Public Insecurity: exception as routine, exceptionality as the norm in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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Abstract *This article is an essay on the production of public insecurity, the yield that it brings as part of a regime of fear, and its effects of normalization of the practices of exception in the rule of law. The article focuses on the ethnographic work with the youth from the slums, together with state and local police from the State of Rio de Janeiro, as well as on a survey of documentary and journalistic sources on the internet, from 2017 to 2020. The reflections are guided by the discussion of the production of insecurity as a project of power. The logic of "protection" takes the place of security. The results point to the manufacture of diffuse and immediate threats as a resource for the imposition of a political economy of control and social regulation. The health crisis has aggravated the security crisis, keeping people on alert, with a feeling of urgency, living the immediate. Collective insecurity is not necessarily an unwanted outcome. It has been an expected and effective result, a strategic means through which to produce and sustain a project of exclusive and unequal power, for the few.*
Key words *Public Security, Violence, State Control, Autonomous governments and police operations*

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Introduction

This essay covers the production of public insecurity, the yield that it generates as a fear-based regime, and its effects in terms of the normalization of the practices of exception in the rule of law. The reflections are guided by the discussion surrounding the production of insecurity as an authoritarian project of power. This essay focuses on the ethnographic work conducted with the youth from the slums, together with state and local police from the state of Rio de Janeiro, as well as on the documentation and journalistic sources gathered from 2017 to 2020. The text is organized in five sections: 1- Insecurity as a project of power; 2- Today's protection, tomorrow's tyranny; 3- Fighting a commercial war to sell peace; 4- Warriors, Merchants of protection and Prophets of chaos; 5- Final judgements.

Insecurity as a project of power

Insecurity has become a symbolic space in which all fears come together. Fear of dying. Fear of being left out. Fear of losing rights. Fear of losing possessions. Fear of falling ill. Fear of unemployment. Fear of others, with their unequal ideas of class, color, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, etc.

Insecurity is the core synthesis of all fears and suspicions we experience in our daily lives. It emerges as a fundamental construct for the operation of a political economy of social control and regulation befitting the neoliberal logic[1], a framework that operates as a complex system, encompassing economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions, reaching beyond the mere expansion of capital.

Production of insecurity corresponds to a project of power that has produced social and political impacts, undermining solidarity and citizenship. Through this apparatus, one can see the strengthening of the fear regime in an imaginary space, in the minds of both the population and the police and other criminal justice agents, of the idea of an imminent danger that demands maximum mobilization to fight the enemy. The utilitarian fear discourse seeks to spread, far and wide, the idea that there is a *war* to be fought, using all available resources, including terror. Contrary to a view on public security as an "open field, where solutions are sought for problems related to public order"[2], the analysis of (in)security as a power tool highlights the processual character of the domination methods of the groups

interested in disseminating procedures aimed at influencing behavior, altering social relationships and distorting the role of the state as the promoter of the common good.

The deformation of the State is not something secondary in neoliberal governability[3]. It is rather deeply rooted in social welfare reforms and in the market privatization of health, education and security, involving the accountability of individuals and families rather than the State[4]. In this scenario, insecurity works as an amalgamation, which provides a sense of unity to the singular experiences of the violation of rights experienced by individuals, on the streets and in the slums, due to primarily to their social identity markers. These individuals, re-created in the neoliberal discourse of crime control[5], are desired as spare agents, alienated from their support networks and left to the utilitarian calculation of free market rationalities. These creatures, without the protection of the State, are expected to see themselves and to be seen, in their interactions, as exposed to every danger. One might say: "unfortunately, we live in a society". The "social" is seen as a threat in each relationship and placed under suspicion; it is society (its solidarity) which is under attack[4].

In scenarios of generalized mistrust, typical of the construction of fear regimes, the individuals are left to fend for themselves. However, they have only scarce private resources, limited to virtual and material bubbles[6]. Because of the selective access to the basic guarantees and individual rights, they ought to compete among themselves for a citizenship that is marketable[7]. The production and dissemination of fear leads to the collective acceptance that social and civil rights are subordinated to the restrictive, discriminatory, and secluding reasons of (in)security. We assume the acceptance that rights are something given as a reward to the "wellborn" and "successful", and an expression of debt and sanction to the "non-wellborn" and "inadequate". Or, limited to the construction of a "policy for the governed", in which the civil society, its rights, and paradigms are restricted to a middle-class world, leaving to those of the periphery the management of a "political society", which alternates logics, rights, and constructions, as if apart from the legal, constitutional world[8].

In face of the worsening of collective mistrust and fear, the time of cooperation shrinks, the time of suspicion grows, and the time of social resistance to the losses suffered seems to freeze. In face of the fear apparatus, one gives up the democratic values and achievements in favor of

the immediate protection of one´s life, which is perceived as a continuous state of threats. Reciprocity in suspicion begins to correspond, in the solitary management of one's selfness and fear of others, to exchanged mutual accusations of a horizontal dissemination of risks. There is a permanent risk of being considered involved in crime[9] and all sorts of "antisocial behaviors", which could contaminate the spaces of social life.

It is in a context of vigilance and punishment taken to extremes that we can observe the emergence of a moral meeting place for subjects who are frightened and solitary in their fears. This corresponds to the definition of an "a priori" victim, falling short of the experimentation of victimization[10]. To experience direct violation would be only a matter of time. The identification with other victims is just a question of metonymic spacing. The indifference towards those identified as threats would be a matter of raising fences and establishing boundaries. Therefore, the probabilistic and indirect victims would become part of an expanding and defensive abstract community: "the orderly and good society". Here, the empathy and solidarity return to one's own selfness and against any other.

Insecurity as a project of power benefits from the expedients of intolerance, which work as single idea pedagogies confronting common thought. It leads to the production of selective guardianship with a social engineering, which corresponds to the inclusion of some and the exclusion of many. Such exclusions reveal themselves as corrective therapies which range from the cure of the morally deformed, who deserves a chance, going through the indifference towards the undesirables, and reaching the elimination of the non-recoverable, those who are not worthy of being investing in, the "seeds of evil".

Insecurity, intolerance, and exclusion are considered power tools that defy the peaceful management of conflicts in a world that is free and plural. The blinder faith is, the sharper the knives of the agencies of social control and regulation become, which are capable of cutting the tongue of politics, any form of politics, and of tearing apart the law. Fear regimes can be translated, in terms of their functionality, into routines of policing which are progressively substituted by exceptional and heterodox police actions.

As an institution of the State, the police force is disputed internally and externally by interest groups, ambitious for political, economic, and electoral power. We watch its original objectives being reconfigured, as it becomes captured by groups which are the expression of autonomous governments and no longer operate to guarantee the State and the public management of territories. It is not about allowing the police to police. It is about promoting a police force which is cornered by political and electoral abuse, and its marketing. It is not about dealing with conflicts by means of the potential and concrete use of force under social consent and according to the rule of law[11]. It is about (re)negotiating the price of the permits to rule territories[12]. The operational spectacle of "shooting, beating, and bombing", spreading fear even further. And in so doing, raise the clamor far and wide so as to reach the noble spaces of the streets and make threats closer and closer to the slum regions, with a large volume of bodies from civilians and policemen and piles of apprehended material which "add up to the statistics". It is about promoting the fear of becoming a victim of a "lost bullet" or of a "found bullet". It is about promoting the risk of becoming "stuck in the police uniform", which has served as an icon of repulsion in face of the accumulated memory of violence, as well as a magnet attracting vendettas and score settling. The police force is controlled by internal and external groups that operate according to the logic of promoting confinement by means of itinerant fences and by stimulating negative social and space mobility. It is about bringing to life, right there in the neighborhood, autonomous units of hatred, resentment, and vengeance, made up of self-proclaimed "good citizens". Their moralistic crusades make them become a "police of customs", whose political practices of extortion and management of illegal markets reveal them as "police of goods" rather than good police.

Today's protection, tomorrow's tyranny

Widespread fear is not a reliable counselor. It transforms the persecutory predictions for tomorrow, into threatening predictions for today. It induces the anticipated and exhausting calculation of the immediate effects as a resource of self-management in the face of uncertainties, dramatized by the narratives of increased fear. It stimulates to produce an "a priori" moral, accounting for the sources of risk. It is a defensive resource for survival in the slums, in the face of disruptions in the routine promoted by the government's management of the "war on crime". Fear also produces moralities that establish a cleavage of the senses, practices, and desires, forging boundaries and identities, such as that of

the alpha-male invulnerable to death by a bullet or by a "little flu".

The main political profit from the fabrication of fears corresponds to creating and legitimizing an authoritarian power project. After all, the greater the generalized feeling of insecurity, the greater the social cohesion around common interests of empathy for the different and of collective mobilization to maintain rights and achievements. The more aggravated fear becomes, the more likely frightened individuals will adhere to a pact of submission to those who promise to "fight decisively, once and for all", crime, violence, incivility, disorder. The more structured fear becomes, the greater is the possibility of subordination to a pact of subjection, which promises closer protection against sudden scares, in a direct manner, above the law and below the rights.

The fear regime, and the generalization of the perception of insecurity, makes space for a ready to act governing structure, which maintains its subjects with open eyes, in a state of attention, ready to make the body react and rapidly avoid the symbolic and material threats that come from above with the warriors of the State. They come in armed and spread themselves around, becoming protection merchants. One may say, pragmatically, about dealing with this daily chaos: "this is what we have for today". To jump the fences of generalized suspicion, to leap over the barriers of exclusion, to push through the barricades of lost rights, and to cross the social boundaries with the little economic and symbolic capital available, "is always counted to the last penny". All this takes place, by making use of a citizenship of "a mileage program", which is used to pay a high price for each social parade in the uptown direction, accumulating moral points for the adhesion to its order. All that, to show that one accepts social inequality as natural, and the declining socio-spatial mobility as destiny. All this just to stay alive, to "fall into the market", trying not to be left out.

Navigating daily life in the peripheral world is punctuated by the activation of an informal alarm system, instituted to deal with constant scares which come from the "fight against crime" or the "disputes between factions". Those who are from or come from the slums learn to make use of a "manual of good practices", to maneuver around the fear of "being seen as involved", the fear of "dying in the hands of the police", of being "used by crime as a shield", and moreover, the fear of "doing everything right and still be left out".

How the perverse circuit of protection works

The field of security is the space of accorded social control and of regulation which guarantees freedom. Its preventive actions, dissuasive and repressive, are by nature, restrictive and invasive. Therefore, they must be agreed upon by society and managed by the State. Hence, security must be public. When public security is perverted into privatized protection, we move away from the free world of coming and going, into defensive spaces. We go from the egalitarian world of the free 800 number, to the charged call world of VIP places where you must pay to enter.

To protect does not mean to produce public security. Protection is a particularized resource, unequal, excluding, that must be paid for. It is a marketable product, operated and capitalized by autonomous governments. We may say that "the logic of protection, incapable of promoting public security, introduces fear as the counselor, violence as the daily reality and terror as the horizon"[13]. This is what creates acceptance of an authoritarian authority, above the rules of social interaction, above the law. The volunteering protector of today – being that, the nice muscular guy from the gym, the drug dealer with a good heart, the good looking strong man at the corner of the street, the nice militiaman – those may all become the tyrants of tomorrow. The ones who free us from the fabricated fears of now will be the calculating bullies who fabricate successive threats to create illegal control over territories and populations, and by doing so, regulate the illegal markets.

To make the perverse circuit of protection work, one must promote security crises, fabricating real or fictional characters who represent danger, because of their social condition, because of the color of their skin, their *habitus* associated with crime, who need to be contained so "good society" can continue to go to shopping malls, to churches, to school. Those continuous threats lead to precarious deals and temporary alliances for the management of social life. This practice opens space to defensive logics of social distancing, such as "each one on his own turf", which corrode empathy, solidarity, and cooperation, expressed in the philosophy of "when there is little to share, I come first".

We reach the exhaustion of the insecurity which ends with the *authoritarian tale* of a strong authority who promises to bring back the order and normality which itself destroys. That leads to

tyranny by legal and illegal, legitimate or illegitimate, governments, which promote the use of terror as a marketing strategy in their criminal political economy. Unpredictability is amplified with vigilante-like practices, which have high social visibility and produce a feeling of policing and justice with immediate effect.

The terror practices become a great political spectacle with the promotion of a commercial war against crime, which justifies, continuously, the practices of exception. Such practices transform lives and rights into merchandise, unequal according to the credentials of color, class, gender, sexual orientation, place of residence, and religious beliefs. War, which should be extraordinary, subordinates ordinary life. The practices of exception, which put the rule of law between parentheses, are legitimized, making it become the law as dictated by the warlord of the moment and by the merchants of protection.

"We produce a war to sell peace": a high impact political advertising for terror marketing

Is Rio de Janeiro still beautiful, as the song says? Rio continues to be a "true battlefield", the law agents say, as well as the press and many *Cariocans* (natives of Rio). A general search on Google about public security shows a gallery of images, which are a portrait of how the policemen, the militiamen, and the "*meninos*" (teenagers) from the gangs see themselves, are seen by others, and want to be eternalized in the social media. The images have in common the ostentation of provocative performances, the showing off of weaponry, the effusive celebrations of victory against the enemy of the occasion, the presentation of the achievements of the latest police operation or the bounty taken from the defeated, the demonstration of combat loyalty, the violent gesture expressions, and the clothing that gives value to the virile disposition for combat. Through this iconographic sample, a narrative about (in)security is revealed, which presents itself as hegemonic: war, as an unavoidable reality, between the forces of order and the armed bands, a war of everyone against everyone.

A collection of published images with a high visual impact and high social visibility, which shows a big enactment of a war. It displays a performance police, with its operational men, a "police of goods", who are also militiamen, and the soldiers of drug gangs, also policing and illegally ruling the illegal markets. The pictures of graffiti also stand out, as do the pictures of barricades, of sentries, and of maps which show the divided territory under the control of armed autonomous illegal governments. We can also find, when searching on Google, the visual records of the frequent territorial disputes between these governments. It is there for those who want to see: *Habemus bellum!* War is real in its practices and in discourse.

War against crime, promoted sometimes with the cooperation of populist politicians, and sometimes as a demonstration of the political and economic strength against them. This war has already lasted more than three decades without reaching victory or defeat. War is the continuation of the permanent criminal political economy, and displayed in the media for publicity. As an entrepreneurship, it must go on. It is seen as an endless journey, as an indispensable fight for the business of protection, and necessary to keep morale high. It is the dimension of impacting publicity for the marketing of terror, at the service of fear and of its authoritarian and lucrative project of power. In order to generalize the individual feeling of insecurity and to promote the increase of collective terror, it is fundamental to make a lot of noise, have many shoot-outs, encourage gunfights, and spread around lost bullets. The situation has reached the point that it is necessary to use types of software that guide people through safe paths and keep them from landing in a "high-risk area" or at a police barrier, or a barrier made by the drug dealers or the militia. In order to leave home before or after an armed conflict, it has become common for people to check apps with names like "Crossfire" or "Where is the shooting" and the "Pista news" blog. After all, it is imperative to interrupt routine, paralyze traffic, restrain the circulation of people, allow real time media coverage, and spread rumors. All of this produces a dazzling effect on the periphery population, where everything happens, and far away, on the population of the noble areas, where people watch, from the couch, the war that is displayed on the apps. Everyone must be maintained on the verge of a nervous breakdown and completely lost; there must be sounds, lights, anger and action: command words, sirens, rhythmic machine gun bursts, police lights, laser aims of weapons ready for instant deployment, all part of the choreography of the operational odyssey of real life action-men.

War is an exaltation of intimidating power used with high visual appeal, which requires a "spectacle police", an ostentatious police, an

operational police. A noisy force which makes itself noticed, that shows off its might. The war against crime is, foremost, a real fiction. Its realism becomes more true, as it moves away more and more from the reality of public safety and imitates the extravagance of the action movies.

A theater of police, political, and commercial operations: self-promotion in high visibility

Every day, they do everything the same way. They wake up for another day of operations, they awaken the poor neighborhoods with some sort of intervention. Out of nowhere, by land and by air, they come in armored cars, spilling out policemen on the streets. There is no conventional and usual coming and going of police patrols which produce actual control of the territory and the people. It is not about policing or producing the dissuasive, accumulative and preventive effect through qualified and focused repression. The aim is to produce repressive results of high impact, with only punctual effect against crime, limited in time and restricted in space, at the cost of significant public resources. One can witness the exceptionality made routine in the form of assaults taking over a reduced perimeter, done by a massive police force. There is an errant and intermittent rush of troop fractions on the inner peripheries, converted into "unstable territories of the slums, incursions and sieges in areas considered "police property"[14], with or without a political aim. Political mission given, publicity mission accomplished: the standard operational procedures of police patrolling give way to the so-called "guerrilla tactics". The daily, order-preserving police is exchanged for the punctual presence of the pointless actions of the police of operations. The endless in and out of police in the slums, compromising expressive contingents and causing scarcity of policing throughout the rest of the city. The excessive deployment of police in the slums for large operations exhausts the available operational capability, reducing ostensive coverage and compromising immediate response for emergency calls. The banalization of operational spectacles comes at the expense of the "before something happens" police, slows down the police "that could stop crime as it happens", and delays "post factum" police. The so-called special operations fulfill a crucial role in the big scheme of policing activities. Their rationale is supposed to be the deployment in critical situations, in which there is high risk of life for policemen, victims, and criminals. That is the origin of the specialized and highly trained tactical forces, and their mission is to divert critical situations with minimal casualties. Its purpose is to reduce risks and losses in complex scenarios. Therefore, special operations are a noble and expensive resource, which should be employed only occasionally, in extraordinary circumstances, in order to guarantee tactical discipline and methodological superiority.

In Rio, special operations ended up becoming "regular police operations", straying away from their specific doctrine, from their original "specialized" character. They have become the priority, the recurring method of police action, acquiring a purpose which does not correspond to the control of common crime and criminal networks as one might imagine. Despite what the policemen believe to be their legitimate, professional way of action, these operations fulfil a different purpose: to make war! To be a theatrical representation of repression as an end in itself, indispensable for the establishment of a regime of fear. The aim is to manipulate the most visible dimension of police work, for the eyes of the simple folk: repression, through concrete police action and in real-time. After all, the nature of police business is repressive, when it dissuades and prevents crime, violence, and disorder. Its political-economic effect becomes more significant with the easy mobilization of coercive resources on a large scale, in the form of police operations. The more exchange of fire, provocations, taunting, the more promotion the business of protection receives.

War is an extreme situation, and police operations made into a routine is a waste of material and human resources; it is, however, invaluable for the regime of fear. War is the exuberance of a dramatic spectacle, approaching tragedy in the horror of the deaths it causes: it amplifies insecurity and intensifies fear. The fabrication of war comes with the emancipation of the power of the police, which in turn makes space for emerging autonomous governments that administrate territories and illegal markets.

It is well-known that war does not defeat armed groups. War creates armed groups which legitimize and perpetuate it. The government works with crime, and not against crime. Fear regimes bring to life a political economy of crime that regulates and encourages illegal markets that provide essential services and goods. In the outlying neighborhoods, one pays repeatedly for the same political goods[15]. Real estate property, ille-

gal electricity connections, propane gas for cooking, makeshift water services, clandestine public transportation, illegal Internet connections, all charged for repeatedly because of instability and changes in the commanding gangs that rule an area. Not to mention rival groups who may charge "protection taxes".

Autonomous illegal governments need a certain amount of permission and connivance from the public powers in order to function and grow, for example, the militias. War is made, so peace can be sold, and the price paid is the bribery to allow a business to be opened and the rent that is charged to allow people to live in those areas. The State seems to operate as a large regulatory agency which outsources the role of governments and leases its territories to armed groups.

A criminal form of entrepreneurship is defined, with a neoliberal coating, which can be summarized by the phrase said by a interviewed policeman: "each one makes their own capitalism". In the illegal markets, there is space for profit and opportunities for those who have the power to break the law. It is the power of the police, perverted into "a policeman's power". Why not negotiate a scheme to make some retirement money out of protection? There is a saying: "in Rio, [the policeman], either ignores, or becomes corrupt, or goes to war". It seems more adequate to say that going to war opens the path towards corruption and justifies omission when doing police work.

To make war is a necessity. Each one, with his own private war, to expand his business. In Rio de Janeiro, the political arrangements with armed groups at the wholesale level, are not capable of absorbing and coordinating the deals with the police at the retail level. Each police department, each troop, and at the end of the line, each individual policeman, may do, independently, their own "police operations" and promote their own private little war, in the name of some public interest, or the interest of his corporation, or on his own behalf. There is no clear unity of command in the legitimate police actions, nor in the command of illegal police activities. The fragmented chain of command of the police force ends up stimulating a form of police liberalism to exploit the illegal markets.

The arrangements with the illegal markets for power occurs through a logic of latent and (one) manifest conflict with the various agreements that come from the very foundations of the police pyramid: the direct contact of the police with the illegal markets. There is a dispute for the control of chunks of the illegal market between policemen from higher and lower echelons as well as within the same hierarchical levels. Thus, the contracts with gangs become even more unstable and untrustworthy, demanding ostentatious, violent displays from both sides to legitimize and update the rules of an economic game that is worth millions. Violence and police corruption are two sides of the same coin used for trade in illegal markets that support the settlement of bribes, in other words, police "permission" for illegal activities. Behind policemen who kill and die in the commercial war against crime, there is a police force which is weakened as an institution and government officials who are vulnerable, muzzled in their offices. The existence of simultaneous and autonomous battles is evidence of how much the politician who defends the war against crime has become himself a prisoner or hostage to his/her own speeches: he/she cannot govern the law enforcement services; he/she is only their spokesperson and flag-bearer.

From the retail of individual "permission" to the wholesale of militias

In the middle of the war, there comes pestilence disturbing everyday operations. There is some data that points to a decline in the profit of the armed groups during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Incoming money has fallen", so we hear from the greedy mouths at the stash houses. There is word of the small-scale delivery services of drugs to customers in social isolation, and the expansion of the areas where protection pay is demanded by the militias. The chaos of small-scale extortion by policemen and the large-scale actions of the militias continued, bravely defying the pandemic. In the slums, the war for territorial dominance is a government problem. It is not a matter of State. Dying of COVID-19 and/or dying because of crime, that is the question. Those who live in places under the control of the militia, are forced to pay the same taxes several times over: they pay to the State and pay to the militia government. "One of these days, we will have to pay to breathe", say the residents and business owners.

Crime business cannot stop. With no crime money, there are no underground contributions to electoral campaigns, and there is no political influence and power over the territory. Political careers become an essential investment, an efficient money-laundering scheme for crime money. The sanitary crisis is a window of opportunity

to strengthen illegal deals by the militias. They must fill in the void left by police operations to expand their areas of sovereignty, to guarantee their monopolies, to update the extortion contracts.

Militia members are not hidden and are not invisible. They come from the State, they have an address and occupation, they mingle with authorities, go to VIP parties, provide protection for important people. These are their credentials. What differentiates the "police of goods" is that they can manipulate the "good police" from within and from without. The business of the militia has the advantage of selling an order which it also threatens with the marketing of war. In the promised land of the militias, "lives are spared", interrupting the routine of police operations and bringing the ostensive routine of extortion. The State grants the function of governing and controlling the territory, the regulation of markets and the payoffs to sponsor truces, with support of weapons and money. A high price is paid to supply stability, to keep the capital of criminal dealings moving. After all, in the war done by the police of operations, the excessive violence compromises the gains of organized crime. The bribes paid for at the pulverized, retail level weaken crime's ability of investing and multiplying profits. The bribes paid at the wholesale level to the militia, prevents, for an certain agreed upon time, the financial losses caused by the armed conflicts. The bribe brings limited peace. It brings, however, the intimidating benevolence: there will be no children dying, there will be no police dying, there will be no resident dying. *Smile, no one needs to die, as long as you pay the bribe.* For a good militia man, one police operation is enough to sell predictability in precarious deals.

Warriors, merchants protection, and prophets of chaos: insecurity, intolerance, and exclusion

To build a regime of fear and make their exception measures natural, as a sort of "bitter medicine" against citizenship, requires more than the willingness of the warlords and the cooperation of the merchants of protection. It takes more than the defiant and confident attitude of the authority of the moment; it takes more than offering illegal merchandise, cheaper than in the uptown, and the promotion of "hard, although easy gains"[16]. The sword is mighty, but cannot manage it all on its own. It needs political alliances

and criminal arrangements. The illegal market is quite powerful with the might of the sword, but it needs the loyalty of providers and clients. Fear is a potent tool, but it requires a strong bonding to attach to people. The warrior and the merchant need the prophet and his moralist preaching to convince people of the advantages of subjection. An engaging fear discourse is indispensable, making the subjects desire captivity. The symbolic efficiency comes with the belief that it works as the cement, as a mechanism of legitimizing authoritarian authority. It is a violent tripod articulation, fusing together the warrior of subjection, the merchant of protection deals, and the prophet of fear, constituting a sort of oppressive holy trinity, articulating insecurity, intolerance, and exclusion.

The exploitation of insecurity introduces a narrative of constant fears and diffuse threats which structure the lives of the individuals around the fear of getting caught by violence or dying. The rhetoric of extreme fear is a terrible counselor, which renders previous mistrust the normal behavioral pattern. The enemies range from the strange to the familiar, and one is suspicious of even the people that are the closest, like neighbors, relatives, and friends. Defensive beliefs such as "trust, but be suspicious" and "always keep one eye open", are strengthened.

Generalization of insecurity leads to intolerance as a defensive and violent resource to be activated in face of successive threats. Intolerance undermines the value of common sense, which comes from discussion, consideration, consensus, and agreements between plural subjects. It favors a single thought, authoritative, settled on the fantasy of a society which is homogeneous and without dissent. The pedagogy of the single thought instrumentalizes and legitimizes a power structure in which exclusion becomes legitimate, it becomes the policy for those who are, at the lower levels of social hierarchy, maneuvering around their unequal situation. Exclusion to include individuals in a situation of social vulnerability requires imposing corrective sanctions, for those who do not fit into an imposed order, from top to bottom, which maintains the white, male, anti-gender status quo. Its purpose is to reinforce social barriers, strengthening social confinement, "each one in his little corner", retro-feeding insecurity. The insecurity-intolerance-exclusion tripod provides the binding and the belief that each one has his/her own sin. However, it masks the fact that when a sentence is fair only according to its own principles, blind in its determination,

it makes the knife sharper on all edges, cutting in every direction, even the hand of the one who holds it.

At this point, it seems obvious that an authoritarian project, built upon fear and insecurity, will make use of a policy of jump scares. The population is *startled* by the promotion of daily tragedies. With that, comes the *punctual authoritarian performances*, in which the actors promise that "they can" and "they do" in order to obtain more power in the protection business. The epilogue is the *operational showoffs* of successive spectacular police interventions with very limited real effect against crime, but with high social visibility. In so doing, the belief in the prophet of chaos is renewed, the belief that we live in a situation out of control, which justifies exceptional actions by the warriors against evil. Hence, the merchant of protection can continue doing his job.

Final considerations

This article sought to show that generalized fear and insecurity are awful counselors, since they make authoritarian demands for order prosper. Public security in societies that are actually democratic, free, egalitarian, and plural corresponds to the wide-scale assurance that ideas, people, and goods can move around freely, in an equitable and predictable manner. Public security surpasses the exclusivity, the intensity, and the quality of police operations, whose effects are always limited and temporary in time and space, regardless of how well the police force does its job. Public security has a structural basis for police operations of control and regulation, the dynamics of social and spatial mobility and the universal access to fundamental rights. This is what values the preventive and dissuasive effect of police work. Public security goes beyond the level of immediate fear, as it paves the road that goes from the "here and now" of our present, to the "coming soon" of our future. On the other hand, the regimen of fear as a power project, promotes pointless repression as a means to its own ends, fabricating and ramping up security crises. For an authoritarian project to prosper, the horizon, the social paths must be narrowed and linked to a present that is unstable and a future that is uncertain. The more restricted to the present, the more condensed and immediate social time is due to increased fear, the more attractive the authoritarian proposals will be, as they present themselves as direct, simple, and straightforward. The more excluding the social spaces become, with more barriers reinforcing isolation and social distancing, the more attractive the promises of an authoritarian order, believed to be efficient because they are unitary, uniform, and authoritarian.

Public security must go back to being controlled by the State, and not outsourced to clandestine organizations, armed groups, and of the like. That is the only way to make insecurity cease to be a political-criminal multi-million dollar project that has achieved such avid success among us.

Collaborations

JO Muniz, FR Cecchetto participated equally in all phases of the production of this article.

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