

# Cultures of Fear

**A Critical Reader**

**Edited by Uli Linke and  
Danielle Taana Smith**

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Cynthia Cockburn

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Carolyn Nordstrom

Susan Sontag

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Cultures of Fear

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Uli Linke and Danielle Taana Smith



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## Series Preface

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Anthropology is a discipline based upon in-depth ethnographic works that deal with wider theoretical issues in the context of particular, local conditions—to paraphrase an important volume from the series: *large issues* explored in *small places*. The series has a particular mission: to publish work that moves away from old-style descriptive ethnography—that is strongly area-studies oriented—and offer genuine theoretical arguments that are of interest to a much wider readership but which are nevertheless located and grounded in solid ethnographic research. If anthropology is to argue itself a place in the contemporary intellectual world then it must surely be through such research.

We start from the question: “What can this ethnographic material tell us about the bigger theoretical issues that concern the social sciences”; rather than “What can these theoretical ideas tell us about the ethnographic context.” Put this way round, such work becomes *about* large issues, *set in* a (relatively) small place, rather than detailed description of a small place for its own sake. As Clifford Geertz once said: “anthropologists don’t study villages; they study *in* villages.”

By place we mean not only geographical locale, but also other types of “place”—within political, economic, religious or other social systems. We therefore publish work based on ethnography within political and religious movements, occupational or class groups, youth, development agencies, nationalists; but also work that is more thematically based—on kinship, landscape, the state, violence, corruption, the self. The series publishes four kinds of volume—ethnographic monographs; comparative texts; edited collections; and shorter, polemic essays.

We publish work from all traditions of anthropology, and all parts of the world, which combines theoretical debate with empirical evidence to demonstrate anthropology’s unique position in contemporary scholarship and the contemporary world.

Professor Vered Amit  
Dr Jon P. Mitchell

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# 1

## Fear: A Conceptual Framework

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*Uli Linke and Danielle Taana Smith*

Washington (CNN) – A Muslim family was removed from an airliner after passengers became concerned about a conversation they thought they overheard “of the safest place to sit.” AirTran officials refused to rebook them, even after FBI investigators cleared them of wrongdoing.

1pm Thursday [January 1, 2009]: AirTran flight 175 was preparing for takeoff from Reagan National Airport outside of Washington DC, a flight destined for Orlando, Florida. Among the passengers were Atif Irfan, his brother Kashif Irfan, their wives, a sister and three children, ages 7, 4, and 2; they were headed to Orlando to meet with family and attend a religious retreat. “The conversation, as we were walking through the plane trying to find our seats, was just about where the safest place in an airplane is,” Sahin said.

While the plane was still at the gate, an F.B.I. agent boarded the plane and asked Irfan and his wife to leave the plane. Passengers were informed that there was a “security situation”—a “breach of security”—on the plane. The rest of the family was removed 15 or 20 minutes later, along with a family friend, Abdul Aziz, a Library of Congress attorney, who was coincidentally taking the same flight and had been seen talking to the family. “I guess it’s just a situation of guilt by association,” Aziz said. “They see one Muslim talking to another Muslim and they automatically assume something wrong is going on.”

The conversation did not contain the words “bomb,” “explosion,” “terror” or other words that might have aroused suspicion, Irfan said. (Ahlers 2009)

\* \* \*

Washington DC (*The New York Times*) ... But passengers sitting behind them evidently overheard the [“safest” seat] remark, saw

Mr. Irfan's beard and his wife's head scarf, and grew concerned. ... The worried passengers contacted flight attendants, who contacted Transportation Security Administration officials and soon Mr. Irfan and his wife were off the plane and being questioned in the jet way. Next, the nine Muslim passengers—all but one are United States-born American citizens—were taken to a quarantine area in the passenger lounge where they were questioned by FBI agents. Mr. Irfan's three small nephews were denied access to food in the family's carry-on luggage. ...

"To be honest, as Muslims, we do understand how to deal with this, we realize this is an unfortunate aspect in our lives," Mr. Irfan said. "Whenever we get on a plane, because of the color of our skin, people tend to look at us with a wary eye anyway." (Robbins 2009)

\* \* \*

Irfan said he and the others think they were profiled because of their appearance. He said five of the six adults in the party are of South Asian descent, and all six are traditionally Muslim in appearance. (Garder 2009)

\* \* \*

According to Inayet Sahin: "There is a climate of fear that is present. When you are on the [Washington] beltway it says, 'Report any suspicious activity.' When you come into the airport, it says, 'Report any suspicious activity.' So people, you know, are just afraid, looking for suspicious activity." (Ahlers 2009)

\* \* \*

AirTran defended its handling of the situation. In a statement issued, the company said:

At departure time, the Captain of flight 175 informed the airline that there were two federal air marshals onboard who contacted local and federal Washington law enforcement officials for a security related issue onboard the aircraft involving verbal comments made by a passenger and overheard by other passengers. The airline then advised the Transport Security Administration (T.S.A.). It was determined that all 104 passengers onboard must deplane and passengers, crew, baggage and the aircraft should be re-screened. After the re-screening of the passengers, crew, bags and the aircraft, 95 passengers were allowed to reboard

the aircraft and nine were detained for interrogation by the local law enforcement officials, the F.B.I. and the Transport Security Administration. ... AirTran Airways complied with all Transport Security Administration, law enforcement and Homeland Security directives and had no discretion in the matter. (Robbins 2009)

“Security,” “safety,” “protection,” and “defense.” These are among the terms circulated as part of a global public discourse of fear which encourages proactive military action, legitimates war as a surgical intervention, and authorizes faraway acts of violence as a means of national border fortification. The securocratic language of the contemporary western state is war talk: it not only empowers a state’s military reach across national borders, but diminishes civil society, abandons human rights, diplomacy, and visions of peace. In US-American militarized media productions, the figure of the enemy outsider is conflated with the terrorist, who is imagined as a syncretic figure, as Muslim-Arab-Black. In this terrain of propaganda, mediatized militarism invigorates a montage of fear and race, recuperating an Africanist Orientalism that resonates across the Atlantic divide, into Europe, and worldwide.

The attacks on New York and Washington in 2001 and the ensuing declaration of the “war on terror” by the United States have had significant consequences for global social life. Anti-terrorist policies designed in the interest of national security and border protection forged a climate of unprecedented state-legitimated terror against phantasmatic others: US visions of the “axis of evil” or the figure of “the terrorist” are as illusive as reactive—fueling a popular desire for fortified borders. But these ideological fantasies about fortification and border protection are not merely discursive machinations. They are grounded in the operational logic of an expansive capitalist empire that seeks to disguise inherent instabilities and contradictions by a turn to war on terror. In the United States, the shifting configurations between politics, power, and capital have encouraged a rigid nationalism and vigilant patriotism.

But in the neoliberal global order, the economic requirements of mobility, flexibility, and deterritorialization collide with the state’s political commitment to securitize space. In this context, the imperatives of national security not only restructure the terrain of the biosocial (Giroux, Chapter 20 this volume) by an appeal to racial hierarchies but alter the essence of the border regime. As Miriam Ticktin observes, “the struggle to define citizenship and the borders of the nation-state is now also a struggle to define the

threshold of humanity and of life itself” (Chapter 9 this volume). The ubiquity of borders and the liquidity of empire are symptomatic of this current reality of the capitalist security state: a nation form, founded on fear, in which policing, surveillance, and militarism have become companions to normal life.

In such a context of heightened security measures and scenarios of threat, this book explores how fear has become a central feature of global social life: it shapes those societies at the very core of the “war on terror” (the United States, the European Union, Australia) as well as those national communities pushed to the margins by globalization, violence, and armed conflict (El Salvador, Mozambique, Uganda). In this chapter, we present a conceptual framework for the intercultural study of fear. Our discussion takes the following format. First, we map out the scope of this volume by a focus on a global logic of fear. Second, we explore the possibilities for a cultural analytics of fear by a heuristic focus on European border regimes. Third, we elaborate how a culture of fear is normalized in everyday social life to emerge as an ontological praxis. Fourth, we outline the organization of the book’s contents, giving particular attention to the thematic grouping of essays. Since each of the volume’s thematic sections begins with a separate introduction to explain our choice of focus and texts, this chapter provides an account of the book’s overarching conceptual frame.

#### A GLOBAL LOGIC OF FEAR

In this book, we expand contemporary discussions about the entanglements of political terror, national security, and human life not only by a comparative, transnational, and global perspective but also by moving beyond more narrowly focused terrorism-security debates. Our collection of essays provides a critical exploration of the formation and normalization of fear in global contexts of war and armed conflict. Our aim is to enable readers to engage the political, social, and cultural dimensions of fear with a humanistic and judicious approach.

This undertaking requires a particular conception of fear. We conceive of “cultures of fear” in terms of the regimes of terror that are discursively, strategically, and experientially imposed on human beings entrapped in the increasingly volatile contact zones between political systems, militarized communities, and administrative apparatuses. Cultures of fear have a political grounding: negative emotions like fear or terror are produced and sustained

to govern populations within the carceral spaces of militarized societies. In this sense, an emergent cultural system of fear cannot be understood solely as a byproduct of violence or as an inevitable symptom of war. Forms of terror are artifacts of history, society, and global politics. Cultures of fear and states of terror are affective tools of government that come into being as a modus of population management deployed by military, political, and administrative actors (Masco, Chapter 3 this volume). With our selection of chapters, we reveal the similar logics of fear that governments, humanitarian agencies, and extremist organizations use to monitor, control, and contain human beings in various zones of violence.

This book offers a comprehensive examination of the cultural manifestations of fear across the globe: the studies range from North America and Europe to Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Australia. Our goal is to provide readers with a deeper understanding of the cultural modus of fear: what forms it takes, how it is perpetrated, in what contexts it occurs, and what marks and traces it leaves on the bodies and minds of ordinary people. Our investigation is thus less concerned with specific acts of violence perpetrated in different parts of the world. Rather, we explore the formation of a global logic of fear under conditions of war and in the aftermath of political violence. We seek to illuminate the parameters, practices, and discourses that support the contemporary complex of terror-fear in societies worldwide. Our collection of essays shows that reification, normalization, and sublimation are among the procedures variously deployed by securocratic, bureaucratic, technocratic, militaristic, and mediatized forms of social governance in different parts of the globe. In exploring the deeper, often hidden, impact of cultures of fear, we reveal the common linkages between seemingly dissimilar conditions of violence that structure the lives of human beings—as citizens, immigrants, and refugees—in the contemporary world.

#### FEAR AS A BORDER REGIME

How does a global logic of fear take local form? How is the relationship between the security state and the biopolitics of privilege, race, and fear made evident in militarized societies? How do neoliberal security states sustain the fortification of borders in different parts of the world? These are among the central questions addressed by our collection of essays. The perpetual formation of militarized violence, racist terror, and destructive dehumanization across the globe makes it imperative, as Simon Gikandi proposed,



to confront the imperial machination “on its home ground” (1996: 27). Accordingly, we are persuaded to take the pertinent task of critical analysis back to the centers of global power, beginning with Europe and the United States. But while committed to this endeavor, we further argue that there is an urgency to widen the scope of such an analysis. There is a need to incorporate a transnational perspective to uncover the global hegemony of terror that structures the relations between subjects, communities, and nations. Following Noam Chomsky (Chapter 2 in this volume), the political history of globalization, including the violent reach of Western imperialism, requires us to rethink existing notions about the geographies of security and threat. In the contemporary world order, as Chomsky points out, the spaces and places where terror is enacted and where cultures of fear take form are not disparate, self-contained political geographies. Transnational flows of capital, media, migration, soldiers, sex, and weapons connect local situations to global networks and global centers of power. This analytic position is shared by other contributors to this volume. For example, by a focus on the global proliferation of US military bases, Cynthia Enloe (Chapter 16) documents how the traffic in sex and gendered violence impacts emergent cultures of fear in local communities across the world, from Okinawa in Japan to South Korea and Chile. By investigating the underground abuse of children by UN peacekeeping forces in Mozambique, Carolyn Nordstrom (Chapter 13) likewise uncovers how the local sex trade is driven by multinational industries with global connections. Although locally situated, cultures of fear are shaped by the dynamics of global power relations.

The essays in this volume approach the subject of fear from different angles, along various analytic trajectories. Positional perspectives illuminate the workings of fear in disparate societal frames and ethnographic contexts: military violence and armed conflict, the aftermath of war, the impact of international intervention, refugee camps, the quest for asylum, and the border protection by security states. What do these distinct settings have in common? How do we connect or assemble anthropological insights from separate places, situations, and events toward an integrated understanding of a global culture of fear? Based on a cohesive analysis of an exemplary case, we can identify those prevailing parameters that organize the ways in which cultures of fear are formed, sustained, and normalized. In the following, we examine the violent procedures of empire through the specters of a culture of fear that govern the borders of Europe. Our discussion is guided by the following

questions: What spaces, borders, and enemies are imagined or manufactured to serve as catalysts for protective militarism? How are populations governed, monitored, and disciplined in the realm of global security? And how is an emergent culture of fear linked to the proliferation of border regimes?

#### Cultures of Fear: Borders and Others

In studying cultures of fear and regimes of terror as situated “imaginative geographies,” Stephen Graham describes “the ways in which imperialist societies tend to be constructed through normalizing, binary judgments about both ‘foreign’ territories and the ‘home’ spaces which sit at the ‘heart of empire’” (2006: 255). The “binaries of place attachment” serve to demarcate a putative “us” in opposition to “the other”, “who become the legitimate target for military power. ...Very often, such polarizations are manufactured and recycled discursively through racist and imperial state and military discourses and propaganda, backed up by popular cultural representations” (256). Such mutually exclusive imaginings of a securitized ‘inside’ and a threatening ‘outside’ are enforced by border regimes that monitor, protect, and sustain cultural notions of relative human worth. As we suggest in this book, cultures of fear rely on this performative capacity of borders.

We therefore begin with an inquiry into the meaning of political borders. How do borders perform their designated task of inclusion and exclusion? Do we envision borders as geophysical entities or as legal, political, symbolic and social forms? In what societal spaces can we locate borders? Following Etienne Balibar, we need to speak of a “regime of borders,” “both in the middle of the European space and at its extremities” (2004: 13). Indeed, any modern state recognizes or creates “borderlines,” as Balibar asserts, “which allow it to clearly distinguish between the national (domestic) and the foreigner” (4). The outer borders of Europe, as mapped out by single states, incontestably have a geospatial dimension, a territorial reference or landmark, a footprint just beyond no-man’s land, where “the entrance of asylum seekers and migrants into the European ‘common space’” can be regulated and controlled (14). But on the ground, where matters of belonging and exclusion are decided, borderlines also acquire tangible form as legal, political, and social contact zones (Ticktin, Chapter 9 in this volume). European Union territories, like other federated entities (the United States), are defined by “open” borders in the interior—the so-called Schengen space—where European citizens can traverse national

borders without passport or identity checks. This inner “open” space, which guarantees the freedom of mobility for nationals, is protected by the simultaneous fortification of exterior borders. This is one snapshot of fortress Europe: an imagined political community with an interior borderland that is envisioned as open, liberal, democratic, and an exterior security border that is monitored, policed, and protected against refugees, immigrants, non-Europeans, and political enemies.

But such a binary juxtaposition of internal openness (no policing) and exterior closure (border militarism) is misleading (Williksen, Chapter 14 in this volume). For in the process of monitoring, capturing, and detaining unwanted populations—the dark-skinned migrants from the global south—external border guarding has become a militarized regime that extends into the very center of Europe: into European “securocratic public space” (Feldman 2004). As in the United States, the regime of borders in Europe is not confined to a fixed periphery, but comes into evidence as a decentered, dislocated, and ubiquitous process of exclusion. Let us elaborate by a look at detention centers. In September 2008, the European Parliament approved a new set of common rules for expelling undocumented migrants from European Union space. Under the new guidelines, these “illegals” can be held in specialized detention camps for up to 18 months before being deported.

The regime of borders, which includes the camps, is expansive, amorphous: it reaches into all contact zones between state officials and non-citizen subjects, both outside and inside of European space. A cartographic view of the location of the camps is revealing: the “empire of camps,” as termed by Nicholas Mirzoeff (Chapter 21 in this volume), extends throughout North Africa, southwest Asia, the eastern parts of Eastern Europe and western Asia; it demarcates Europe’s southern and eastern security borders and extends into all interior borderlands, with notable concentrations in Poland, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Great Britain (Migreurop 2009). An analysis of Europe’s border regimes therefore requires a focus on “the contradictory effects of the violent security policies waged” by *Europe* within its interior borderlands and “‘*in the name of Europe*’ by the bordering countries, now aggravated by the conjuncture of the ‘global war on terror’” (Balibar 2004: 15).

Europe’s political borders may be conceived as a militarized machinery, a violent procedure for tracking and containment that is subject to the operations of a state apparatus: migrants can be

envisioned either as a valued labor force or as a potential threat to life and safety. As such, border regimes have a dual disposition:

[O]n the one hand, a *violent process of exclusion* whose main instrument (not the only one) is the quasi-military enforcement of “security borders”, which recreates the figure of the *stranger as political enemy*, ... which is potentially exterministic; on the other hand, a “civil” *process of elaboration of differences*, which clearly involves ... a basic aporia concerning the self-understanding of Europe’s “identity” and “community”. (Balibar 2004: 14)

#### Producing Cultures of Fear: Exclusion as a Form of Terror

Cultures of fear are founded on border regimes, processes of exclusion that can be enforced by political and military means. In what ways does the performative violence of border guarding in Europe come into evidence? According to documentation provided by various humanitarian organizations, border militarism in Europe has resulted in close to 9,000 deaths of undesirable border crossers between 1993 to 2007 (United for Intercultural Action 2007). This figure includes “statistics of the permanent increase of death cases in some sensitive areas of the ‘periphery’ (such as the Gibraltar strait, the sea shores of Sicily and the Adriatic, some passages of the Alps and the Carpaths, the English Channel and Tunnel, and so on), which are recorded officially as casualties or tragic accidents” (Balibar 2004: 15). In addition to recording the fatalities of border militarism in Europe’s periphery, these statistics also include the deaths of migrants in Europe’s interior. Refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers are imprisoned, tortured, and killed, even after they enter the presumed zones of safety in Europe, in detention camps and police custody:

In January 2005, while detained in a police station in Dessau, Germany, Oury Jalloh (from Sierra Leone) was burned alive in a holding cell, found with his hands and feet chained to a bed, his nose broken, and his pants pulled down to his ankles. A month later, his death was declared an accidental suicide, with a notation by the chief of police: “Blacks just happen to burn longer”. (Jansen 2008)

This murder is not an isolated case. In Europe’s interior, the border regime is violent and often deadly. Detainees (primarily young

black men) are murdered in state custody: in the camp, the holding cell, the police station. The most often used methods of killing (based on a review of hundreds of cases) include the following: asphyxiation (hanging, suffocation with an object, strangulation, manual choking), the use of sedatives, waterboarding, drowning in police custody (by pushing a water hose down the victim's throat), forcible drug-induced vomiting (as practiced in Germany), being set on fire or dying in a fire (at airport detention centers or in police custody), and the denial of medical treatment. These murders by European state officials are pronounced and recorded as accidents or suicides. We suggest that we must rethink such practices, following Noam Chomsky (Chapter 2 in this volume), in terms of a "silent genocide."

In analyzing the tactics of border militarism in Europe, some scholars proposed that there is a need "to expand the model of 'war' to the study of the violent processes of control and suppression which target 'illegal migrations' and also affect asylum seekers at the 'outer borders'" (Balibar 2004: 15). But this border war, as we have suggested, is not confined to the periphery. It extends its reach into the very center of Europe, where predatory state terror unfolds in the detention camp and the police station, in holding cells, in police custody, in airplanes, airports, and in prisons. In addition, we argue that Europe's border regime, and the concomitant border war, is not limited to the carceral spaces of state detention. It takes effect in all those public places where migrants are policed, monitored, and violated by ordinary European citizens: the street, the park, the subway, and so on. But this biopolitical extension of the border regime, the border war's penetration into the vernacular spaces of everyday life, remains largely unrecorded. Such observations are supported by many contributors to this volume, such as Cynthia Cockburn (Chapter 11), who speaks of an unacknowledged "continuum" of violence and fear.

#### Implementing a Culture of Fear: Rendering Others Visible

Cultures of fear are founded on a politics of borders that enables the systematic inclusion and exclusion of specific population groups. But the everyday work of terror requires visible signifiers: abject difference comes to be visually marked. In the public realm, a binary code of race, sex, and space (ghetto, slum, camp) is implanted into vernacular looking-relations, used to identify the Other on sight (Giroux (Chapter 20), Kleinman and Kleinman (Chapter 19), Malkki (Chapter 7) and Sontag (Chapter 18) in this volume).

Similarly, European border regimes are encoded by a cultural logic of othering that sustains the fortification of Europe as a hegemonic white space. The regime of borders, as a violent process of exclusion, as Paul Gilroy observed, implicates the European Union in the explicit construction of a “white fortress” (2000: 247), a “bleached, politically fortified space” (2004: xii). Border militarism, as a way of guarding whiteness, has extended its reach into the political and social interior of Europe, into the everyday zones of national life. In Europe, violent exclusion proceeds by what Jonathan Inda (with view to the US-Mexican border) termed “border prophylaxis”: by spatial enclosures (camps), surveillance, and by “governing through crime” (2006: 116) and race. This conflation of blackness and criminality has several important consequences. African immigrants (by extension Black Europeans) are forced to inhabit the figure of the “illegal alien,” the enemy “outsider,” the “welfare sponger,” “pimp,” “drug dealer,” and the “diseased body”; they are treated accordingly. Random passport and identity checks, arbitrary arrests, body searches, physical abuse, torture, and sexual humiliation are perpetrated by state officials and police with increasing frequency since September 11, 2001. In Europe’s white public space, the black and dark-skinned signifier is continuously monitored. In this panoptic theater of race, the figure of the black-terrorist-criminal is conjured on sight.

In Europe’s interior “borderlands,” in those everyday zones of contact that Gloria Anzaldúa envisioned as “open wound[s],” “where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds” (in Fine et al. 2007: 76; see Anzaldúa 1987: 25), we see an intensification of racial violence and street terror against those whose physical appearance is rejected as non-European. Perceived “as a threat to the [white] body politic” (Campt 2005: 83), black and brown people are brutalized and killed by ordinary Europeans. The attacks appear to be opportunistic encounter-killings (on a train, in front of a pub, on a street, in a park, on a streetcar or subway), perpetrated by close-contact violence: the victim is kicked or beaten to death, stabbed, dowsed with alcohol and burned, bashed with a rock, pushed through a glass door or thrown out of a window. Europe’s border war has transfigured the space of the street into a zone of terror.

In this carceral terrain of white-on-black violence, fear becomes a central experience. In the words of one young African man: “I cannot move freely and avoid certain places; I am always afraid” (Menschenrechtsverein 2002). Europe’s “violent security policies ... [want

to] install migrants in a condition of permanent insecurity” (Balibar 2004: 15). In Europe’s border war, the securocratic apparatus not only includes peripheral borderlines, camps, prisons, and holding cells, but all public places. By policing the perceptual anti-citizen across European Union territory—from the outer perimeter to the camp to the street—border militarism has become commonplace: it has been implanted into the security habitus of the mundane.

Border regimes fabricate cultures of fear through panoptic markers of difference. This observation is attested by the various studies in this volume: the creation of “diseased” and “disabled” African bodies in France (Ticktin, Chapter 9); the vision of “proper” refugees imposed by international aid workers in Tanzania (Malkki, Chapter 7); the sexual targeting of “Asian girls” in Okinawa by US soldiers (Enloe, Chapter 16); the denial of humanity to grieving survivors of war in Sierra Leone (Henry, Chapter 8); the ‘disposability’ of black bodies in the United States (Giroux, Chapter 20); or the terror focused on “boys in rural areas” of El Salvador who come under suspicion of being soldiers (Dickson-Gómez, Chapter 12). The exclusionary capacity of border regimes is evident beyond fixed geographies.

#### Normalizing Fear: Monitoring and Surveillance

Analytic insights about Europe’s securocratic terror can be transported to other political terrains, whether Japan, Tanzania, Australia, or the United States (see Enloe (Chapter 16), Malkki (Chapter 7), Giroux (Chapter 20), Sontag (Chapter 18), and Mirzoeff (Chapter 21), this volume). As we have seen, the border regime’s focus on postulated biopolitical threats is effective in mobilizing public support for and participation in the everyday regimes of terror. In some cases, such a penetration of the security state into the everyday, vernacular spaces of social life is accelerated by enhanced technologies of surveillance and the panoptic regimes erected in militarized space (Masco, Chapter 3 this volume).

The fusion of national security and border protection has taken an electronic turn in some nations, as for instance, in the United States. Camera surveillance of the US-Mexican border has gone online: ordinary citizens can now participate in the policing of national space by accessing the World Wide Web (Rotstein 2008). Computerized, privatized, and global, the US border war is fought by techno-prosthetic means:

In a controversial program aimed at enhancing border security, Texas sheriffs have erected a series of surveillance cameras along the Rio Grande and connected them to the Internet. Thousands of people are now virtual Border Patrol agents—and they're on the lookout for drug smugglers and illegal immigrants. ...

Online border patrolling is about as sexy as real-life police work—hours of tedium punctuated by minutes of high excitement. On Blueservo's Web site, each camera focuses on an area that's known for illegal crossing. Next to a real-time view of a grassy meadow is the message: "Look for individuals on foot carrying backpacks." A shot of a border highway says, "If you see movement from the right to the left, please report this activity." When a citizen spots suspicious activity, they click a button on the Web site and write a report. That message goes to the corresponding sheriff's office. The sheriff may handle the problem or call the U.S. Border Patrol.

To date, more than 43,000 people have logged on and become, as the Web site calls them, "virtual Texas deputies." ... But effective or not, more than 43,000 pairs of eyes are watching the Texas-Mexico border through blueservo.net. (Burnett 2009)

The violence of the US border regime has been turned into an ontological practice by a new political technology of the senses. Anyone, anywhere across the globe, can participate in the surveillance-terror of the US border regime: as "TechnoPatriots," as "virtual Texas deputies" or as "Armchair Warriors." Virtual eyes watching, 24/7, with a militarized gaze that is trained on the nation's southern periphery to monitor the borderland for signs of black or brown bodies, whose movements are criminalized and treated as a national security threat. These moving targets, who appear as blips on someone's computer screen, are effectively dehumanized.

The surveillance and capture of disenfranchised human subjects has become a national pastime in centers of global power. Security patriotism and fear of the phantasmatic terrorist are deeply embedded in Western popular culture and the global public sphere. Similar principles of othering and dehumanization are uncovered by the contributors to this book (Wood (Chapter 15), Turshen (Chapter 17), Dickson-Gómez (Chapter 12), Sontag (Chapter 18), Giroux (Chapter 20), Ticktin (Chapter 9), Mirzoeff (Chapter 21), and Kleinman and Kleinman (Chapter 19) in this volume). Race, sex, and space are conjured as elemental signs of difference, turning marked subjects into targets of political violence and everyday terror.



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