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# The Militarization of Inner Space

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## ABSTRACT

This essay considers the contemporary militarization of U.S. civilian psychology in the context of World War II and Cold War efforts to target the psychic and emotional life of civilians as a battlefield component of 'total war.' Selectively tracing the entangled histories of academic social science, the mass media, military technologies, and U.S. government agencies, I suggest that the post-World War II emergence of the U.S. national security state is founded in part on the calculated promotion of civilian insecurity and terror. The militarization of civilian psychology – that is, the psychological re-organization of civil society for the production of violence – becomes historically visible as an administrative imperative of U.S. government. This visibility, I argue, is important in interrogating and intervening in the complex politics and cultures of terrorism today.

KEY WORDS: militarization, psychology, citizen, terrorism, history of sociology.

## Operation Scramble

WARNING: The following statement may contain secret coded messages intended to reach any of my allies who may reside within your borders.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On October 10, 2001, U.S. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice made a request to all major television networks to carry only carefully edited versions of future

“[E]very American is a soldier” now, declared George W. Bush one month after September 11, 2001.<sup>2</sup> Speaking at the first meeting of the new Homeland Security Council, whose opening order of business was to beef up U.S. border operations by tightening immigration surveillance and control, Mr. Bush’s pronouncement itself performed a consequential border crossing. His sweeping rhetorical induction of the entire U.S. citizenry into the ranks of military combatants obliterated the very boundary between ‘civilian’ and ‘soldier’ on which popular understandings of ‘terrorism’ fundamentally depend: would future attacks on U.S. civilians now be acknowledged as a targeted assault on U.S. soldiers? Mr. Bush’s border transgression, conducted in the midst and in the name of intensified border patrols, raises a few other urgent questions for the newly anointed civilian-soldier:

When was I trained for battle?

What are my weapons and how do they work?

And where, precisely, stands this “home” which the new armies of civilians are asked to secure? Which borders are we really being asked to defend? What exactly is this war into which the U.S. civilian-soldier has been involuntarily drafted?

The ‘war against terrorism’ is the repetitiously proffered answer to this last query. But a little bit of history and the website of the U.S. Space Command suggest another story. The U.S. Space Command was established in 1985 as the coordinating military body unifying Army, Navy, and Air Force activities in outer space. “As stewards for military space,” states General Howell M. Estes III, the Space Command’s ex-Commander in Chief, “we must be prepared to exploit the advantages of the space medium.” In *Joint Vision 2010*, an operational plan for securing and maintaining unchallengeable “space power,” the U.S. Space Command describes how “the medium of space is the fourth medium of warfare – along with land, sea, and air.” The end result of the “emerging synergy of space superiority with land, sea, and air superiority” is the achievement of Full Spectrum Dominance: the capacity of the U.S. military to dominate in any conflict, waged in any terrestrial or extraterrestrial medium. Or, in the Space Command’s words, displayed onscreen against the black, star-studded background of empty space: “U.S. Space Command – dominating

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videotaped statements from Osama Bin Laden or his “followers.” Rice suggested that the broadcasts could be used “to send coded messages to other terrorists” and to disseminate “inflammatory” propaganda. In an unprecedented joint agreement, the networks, in what was described by one T.V. executive as a “patriotic” decision, complied. The next day, the White House made the same request to major U.S. newspapers. See *The New York Times*, 11 October 2001, p. A1, and 12 October 2001, p. B7.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *The New York Times*, 30 October 2001, p. B5.

the space dimension of military operations to protect U.S. interests and investment. Integrating Space Forces into warfighting capabilities across the full spectrum of conflict.”<sup>3</sup>

The battles for which the U.S. Space Command is prepared are not futuristic science fiction scenarios. As the command center responsible for the protection and proliferation of military and commercial satellites, and for the rejuvenated National Missile Defense program, the Space Command is already a key player in the conduct of U.S. war. Satellite-mediated infotech warfare has arrived. The militarized use of space-based satellites to provide real-time flows of information and imagery debuted in the U.S. invasion of Panama in 1989, developed in the 1990s during the U.S.-led war against Iraq and in the killing fields of Kosovo, and is today an integral component of U.S. military activity in Afghanistan and Iraq (Gray 1997; Grossman 2001). “Space support to NATO’s operations in Kosovo was a perfect example of how the United States will fight its wars in the future,” the Space Command reported in 2002, “Satellite-guided munitions, communications, navigation, and weather all combined to achieve military objectives in a relatively short amount of time and without the loss of a single U.S. troop.”<sup>4</sup> As home to an increasingly sophisticated and expensive infrastructure of satellites, and to a proposed network of (possibly nuclear-powered) space stations equipped with laser weaponry, ‘outer space’ is now the final, fantastic frontier for the U.S. military’s imaginary and material battlefields.

With Full Spectrum Dominance as its official doctrine, the U.S. Space Command clearly articulates its 21<sup>st</sup> century mission: to ensure that the United States will remain a global power and exert global leadership during the current “globalization of the world economy.” Noting with admirable sociological acumen that this globalization will create a “widening between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ . . . [and] [t]his gap will widen – creating regional unrest,” the U.S. Space Command announces that the new strategic situation requires “a global perspective to conduct military operations and support regional warfighting. . .”<sup>5</sup> The U.S. Space Command stands ready to serve.

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<sup>3</sup> Quotes from the website of the U.S. Space Command at [www.spacecom](http://www.spacecom), December 2001. The website has since changed, and many of the documents I cite here are no longer displayed online. Thanks to John Burdick for originally calling attention to the mission of the U.S. Space Command and its connection to current U.S. military action in “Terrorism and state terror,” public talk presented at the Socialist Forum, Westcott Community Center, Syracuse, New York, October 14, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> From the website of the U.S. Space Command at [www.spacecom.mil/Fact%20Sheet-MilitarySpaceForces.htm](http://www.spacecom.mil/Fact%20Sheet-MilitarySpaceForces.htm), April 22, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> All quotes from the U.S. Space Command website, December 2001.

And we – we civilian-soldiers – where do we stand? In what space really do we wage our scrambled warfare, our civilian participation in the militarized state of the nation? Are we all soldiers now in the battle for Full Spectrum Dominance of the globe? South Asia. Eurasia. East Asia. Central Asia. What boot camp has prepared us for the rigors of a perpetually ambiguous, infinitely expanding battlefield? Across what geography is the ‘war against terrorism’ really mapped? Land. Sea. Air. Space. In how many dimensions must today’s civilian-soldier really move?

The Bush administration’s first National Security Strategy document, published in September 2002, offers the inquiring civilian-soldier some indication of the full scope of the battle plans. Twelve months after launching its boundless war against terrorism, the administration introduced its new doctrine of preemptive strikes, unilaterally pursued, against perceived threats. National security now depends, the civilian-soldier learns, on “identifying and destroying the threat before it reaches our borders. . . [W]e will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively.”<sup>6</sup> Released just as the Bush administration stepped up its rhetorical and operational preparations for a military invasion and occupation of Iraq, the document leads even mainstream media commentators to note, with measured alarm, its imperial posture. An editorial published in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* a week after the document is made public describes it as a “plan for permanent U.S. military and economic domination of every region on the globe.” The editorial warns: “This war [against Iraq], should it come, is intended to mark the official emergence of the United States as a full-fledged global empire, seizing sole responsibility and authority as planetary policemen.”<sup>7</sup>

If the militarization of outer space is an essential component of Full Spectrum Dominance, and if the so-called ‘war against terrorism’ must be

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<sup>6</sup> The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (September 2002), p. 6 (online document, available at a number of sites). A published version is now available as *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Falls Village, Connecticut: Winterhouse Editions, 2002). National Security Strategy documents, published sporadically at the discretion of the executive branch, are intended to circulate as public – and public relations – documents.

<sup>7</sup> Jay Bookman, “The President’s Real Goal in Iraq,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 29 September 2002. Bookman and others trace the agenda set out in the 2002 National Security Strategy document to a report published in September 2000 by the conservative Project for a New American Century, whose signatories included Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, I. Lewis Libby, and Elliott Abrams. The genealogy is significant, allowing Bookman and others to argue that, far from reacting to the attacks on September 11, the Bush administration is pursuing a military agenda at least a decade in the making, whose principal architects are now in key positions of civilian and military power.

situated within broader U.S. ambitions for global empire,<sup>8</sup> it is perhaps useful for today's civilian-soldier to wonder just how wide and deep is a "full spectrum" of dominance? What borders must be crossed to fully dominate such an infinity of space? Perhaps the domination of outer space in the interests of militarized technologies and intelligence requires the militarization of a somewhat more covert spatial territory – a territory more spectral, less smoothly operationalized but no less necessary to global dominion. What happens in that elusive terrain of 'inner space' as outer space becomes an overt field for fully militarized command posts? Is the 'inner' psychic terrain of today's U.S. civilian-soldier another battlefield on the way to full spectrum dominance of the globe? What kind of militarized infrastructure is needed 'inside' the soldierly civilian called upon to support the establishment of military superiority across the spectrum of spaces 'outside'? To what extent might Full Spectrum Dominance depend intimately on commanding 'space power' in both outer and inner space?

The psychology of the civilian-soldier, the networks of everyday emotional and perceptual relations, constitute an 'inner space' that is today, I suggest, one volatile site of attempted military occupation. But the occupying forces I'm concerned with here are not those of an invasive, enemy 'other.' Rather, a partial and urgent history of attempts by the U.S. government, media, military, and academy to enlist the psychological life of U.S. citizens as a military asset – this is the embodied story that occupies me here.

The militarization of inner space, a complex, discontinuous story that nowhere crystallizes into the clear knot of conspiracy but which leaves its uneven traces throughout the scattered archives of the 20<sup>th</sup> century United States, is now as it has been before a major concern of those most responsible for the business of war. Militarization, defined by historian Michael Geyer as "the contradictory and tense social process in which civil society organizes itself for the production of violence," constitutes at its

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<sup>8</sup> Connections between the ambitions of the 'war against terrorism' and the space-based military imperatives of Full Spectrum Dominance are perhaps best exemplified in the figure of Donald H. Rumsfeld. Until his appointment in December 2000 as Secretary of Defense in the new Bush administration, Rumsfeld chaired the Commission to Assess U.S. National Security Space Management and Organization. The Commission, charged with constructing a blueprint for the future of U.S. "military space assets," made public its unclassified report in January 2001. Citing the threat of a catastrophic "Space Pearl Harbor," the report argues forcefully and in detail for the prioritization and reorganization of military, intelligence and commercial activities in space. See the Report of the Commission to Assess U.S. National Security Space Management and Organization (Washington, D.C., 11 January 2001), available online at [www.space.gov](http://www.space.gov). Rumsfeld's proposed military budget for 2003 substantially increases funding for space-based programs.

core a border-crossing between military and civilian institutions, activities and aims (1989: 79). The militarization of inner space can be conceived, then, as the *psychological organization of civil society for the production of violence*, an important feature of a broader – tense and contradictory – social process. It is not my intention to reify ‘psychology’ or psychological processes as if they could be separated from social, historical, or economic contexts. Quite the contrary. By naming the constructed ‘inner space’ of psychological activities as increasingly militarized – with the events of September 11 serving as an accelerator and intensifier of processes that are by no means new – my hope is to deepen a critical sociological commitment to contesting the ‘space’ of psychology as the radically social matter of political struggle, as one radically material weapon of war. Or its refusal.

While I refer to this psychological space as ‘inner,’ it of course is not irreducibly individual, and is never confined to a neat interiority. Inner space both produces and is produced by deeply social ways of seeing, profoundly cultural technologies of perception. And though I want to reject any notion of a homogeneous collective psyche, I do want to conjure the dense sociality and historicity of psychology spaces. Psychological life occupies a difficult borderland, a ‘between-space’ where the question and human confusions of what is ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ are repetitiously experienced, and consciously and unconsciously lived. Indeed, the space of psychology is the very site where everyday sensations of what’s ‘inside’ and what’s ‘outside,’ what’s ‘them’ and what’s ‘us,’ what feels safe and what seems fatally frightening are culturally (re)produced or resisted; it is an intensely border-conscious space. The politics of borders – how they’re made and unmade, what they come to mean – is one shifting center of the politics of nationalism, of language, of memory, of race, gender, class, of terror. What has come in the modern West to be called the ‘psychological’ plays a dramatic, power-charged role within each of these entangled political fields. The militarization of psychological space can be imagined then as a *strategic set of psychological border operations* aimed at the organization of civil society for the production of violence.

The historically-specific confusion and re-configuration of the borders between the psyche of the soldier and of the civilian, between the practice of psychology and the prosecution of war, is the topic of several recently published studies of World War II and its Cold War aftermath. “New languages for speaking about subjectivity,” writes Nikolas Rose, emerged during World War II to address the new consensus that “[w]inning the war was to require a concerted attempt to understand and govern the subjectivity of the citizen.” Research on ‘attitudes’ and ‘personality,’ relying on recently developed techniques of public opinion polling and statistical survey research, constituted new “sciences of the psyche” aimed

at managing both military and civilian beliefs and behaviors. The human psyche itself became “a possible domain for systematic government in the pursuit of socio-political ends” (Rose 1996: x, 21, 7). According to historian Laura McEnaney, with the end of the war and the rise of the U.S. national security state, the “ambient militarism” of Cold War U.S. culture translated the very meaning of national security into a “perception, a state of mind” – a profoundly psychological state in which the civilian psyche became a difficult but pervasive variable in military planning (2000: 39, 12-15). Ellen Herman’s chronicle of the imbrications of psychological concepts and expertise into the textures of everyday life in post-World War II U.S. society, recounts how efforts at “mass emotional control” in the name of national security led, by the late 1960s, to an unprecedented blurring of boundaries between public policy and private emotions (1995: 241-242).

Today, one important contributing factor to civilian-soldiers’ willingness to serve may be a sanctioned ignorance of this history of previous campaigns to effectively mobilize ‘inner space’ in the interests of war and the organized production of violence. Remembering the militarization of psychic space as part of the full spectrum of tactics deployed in 20<sup>th</sup> century warfare may help us better grasp the multiple dimensions of danger in the present, post-September 11 contagion of terrors. “[W]hat one remembers of the past and how one remembers it depend on the social and cultural resources to which one has access,” writes Fred Turner in his recent history of collective memory-making, cultural trauma, and the Vietnam war (1996: xii). Consider this text as one attempt to apply the resources of a critical sociology to a more public remembering of how the inner space of psychology has been already a calculated battlefield, a terrain of cultural combat where the measure of victory includes the possibility, or impossibility, of remembering that a fight took place. If, as Turner suggests, “memory takes place simultaneously in the individual psyche and in the social domain,” then what I (want to) recall is intimately tied to what you (are able to) remember (1996: xi). The psychic space of memory is a cultural and collective landscape – nobody moves around there all alone. Is it possible for a critical sociology today to mobilize its scholarly and psychic resources to disrupt what Stephen Pfohl has called “the hegemonic rhythms of public memory in the USA Today” (1992: 42)? Can a contemporary critical sociology – remembering its own insurgent origins<sup>9</sup> – contribute to counterhegemonic memories that are more public and more powerful?

An orbiting U.S. doctrine of Full Spectrum Dominance calls for critical terrestrial practices of full spectrum de-militarization. Economy. Culture.

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<sup>9</sup> The journal *Critical Sociology* was previously titled *The Insurgent Sociologist* (1971-1987).

Society. Psyche. Perhaps it's time for a few collective flashbacks. How hard would it be to publicly remember the civilian-soldier as a central, contested figure of 20<sup>th</sup> century hot and cold wars? What difference could it make to re-frame and refuse today's 'war against terrorism' as the most recent theater of operations for securing the psychological organization of U.S. civil society for the manufacture of mass violence? Insisting on the productive border-crossing between the past and present tense, asking you to live briefly in the question of the boundaries between 'then' and 'now,' this text tries to contribute to an effective history of the present – one that might arrive in time for the fight for less terrorizing future spaces.<sup>10</sup>

### Target You

“At a time of national crisis, I think it is particularly apparent that we need to encourage the study of our past.”

– Lynne Cheney (October 5, 2001)<sup>11</sup>

The U.S. civilian-soldier is at least as old as a New World conquered in part by volunteer armies of white settlers and constitutionally founded on the right to own lethal weapons. But not until the advent of 20<sup>th</sup> century military and communications technologies did certain contours of today's civilian-soldier begin to take shape. Terrorists, we are told, have training camps. The 21<sup>st</sup> century civilian-soldier does too. World War II and the early years of Cold War U.S. culture, I suggest, supplied one not-so-secret training camp where the civilian-soldier was experimentally shaped by not-so-civil lessons in 'total war.'

London. Dresden. Tokyo. Hiroshima. Nagasaki.

Launched during World War II to name the new strategic situation in which the civilian home front became as important militarily as the

<sup>10</sup> The project of a “history of the present” is indebted to the work of Michel Foucault, and his efforts to engage contemporary struggles by making histories of shifting strategies of power, knowledge, and experience. Two of his most useful statements on historical methods are Foucault 1984 and 1994.

<sup>11</sup> Opening quote in Jerry L. Martin and Anne D. Neal, “Defending Civilization: How Our Universities Are Failing America and What Can Be Done About It” (American Council of Trustees and Alumni, November 2001). This document received significant media coverage for its argument that the U.S. academy “is the only sector of American society that is distinctly divided in its response” to the events of September 11, and included a recitation of 117 instances of campus criticism of the U.S. government post-September 11. While the document was broadly attacked within and outside the U.S. academy for its McCarthy-esque pretensions and shoddy scholarship, it's worth noting that its sponsoring organization, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), is the largest private financial contributor to institutions of higher education in the U.S. Last year, ACTA members reportedly gave \$3.4 billion to colleges and universities.

frontlines of battle, the notion of ‘total war’ officially drafts the U.S. civilian-soldier into an active psychological role in the conduct of successful war.<sup>12</sup> In a special issue of *The American Journal of Sociology* (November 1941) devoted to the problem of civilian morale and published on the eve of U.S. entry into World War II, sociologist Robert E. Park observes:

Since war has invaded the realm of the spirit, morale has assumed a new importance in both war and peace. Total war is now an enterprise so colossal that belligerent nations find it necessary not only to mobilize all their resources, material and moral, but to make present peace little more than a preparation for future war. Under these conditions so-called psychic warfare ... has assumed an importance and achieved a technical efficiency which ... has profoundly altered the character of peace, making it much harder to bear.

The object of attack in psychic warfare is morale, and less that of the men in arms than of the civil population back of the lines. (1941: 360)

The wartime preoccupation with civilian morale – how to build one’s own and destroy the enemy’s – marks an official recognition by the U.S. government and its professional knowledge-makers that, as Ellen Herman writes, “the human personality, and its diverse and unpredictable mental states were of utmost importance in prosecuting the war.” The problem of morale receives enormous, well-funded attention in the U.S. throughout the war years, and becomes a pivotal concept in the construction of the ideal 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. civilian-soldier: the notion of morale and the “control of human subjectivity” as central to military strategy “stretched the definition of war to encompass aspects of civilian social life previously considered off-limits to military policy-makers” (Herman 1995: 29-30).

Faced with the emergent challenges of total psychic warfare, U.S. social scientists in the special *AJS* issue mobilize their civilian resources to consider the most promising course of social action. In the vortex of total war, where the boundaries between psychic and military tactics, soldier and civilian, home and combat zone, war and peace are set spinning – how might the civilian-soldier-social scientist most effectively contribute to the allied cause?

Noted psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan argues for the necessity of a program of “total defense” waged equally by the national citizen and the military conscript. Any effective “counter-strategy” for preventing civilian demoralization requires a suspension of democratic ideals and

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<sup>12</sup> A succinct statement of the doctrine of total war was offered in 1945 by Vannevar Bush, director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development: War, he writes, is “increasingly total war, in which the armed services must be supplemented by active participation of every element of the civilian population” quoted in Bush 1945, p. 12.

a re-education in the “rigid discipline” and mandatory cooperation characteristic of military institutions. The kind of social organization required will create “a society the structure of which must be distinctly paternalistic – authoritarian – in order to win in the fight on national socialism.” If such a disciplinary, authoritarian society can be achieved, Sullivan encourages, “we will then, I suppose, have time and ingenuity to work out a little strategy of terror of our own” (1941: 292-295).<sup>13</sup>

But Sullivan’s proposal stands out against a chorus of voices in the *AJS* issue calling for more ‘democratic’ methods to maintain the psychological fortitude of the civilian-soldier. In a report on U.S. government-sponsored research on citizens’ attitudes and opinions, sociologist Edward A. Shils clarifies the kind of “‘intelligence’ activities” that distinguish a democratic government’s efforts to shape civilian behavior from more overtly authoritarian information-gathering: “For a democratic government which regards preferences not merely as objects to be manipulated but as a source of guidance . . . it is especially urgent to possess means of acquiring knowledge of the state of mind of its citizens.” Shils celebrates the recent techniques of public opinion polling and survey research as intelligence activities befitting a democratic state. Reliable information about citizens’ “state of mind” is a prerequisite for the government’s effective management of “the population whose behavior it seeks to influence” (1941: 472). The social sciences – which in close collaboration with market researchers have by the early 1940s started developing statistical techniques for gathering precisely such information – thus carve out for themselves a central role in the political administration of civilian psychology. Indeed, with the U.S. entry into the war, hundreds of sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, and educators form a “new breed of policy-oriented psychological experts,” directly employed by civilian or military agencies to study human attitudes, behavior, opinions, and emotions, putting to militarized use the methods of sampling and survey research of large (military and civilian) populations (Herman 1995: 54).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> In his most “cold-blooded proposition” in the *AJS* essay, Sullivan suggests that people who “cannot reasonably be converted into trustworthy citizens of the nation at war” might best be dealt with by placing them “out of harm’s way in a civilized version of the concentration camp,” p. 294.

<sup>14</sup> See also Herman, pp. 48-81. One of the most notable, if seldom noted, applications of social science research to civilian psychological management during WWII was the Sociological Research Project, an interdisciplinary team of social scientists, including psychiatrists, who worked to ensure the smooth administration and “human management” of the Poston Relocation Center, one of the internment camps for the over 100,000 Japanese-Americans ‘relocated’ in 1942 by the U.S. government, see Herman, pp. 25-29.

Two entangled technological developments in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century create the military and historical contexts in which the psychology of the civilian home front becomes an obsessive variable in the political calculus of war. Both developments involve enhanced and accelerated ‘delivery systems’ – the first, for weapons, the second, for words. Both developments heighten the permeability of geographic and psychological or perceptual borders. The invention and deployment of airplanes as instruments of war, making aerial bombardment a key strategy of industrialized warfare, ushered in a new spatial-temporal rhythm of attack. With virtually no warning, an enemy located many hundreds of miles away could launch an aerial attack on a targeted city or town. The speed of the attack combined with the potential intensity of destruction posed a potent new psychological as well as material threat to the everyday life of civilians.<sup>15</sup>

But the delivery system that amplifies most dramatically the volatility – and military significance – of civilian psychology is the crackling black box with the numerical dial sitting in most U.S. households by the mid-1930s. As the first popularized form of electronic mass media, radio radically alters the spatial-temporal rhythm of the production and reception of news and information, erasing previous boundaries of both time and space. When the 1938 radio broadcast of Orson Welles’ *War of the Worlds* reportedly creates mass panic among millions of listeners in the U.S., news commentators quickly focus on the military implications of radio’s power to influence the psychology of a mass audience.<sup>16</sup> While there is general agreement that “[r]adio can spread and radio can control ideas and information essential to national defense,” there is no consensus over how this new-found weapon should be wielded.<sup>17</sup> Should the state protect the public from its tendencies toward terror and initiate government control of the radio airwaves as the first line of national defense? Or is government control of radio actually a weapon of totalitarianism, securing a deadly monopoly on

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On the history of survey research methods in the U.S., including the tight link with World War II government agencies and agendas, see Hyman 1991.

<sup>15</sup> While World War II saw the first mass use of aerial bombardment, the use of aerial warfare by Western industrialized countries against colonial territories had been inaugurated by the U.S. in Nicaragua in 1933. Occupied between world wars by U.S. military forces and declared a ‘Protectorate of the United States of America,’ Nicaragua was the site of U.S. experiments with aerial bombing against the ‘Bolshevik’ threat of Augusto Cesar Sandino and his itinerate, largely rural, indigenous army of liberation. See Galeano 1988.

<sup>16</sup> For a cultural history of panic and its techno-social management in the 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S., see Orr (forthcoming).

<sup>17</sup> *Daily News*, 31 October 1938, quoted in Koch 1967, p. 22.

this powerful psychological medium? Perhaps most disturbingly, what to make of the potential for this new ‘delivery system’ of words and world events to broadcast theatrics and simulations that can have just as much psychological force as real news? As one news columnist put it, if the electrified radio voice of Adolf Hitler was currently scaring much of Europe to its knees with “an army and an airforce to back up his shrieking words,” then what to make of the power of Orson Welles’ radio theater to “scare thousands into demoralization with nothing at all”?<sup>18</sup>

U.S. social science takes note of the shifting techno-social terrain constructed by new mass communications technologies and their capacity to rapidly mobilize psychological and militarized movements. As Princeton psychologist Hadley Cantril (1940) is writing up the findings of his research into the 1938 ‘panic broadcast,’ social scientists in the special 1941 *AJS* issue are also grappling with the influence of mass media on civilian psychology. James R. Angell, of radio’s National Broadcasting System, and Walter Wanger, a movie studio executive, are invited contributors to the *AJS* debate. In “Radio and National Morale,” Angell explains that reasoned confidence alone is not enough to move a nation on the brink of total war. The “masses must be moved by emotional excitement and exaltation if they are to reach any high pitch of forceful action” (1941: 353-354). Wanger asserts that the “builders of morale must weave . . . a fabric of emotion around the rational aspects of democratic life. . . . Men [sic] must become emotionalized, to use a clumsy word, about their country and their country’s goals.” Filmmakers, Wanger promises, can contribute significantly to the national cause (1941: 380-383).

How exactly will the coordinated efforts of the mass media, social scientists, and government officials to ‘emotionalize’ and manage psychological investments on the civilian front of total war differ from the domestic propaganda techniques of totalitarian governments?<sup>19</sup> “The arts and devices of spiritual warfare are many and various and more subtle no doubt than any analysis has thus far disclosed,” Robert E. Park enigmatically observes (1941: 363). As the U.S. civilian-soldier materializes as a strategically conceived combatant in the crucibles of world war and new mass communications technologies, the battle for establishing psychological supply lines and defense systems for this most vulnerable and volatile of troops, opens out onto an unforeseen future.

<sup>18</sup> Dorothy Thompson, “On the Record,” *New York Tribune*, 2 November 1938, quoted in Koch 1967, p. 92.

<sup>19</sup> For an excellent historical discussion of how social psychology grappled with this question, self-consciously constituting itself as a necessary “science of democracy,” see Rose 1996, pp. 116-149.

### **Disaster on Main Street**

“America will not live in peace...”

– Osama Bin Laden (October 7, 2001)<sup>20</sup>

The end of World War II, rather than marking a de-militarization of the U.S. civilian-soldier, signals a deepening anxiety over his/her psychological and military role in the sustained tensions and proliferating dangers of the Cold War. With the United States' invention and use of atomic bombs in 1945, the character of industrialized warfare prefigured in aerial bombardment becomes exponentially more terrifying for civilian populations, inside and outside the United States. In their top-secret analysis of U.S. nuclear testing in the South Pacific in 1947, the Joint Chiefs of Staff decide that the primary value of the atomic bomb is its “psychological implication,” i.e. its capacity to terrorize and demoralize an enemy population without ever actually being deployed. The panic that would accompany the threat or use of nuclear weapons, they report, is a key strategic advantage for a nation on the military offensive, and a problem of the highest order for the nation planning its own defense. Military victory is assured for the country best able to exploit this potentially nerve-shattering psychological situation (Oakes 1994: 35).

A survey of U.S. public opinion is conducted during the 1947 nuclear tests and overseen by several social scientists who directed wartime military and civilian survey research agencies.<sup>21</sup> The findings include troubling evidence that people tend to be confused, contradictory, poorly-informed, or undecided about the grave issues of the atomic age. Indeed, responses to the survey offer “little indication that the people recognize the revolutionary significance of the new weapon.” The researchers conclude that a “focusing of attention and securing [of] psychological involvement” is necessary for the U.S. public to fully participate in the government of world affairs in the new nuclear era (Cottrell and Eberhart 1948: 14-19, 59-60).

In a series of both classified and public documents produced in the late 1940s to address the civil defense problems facing U.S. planners, the

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in *The New York Times*, 8 October 2001, p. A1. Bin Laden's words end the brief videotaped statement released on October 7, hours after U.S. and British forces began bombing Afghanistan. The full quote, in translation, reads: “I swear to God that America will not live in peace before peace reigns in Palestine, and before all the army of infidels depart the land of Muhammad, peace be upon him,” p. B7.

<sup>21</sup> Social scientists overseeing the survey, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, include Hadley Cantril, Rensis Likert (director of the Morale Division of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey), and Leonard S. Cottrell, Jr. (director of the Survey Section of the War Department's Research Branch).

findings of the 1947 Joint Chiefs of Staff's evaluation become foundational assumptions for thinking about atomic weapons. Panic and the destruction of national morale are named repeatedly as the main obstacles to the successful conduct of nuclear war. In an early instruction manual on *Panic Control and Prevention*, readers encounter the remarkable claim that:

Mass panic can produce more damage to life and property than any number of atomic bombs. . . . If war comes, it will be a total, absolute war. Fitness of the civilian will be of equal importance with fitness of the fighter. The outcome of the war will depend upon the staying power of the civilian just as much as upon that of the soldier. The fatigued civilian will be the unfit, panic-ripe civilian. (Office of Civil Defense 1951: 71-72)

A report by the Social Science Research Council's Committee on Social Aspects of Atomic Energy recommends more research into the dangers of hysteria and mass panic among U.S. citizens (Coale cited in Oakes 1994: 35).

The psychology of the Cold War U.S. civilian-soldier is now burdened with nothing less than the success or demise of national security itself. With national defense increasingly linked to psychic defense, the militarization of civilian psychology takes on a new urgency. In this ongoing "imaginary war" for the civilian psyche, the resources of the U.S. government, the academy, and the corporate mass media all mobilize in an effort to "bring the public psychology into conformity with the requirements of national security policy" (Oakes 1994: 33). The effort is neither a conspiracy nor an assured success: it is experimental, creative, committed, and sustained. It does not equally target all civilians but rather a dominantly white, middle class or upwardly-mobile working class population who owns property, preferably a house and presumably in the suburbs.<sup>22</sup>

The byline reads "Moscow, 1960," and the simulated news report narrates the historical highlights of world war as they spin out from the ill-fated Soviet assassination attempt on the life of Yugoslavian leader, Marshal Tito, on May 10, 1952. "This was the . . . start," the report recalls, "of 32 months of unlimited catastrophe for the human race, in the course of which millions of innocent people met violent deaths. . . . Among their scorched, shattered graveyards were the atomized ruins of Washington, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, New York, London and eventually Moscow" (Sherwood 1951: 19, 22).

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<sup>22</sup> See McEnaney 2000, chapters 4-5, for the best discussion I have seen of the gender, race and class politics of Cold War civil defense discourse, including the proactive role taken by the NAACP and women's volunteer clubs to make a place for themselves as participants in civil defense programs.

On May 14, 1952, the report continues, the U.S. begins dropping atomic bombs on selected military and industrial targets in the Soviet Union, carefully avoiding civilian population centers. The round-the-clock saturation bombing campaign continues for three months and 16 days. A year later, the Soviet Union retaliates with the atomic bombing of civilian target cities in the U.S., including Washington, D.C. An eyewitness account of the attack is accompanied by a two-page illustration of the nation's capitol on fire with the caption, "Note Pentagon blazing (at upper left)" (Boyle 1951: 20).

This dramatic staging of World War III is offered up by *Collier's* magazine in October 1951, in a special issue entitled "Preview of the War We Do Not Want." *Collier's*, a popular weekly magazine with a wide circulation targeted mainly at a white suburban audience, designs the issue in consultation with top military, economic and political thinkers in U.S. and international affairs. The "ultimate purpose" of this fictionalized history, the editors explain, is to provide a kind of cautionary tale of "hypothetical war" amidst the anxious signs of an increasingly hot Cold War (1951: 6, 17).

*Collier's* hypothetical war reportage appears in the same year that the fledgling Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) launches "one of the largest mass programs the nation has ever essayed": the public education and training of U.S. civilians in the "proper public attitudes and behavior" necessary to their own defense (Associated Universities, Inc., 1952: v). Created by Presidential executive order, the agency's basic mandate, spelled out in the Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950, is to provide for the civilian defense of both life and property in the event of war, including emergency communications networks to warn of enemy attack and the nationwide organization of local volunteer civil defense corps (FCDA 1952: 38).

A major theme of the FCDA's mass education and information program underlines the dangers of civilian terror in the face of atomic threat or attack. According to a pamphlet produced by the Office of Civil Defense in 1951 for local municipal leaders:

Since the advent of the atomic bomb, unfortunate psychological reactions have developed in the minds of civilians. This reaction is one of intense fear, directed against forces that cannot be seen, felt, or otherwise sensed. The fear reaction of the uninitiated civilian is . . . of such magnitude that it could well interfere with important military missions or civil defense in time of war. (1951: 63)

With "Keep Calm!" as its easy-to-remember antidote to atomic panic, the FCDA sponsors a range of print, radio, television, and cinematic messages aimed at disseminating the relevant facts and advising the appropriate

behaviors. Over 20 million copies of the FCDA pamphlet, “Survival Under Atomic Attack,” are distributed in 1951. In folksy prose, the text calmly describes how to avoid “losing your head” and panicking if even that worst case scenario occurs: an atomic blast catches you unawares and you “soak up a serious dose of explosive radioactivity” (U.S. Government Printing Office 1950: 12).

In April 1951, the FCDA releases the movie version of *Survival Under Atomic Attack*. Commercial distributors sell more prints of *Survival* in the first nine months than any other film in the history of the industry. In the next several years, the FCDA’s mass public education program produces an instructive litany of films, newsreels, and made-for-T.V. series including *Disaster on Main Street*, *Operation Scramble*, *Bombproof*, *Target You*, *What You Should Know About Biological Warfare*, *Take Cover*, and *Let’s Face It*.<sup>23</sup>

But alongside government-sponsored encouragements to Cold War civilian-soldiers to “Keep Calm!,” an apparently contradictory effort to frighten the U.S. public is simultaneously underway. From its inception, the FCDA identifies “public apathy” toward civilian defense as the major obstacle to the successful conduct of its task. In a public letter to President Truman in 1952, the first director of the FCDA explains:

The American people will respond to civil defense when they believe in its immediate necessity. Such widespread belief does not yet exist... Too few realize that the atomic bomb changed the character of warfare and that in future conflicts the man and woman in the street and in the factory will be the prime target – that they will be in the front line of battle... [T]here is little real understanding of the need for a balanced defense, composed of the civil and the military serving in a co-equal partnership. (Caldwell in FCDA1952: v)

In the *Report of Project East River* (1952) – an extensive study of the problems of civil defense commissioned by the FCDA, the Department of Defense, and the National Security Resources Board – the authors cite recent public attitude surveys to argue that “a major barrier to involvement and activity in civil defense” is the public’s tendency to believe that an atomic attack cannot really occur in their hometown, or that the U.S. military will successfully protect the country should such an attack take place (Associated Universities, Inc., 1952: 3). *Project East River* recommends a massive public information and training program to address public

<sup>23</sup> The FCDA’s motion picture program involved collaboration with private industry which provided the capital, directed the films and organized their distribution; the FCDA provided information and “technical consultation.” The Cold War classic “Duck and Cover” was produced through this arrangement. For a summary of media activities see FCDA, *Annual Report for 1951*, pp. 10-15; also *Annual Report for 1952*, pp. 43-49; *Annual Report for 1953*, pp. 67-77; and *Annual Report for 1954*, pp. 90-96.

indifference and inculcate civil defense procedures as a “future way of life.” Noting a dangerous heightening of military tensions with the Soviet Union, the *Project* asserts that the entire edifice of national security rests on the psychological fortitude of the civilian population. The public needs to understand that national defense today “transcends the military’s ability and responsibility,” and depends equally on citizens’ capacity for self-help and self-protection (1952: v).

The *Project’s* findings are quickly acknowledged as the ‘Bible’ of civil defense. Collectively authored by Associated Universities, Inc., a Cold War think tank organized by a consortium of elite universities under contract with the Army, the *Project’s* research team includes an interdisciplinary array of sociologists, psychologists, engineers, physicists, economists, public relations personnel and educators. *Project* researchers also consult with the Psychological Strategy Board, an agency established by secret Presidential directive in 1951 and charged with the task of designing “psychological operations” – propaganda and psychological warfare planning – against enemies.<sup>24</sup> Although never called psychological warfare, the public information campaign outlined in the *Project* can be read as a retooling of the psychological strategies aimed at enemies abroad, now deployed for use as “emotional management techniques for psychologically manipulating” the U.S. public at home (Oakes 1994: 51). Public opinion polls, attitude surveys, in-depth interviews and personality analyses were the techniques used simultaneously to conduct psychological warfare abroad, and to promote ‘morale’ among civilians in the U.S. (Herman 1995: 31).

And so the management of fear – avoiding the dangers of its excess (the chaos of panic), or its absence (the unpreparedness of apathy) – becomes a primary aim in constructing the ideal civilian-soldier (Oakes 1994: 62-71). In the *Project’s* plan for an informed public inoculated against the threat of mass panic, the encouragement of individual and group fear is acknowledged as a necessary strategy. Under conditions of atomic threat, the boundary between national security and national fear is reconfigured: national security IS national fear. A nation whose civilians don’t fear their own annihilation is a nation without an effective military defense system.

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<sup>24</sup> Legally restricted to psychological affairs beyond the U.S. borders, the Psychological Strategy Board’s relations to *Project East River* remained unofficial, informal, and secret. See Oakes 1994, pp. 50-51. I’m using ‘psychological warfare’ in the sense defined, for example, in a civil defense guide which explains: “Psychological warfare consists of activities which communicate ideas and information intended to affect the minds, emotions, and actions of people. Its purpose is to reduce [or induce] morale and the will to fight. Psychology can be used as an effective war weapon. It is often used in an attempt to soften up the citizenry, to confuse, to frighten ... to create doubt and worry. ...” see Office of Civil Defense 1951, p. 8.

But by 1953, according to the picture drawn by public opinion and survey research, little has changed in the general psychology of civilian-soldiers: the public continues to be confused and psychologically distanced from the looming dangers of atomic warfare. Researchers at the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center – who start conducting government-sponsored surveys on atomic attitudes in 1946<sup>25</sup> – summarize their survey findings on a public uninterested in learning about the effects of atomic bombs, unaffected by conscious worry about atomic war, with unstable attitudes lacking any “logical structure” or well-developed thinking. The authors conclude that the high profile of atomic matters in the mass media and “popular fantasy,” stands in stark contrast to its apparent absence in “people’s conscious day-to-day thoughts.” They suggest that perhaps a disavowal of anxiety is operating as a defense against intolerable feelings of fear and powerlessness in the face of the new weapons. Further research and systematic investigation are recommended (Douvan and Withy 1953: 109-111, 114-117).

Now it’s 1955. The byline reads “Survival City, Nev.,” and the news report narrates the highlights of the first atomic bomb dropped on a “typical” U.S. town. Part laboratory experiment, part reality, part mass-mediated spectacle, the incendiary fate of Survival City is broadcast live on CBS and NBC-TV to an estimated audience of 100 million viewers who tune in to watch the blast. The climactic televising of the explosion is preceded by two weeks of live telecasts three times daily from the test site. The town, composed of ten brick and cement houses and several prefabricated industrial buildings, is built and bombed to test the effectiveness of civil defense procedures during a simulated atomic attack. Of the 500 witnesses to the explosion in the Nevada desert, 200 are civil defense personnel. The televised test is designed to demonstrate the ferocity of atomic power, and, according to the FCDA, to bring “vast numbers of Americans face to face with the enormity of the problem of survival in the nuclear age” (FCDA 1956: 6). Over 450 members of the press, including radio, television, and newsreel reporters, are stationed on “Media Hill” eight miles from ground zero. Televised interviews with the city’s ‘survivors’ – an array of human-size mannequins placed throughout the test site – are carried out before and after the explosion (Ahlgren and Martin 1989: 26).

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<sup>25</sup> Rensis Likert, director of Michigan’s Survey Research Center, also directed the Morale Division of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey during World War II. The U.S.S.B.S. was a large-scale research program conducted in Germany and Japan during the final months of the war. Using a variety of techniques including survey research, the U.S.S.B.S. investigated the military, economic, social, and psychological effects of U.S. and allied bombing.

The alarming facts of nuclear threat and civilian survival continue in 1956 to be circulated in an array of dramatized forms, with over 22 FCDA-sponsored films available for showing on television or in schools, civic organizations, and churches. One of the films, *Operation Ivy*, documents the secret military operation carried out in the Marshall Islands on November 1, 1952, when the U.S. detonates its first hydrogen bomb, producing the largest nuclear fireball in history. The film shows the sensational atomic fireball rising up out of the sea, the shock waves rushing across the ocean surface, and the enormous mushroom cloud darkening the sky. Superimposed against the horizon of flame is a replica of Manhattan's downtown skyline: "The fireball alone," the film narrates, "would engulf about one-quarter of the Island of Manhattan."

In National Security Council meetings, where the public release of *Operation Ivy* is debated in early 1954, discussion veers from FCDA director Val Peterson's plea for something that could "scare the American people out of their indifference," to President Eisenhower's denouncement of fear tactics and insistence that the film be aired only if it offers "real and substantial knowledge to the people." For one reason or the other or perhaps both, *Operation Ivy* is released in April 2, 1954, and broadcast repeatedly over television stations throughout the day. In the media package accompanying the film's release, Peterson emphasizes the spectacular power of the new weapon while reasserting the capacity of current civil defense strategies to absorb the new threat (Oakes 1994: 149-150).

### Take Cover

"A bright line has been drawn between the civil and the savage."

– Attorney General John Ashcroft (September 21, 2001)<sup>26</sup>

But behind the scenes, Peterson and the FCDA's assessment of the home front situation is not so sanguine. At a National Security Council meeting in January 1954, Peterson suggests a new strategy for testing civilians' psychological readiness for World War III. He argues for a nationwide civil defense drill which might serve as a risky but useful measure of the extent to which the U.S. public is indeed "subject to hysteria." The results of the defense drill, which would reveal operational as well as emotional vulnerabilities in the civil defense infrastructure, could dramatically raise the stakes in the battle for comprehensive civil defense planning. Other Council members fear the "psychological impact" such an exercise might

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted in *The New York Times*, 22 September 2001, p. B6.

have, both in the U.S. and internationally, and worry over the possibility of producing a public panic (see Oakes 1994: 148-149).

Ground zero is incinerated in 60 U.S. cities when 61 atomic bombs explode on their civilian targets in the early afternoon of Friday, June 15, 1955. The bombs range in explosive force from the equivalent of 20 kilotons to 5 megatons of TNT, and are delivered by air or by guided missiles launched from submarines at sea. The nationwide civil defense alert system is activated at 11:04 a.m. E.S.T., offering only a marginal advance warning of the horrific attack. By the end of the day, the massive nuclear attack on the United States kills an estimated 8 million people, injures 12 million more, destroys 6.7 million homes, and creates potentially deadly radioactive fallout conditions over approximately 63,000 square miles (FCDA 1956).

The event is called Operation Alert, a national civil defense simulation exercise designed by the FCDA in cooperation with Federal and state agencies, the White House and Cabinet members, the broadcast media, the military, organized labor, municipal governments, businesses large and small, and the U.S. public. The stated goal of Operation Alert is to enhance civil defense training while testing local operational plans for attack preparedness, survival, and recovery.<sup>27</sup> First organized in 1954, Operation Alert exercises take place each summer for the next four years. These “series of annual rehearsals for World War III,” writes Cold War historian Guy Oakes, “enacted simulations of a nuclear attack in an elaborate national sociodrama that combined elements of mobilization for war, disaster relief, the church social, summer camp, and the county fair” (1994: 84).

The FCDA’s carefully planned protocols for Operation Alert direct each participating city to play out its assigned civil defense scenario as realistically as possible. During the three-day exercise in 1955, over 80 U.S. cities carry out some form of public evacuation: sixty-two cities simulate the action on paper, while another 18 conduct actual evacuations, involving at least 117,000 people. In Memphis, Tennessee, an estimated 25,000 people are evacuated from downtown office buildings. In Atlanta, Georgia, 3,500 government officials are evacuated and 2,000 of them are

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<sup>27</sup> The FCDA’s concept of an ‘operational plan’ for local civil defense involved a “thorough analysis of items such as the most probable target area, probable damage and casualties, population distribution, industrial installations, communications, transportation systems, evacuation routes, power and water facilities, medical resources, hospitals, schools, jails, zoos, fire-fighting plans, potential assembly areas, feeding and welfare facilities, topography, prevailing winds, possible shelters, and many other items.” The FCDA encouraged the development of such plans in all of the over 180 critical target areas in the U.S. See FCDA, *Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1956*, pp. 27-28.

transported outside the city, registered, and fed lunch. In Youngstown, Ohio, the entire city, led by the Mayor, evacuates. At the center of the deserted city, “adding realism to the exercise,” the 554<sup>th</sup> Explosive Ordnance Detachment detonates a mock bomb (FCDA 1956).

But the climactic moment of the 1955 Operation Alert exercise is the three-day evacuation of President Eisenhower, his Cabinet, and 15,000 Federal employees to 31 undisclosed locations outside Washington, D.C. Situated somewhere in the mountains of Virginia, the secret emergency headquarters of the President become the preserve of operational continuity for the State after the nuclear obliteration of the nation’s capitol. Seated inside a makeshift tent before a microphone, President Eisenhower addresses the nation in a live television broadcast announcing the (simulated) nuclear emergency and the continuing survival of the nation.

The televised Presidential address is the culmination of a sophisticated, well-planned public relations and press campaign launched some six weeks before the Operation Alert exercise. The White House and FCDA coordinators of the press coverage, desiring extensive media attention for the event but also strict control of its contents, meet with executives from the broadcast industries well in advance of the simulated attack. A round-the-clock media center with the sole purpose of generating and controlling public information about Operation Alert is established in Richmond, Virginia, and equipped with state-of-the-art communications technologies for the crowds of reporters who arrive to cover the event (Oakes 1994: 86-89).

“Although the [Operation Alert] exercise showed the Nation unprepared to cope with a thermonuclear attack,” the FCDA reports, “it concentrated the attention of the Nation on civil defense...” (1955: 35-37). Encouraged by the concentrated attention they excite, Operation Alert exercises in each successive year grow more complex and ambitious. Each year, FCDA planners try to design a more systematic, fully rationalized plan of action in response to increasingly savage and extensive imaginary attacks. Searching for an ever closer fit between simulated event and actual atomic invasion, the psychological theater of civil defense presses the borders of (im)possible terrors in the interests of improved safety and efficient survival.

After a Cabinet-level evaluation of Operation Alert in 1956, concern is expressed over how the exercises are affecting public attitudes. President Eisenhower calls for a blue ribbon panel of social scientists to convene and conduct a “thoroughgoing study of the effect on human attitudes of nuclear weapons.” The top-secret report is delivered to the President in November 1956. The panel of experts speaks in a chorus of collective bafflement. They suppose that people are frightened by the dangers of

atomic weapons and desire to avoid war. But they are unable to report with any certainty what the new weapons really mean to the U.S. public (Weart 1988: 135-136).

In a cabinet discussion held during the course of the extended Operation Alert exercises in 1957, Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson reports that, due to the realistic simulation of emergency government activities over a period of several weeks, "people were panic stricken in large cities and were paying no attention to Government orders." Any solution to the problem of panic risks exacerbating the potentially explosive mix of the real and the unreal composing the elaborate sociodrama of Operation Alert: presuming the panic is due to people's confusion over the reality of the simulated emergency operations, a statement by President Eisenhower clarifying the simulated nature of the operations might calm the public, but be mistakenly interpreted by the Soviets as a sign of real preparations for war, thereby touching off a defensive Soviet nuclear offensive. The fake civil defense drill, creating an actual panic, could then explode into a real war caused by the simulated preparations to defend against it (Oakes 1994: 151).

With the real and the imaginary, the savage attack and the civil defense, survival and extermination, terror and television, war and its bureaucratic simulation, imploding around the heads of U.S. civilian-soldiers throughout the 1950s, what historical sense to make of this psychological battleground? Vertiginous efforts to regulate civilian psychology in the name of national security become institutionalized, everyday concerns among workers in both military and civilian government agencies, the university, and the mass media. The partial history I offer here of a domestic war for civilian psyches, compelled by World War II and Cold War technological and political imperatives, suggests that a militarization of psychology has been a self-conscious goal and official aim of U.S. policy for quite some time. And the shape of that militarization, the affective and perceptual tendencies promoted by such policies, has not been only about seeding blind aggression or violent arrogance in dominant U.S. culture. Militarizing civilian psyches involves the strategic deployment of fear, a considered risk of panic and terror, and a productive construction of intense vulnerability and insecurity. Perhaps most maddeningly, a militarized civilian psyche is faced with a government which, while avowing its commitment to a secure national defense, at the same time wants you to know that it may not be able to protect you at all.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See McEnaney 2000, pp. 37-39, 53-62, for a discussion of the discourse of 'self-help' promoted by Cold War civil defense planners as they downloaded responsibility for atomic

### **Let's Face It**

“We’re going to start asking a lot of questions that heretofore have not been asked.”

– George W. Bush (October 30, 2001)<sup>29</sup>

“What role will we assume in the historical relay of violence, who will we become in the response, and will we be furthering or impeding violence by virtue of the response that we make?”

– Judith Butler (January 2002)<sup>30</sup>

“Every American is a soldier” – a declaration of psychic and social fortitude announced in the absent shadow of two pillars of world trade, near the cold ashes of the nerve center of U.S. military planning and power. The militarization of inner space that such a proclamation incites and enforces is part of a history of imaginary and real constructions of the ideal U.S. civilian-soldier. Full Spectrum Dominance and its ambition to link a hegemonic multi-dimensional U.S. military superiority with a global economic reach, can only be built within the psychological space of a population that produces the violence demanded by such a blind, visionary conjuring of the future. The so-called ‘war against terrorism’ takes its place within a historical theater of cultural wars over de/militarized psychic zones.

But in the current cultural war, what role can really be played by Cold War histories of state-sponsored fear and disoriented publics? What difference does it make to know that once upon a time the U.S. government built and bombed suburban-style houses and their plastic inhabitants, ensuring the fall-out included live T.V. broadcasts from ground zero and social science surveys of public opinion before and after the blast? Does a history of the present cross paths with a theory of politics that would tell us where to go from here, after having once been there?

“A military Babel has risen out of nuclear proliferation and generalized terrorism,” writes contemporary theorist and historian of war, Paul Virilio, “we’re disoriented and can no longer find our way, not even in our theoretical work” (1999: 97). That was in 1999. The ‘we’ Virilio invokes

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survival from the bureaucratic state to the individual and family, transforming Cold War militarization into a personal responsibility.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in *The New York Times*, 30 October 2001, p. B5, in caption to photo of first meeting of the Homeland Security Council.

<sup>30</sup> Judith Butler, “Explanation and Exoneration, or What We Can Hear,” *Theory & Event* 5, no. 4 (January 2002), e-journal at [http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/theory\\_event/5.4butler.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/theory_event/5.4butler.html), paragraph #19.

may not include all of you. But some of us, well before September 11, 2001, lost our way in the proliferation of real and perceived terrors – and in the difficulty of confidently deciding the border between them. For me, making histories out of not-so-private memories is one way to be lost without losing my mind. For me, making histories of panic and terror is one way to participate, however crazily, in contemporary cultural wars over whether and how psychic spaces will be militarized. Today, for me, it is not surprising to hear Patricia Williams, a “mad” law professor,<sup>31</sup> describe the U.S. war on terrorism as a “*war of the mind*, so broadly defined that the enemy becomes anybody who makes us afraid” (2001). I know that war. I’ve been there before. Its casualties are never precisely calculated and the archive of its psychic and political effects is always poorly kept.

To historicize, as I try to do here, the call to psychic arms implied in George Bush’s appeal to civilian “soldiers,” to track how the psychology of U.S. civilian populations became an explicit target of the national security state and its civilian institutions, is to incite public memories in the place of privatized terrors. There is no exact historical origin or parallel to the present *war of the mind*, and no easy causal accumulation of effects between the Cold War manipulations of nuclear terror that I recall here, and the ‘war against terrorism’ today. The widespread anti-war feelings and politics in the U.S. in the final years of the Vietnam war, and the uneven attempts to re-militarize civilian psyches after the mostly unspeakable humiliation of that military defeat, are real and relevant to any full accounting of how psychological militarization works, or fails, or tries again.<sup>32</sup> But my task here is both more modest and more urgent: to find compelling psychic weapons – in the form of collective memories – with which to fight a militarization of inner spaces today.

In the aftermath of the 1991 U.S.-led war against Iraq, Thyrza Goodeve wrote that “[m]aking connections . . . thickening the present with future visions and past complexities, forcing edges to rub up against and through their rough boundaries” was one kind of “critical survival strategy” for progressive politics under siege (1992: 53). So what does the present look like when connected to past state and media-sponsored spectacles of terror?

On Friday, April 12, 2002, an airplane buzzes McAlester, Oklahoma, covering the city with a fine spray containing pneumonic plague. The

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<sup>31</sup> Williams writes a column for *The Nation* called “Diary of a Mad Law Professor.”

<sup>32</sup> See Turner 1996, pp. 83-95 for an account of the psychological politics of re-militarizing, and re-masculinizing, civilians as soldier ‘heroes’ in the wake of the U.S. defeat in Vietnam. See also Ronnell 1992 for a critical psychoanalytically-inflected deconstruction of the 1991 war against Iraq as a “healing” war to repair the wounds of what became called the “Vietnam war syndrome.”

simulated bioterrorist attack infects 95 percent of the city's population. By Saturday afternoon, 120 people are dead. On the ground in McAlester, real doctors begin handing out 10,000 packets of imaginary (jelly bean) medicine, while 700 volunteers administer fake antibiotics around the city. Local Boy Scouts, playing the role of plague-infected civilians, are rushed to the hospital or driven to the morgue. The simulation, I learn from my daily newspaper, is one of "the most complex bioterrorism drills every undertaken," and will be followed by a staged attack of botulism in Lawton and an outbreak of smallpox in Tulsa. The April 2002 exercises are follow-up to a simulation conducted at Andrews Air Force base in the (pre-September 11) summer of 2001 when officials "pretended that Iraqi-financed Afghan terrorists were spraying the smallpox virus into shopping centers in Oklahoma City, Philadelphia and Atlanta."<sup>33</sup>

Manipulating the borders of the real and the imaginary, the present and the future – these are not new tactics in the battle to militarize civilian minds. If the militarization of inner space is a *strategic set of psychological border operations*, then collectively remembering Cold War events like Operation Alert may help us recognize how these borders in particular are once again battlefields inhabited by well-planned theaters of terror and its control, theaters extended by the mass media into the everyday lives of millions of people. Imploding a possibly horrific future into the tremulous present, radically confusing the real with a tightly choreographed imaginary of catastrophe – these forms of state-sponsored spectacle networked through channels of mass communication can be read as domestic psychological warfare. A public memory that such spectacles have been used historically to promote a politically productive fear may offer U.S. civilians one kind of psychological border defense against such mass mediated attacks.

For all the disturbing resonances, increasingly noted by contemporary critics, there is of course no simple correspondence between 1950s Cold War culture and today. Both moments involve a transition in the image of the 'enemy': from fascism to Communism in the early years of the Cold War, and from Communism to terrorism today. Both moments see the intensification of authoritarian and repressive domestic politics in the name of routing an enemy who has infiltrated national borders and resides 'inside' as well as 'outside' the United States.<sup>34</sup> But today's so-called 'war on terrorism' was launched in the wake of an unprecedented attack on U.S. civilian and military targets on September 11, 2001. The context in

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<sup>33</sup> See "Three-Day Bioterrorism Drill Begins in an Oklahoma Town" in *The New York Times*, 13 April 2002, p. A11.

<sup>34</sup> For one example of an analysis of the "eerie resonance" between dominant Cold War culture and today, see Robin 2002.

which a militarization of inner space is taking place today includes – in a dramatic difference from the Cold War – the psychological relations to violent injury and mass death experienced ‘inside’ the U.S. borders.

One remarkable feature of the militarization of inner space in the post-September 11 United States is how the language of psychology itself, of emotional and ‘inner’ experience, fights for dominance in public and political discourse about the attack and its aftermath. A reductive, repetitive discourse of trauma, healing, and recovery displaces the complicated realities of violence and war, of historical and political conflict. A kind of “therapeutic patriotism,” mixing political authority and the authority of T.V. news networks, emerged almost immediately in the days and weeks after September 11, as the mass media addressed issues like how to talk to your children, how to manage stress, and how to express grief and mourning and begin the emotional work of healing (Aufderheide 2002). A university-wide memo circulated on September 12 at the institution where I teach noted that we were “in the midst of dealing with an incredibly traumatic event” and that all of us would be “part of the healing experience for each other.” Practical antidotes to symptoms of stress were offered: strenuous physical exercise, soothing music, or keeping as busy as possible. Representative Jim McDermott, a psychiatrist, used a meeting of House Democrats in late September 2001 to explain the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and suggest that he, many of his colleagues, and much of the country were probably suffering from it.<sup>35</sup> While the attacks on September 11 were undoubtedly traumatic, the consequences of public and personal discourse that limits that trauma to ‘psychology’ alone are deeply disturbing.

The contradiction here is clear: when a highly, historically militarized U.S. civilian population encounters violence against it produced by others, it has nothing but a psychologized language of inner experience to understand that violence. Many civilian-soldiers today experience the trauma of September 11 without any recourse to historical or political understandings of the very violence ‘we’ are now asked to produce in response. As feminist theorist Laura Kipnis writes (of the political scene prior to September 11), “[W]ith trauma narratives in one sphere occluding historical consciousness in the other, it seems all the more likely that repetition and amnesia are to triumph and prevail as the identificatory modes of citizenship, rolling out the red carpet for creepy political forms...” (1999: 72). With objects of terror and fear defined in primarily non-political terms, a kind of (anti)politics of fear emerges that

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<sup>35</sup> “The Psychiatrist in the House Feels the Nation’s Trauma,” *The New York Times*, 1 October 2001, p. A16.

threatens to erase the politics of globalization, the politics of oil, the politics of Palestine and Israel, or the politics of a Cold War that played out in many non-white, non-Western countries, including Afghanistan. The “creepy political forms” that Kipnis warns against appear to have arrived. They include a militarization of psychic space that rests in part on an experience of violence as a strictly psychological event. The psychological organization of civilian society for the production of violence – the aim of a successful militarization of civilian psyches – proceeds today, it seems, by effectively amputating the psychological experience of traumatizing injury from issues of power or history. This may be one militarized consequence of ‘therapeutic culture’ or the ‘therapeutic state,’ theorized since the 1960s as a new formation of power in which cultural and political authority is wielded by appeal to the ‘psychology’ of the individual. But, even more ominously, therapeutic culture itself may be one effect of the rise of the national security state and a Cold War obsession with U.S. civilian psychology as a military playing field.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, perhaps most importantly, efforts to militarize post-September 11 civilian psyches lean heavily on a coded politics of meaning. If militarization always depends on the successful construction of confident borders between an evil ‘them’ and a good ‘us,’ then ‘we’ must notice the particular kind of border work being done today by the word ‘terrorism’ itself. ‘Terrorism’ does not only name and condemn specific acts, it also promotes a specific kind of psychological relationship. The word encodes a set of psychological meanings; it not only names but performs a form of self-other relationship. “As a boundary marker, the terrorist at once unsettles and stabilizes, filling a position recently vacated by the Communist in a post-Cold War era,” writes Lon Troyer (2002). The unsettling threat of the ‘terrorist’ as radically outside cultural intelligibility and beyond moral understanding, secures for the presumably ‘non-terrorist’ self its own moral grounding and cultural membership. The ‘terrorist’ is grotesquely, yet gratifyingly, ‘other.’

The historical fact that the 20<sup>th</sup> century usage of the word ‘terrorism’ emerged in the violent ambiguities of colonial occupation – in the violation of national, racial, ethnic, cultural, sexual, religious, linguistic, economic, and psychological borders – is not coincidental. Used, for example, by French colonial forces in the 1950s to name strategies of violent struggle by Algerian guerillas against French domination, ‘terrorism’ became a way

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<sup>36</sup> Ellen Herman’s history of the post-WWII rise of psychology as an expert and popular discourse provides the best evidence of the possible military origins of ‘therapeutic culture’ (though this is not a term she uses). For a recent discussion of the therapeutic state and the U.S. military see Nolan 1998, pp. 280-282.

to police forms of violence conducted without recourse to nationalized armies or centralized military command.<sup>37</sup> ‘Terrorism’ became a name for the violence deployed by people at an enormous military disadvantage, outside the boundaries of a mutually agreed upon battlefield. ‘Terrorism’ stages the theater of war, by force and of necessity, inside the realms of everyday life and everyday imagination and everyday fear.

But the purportedly distinguishing features of ‘terrorism’ – that civilians are the direct target of attack, and that the attacks are designed to create extreme fear and terror in the broader population – are, as I have tried to show here, a routinely practiced, planned-for feature of 20<sup>th</sup> century warfare. No, the difference between ‘terrorism’ and other forms of violence lies elsewhere. ‘Terrorists’ are a species of civilian-soldier who could not exist without the psychological and historical disavowal by other civilian-soldiers who refuse to remember that the boundary between civilian and military, between lethal violence and everyday life, has been breached and is bleeding into almost every psyche, every 21<sup>st</sup> century civilian-soldier’s nightmare of domination or sweet dream of social justice. The boundary that the word ‘terrorist’ really draws is between some civilian-soldiers and certain other civilian-soldiers. Historically, it is often a racialized boundary, sedimented with histories of colonization, and material and symbolic exploitation. Currently in the U.S., it is a racialized name used against some civilian-soldiers by other civilian-soldiers who refuse recognition of their own historical and contemporary role in the military manufacture of everyday violence. It is a name used today to mobilize and militarize U.S. civilian psychology for the production of continued, intensified violence – often against other civilians. It is a word that promotes violence across unacknowledged borders, in the name of borders that don’t exist. It is a secret coded message sending covert psychological instructions through political and historical, ambiguous and bloody networks of violent fear.

Are we all soldiers now?

Were we all soldiers before?

Are we all terrorists now?

Have we all been terrorists before?

Today, ‘we’ must be attentive and resistant to the variety of border patrols being deployed to sustain the imaginary, as well as the material, violence of ‘our’ not-so-united-(psychic)-states. Historically speaking, the

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<sup>37</sup> My thanks to Troy Duster who circulated his unpublished essay, “From Theater of War to Terrorism,” after the attacks on September 11. Written in 1986, his overview of “the historical evolution of the very concept of contemporary terrorism,” and the links between 20<sup>th</sup> century colonial battles and ‘terrorism,’ set much of my thinking here in motion. The essay is now available online at <http://www.hereinstead.com/sys-tmpl/htmlpage13/>.

U.S. civilian-soldier was primarily a white man or woman who lived in a house with a relatively steady income. The complexities of the militarization of psychic space are now being lived out daily – it remains to be seen what difference racial, gender, and class differences can make in the refusal of ‘our’ role as loyal psychic soldiers. The cultural battle today to construct forms of ‘we’ that will not submit ‘our’ inner space to the demands of an ongoing production of violence, to a militarization of everyday life and feeling, is just that, a battle. How to practice other everyday forms of emotional and political collectivity, how to make and to feel other meanings of ‘we,’ is today a psychological struggle with enormous military consequences.

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