the spreading of risks (Harvey 2005: 161–162). The defining impacts of neoliberal globalization are neatly summarized in the following passage:

1) [The protection of] the interests of capital and [the expansion of] the process of capital accumulation (if this is viewed as occurring within and because of a structural crisis in capitalism or a long-term economic stagnation, then neoliberal economic globalization is essentially a strategy of crisis management or stabilisation); 2) the tendency towards homogenisation of state policies and even state forms in the direction of protecting capital and expanding the process of capital accumulation, via a new economic orthodoxy, i.e. market ideology (wherein even the state itself becomes subject to marketisation while simultaneously being deployed instrumentally on behalf of capital); 3) the addition and expansion of a layer of transnationalised institutional authority above the states (which has the aim and purpose of penetrating states and re-articulating them to the purposes of global capital accumulation); and 4) the exclusion of dissident social forces from the arena of state policy making (in order to insulate the new neoliberal state forms against the societies over which they preside and in order to facilitate the socialisation of risk on behalf of the interests of capital). (Amoore et al. 1997: 181)

What needs to be underlined here is the fact that state power is the paradoxical instrument of the dismantling of the welfare state. The elimination of the obstacles in the way of marketization (trade union power, social rights, political liberalism, constitutionalism) has called for outright coups in certain parts of the world—Chile was the first laboratory for such an experiment (Harvey 2006)—austerity packages, ethnic wars, or “wars against terrorism” in
A return to the process of “primitive accumulation” was also required in order to turn hitherto uncommodified areas or resources into marketable entities. This was conspicuously accompanied by the will to suppress protests, allow unemployment to rise, and to deprive local populations of their traditional means of livelihood through a form of structural violence that makes previously self-sufficient peasant communities dependent on the market. To such an inventory, one needs to add the sinister phenomenon of “disaster capitalism” where social turmoil, natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, and even stock market crashes become means of transferring capital and property from the stricken to powerful creditors (Klein 2007; Smith 2007).

This short chronicle of violence compels us to probe further into the way neoliberalism ticks at the political and societal levels. Contributors to this volume agree that the prefix “neo-” in neoliberalism represents a new social and political logic that has emerged from the relatively short history of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank–led imposition of the “free market” around the globe.

The structural transformation undergone by the state, the dismantling of welfare regimes, and the replacement of the concept of rights with market-based criteria of performance could not have been achieved without a substantive shift in subjectivities and patterns of belonging. As Maurizio Lazzarato brilliantly demonstrates, financialization is not solely an economic phenomenon. Looking at how pension funds become fiscal resources for both private and public enterprises, he shows how this is an individualizing technique that entraps the wage earner in such a way that the latter is at the mercy of both the employer and the market. Reversing the trend of the socialization of risks (social security schemes and mutual associations), financialization turns the worker into a peculiar type of capital within a “multiplicity of investments (in training, mobility, affectivity) that the individual as ‘human capital’ must make to optimize performances” (Lazzarato 2009: 121). The wage earner thus turns proactive in ensuring the profitability of capital in general. The paradox lies in that the individualization of risk reconstitutes individuals as the subjects of their own destiny, while subjecting them to a permanent state of insecurity and precarity (Butler 2009).

Seen in this light, celebrating hybridity and deregulation for their liberating potential might be a sign of misplaced optimism, given the renewed power of capital to co-opt resistances through new forms of subjectivation. As Lois McNay asks, “If individual autonomy is not the opposite of or limit to neoliberal...
governance, but rather lies at the heart of disciplinary control through responsible self-management, what are the possible grounds upon which political resistance can be used?” (2009: 56). Exploring such a prospect is the purpose of the present collection of essays. For instance, how neoliberalism encourages resourcefulness as a survival strategy that transgresses the narrow limits prescribed by law or convention still needs to be mapped out in all its details and detours. Likewise, the relationship between these new entrepreneurial subjectivities and organized crime, lynching and vigilantism, xenophobia and ethnic cleavages, and terrorism or combat cultures calls for closer scrutiny.

It would be misleading, though, to conceive of neoliberalism as the very opposite of conservatism. As Wendy Brown convincingly argues, aversion to the “social” is one of the instances in which neoliberal values and neoconservative ones converge. But reconciling “the Party of Moral Values and the Party of Big Business” or “threats to security” and “threats to humanity” is not a simple feat, and the alliance is an uneasy one (Brown 2006: 698). The neoliberal logic glorifies laissez-faire rationality except when legal measures are needed to ensure capital accumulation and keep opposition at bay; neoconservatives advocate interventions into the private realm to regulate morality, but also press for detaxation so as to benefit the growth of wealth in private hands. Brown sees the one as preparing the ground for the other: “Neoconservatism sewn in the soil prepared by neoliberalism breeds a new political form, a specific modality of governance and citizenship, one whose incompatibility with even formal democratic practices and institutions does not spur a legitimation crisis because of the neoliberal devaluation of these practices and institutions that neoconservatism then consecrates” (702).

David Harvey also argues that neoconservatism is consistent with the neoliberal distrust of democratic institutions. Indeed, “neo-conservatism appears as a mere stripping away of the veil of authoritarianism in which neoliberalism sought to envelop itself” (Harvey 2005: 82). The former tends to resolve some of the contradictions inherent in neoliberal market economy. In response to the chaos that would govern when competitive and acquisitive interests are allowed free reign, “some degree of coercion appears inevitable to restore order” (82). The neoconservative twist to the modern problem of order is to highlight threats and propose militarized solutions to social problems.

In many ways, the neoliberal-neoconservative articulation can answer some of the key questions raised by the power of neoliberalism. It is certainly a useful temporalization of neoliberalism and also quite instrumental to the
political imperative to move the debate forward. The point is that the complementarity between neoliberalism and neoconservatism cannot but engender frictions or ambivalences. 

Theoretically speaking, Hobbes’s *Leviathan* suggests that the conservation of the status quo through repressive sovereignty is the rather paradoxical requirement for sustaining a private sphere of possessive individualism and market exchange. Historically speaking, the edgy complementarity between conservatism and liberalism can be said to have surfaced when, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the discourse of democratic rights proved too much for the free market to withstand. Revolutions and working-class movements were threatening the formal limits that political liberalism set for itself. Locke’s attempt to democratize the sovereign instance while at the same time maintaining the inequalities of property and labor expenditure was backfiring. Indeed, Disraeli’s fear of poverty and of the rising power of working-class movements epitomizes the main thrust behind the conservative reaction at the end of the nineteenth century. Historically, conservatism seems to have served as a savior to economic liberalism.

Today, neoliberalism appears to devolve onto civil society the powers initially transferred to the state, thus dissolving the power differential between the state and society. But this, too, carries a price tag: state power may be devolved only on the condition that the second and more fundamental inequality between capital and labor be sustained. Like Locke’s ultimately paradoxical attempt to render equality (rights) and inequality (property) compatible, neoliberalism also backfires. Devolving power onto civil society is too much for the “free market” to withstand. The neoliberal agenda of “rolling back the state” cannot but set free alternative social forces—legal and paralegal, of resistance and revolt—that threaten the globalization of a particular model of accumulation. Countersystemic protests ranging from the World Social Forum to today’s *indignados* and Occupy movements testify to the presence of new spaces of solidarity that have emerged as a response to the rapid transformation of social bonds.

Whereas nineteenth-century conservatism was a reaction against socialism, twenty-first-century neoconservatism seems to be a reaction against the plurality of forms that civil society takes when the state’s unifying institutionality recedes. Given the altered conditions of capital accumulation in the neoliberal era, new foundations must be found for unity and conformity, so as to counterbalance the market imperative that generalizes risk and binds

---

8 Zeynep Gambetti and Marcial Godoy-Anativia
sections of the population together in a struggle to survive its deadly competitiveness. Unity in insecurity can only be sustained under extremely marginal conditions (as depicted in some of the contributions here). A number of strategies and dispositifs have been deployed to invent new bonds: war against terrorism, autochthony, self-care, vigilantism, paralegality, neopatrimonialism, xenophobia, militarism, and so forth. Thus, to use Tsing’s insights, the articulation of neoliberalism and neoconservatism needs to be examined at its points of “friction.” This is, in fact, what De Genova, Gambetti, and Ipek Can attempt to do. These and other essays in this volume seek to demonstrate that neoconservatism is not a trade-off between liberty and security, but the condensation of the complementarity that has emerged between a geopolitics of fear (the globalization of suspicion) and a political economy of societal regulation (the globalization of neoliberal governmentality).

Insecurity/Security

Here we touch upon the second axis around which the contributions in this book evolve: Security is a neoliberal technique of power that operates as a counterpoint to the principle of universality—of law, of the provision of state services to all citizens, and of Enlightenment ideals embodied in the republican version of liberalism—to which all law-abiding states had hitherto paid lip service, at least.

Political science and international relations literature barely does justice to the intricate connection between security and the socioeconomic rationale that seems to underlie it. Writing in 1991, Stephen Walt argued that security was fundamentally about war, but that from the 1980s onward, scholars broadened the scope of the concept to “include topics such as poverty, AIDS, environmental hazards, drug abuse, and the like” (Walt 1991: 213). This was risky, as far as Walt was concerned, since security studies could then expand excessively in such a way that even “pollution, disease, child abuse, or economic recessions could be all viewed as threats to ‘security’” (213). The premonition seems to have come true. Buzan, for instance, takes for granted that among the five categories that he defines,2 “societal security concerns the ability of societies to reproduce their traditional patterns of language, culture, association, and religious and national identity and custom within acceptable conditions for evolution” (Buzan 1991: 433). In other words, what political philosophy and the social sciences called by a variety of other names
(entitlement, justice, sovereignty, nationalism, praxis, socialization, political culture, and the like) have now come to be labeled as “security” concerns. The terminological shift points to a practical one as well: the securitization of social praxis frames the issue as one involving “survival.” A type of “panic politics” (Buzan 1997: 14) ensues that calls for exceptional measures in realms that were formerly regulated through law and welfare policies. This dramatization of praxis need not be legitimized by an “objective” threat, as in the case of military emergencies. This is why Tarak Barkawi claims that the “proliferation of security politics is . . . a prime instance of what Max Weber called rationalisation, the increasing dominance of means over valued ends in modern culture, science and politics” (Barkawi 2011: 703). Objective ends seem to have given way to vague threat perceptions that need not be verified before deploying various means of security.

It must be remembered, nonetheless, that the insecurity/security binary has a long history. The most fundamental (and the most dubious) relation between liberalism, violence, and insecurity was conceptualized by Hobbes, long before Carl Schmitt took up the task in the twentieth century. In Hobbes, both state and society appear to be founded by a willful pact established with the consent of all. This representation conceals the twofold violence at the very core of the foundation: first, the pact is not a product of the free will, but rather of the fear of violent death. In other words, Hobbes’s liberalism does not exchange liberty for security; it replaces the prospect of unexpected and violent death for the security of a regulated death within the legal order. Second, legality can provide security only if there exists a sovereign, that is, an instance that is capable of repression for the sake of order and compliance. The belief that, when institutionalized and legal, violence somehow turns benign (read: predictable and nonarbitrary) cannot undo what Walter Benjamin calls “the ultimate insolubility of all legal problems” (Benjamin 1978: 293), that is, the paradoxical enlisting of violence as a means to settle the boundary between what is legal and what is not.

This is to say that the nature of the order established by the modern liberal state is fundamentally ambivalent. Security seems to hinge upon conformity, since individual freedoms can only be sustained within the boundaries forcefully assigned to each life activity by sovereign power. Rights cannot take effect without securing compliance, that is, without enforcing a set of obligations through sanctions and punishment. Every liberal “right” entails the regulation and supervision of domains of existence. The state is that instance
which continually imposes a certain behavior on individuals, correcting those who fail to subordinate themselves to rules and norms. Enforcement, therefore, does not cease to contain an element of violence when it is associated with the seemingly benign term “law.”

While these aporias of political liberalism were couched, if not in the language of reason, at least in that of rationality, what appears to have been transformed in the age of neoliberalism is the state’s willingness or capacity to provide for such regulation. Schematically speaking, it is logical to expect an effervescence of anarchical forces once the state retreats—protest movements that have emerged since the 1990s testify to this. The millennial neoliberal task is, therefore, to achieve conformity without resorting to the ultimate, form-giving institutionality of the state. The solution that seems to have materialized is the transfer onto “society” of the obligation to provide for security. The emergent societal model is best represented by the figure of Behemoth that results from the fusion of state, economy, and society. This is an amorphous structure marked by the indistinction of public and private, legality and illegality, resistance and subjection, such that an “invisible hand” effectively regulates all spheres of life without resorting to the rigidity of law.

* * *

In keeping with this line of argument, what emerges as a common concern espoused by the texts in this volume is that the practices, rhetorics, and agendas of security are both reactive to and productive of rapidly expanding cartographies of insecurity. This book deploys a variety of methodological, analytic, and empirical approaches to examine both the production of this generalized insecurity and its reproduction through the very practices, tactics, and strategies erected to combat it, that is, discourses of security. The growing mass of disaffiliated, nonaffiliated and para-affiliated subjects discussed by Geschiere, Tsing, Reguillo, Derluguian, and others speak to insecurity as an outcome of social processes that long antedate the attack on the World Trade Center.

Indeed, September 11, 2001, brought to light the neoconservative imperial project based in the United States that adapted itself to the large-scale neoliberal expansion and consolidation that took place during the Clinton administration. That consolidation created previously unimaginable amounts and scales of wealth and power. In the United States, it transformed the university, changed immigration law, and finished with the
dismantling of the welfare state. Domestically, the neoconservative project offers moral and social order along with the undoing of all things New Deal. It signals a return to primary forms of “advanced” capitalist accumulation, no doubt perfected in ante- and postbellum America. The Obama regime does not seem to be either able or willing to reverse this trend in the international or national arena. The way it deals with Latin America (Carranza 2010; Shifter 2010) or with police brutality against Occupy movements suggests that it is unrealistic to expect its electoral promises to be fully fulfilled. Elsewhere in the world—in Europe, as well as in Russia, India, Turkey, and Africa—the comeback of xenophobia and militarism is coupled with the newly discovered fantasies of “war against terrorism” and “autochthony.” These follow the line of “creative destruction” as outlined by Harvey (2006): they create new agencies and practices while stifling others.

Many of the chapters evoke the idea of indistinction, reversal of terms, ambiguity, and confusion. This might indeed be the sign of the paradoxical alliance between neoliberalism and neoconservatism that needs to be explored in its multiple effects on social and political life. A closer look at what is discussed in each contribution would suffice to reveal the complexity of the mechanisms that go into the sustaining of the two binaries security/insecurity and neoliberalism/neoconservatism.

Peter Geschiere discusses some elements for a genealogy of the related notion of “autochthony.” His main contention is that going back to the (contested) roots of this notion in classical Athens is worthwhile for better understanding its highly variegated and even paradoxical expressions in different parts of the present-day world (Africa, Canada, Europe, the Pacific). In Geschiere’s account, it is precisely the dispersed history of the concept—and its capacity for taking on such variegated meanings under the guise of apparent self-evidence—that makes “autochthony” a key notion for understanding the quite surprising convergence of a neoliberal ideology and an obsessive preoccupation with local belonging and security in our globalizing world. Turning to funerals in Cameroon to highlight the paradoxes tormenting Dutch society, Geschiere convincingly shows how autochthony’s promise of security necessarily breeds practices of insecurity. Often expressed in violent terms, the fight over locality is also one over property, resources, new profit venues, and market shares. The emphasis on “belonging to the soil” not only marks the migrant or “stranger” as

12 Zeynep Gambetti and Marcial Godoy-Anativia
allochton, but also modifies relatively tolerant societies beyond recognition, such that exclusionism and coerced integration into the dominant culture become “normal” practices.

In a similar vein, Stephen Jackson looks at the politics of authenticity revolving around the concept of Congolité in the Democratic Republic of Congo from mid-2006 onward. Having materialized shortly before the country’s first democratic elections in more than four decades, Congolité dominated discussions of the elections so much that substantive policy debates about postwar reconstruction became unimaginable. The “venomous potency” of Congolité was that the discursive exclusion of individuals or groups that did not “fit” turned out to be dangerously vague. Alongside the “non-Congolese” or outright “foreigners,” presidential candidates or groups supporting them were included or excluded according to where they belonged in a set of overlapping binaries: western Congolese or eastern, Lingalaphone or Swahiliophone, Francophone or Anglophone. Jackson argues that even though Congolité might seem to have emerged from nowhere as a proximate and virulent product of the elections, as a merely tactical politics of authenticity and localness, the elections were, in fact, the catalyst that caused this new discourse to crystallize out of a number of distinct but related preexisting elements. This, he contends, reveals a paradox at the heart of the liberal project of postconflict state building. The process of constructing democratic institutions can in fact electrify discursive forms of violence that are either homegrown or imported.

In his provocative essay, Georgi Derluguian picks up a comparable thread in the former Soviet Union. Asking whether globalization breeds violent anti-Enlightenment reactions, Derluguian opts for a class perspective to analyze the effects of the collapse of the developmentalist state project. The two coping strategies that developed in response to this collapse are neopatrimonialism and mobilization of ethnic and religious solidarities. Contesting the idea that ethnic strife is caused by the urge to defend local cultures against the onslaught of “McWorld,” Derluguian seeks instead to show how the delegitimization of the developmental state has opened up an array of profitable alliances and influences that were up for grabs. A new class of enterprising patrons, mainly from bureaucratic backgrounds, became the gatekeepers of access to resources and mobilized support along ethnic and religious patterns of belonging. The simultaneous growth of a subproletarian class willing to seek its means of subsistence in informal and often illegal activities has in fact left the middle class in a structural and moral void. Instead of complying with
the neoliberal vision of the creation of a new, property-owning middle class that would enable civil society to flourish in the postcommunist era, middle classes in Russia today have a penchant for “Pinochet rather than Jefferson.”

The “civility” of civil society is also questioned by Yasemin Ipek Can, whose chapter probes into volunteer activity in post-1990 Turkey as a particular response to the threat posed by the weakening of the welfare state and the neoliberal restructuring of society. The chapter discusses how the “middle class” and its civil society organizations (CSOs) have started to align themselves with the state to assume the duty of “sharing the state’s burden.” Field research into the activities of one particular CSO, which took on a prominent role in the provision of educational facilities to “disadvantaged” segments of society, reveals how the most individualizing technologies of the self may be used by CSOs to promote loyalty to Republican modernism and neoliberal market values. Volunteers engaged in bettering the lives of children in urban neighborhoods with a heavy population of rural migrants speak both the official language of the state and neoliberal jargon of individualism. Risk management becomes an everyday practice of the self, an aptitude that school children must begin to acquire. Holding the individual responsible for knowing how to navigate in increasingly treacherous socioeconomic and cultural terrains, the CSO engages in a “discourse of blaming” and reduces every “lack” into a “failure.” History and structure fade away into oblivion as children are taught to take care of their selves—they thus become the proactive agents of their own insertion into the market.

The contradictory ways in which history is incorporated into neoliberal ideology is a central concern in two other chapters. In her ethnography of marginal foragers in the US Pacific Northwest, Anna Tsing looks at how the poor and precarious come to endorse market values. Here, through the prism of commercial mushroom pickers of Southeast Asian origin, state militarization seems most present in the form of public memories of the US–Indochina War. Tsing explores how a varied set of subcultures of military memory among Southeast Asian refugees and white Vietnam veterans influences the performance of risk-based entrepreneurship. War continues to shape lives, even many years after the official conflict has ended, via a new political economy: supply-chain capitalism. Arguing that culture is the emergent economic strategy of our times, Tsing describes a set of “cultures of freedom” that are necessary to sustain the supply chain by linking cultural-economic niches throughout the global system. Emerging out of military conflicts, evictions,
harassments, and dispossessions, these forms of “popular neoliberalism” enable the dispossessed to recoup their losses and breed new cultures of work that hinge upon modes of insecurity. Violence, Tsing argues, is not only a consequence of privatization but also a condition that allows free-market entrepreneurship to thrive.

The militaristic ideology that pervades Tsing’s piece finds an echo in Nicholas De Genova’s theoretically profound analysis of the spectacle of security. Elaborating on Guy Debord’s theses to demystify US establishment ideology, De Genova reveals how history is buried in culture through discourses of “terrorism,” “security,” and “consumption.” The theme of “regeneration through violence” (Pearl Harbor related to the bombing of the Twin Towers) serves to secure a dehistoricized identity, while the spectacle of security assures the continuation of consumption patterns. The latter is indeed necessary to uphold a system that feeds upon a dutiful and patriotic submission to “business-as-usual”; that is, to securing and superintending egotistic social relations in everyday life. The paradox of refuge into mundane comfort in the face of the spectacle of an omnipresent yet elusive menace conceals the fact that the status quo is the real catastrophe.

The discourse on terrorism also becomes an ally of the neoliberal-neoconservative transformation undergone by civil society in Zeynep Gambetti’s chapter on societal violence in Turkey. Gambetti argues that 2005 marks a break in civil society’s demeanor vis-à-vis the Kurdish question in Turkey. Noting that lynching attempts have been occurring in regular intervals against Kurds, leftists, the Roma, and university students throughout the country since then, Gambetti explores how the criminalization of dissenting identities (all conveniently labeled “terrorists”) works in tandem with a shift in the notion of citizenship: from rights-bearing members of civil society, citizens turn into the willing executioners of the state. The dispensation of justice by citizens themselves buttresses the state by aligning civil society and citizens along national and market-based objectives. In civil society, associations armed with national values rush to fill in the gap left by the downsizing of the social state, while citizens take onto themselves the responsibility of policing dissenters and would-be enemies. The figure of the “terrorist,” emerging from thirty years of armed conflict with the Kurds, turns out to be a convenient tool in pushing forward new strategies of control as well as the privatization of livelihoods and natural resources.
In another twist that the discourse of “terrorism” can take in the era of neoliberalism, Nandini Sundar looks at what she calls the “industry of insecurity” in India. From 2006 onward, she notes, there has been a peculiar shift in the government’s response to the Naxalites (Maoist guerilla fighters). Previously, official pronouncements on the Naxalites located the movement largely in its “socioeconomic” context, with the usual statements about the need to bring development to “tribals” (indigenous peoples). However, this has now changed to an overwhelming focus on military assault in the form of counterinsurgency warfare, thus prompting an armed response from the Naxalites. Perhaps, argues Sundar, it is not coincidental that the shift accompanies a phase of primitive accumulation where a large number of agreements have been signed between the government and private companies to exploit the mineral resources in areas under Naxalite influence. Her chapter explores the ways in which the statistics of killings in the counterinsurgency operations as compiled by the government have constructed the Naxalite “problem” in a particular way. She also looks at the role of the media and censorship, and at state security laws that criminalize dissenting views or human rights activists. The chapter further examines state and Maoist notions of legality and justice as well as the problems involved in any attempt to get justice for the multiple victims of the area.

A common theme in most of the chapters, the issue of the enlargement of zones of paralegality—or, to borrow from Giorgio Agamben, of zones of indistinction—in the neoliberal era, is also central to Rossana Reguillo’s piece on drug cartels in Mexico. Reguillo maps out a critical terrain that enables her to analyze the triple relationship between the exhaustion of the institutional order, the intensification of syncopated violencias, and the enormous productive power of “paralegality.” By the latter, she means a set of strategies and practices that create, institute, and maintain a “text” that is parallel to the legality constituted by contingent agreements and negotiations, and is capable of engendering an order that runs alongside the state and social institutions. Confronted by this parallel order as well as by its own crisis of legitimacy, the state and its associated enclaves of power respond by redoubling their discourses of legality—a process that is most clearly exemplified by what Reguillo calls “rhetorics of security.” Thus, paradoxically, the insecurity generated by these violencias finds its counternarrative in the security of authoritarianism and zero tolerance.
The essays thus point to how the “frictions” within the binaries security/insecurity and neoliberalism/neoconservatism create contradictory states of being. Today, security becomes the ultimate frontier of privatization, the latest stage of the neoliberal dismantling of the state, which privatizes and redistributes its core functions. The present situation is not characterized by the total transfer of the state’s monopoly to the private sector, but rather, as Sundar puts it, by “an expansion of options or greater market choice in the use of violence”—and, it must be added, of boundary setting and law enforcement.

Within this matrix, radicalized senses of belonging—and of othering—accompany the disaffiliation that both market forces and wars against terrorism provoke. The mapping out of the emergent subjectivities would require much more analysis into seemingly disparate techniques of material and symbolic survival across the globe. The developmentalist aspiration toward rights-bearing citizenship and rule of law may indeed become obsolete under conditions that redefine bonds. The insecurity caused by the simultaneity of law and its suspension feeds into what Judith Butler calls precarity, “that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death” (Butler 2009: 25). Groups or individuals whose lives are rendered precarious are caught up in a dilemma whereby the instance to which they appeal for protection (the state) is at the same time the instance that produces precarity. The question that comes to mind, then, is whether neoliberalism effectively spells the end of political liberalism (as we know it).

Though it has become morally impelling—if not merely fashionable—to conclude by proposing exit strategies and venues of hope, we shall deliberately refrain from doing so. This volume admittedly paints a gloomy picture of the neoliberal horizon. And yet neoliberalism is a highly complex and ambivalent process of capital accumulation, such that it is misleading to construct strict causalities. What appears as a form of resistance might eventually end up reproducing the very mechanisms that the security/insecurity binary feeds upon—or the aggravation of precarity may in time serve to generate the conditions of possibility of a new political economy of agency.
Notes

1 According to Harvey, New York City was the first theater in which the market effects of austerity packages were tested and approved.

2 These are: military, political, economic, societal, and environmental security.

3 This parenthetical is borrowed from the eloquently entitled work by Graham-Gibson (1996).

References


18 Zeynep Gambetti and Marcial Godoy-Anativia


