



Book Review : La peur, l'Etat et le citoyen (Fear, the State and the Citizen)

The Reviewers

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La peur, l'Etat et le citoyen (Fear, the State and the Citizen)

Preface by Alain Bauer and Manuel Valls

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To offset insecurity, risk is “merchandised”

Nicolas Arpagian's latest book appeared at the same moment that the *The Economist* featured “Fear returns” as its cover story (on how to avoid a deepening of the Great Recession). Fear is a topic on many minds but one seldom treated by futurists, making Arpagian's volume one of particular interest to *Foresight's* readers. He makes fear explicit as an element in planning, scenario development, and devising strategic methods of applying protection.

This book is highly structured and, at first glance, appears to apply mainly to France. But the author, who is editor of the futurist journal *Prospective stratégique* and teaches at the National Institute of Advanced Studies in Security and Justice (INHESJ) in Paris, uses his pages to set security models for: countries desirous of revising collective and individual security standards; and young nations starting from scratch in evolving codes of security appropriate to their needs. France and similar nations today find themselves, author Arpagian reminds us, in the curious situation that the resources constituting private security will overtake numerically (before 2015) those of police and other official services. Public surveillance by video camera is one such resource, notoriously in Britain; another is that of property-guardian services, whose right to demand identification – for instance – from potential trespassers remains legally moot.

The situation complicates itself when a demonstrator intends protest or, to a further degree, causes violence to others or damage to property either fixed or movable. In the prevention mode, “since the collapse of the Roman empire, police competence has fluctuated regularly between that of feudal lords desirous of having order respected on their own lands and that of monarchs concerned with exercising authority over what the era deemed national territory” (p. 70).

Human caution has grown considerably in our time, as cross-frontier wars have given way to increasing terrorism (whatever its impulses) within national confines. Even in war zones, many security duties, classically the responsibility of the military, have been assigned to civil contractors who, in their turn, may commit excesses that remain beyond the jurisdiction of legal process, whether military or civil. Security has become a business exercise in the private – and therefore commercial – sector and, often big business indeed.

The very concept of public security “is an intrinsic part of a country's culture”, furthermore, one inevitably responding administratively “according to the values comprising national identity” (p. 129). Author Arpagian notes that in the US, for example, “police logic” is founded basically on the principle of subsidiarity, meaning that the type of offense involved determines the level of juridical responsibility – local, state or federal – to be exercised.

Fear can assume curious forms, too, such as Canada's predicament in the 1990s. Canadian finances were in such a deplorable state at the time that the country risked coming under the vigilant stewardship of the International Monetary Fund, a situation usually reserved for nations that the author terms “exotic”, i.e. in the circumstances of a failing state. To save the situation, the Ottawa government managed to cut certain ministerial budgets by 40 percent within a matter of three years (1995-1998). These and other stringent economies saved the day.

Realistic efforts to ease fear

Draconian measures would be hard to imagine for most national governments but, with the Canadians, they became reality and worked wonders. In countries such as France, Germany, Greece, Italy and Spain the finances of both their public-health and retirement schemes came under comparable pressure during the decade just past and begged similar rescue. The fear involved here is not of the physical sort, of course, but one that may signal the collapse of institutional safeguards and key societal amenities. Once that these have disappeared, they are difficult and time-demanding to rehabilitate. “It is not that more state is needed, but better state” (p. 88) and, by extension, avoidance of a lapse into non-democratic or even totalitarian rule.

Other forms of fear engender other solutions. Piracy on the high seas, notably roundabout the Gulf of Aden, has generated subsidies paid to national navies for armed protection of cargo vessels and tuna boats and their crews. The Belgian government is charging, for example 115,000 per team of eight marines (pp. 99-100). Airlines accepting armed marshals aboard flights possibly subject to terrorist acts incur additional costs, too – not all of which can be integrated into more costly tickets for passengers.

All such measures are meant to calm public apprehensions or allay clients' worries as well as offer physical protection to crews and capital equipment. In some countries, professional-sports groups (teams, associations, federations) pay police from gate receipts for supplementary surveillance and protection against public rowdiness or worse in stadium or arena.

Additional security costs need, as do education, highway maintenance and police presence, to be funded at considerable imposition on administrative and defense budgets. In August 2009 the United States Congress estimated that the taxpayer was paying well beyond the cost of troops and their equipment to maintain 6,820 private contractors in Afghanistan and 132,610 in Iraq – adjuncts to the uniformed operations in those areas. The expense for

physical protection of the American Embassy in Kabul alone reached a total of \$189 million over a five-year period during the new century's first decade.

Purchasing security, despite its many shortfalls, has thus become as commonplace as ordering pencils, telephones and computers. With the new costs of security for all, most of it funded by or through the coffers of state, author Arpagian concludes that governments must tighten their controls over how security is dispensed and who or what does so. This needs to be done increasingly, he maintains, through the careful development of a "culture of service": partly by more stringent financial control; and partly by more severe official attitudes in the regulation of security standards and the quality of the delivery of protective services to those in need. The author concludes that systematic improvement of protective codes, equipment and methods, and of security personnel must therefore predominate over attitudes of public fear – that such improvement is the only recourse – lest the public should take to arms, in defiance of legitimate authority.

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