

THE RISE OF SECURITY
and
Why We Always Want More

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Mike Croll



Universal-Publishers
Irvine • Boca Raton

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Universal Publishers, Inc.
Irvine • Boca Raton
USA • 2023
www.Universal-Publishers.com

ISBN: 978-1-62734-432-6 (pbk.)

ISBN: 978-1-62734-433-3 (ebk.)

ISBN: 978-1-62734-423-4 (aud.)

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Typeset by Medlar Publishing Solutions Pvt Ltd, India
Cover design by Ivan Popov

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
available at <https://lcn.loc.gov>

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INTRODUCTION

Security is a baggy term, although its essence is easy to define. Rooted in the Latin *se*—without, *cure*—care, it means without care or worry.

There are many types of security: geopolitical, national, military, economic, financial, emotional, and more. But this book is about physical security: how we protect ourselves from other people. It's not about defence, that's what soldiers do; neither is it about law and order, that's what police officers do. But security is closely related to both and its central character is the security guard who you ignore in the museum, or grumble at in the airport.

Tell anyone that you work in “security,” and they are likely to tap the side of their nose and imagine that you belong to some shadowy government agency. Or they might think that you wear a peaked cap and stand outside a supermarket in the rain. Either could be true.

It's rarely been glamorous, but we've needed security since the earliest of times and it's now one of the world's fastest-growing businesses. By 2020 it was worth over \$250 billion, close to \$500 billion if we include the booming cybersecurity business. Forty countries have more security guards than police officers and in the UK they outnumber police by more than two to one.

The traditional paraphernalia of security was truncheons and lanterns, locks and keys, gates and walls. Today it is metal detectors, CCTV, electronic alarms, X-Ray machines, digital access control, and intruder detection systems. All things that have become so common that we barely notice them.

Yet, increasingly, security systems using facial recognition, GPS tracking, and dataveillance, notice us. We are trading our liberty, and our privacy, for our security. But that may not be a bad thing.

The central question that this book aims to answer is: why do we always want more security? There is no simple answer.

Security is closely linked to safety and, although the terms are often used interchangeably, they have different meanings. Safety also has a Latin heritage: it comes from *salvus*, which means being uninjured or physically unharmed, whereas security is about being psychologically untroubled.

Whatever their etymological origin, safety and security are two sides of the same coin. Both are about protection from harm, but there is a key distinction: safety is about protection from things (trips, tornadoes, and tigers), whereas security is about protection from people (mostly men). Safety is straight-forward and often predictable, but security is more complex because people are endlessly cunning. Armed with sufficient determination, they will eventually overcome any security measures.

The importance of both safety and security was put into context by US psychologist Abraham Maslow in 1943 when he described a hierarchy of human needs. The first are physiological: air, water, food, sleep. Without these, we cannot live. Next, comes safety and security. Without these, we cannot survive. After that comes kinship and belonging to a community, which provide contentment, followed by esteem, dignity and self-actualisation which deliver fulfilment.



Maslow's hierarchy: safety and security are fundamental to the human condition.

Our instincts for security were honed hundreds of thousands of years ago as we competed for survival amongst other animals on the African plains. We were never the fastest, nor the strongest, but we had efficient fear mechanisms that helped us fight, or more likely, flee from predators. Using intelligence and teamwork, we became the apex species, and we developed reason to fear each other more than we feared lions.

As social creatures, we grouped together under an alpha male. He took the best food and the finest women but, in return, he provided security for

the group. Protecting people was the first role of the leader, a principle that holds true today.

Communities grew and alpha males became kings. Security became a collective responsibility with all men obliged to take turns at keeping watch and chasing criminals. During the industrial revolution, small towns grew into complex cities. The night watch became a paid service, and police forces were established to maintain law and order.

As people became wealthier, they developed a fascination with locks to protect their growing range of possessions. Locksmiths became famous and lock-picking competitions were celebrated public events. In London, newspapers fuelled a moral panic about crime which boosted demand for locks and security guards, and created a market for home insurance.

Large-scale commercial security started in the US during the 19th century, where big business employed guards to control restive workers, often with fatal results. During the World Wars military guards protected the US's defence establishment. After WWI they were disbanded, but after WWII and the transition to the Cold War, they were privatised and by 1950 there were half a million private security guards in the US.

In the 1960s there was a rapid expansion in the construction of commercial property including office blocks, shopping malls, cinemas, airports, and sports stadia. The owners of these properties, rather than the police, were responsible for security within them, so they turned to private security companies for help.

The 1960s also saw the start of the mass consumer age. Everyone wanted radios, televisions, cars, record players, and kitchen appliances. Some could afford them, others couldn't. Throw in the rise of drug culture and addicts seeking to fund their habits, and the breakdown of traditional family, religious, and community structures, and the result was a crime wave. The main beneficiary was the private security industry which provided protective services to businesses and residences.

Until the 1970s you could board a plane without any identification or baggage checks, and join the pilot in the cockpit for a smoke. Then along came hijacking and the introduction of strict security measures. They slowed things down at the airport, but they helped the commercial aviation security industry to take off.

The age of terrorism coincided with the arrival of graphic around-the-clock television coverage which amplified violent acts and generated public fear.

The 9/11 attacks were like a disaster movie plot. There was an appalling loss of life and everyone felt vulnerable. It also proved to be a bonanza for the security industry which broadened its services to include geopolitical analysis, risk management, employee vetting, crisis management and business continuity management.

Embassies became targets for terrorists, and diplomats were posted to active war zones, swapping dinner jackets for flak jackets. From welcoming symbols of national prestige, embassies were transformed into bomb-proof bunkers. They relied for protection on an exclusive part of the security industry: the private military company, whose hired guns never quite shook off their mercenary image.

In the meantime, lawyers had entered the security arena. Traditionally, if someone suffered a loss in a security incident, they might get tea and sympathy, and perhaps a modest settlement on the side. But by the 1990s lawyers, often on a “no win, no fee basis,” were helping victims to fight for substantial compensation. They held venue owners to account for incidents on their property and the fear of litigation led to yet more investment in security.

Cyberspace created a new realm for security. The problem started with hackers who developed malicious viruses to damage computers and soon realised that there was money to be made. They morphed from vandals to criminals and were soon stealing more money than stick 'em up thieves. As organisations became dependent on computers, they were forced to invest in cyber security.

New technology, much of it originating in military systems, found applications in private security: CCTV (first used to monitor the launch of German V2 rockets during WWII), ultrasound and infra-red detection, satellite tracking, magnetic strip access control cards, electronic alarms, and drones. Sleepy guards were replaced by the unblinking eyes of cameras and sensors, controlled from high-tech operations centres.

The security sector has grown rapidly in recent decades. It attracted major investment from private equity which spotted the potential for growth and the need for competent security services to protect their interests in big businesses. The expansion of commercial security has been accompanied by consolidation. In 2021 a series of acquisitions made the security company Allied Universal one of the world's largest enterprises with annual revenues of \$18 billion and 800,000 staff. It's a good bet for the future too, as the private security business is likely to grow strongly for many years to come.

It seems that the more security we have, the more we want. Collectively, we are like a donkey trying to eat a carrot on the end of a stick that is harnessed

to our neck. As we move forward to take a bite, the carrot remains stubbornly out of range. The gap between our cravings and our satisfaction never closes. We can never be free of worry, so we try to soothe ourselves with ever-increasing security measures.

In part this desire for security is a normal human instinct, but there is also an alignment of powerful interests. Politicians, whose first duty is to protect us. Intelligence agencies, which justify their existence by pointing to unseen threats. The media, which sells more newspapers by shocking us. The security industry, which makes money by selling services to salve our fears. The insurance industry, which compensates for losses whilst minimising the chance of a pay-out. These forces converge on our anxiety-prone minds. It seems, as Dwight Eisenhower said of the military industrial complex, “We will bankrupt ourselves in the vain search for absolute security,” and the same could be said of our desire for personal security.

But that, too, may not be a bad thing. There are more feckless pursuits on which to spend our money. Security is a fundamental need for individuals, and it is the first function of government. As early as 1911, German soldier and writer Wilhelm Balck noted that “the steadily improving standards of living, tend to increase the instinct for self-preservation.” It’s natural that the wealthier we become, the more we have to protect and the more security we demand.

This book is panoramic rather than encyclopaedic. It’s an overview, not an oracle. I’m a security insider and I’ve aimed for a narrative that is interesting and engaging, a sideways perspective on a broad subject. It will take you on a path that may be familiar, but expect some surprises along the way.

Any discussion of security inevitably touches on a lot of injury and death. I haven’t lingered on tragedy; others can articulate that much better than I can. I’m not insensitive to suffering but, in this book, I’ve taken a clear-eyed approach to loss. I don’t mean to whistle as I walk past the graveyard, and I mean no disrespect by focusing more on the data than on the human element of some awful events.

Where I’ve used a quote or a distinct concept, I’ve given credit in the text. I’ve avoided footnotes (too distracting) and references (facts can be so easily checked on-line these days), but I have provided a select bibliography so you can see that this isn’t entirely a work of imagination. I’ve used various numbers to make my case. I’ve tried to be accurate, but do treat them all as indicative rather than gospel because statistics relating to security are notoriously sketchy. I’ll take the bullet for any errors.

A brief word on sex. Security, until recently, was an almost exclusively male occupation. I've referred to night watch*men* and I've used the pronouns he/him for security guards. I've done this because it was largely true, and to maintain a brisk narrative without resorting to caveats and contortions. If my instinct for brevity appears insufficiently inclusive, I can only apologise.

This book largely focuses on the UK and the US. These are the countries that I know best, they were amongst the earliest to establish private security, and the US in particular, has been the major innovator in this field.

Why did I write this book? I'm interested in how security developed and where it's heading. I believe there should be more debate about the implications of our insatiable appetite for security, the surveillance culture that has quietly been gathering intensity in recent decades, our attempts to eliminate even the most unlikely risks, and the profound impact of new technology. I aim to illuminate for the general reader how security has become such a major factor in our lives, and to encourage security professionals and students, to think more widely about the subject. Also, I find most of what is written about security to be somewhat dry and inaccessible, so I've tried to be kind to the reader and provide perspective, context, colour, and occasional glimpses of levity.

You might be hoping for some sensitive beans to be spilt on the various organisations for which I've worked. Sorry to disappoint you. You'll find nothing here that isn't available through open sources if you dig deep enough.

I hope you enjoy this story of how *Homo sapiens* became *Homo securitas*.

1

BASIC INSTINCTS

The journey to our modern concept of security has its roots deep in pre-historic times. We may be top of the food chain now, but we haven't always been. After descending from trees, we started life as *Homo sapiens* on the East African savannah around 200,000 years ago. The world was then much richer in animal life than it is today—and as a mid-size mammal that survived by foraging, we were pretty puny. Individually, we still are.

Consider the statistics. Usain Bolt, after years of training, and with designer shoes, can, for a few seconds reach 45kph. That's about the same top speed as an elephant. A wild dog can run at 70kph, and a cheetah can top 110kph. So, there are plenty of creatures that can catch us without struggling for breath.

In a stand-up fight, how would we fare against other animals? Could a 60kg man (that's the average weight of an African man today; the average American man, by the way, is 25kg heavier) overcome a 180kg lion, or even a 30kg baboon? Of course not. We lack the speed, the claws, the teeth, and the aggression, to subdue any but the smallest of animals in a bare-knuckle contest.

Without weapons, traps, and teamwork, we are pathetically vulnerable; so, our finely tuned fear mechanisms are fundamental to our survival. Fear is our emotional response to perceived danger. It's our instinctive risk-assessment mechanism, it's central to how we feel about security, and, as we'll see, it can often defeat clear thinking.

Much as we may like to think that we are predominantly intelligent creatures with emotions, we are fundamentally emotional creatures with intelligence.

Our bodies, our minds, our chemistry, our instincts, are basically the same now as they were 200,000 years ago. We may be better groomed, better fed, better mannered, and smell more fragrant, but we are essentially the same creatures.

The Importance of Being Fearful

Long before we developed language, we were expert at identifying emotions in others. Of the six main emotions generally recognisable across all cultures—fear, anger, happiness, surprise, disgust, and sadness—fear is the one that kept us alive. Fear alerts us to danger and keeps us secure. “Fear”, observed Samuel Johnson, “is implanted in us as a preservative from evil.”

Life on the savannah was all about survival: getting a meal, without becoming a meal. Mostly that meant foraging for nuts, berries, leaves, insects, and fruit, while watching over our shoulder for predators. If we wanted meat, we had to make do with carrion that had been killed by lions, then picked over by hyenas and wild dogs. After we gnawed on the bones, we left the scraps for the vultures. Our natural place in the food chain is between a canine and a carnivorous bird.

We needed at least 3,000 calories a day to survive, all of which had to be found in the wild. There were no cafes, supermarkets, take-away joints, or neat rows of carrots and corn growing in freshly tilled fields. If we didn't find food, we grew weak. If we grew weak, we fell behind. If we fell behind, we died. We grubbed and gleaned, like the animals we were, and we ate everything raw up to about 10,000 BC, when we learned how to cook with fire.

Very few people in the developed world have had to go without food. We may have felt hungry, but we haven't felt hunger. Hunger is when we don't eat enough to sustain our nutritional needs. It's the point at which the body starts to devour itself, first any reserves of fat, then muscle. Getting enough to eat each day was, until modern times, everyone's major preoccupation, our survival depended on it.

As *Homo sapiens*, we had a life expectancy of perhaps 25 years, a clear indication that only the fittest survived. Beyond that age, we lacked the speed, strength, and stamina to find food. Contrast this with modern athletes who can compete internationally well into their 30s, and you get a sense of the physical demands placed upon our ancestors. They had to be superbly fit, not to win a gold medal, but just to scratch around for dinner. As English philosopher Thomas Hobbes hypothesised, the natural state was one of “continual

fear and danger of violent death and the life of man [was] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short”.

At sunset, there was no gentle carefree sleep. Night-time was fright time for our ancestors. Many animals—including hyenas, snakes, scorpions, and leopards—are nocturnal hunters, while the lion is crepuscular, hunting in the twilight of dawn and dusk. The agitation felt by animals around the full moon is the response to the increased predator activity under its silver light. But regardless of the phase of the moon, we have always felt vulnerable at night when our bodies are tired, our vision is reduced, and our predators are active.

Survival on the savannah meant being constantly alert and ready to react. Faced with danger we would flee, or, if cornered, we’d fight. We didn’t have time to contemplate, we needed to react instantly. Instinct, not intellect, determined our response.

All creatures are programmed to preserve their lives. It is the most crucial of predispositions. The thing that makes us most fearful is, of course, the prospect of death, especially a painful death. Pain is a natural response to our bodies being harmed. We don’t have to ask if we are being hurt because pain tells us. It’s a feeling, not a thought, it’s an automatic self-preservation mechanism.

Fear, too, is a feeling. We have all experienced it with varying intensity: a sudden knock at the door, a sharp swerve of a car, or an unknown figure bursting from the shadows. Fear explodes deep within our brains in a region called the amygdala.

The amygdala is both powerful and stupid. Powerful because it triggers the release of adrenaline and cortisol from the adrenal glands found above our kidneys. It’s like having an espresso, a Red Bull, and a steroid shot all at once. You don’t have to think about it, it just happens and instantly you are ready to run or wrestle. Stupid because it creates tunnel vision and blocks out rational thought.

You’ll be familiar with the feeling. The thump in your chest as your heart accelerates to pump more blood around your body. Your breath quickens to oxygenate your blood. Your muscles twitch as adrenaline readies them for action. Instantly, you are hyper-alert and goosebumps rise on your skin. You sweat to stabilise your temperature. If you’re male, your scrotum tightens as your testicles are lifted, like an aircraft’s undercarriage, as you prepare for action. And you get that ‘butterflies in the stomach’ feeling as blood is diverted from the digestive system into your muscles.

Anxiety is closely related to fear but it’s not the same. Fear has immediacy. You see a lion, instantly you dump performance chemicals into your bloodstream,

and off you scoot. Anxiety doesn't hit you; it gnaws at you and won't let you rest. Imagine crossing an African plain, with no refuge in sight, and knowing that lions may lurk in the long grass. You don't get a sudden shot of adrenaline, you get a steady drip, like a leaking tap. Your heart canters rather than gallops, your breathing is brisk but not rapid, you are unable to concentrate on anything, and your thoughts keep returning to what might be out there.

These primeval fear mechanisms continue to shape how we feel about security. The term *security* means a state where we are free from fear and anxiety. So, security is fundamentally about managing these feelings which are generated when we believe that we might be harmed.

For most of us the threat of lions has been replaced by the threat of burglars, muggers, or terrorists. But our physiology has not recalibrated to account for our less risky lives. The amygdala remains a commanding and relentless mechanism designed for the dangers of the savannah rather than modern urban environments. It overrides our rational thoughts compelling us to respond emotionally to safety and security issues even though we can expect to live vastly more comfortably, and three times as long, as our ancestors.

Alpha Males

As *Homo sapiens*, we generally lived in small groups of one or two dozen, and certainly no more than about 150. This was the maximum size of a community in which everyone could know each other. Beyond this number, groups lost their cohesion and sub-groups formed and skulked away. Key to cohesion was the 'alpha male' who kept order, literally through brute strength.

Vulnerable to predators, *Homo sapiens* stayed together for security, keeping watch, and, like families of meerkats, warning each other of danger. A group of strong males might have the best chance of short-term survival but in the longer term they would die out: reproduction was essential, so they needed a gender balance within the group. Producing and raising children, nurturing and protecting them, was a collective effort. So, security and reproduction, and therefore survival, depended on social cooperation.

Along with an instinct to detect dangerous predators, we also developed a strong sense of whom, within our species, we had to be wary of. The male could immediately gauge how he would fare in a fight with one of his own. He knew in a flash—by his opponent's size, his physique, the pugnaciousness of his features, and the look in his eye—if he could best him in a fight, or if he needed to run away.

That instinct remains with us. When men meet for the first time, they automatically assess each other's propensity for aggression. The clearest guide is facial breadth. A wide face is an indicator of higher levels of testosterone, larger bones, and greater muscle bulk. Richard Wrangham, in *The Goodness Paradox*, describes how wider-faced men score higher on the psychopathic trait of "fearless dominance". In ice hockey, for instance, the number of minutes spent in the penalty box is higher for broad-faced men than those with narrower faces. In the same way, whenever a man meets a woman, he knows instantly whether he finds her attractive or not. Back in the day, there was little time for an elaborate courtship. They made an instant left or right swipe. Mating was fast and furtive and a brisk performance was a necessity, not a source of shame.

The dominant male in the group naturally became the leader, the alpha male. His life revolved around the three fs: feeding, fighting and reproduction. He got the pick of the females in a social system that favoured breeding by the strongest and fittest, a selection mechanism that played an important role in maintaining the quality of the gene pool and thus the survival of the species.

The alpha male established a principle that has held good through the ages: there can be no political power without physical power. But his privileged position brought with it responsibilities. It was essentially an early example of an implicit social contract described by 18th-century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his book *Du Contrat Social*. The alpha male had to ensure order within the group and maintain stability. And he had to protect the group from external threats such as predatory animals and aggressive people. If he failed in either of these, he lost his position, and probably his life. In essence, the alpha male's status depended on his ability to provide security for the group. The same remains true of any leadership position.

Foragers to Farmers

A hundred-thousand years ago, when our species perhaps numbered only about 5,000 souls, some of our ancestors walked out of Africa, club in hand, to explore the world. After about 85,000 years we were thinly spread across every continent and had grown in number to about four million, or about the same as New Zealand's population today. To put this in perspective, the world is now growing at a rate of around 80 million people per year—roughly the population of London being born every month.

As we spread and multiplied, we turned our grunts into language, crafted tools, discovered the wheel, and we made best friends with the dog. By 5000 BC we started to grow food rather than chase it, which meant an end to the nomadic life and settling down.

A single hunter-gatherer needed about 150 hectares of favourable habitat to sustain himself. A cultivated plot of that same size could sustain dozens of people. New, permanent settlements sprang up along rivers: the Indus, the Nile, the Yangtze, the Tigris, and the Euphrates. An abundant supply of water, fertile alluvial plains, native cereals, and warm weather created the ‘Goldilocks conditions’ for sustainable farming which allowed communities to grow well beyond the few dozen members of nomadic groups.

With farming, security took on a new dimension. As nomadic foragers, we roamed the land and only possessed what we could carry. As farmers, we looked ahead, not just to our next meal, but to the next harvest. This meant owning land, building permanent homes, acquiring a range of possessions: tools, draft animals, and furniture, and it also meant stocking food to feed ourselves between harvests. At this point in our development, our major pre-occupation shifted from protection from predators, to protection from other people who coveted what we had.

Farming communities came into conflict with two types of people: hunter-gatherers, who had no concept of private property and sought an easy meal, and neighbouring communities competing for resources. The transition from nomadic wanderers to settled farmers brought with it epic conflicts as we staked out the land and attempted to protect our newly claimed property.

Studies of ancient corpses show that hunter-gatherer societies had a violent death rate of 164 per 100,000 per year, compared with 595 per 100,000 per year in early farming communities (by contrast, the worldwide homicide rate in the 21st century is 5.2 deaths per 100,000 and even during WWII it was only around 200 per 100,000—about a third of that in amongst early farmers). We often think of farming being a gentle, noble endeavour, but there is little doubt that it brought with it a significant shift in levels of violence and insecurity.

The Law, the Lash, and the Lord

As farming communities grew into large and complex civilisations, they developed hierarchies. The alpha males’ position was formalised and ritualised and they became known as kings. Like the alpha male before them, the king had an implicit social contract with his people. His privileged position depended on

him defending against external enemies and maintaining internal order. But with so many more people to govern and protect, he could not do this alone, he needed an army to do his bidding. To support an army, yet more food was needed. More food meant more land, and more land meant more conflict. It was the original vicious circle.

Early civilisations were essentially militarised agricultural societies. To survive they required strict discipline. An alpha male alone could control small hunter-gatherer groups, using his physical strength, and, quite literally, the law of the jungle. Then, as communities settled, the law of the jungle became social norms. As these expanded into large civilisations, the king needed to exert control beyond those that he could personally see and for this he needed laws. Laws provided the benchmark for internal order, they regulated behaviour, protected rights, and provided a framework to resolve disputes. If people stayed within the law, security would prevail. Security provided stability, stability gave rise to productivity, and productivity delivered prosperity.

One of the best-known early sets of laws is from Hammurabi in Mesopotamia, which was written on tablets of stone in around 1800 BC. The ancient Egyptians, Chinese, Greeks, and Romans all developed sophisticated legal codes, based on their notions of appropriate behaviour, and they have become a defining feature of every nation-state. But having laws is one thing, getting people to abide by them is another.

John Locke, the 17th-century English philosopher, believed that everyone had a natural right to protect their lives, limbs, liberty, and property, accompanied by a natural right to punish those who infringed these rights. By *natural rights*, he meant those held by all people prior to the formation of the state. Allowing people to exercise these rights themselves would lead to anarchy and endless revenge, so people surrendered to the state, their right to take justice into their own hands.

Punishments for law-breaking in early civilisations were swift and savage, much, presumably, as they had been in hunter-gather groups. This had two objectives: the first was to penalise wrong-doers, and the second, often more importantly, was to deter wrongdoing in the first place. The deterrence effect was amplified by punishments being a public spectacle.

Serious offences invariably resulted in the death penalty, but it wasn't sufficient just to kill someone, it was felt necessary to make sure that it hurt all the time they were dying. Lawbreakers could expect a slow and painful death: roasted over fire, flayed, or boiled alive, impaled, stoned, or thrown in a pit of snakes. Hanging and beheading were considered mercifully quick, and the guillotine

was introduced in 18th century France as a humane means of dispatching the guilty (last used publicly as late as 1939 and not abolished until 1981).

Minor offences attracted corporal punishment. The ancient Chinese used a system known as The Five Punishments, each escalating in severity. First was branding or indelibly tattooing the face; second, cutting off the nose; third, amputation of one or both feet; fourth, amputation of the sexual organs; and fifth, death by quartering or boiling alive. But the most common universal punishment was the lash. It was easy to administer, the number applied reflected the severity of the crime, it was intensely painful although rarely permanently debilitating, and the ferocious crack of leather on bare flesh added to the spectacle. It is easy to forget that until the 1870s the Royal Navy flogged disobedient sailors, and that corporal punishment was only finally banned in British schools in 2003.

Violent punishment was (and in some countries still is) used as the main tool for maintaining social control and security. A sign that a town took security seriously was often the sight of heads on spikes, or crucified or hanged bodies decomposing on the city walls. In Britain, criminals were placed in a body-shaped iron cage known as a gibbet and left to rot. Their flesh would be picked at by birds and eaten by maggots. The remaining bones would be left for years for all to see.

The practice was encouraged by the 1752 Murder Act aimed at “better preventing the horrid crime of murder,” by stipulating that, “in no case whatsoever shall the body of any murderer be suffered to be buried.” The gibbet was not abolished in Britain until 1828.

As well as laws and the lash, a third mechanism was devised to keep people on the straight and narrow. It was called religion. Hunter-gatherers were animists, believing that animals, plants, and forces of nature had souls. The Egyptians built on these beliefs with animal cults, multiple deities, elaborate funerary practices, and an unshakable conviction that their deeds in this life would determine their fate in the next. And the Pharaohs claimed that they were divinely appointed, which was a master stroke that meant that no one could challenge them.

Most societies developed some form of religion that connected your earthly deeds with your destination after death: the righteous were given a big set of white wings to take them to heaven, but sinners would end up stoking the fires of hell. It was a brilliant concept. Even if no one saw you commit a crime, you couldn't escape God's all-seeing eye (explained more fully in chapter 6). Whatever people thought of their earthly king, they were indoctrinated with

a genuine fear of a heavenly God, and this was a powerful means of ensuring order. In the Old Testament, God orders Abraham to kill his son, a clear sign that obedience to God was more important than even parental love. In the US today, studies show that non-churchgoers are twice as likely as churchgoers to be responsible for a crime, clear proof of religion's ability to exert social control and improve security.

Dark Ages

Ancient civilisations eventually lost their cohesion, broke down, and crumbled into smaller states. The impact on security was profound. For example, the Romans occupied Britain for almost 400 years having pacified local tribes and imposed law and order. When they left, Britain was plunged into centuries of anarchy known as the Dark Ages, the rate of violent death increased fourfold, and the economy tanked.

During the Dark Ages, there was no central authority to impose order. Communities had to rely upon themselves for protection using a system of collective security in which everyone had a role to play. Collective security had three key elements: hue and cry, tithing, and the posse.

The hue and cry was a mechanism whereby anyone witnessing a crime would shout to alert others who would pursue and arrest the offender. The practice wasn't unique to the post-Roman Britain; it's deeply rooted in our animal instincts and exists within all cultures. If a hunter-gatherer saw something threatening, such as a snake, a lion, or an aggressor from another group, he would alert others and get ready for flight or fight.

Tithing was a part of a system of compulsory shared responsibility brought to England by the Vikings. A *tithe* was a group of ten men who were obliged to arrest anyone within their *tithe* suspected of a crime, or they would all face punishment. This moderated an individual's behaviour by making the group accountable for the actions of each of its members. It was a bit like a football team where if one player commits a foul his teammates are obliged to squeal to the referee, or they would all be yellow carded. It was essentially a self-policing mechanism that built cohesive communities based on cultural norms and mutual trust.

A posse was a contraction of *posse comitatus*, a Latin term for a force of able-bodied men raised to deal with an emergency. It was less immediate than a hue and cry but more organised. A posse hunted for suspects, put down riots, and defended property. It was mobilised by someone in authority,

normally someone known as a *Reeve*, who was responsible for an administrative unit or Shire: a *Shire Reeve*, which is where the term Sheriff comes from.

Keeping the Peace

In Britain, after the Norman invasion, the system of collective security disintegrated and much of the countryside became lawless. People gathered in towns for protection, and from the 12th century, an increasing number of them were walled, reflecting the circular relationship between economics and security. To build a wall you needed money, to accumulate money you needed stability, for stability you needed security, for security you needed walls.

Walled towns provided a stable environment, and were the enterprise hubs of the time, but rural insecurity remained a problem. This was the period that gave rise to the legend of Robin Hood. Whatever the veracity of that tale, it was certainly true that Sheriffs struggled to control armed bandits living in the woods.

In the 13th century, King Edward I was determined to “keep the King’s peace.” This was an imprecise notion meaning tranquility, an ordered state of affairs, an absence of crime, where everyone was secure. This concept has endured through the centuries and even today British Police officers take an oath that they will, “well and truly serve the King in the office of constable ... and ... to the best of my power, cause the peace to be kept and preserved”.

In 1285 King Edward issued the Statute of Winchester, which was needed, it stated in its preamble, “Because from day to day, robberies, homicides and arsons are more often committed than they used to be.” The problem was that people instinctively supported the indigenous Robin Hoods against the Norman Sheriffs. People would not snitch on their own. The Statute, therefore, aimed to “reduce the power of felons” by enrolling communities. Everyone was given the right to make a citizen’s arrest and obliged to make “vigorous pursuit” following a crime. If they failed to do so, they would suffer a “fearful penalty”. It didn’t specify what the penalty would be, but it would usually involve a combination of extreme violence and debilitating fines.

To make certain that everyone got the message, the Statute was read aloud in “courts, markets, fairs and all other places where people assemble... so that no one can excuse himself on the grounds of ignorance.” This was the King losing patience. He was warning everyone that they would be held responsible for criminality in their area.

Under the Statute, tithing was re-energised, and people were obliged to take responsibility for guarding their towns using a system known as “watch and ward.” A watch was a watchman, and a ward was an administrative district. Town gates had to be locked between sunset and sunrise, and roads between market towns had to be widened, “so that there may be no ditch, underwood, or bushes where one could hide with evil intent within two hundred feet of the road”.

“Every man between fifteen years and sixty [was] assessed and sworn to arms according to the amount of his lands and of his chattels”. The statute listed six levels of wealth and the weaponry to be maintained by each. The richest had to have a horse, a chainmail tunic, an iron helmet, a sword and a knife. The poorest had to have a bow and arrow. Everyone was obliged to present their arms twice a year and train with them regularly. This created a militarised society with everyone having a role to play in maintaining security.

Three things point towards the effectiveness of King Edward’s system of collective security. The first is archaeological: examination of corpses indicate that the rate of violent death in England halved between 1200 and 1600 which reflected the pacification of the country.

The second is that the system was replicated in America by early settlers in the 17th century and formed the foundation of US law enforcement. The Sheriff and the posse are staples of Western movies which reflected the realities of frontier America where officers of the law would enlist people to help them to impose security or to track down suspects. Their function was the same as those raised in England centuries before.

By the time the Mayflower set sail, firearms had replaced swords as personal weapons, so men were obliged to carry guns and organise themselves into what became known as militias. So the US Constitution with its Second Amendment right to bear arms can trace its lineage back to the lawless forests of 13th-century England.

The third is that the ward and watch, together with the justice administration system, remained virtually unchanged in England until the 19th century when, as we’ll see in the next chapter, the industrial revolution, and the complexity of metropolitan life, demanded a new approach to security.

STOKING BRAZIERS TO STOKING FEAR

It is sometimes said that prostitution is the oldest profession, but it's likely that watchmen were there first. The earliest written reference is in the Old Testament's 7th century BC Book of Isaiah where watchmen were appointed to guard Jerusalem. And the seriousness of their task is spelt out in the Book of Ezekiel where "If, a watchman sees the enemy coming and does not sound the alarm... I will hold the watchman responsible..."

The watchman is at the heart of the story of security. We can imagine him, a solitary figure in a slumbering town, hunched over a brazier warming his hands, as he kept an eye out for trouble. His direct descendant is the modern security officer sitting in a darkened control room, peering at CCTV images on flickering screens and checking control panels for alarms.

In the first chapter we saw how citizens in England were compelled to mount a night watch, but over a thousand years earlier Rome had a formal internal security structure. Rome was a complex city with a cosmopolitan population of around one million. A city of that size couldn't just rely on laws, religion, and the lash to keep order, and the army was too blunt an instrument for internal use. To maintain security there were three organisations. The Praetorian Guard: elite bodyguards that protected Emperors and high officials. The *Cohortes Urbanae*: which was essentially a police force. And the *Vigiles Urbani*: city watchmen, whose role was similar to that of modern security officers.