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Democracy, Society and the Governance of Security

The promotion of security is no longer a state monopoly. It is dispersed and takes place through the practices of states, corporations, non-governmental actors and community-based organizations. But what do we know about the ways in which 'security' is thought about and promoted in this pluralized field of delivery? Are democratic values being advanced and protected or threatened and compromised? Wood and Dupont bring together a team of renowned scholars to shed light on our understanding of the arrangements for contemporary security governance. Offering a 'friendly dialogue' between those who argue that democratic transformation rests in the development of strong state institutions and those who propose a more de-centred agenda, the scholars in this volume bring cutting-edge theoretical analyses to bear on empirical examples. This volume will appeal to researchers in the fields of criminology, political science, sociology and security studies.

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Foreword

This is a timely book that echoes important developments occurring in other fields. Pluralism in law is now an important trend in legal theory. The 'anchored pluralism' for which this collection of essays is arguing may also become a thread running through various innovative approaches to the theory and practice of security.

The book has a theoretical and a pragmatic focus and it succeeds in many things. I will mention four of these. First, it is a welcome exercise in conceptual analysis, as it tries to spell out the meaning of a new set of joint notions – governance, node, pluralism and the governance of security, just to mention a few – that are taking an increasing place in theoretical discourse. The authors make a convincing case that these concepts are the building blocks of a robust perspective that future research will have to take into account.

Second, the essays go far beyond definitional issues and the explanatory power of their key notions is truly put to the test. One such key notion, which is approached from different angles in the book, is that of 'nodal governance'. This notion implies that power flows from a nexus of connected – but not necessarily co-ordinated – agents rather than from a single well. Despite its trendy garb, nodal governance may prove to be a useful tool, as it allows us to overcome two obstacles to building a new paradigm for reflecting upon the exercise of power. First, thinking about power and its potential effects has been hindered by the centripetal–centrifugal polarity. Either power accumulates in a single locus, according to the traditional *centralization* model, or it is dispersed, in accord with the no less ancient *decentralization* model. What is common to both of these models is that they view power as a single kind of stuff – the force of the state – that is either put in one place or tucked in several corners. What they fail to capture is that it makes little difference whether all the ministries are located in one capital or spread out over the whole territory, as long as they remain *state* ministries. Not only does the idea of nodal governance escape from the *one-centre/no-centre* pseudo-alternative, but, more crucially, it does away with the *single stuff* mythology: depending

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on its agent, power can be public, private, hybrid or yet uncategorized. Getting rid of the single stuff mythology also means moving beyond the second obstacle to thinking lucidly about power. This monumental obstacle, still very much insurmountable in countries that have experienced centralized government, is *statocentricity*. Statocentricity does not only rest on the belief that all power is governmental; it also asserts that all valid discourse on power must be grounded in things political. Just as theology was the sole fount of religious thought in the West when there was only one religion, political theory claims to encompass all knowledge on power when force is vested exclusively in the state.

Third, the authors of the various chapters in this book have a normative outlook and they do not claim to be above pragmatics. A normative focus can be variously interpreted. At the least, it implies arguing for what ought to be done. This book takes a much bolder approach and dares to pronounce on moral issues. In this time and age when moral discourse is proffered in a key more consonant with angry elevator music than a Bach cantata, a genuine voice is a welcome sound, even if it is dissonant. Finally, it must be stressed that the various authors of this book are engaged in a vigorous debate, an activity less placid than dialogue and now more needed. Although united by the urgency to think anew about security, these writers have healthy disagreements on basic issues. Writing a foreword to this stimulating collection is frustrating because one has to keep from jumping into the fray. But not for long, as all readers of this book will feel.

JEAN-PAUL BRODEUR

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We have also had the honour of working with practitioners and scholars from different parts of globe. Our participation in the Project for Safe and Just Communities (PSJC) in Argentina continues to be near to our hearts, and has opened up our eyes to the challenges of democratic transformation in social, political and economic contexts that are profoundly different from our own. Special thanks to Enrique Font for allowing us to be included, in the modest ways that we can, in his pursuit of forms of security governance that privilege human rights. We would also like to acknowledge the generous financial support of the Canadian International Development Agency as well as the support of the Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto in managing the PSJC.

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