THE "NEW" NORMAL

In the fall of 2001, the United States inaugurated a new project to secure the American future, and did so in the name, and language, of counterterror. The very real terrorist violence of September 2001 was quickly harnessed by U.S. officials to a conceptual project that mobilizes affects (fear, terror, anger) via imaginary processes (worry, precarity, threat) to constitute an unlimited space and time horizon for military state action. By amplifying official terror and public anxiety, the U.S. security apparatus powerfully remade itself in the early twenty-first century, proliferating experts, technological infrastructures, and global capacities in the name of existential defense. Counterterror constitutes itself today as endless, boundless, and defensive—a necessary means of protecting American interests in a world of emergent and violent dangers. The resulting security state apparatus no longer recognizes national boundaries or citizenship as the defining coordinates of its governance; rather, it constitutes a dangerous future as its object of concern. The motivating force behind this radical renewal and expansion of the national security state in the twenty-first century is a vision of a world without borders, generating threats without limit. The goal of the counterterror state is to produce and administer a U.S.-centric world, one in which American interests can never be surprised by external events, let alone shocked by them (see U.S. White House 2002a). Always already in crisis and failing, this aspirational image of American power has nonetheless been

hugely productive in its first decade, generating new expert worlds devoted to counterterror as a planetary project while rewriting the domestic social contract in fundamental ways.

The relationship between affect, technological capacity, and political agency in U.S. national security culture is the central concern of this book, which investigates the conditions of possibility for the most powerful military state in human history to declare war on an emotion. In particular, it traces how the affective politics of the Cold War nuclear state both enabled, and—after 2001—were transformed into those of the counterterror state. *Terror*, as we shall see, has a specific genealogy in the United States after 1945, one that is deeply structured by the revolutionary effects of military technoscience on American society and governance. But existential terror (after 1945, of the atomic bomb; after 2001, of the WMD) not only empowers the most radical actions of the security state; it also creates ideological barriers to dealing with a vast set of everyday forms of suffering and vulnerability that Americans experience, now rejected in favor of warding off imagined catastrophes. The escalating violence of neoliberal economics in the twenty-first century (poverty, bankrupt municipal governments, spectacular white-collar crime, energy scarcity) and of an increasingly destabilized biosphere (affecting health, agriculture, city infrastructures) generate an intensifying experience of precarity in the United States but rarely rise to the level of a formal national security concern. Although cities lost to storm surges and bankruptcies create terrors of the most visceral and immediate kind for citizens, such events do not activate the attention of the counterterror state.[1] The state security apparatus today sets aside these everyday insecurities endured by citizens to pursue a specific, if expansive, universe of terroristic potentials. American insecurity may derive from many sources, but it can be affectively channeled to enable a state project with specific logics and coordinates. Put differently, the United States is a global hyperpower that increasingly produces the conditions for its own instability (politically, economically, environmentally) and then mobilizes the resulting vulnerability of its citizens and systems to demand an even greater investment in security infrastructures. Counterterror has thus become recursive and self-colonizing, replacing the social commitment to building a prosperous collective future and a stable international order with the project of warding off a field of imagined and emergent dangers.

Given the wide-ranging global violence (involving wars, covert operations, and drone strikes) as well as the extraordinary costs of counterterror, its incompatibility with democratic governance, and its overwhelmingly

negative vision of citizens, international relations, and the future, it is important to consider how and why counterterror has become so American. What a national community fears and how it responds to those fears are cultural forms as well as technologically mediated processes, the basis for a domestic politics as well as a geopolitics. The affects and infrastructures of the contemporary security state, as we shall see, have both a history and an emerging logic and purpose. This book explores why American society, at the very height of its global military, economic, and cultural power, has been so receptive to a state program that offers little in the way of material everyday security in exchange for increasing public docility, private excitability, and the promise of unending war. *The Theater of Operations* is ultimately an examination of American self-fashioning through technoscience and threat projection, of how fear and terror have been domesticated as a primary national resource and projected out globally as a twenty-first-century American project.

Threatening Histories

One of the very first formal acts of the War on Terror was a purge of the U.S. national archives. After the suicide-hijacker attacks on New York and Washington in 2001, researchers at the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, myself included, began to notice the disappearance of long-available files or the absence of documents within them, sometimes marked with a withdrawal notice stating that "this item was removed because access to it is restricted" (figure 1.1; see Aid 2006; U.S. Information Security Oversight Office 2006). Specific historical materials related to national intelligence estimates, emergency response planning, nuclear policy, and covert actions dating back to World War I were pulled from public access and reclassified. Documents that had been in the public domain for years and, in some cases, already published in official government histories were nonetheless inexplicably recategorized as official secrets. Codified in secret legal agreements with U.S. intelligence and defense agencies, this reclassification program extended from the National Archives to the presidential library system, involving records from the State Department, National Security Council, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Department of Defense (DOD), as well as from agencies that no longer officially exist—such as the Atomic Energy Commission, Defense Nuclear Agency, and Chemical Warfare Service. Thus, before the United States invaded Afghanistan on October 7, 2001 (which inaugurated the George W. Bush administration's global War on Terror), or adopted the U.S.A. Patriot Act
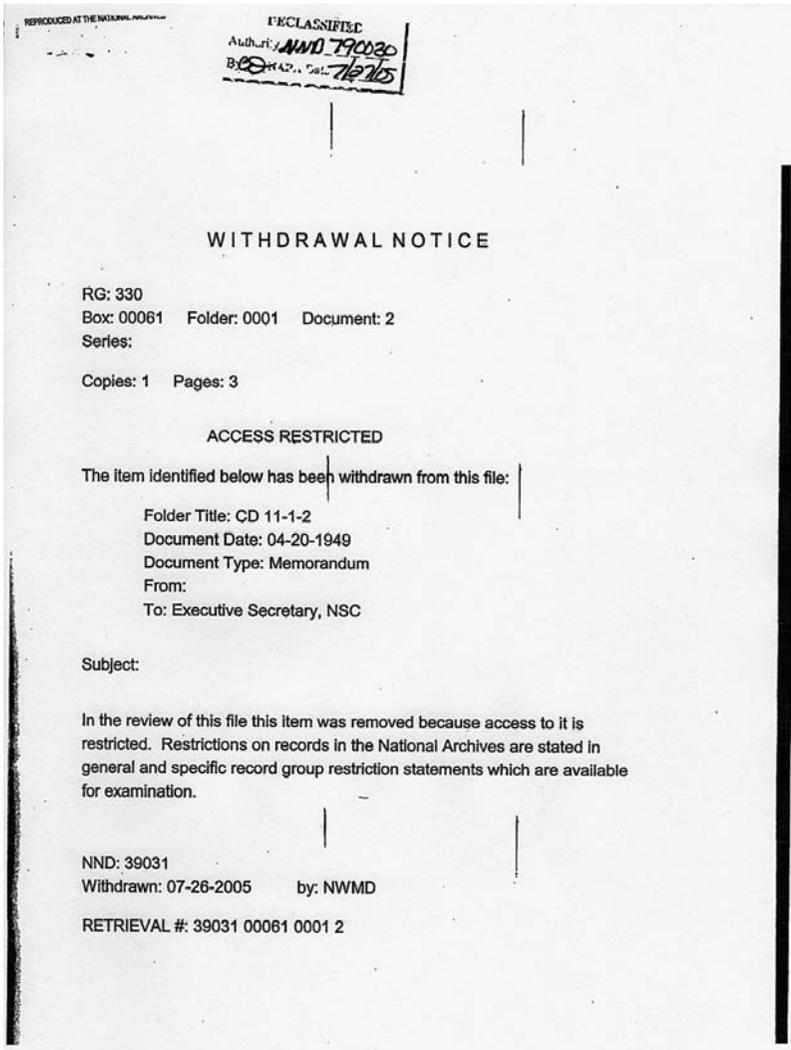
FIGURE I.1. Withdrawal notice, U.S. National Archives and Administration.

on October 26 (which profoundly redefined the concept of U.S. citizenship through search, seizure, surveillance, and detention policies), a war on public memory was already well under way.

We might well ask: Why would national security policy documents, particularly those of the long-dead Cold War, be of such immediate concern to U.S. officials, appearing to undermine the War on Terror at its very founding? And if American history began anew with the violence of September

2001, as White House officials reiterated over and over again in their public statements, declaring the end of Cold War security logics of deterrence and a "new normal" of preemptive counterterrorism, then why was it so important to control the deep history of the national security state?

We should begin by recognizing that the official declaration of a "new" counterterror state in 2001 was actually a repetition, modeled in language and tone on the launch of the national security state in 1947. Both projects involved the designation of new insecurities, new institutions to fight them, a public mobilization campaign grounded in fear, and above all, official claims that a new kind of war (a cold war or a war on terror) was a multi-generational commitment, constituting a new mode of everyday life rather than a brief intensity of conflict. The former cold warriors in the George W. Bush administration intended the War on Terror to be as powerful as the Cold War in realigning citizen-state relations and defining American geopolitical objectives, constituting a renewed commitment to state and nation building through confronting an existential danger. Nonetheless, official desires for a newly militarized consensus, and a reliance on a prior model of state and nation building, still do not explain the immediate anxiety about the public history of the national security state in the fall of 2001.

Consider the following two instances of War on Terror reclassification of Cold War materials.[2] A "top secret" memo from April 27, 1951 (originally declassified in 1996), on the subject of "Chinese Communist Intentions to Intervene in Korea" seems to have been reclassified because it documents a failure to predict the future. The CIA intelligence estimate states that the Chinese would not invade Korea in 1950, as they in fact did in November of that year (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency 1951). It was pulled for reclassification on October 16, 2001. A CIA report to the National Security Council from April 1949 (originally declassified in 1996 and reclassified in 2005) on the subject of the "Atomic Energy Program of the USSR" also attempts to engage the future, stating that "in order to estimate the capability of the USSR to wage atomic warfare, it is necessary to know, not only the events that preceded the date when the first bomb is detonated, but also the capability for bomb production thereafter" (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency 1949, 1). It calls for a comprehensive effort to study Soviet capabilities in nuclear weapons science, including "special intelligence," "interrogations," "covert operations," attention to "Soviet technical literatures," as well as the production of a "detection system" to discover when a nuclear explosion has occurred (ibid.). The document suggests that in spring 1949 the CIA was unaware that the Soviets would test their first atomic bomb on August 29 of that year. Today,

these documents show how the newly formed U.S. intelligence agencies of the mid-twentieth century calculated Communist activities and nuclear threat at the very start of the Cold War. However, the documents also reveal something else that is deeply important to national security professionals to this day: the value—and the shame—of strategic surprise.

In their historical moments, the shock of the first Soviet nuclear test and of the Communist revolution in China and later actions in Korea were driving forces for a massive expansion of the national security state in the 1950s, a radical investment in militarism not to be repeated until the first decade of the twenty-first century, when the nuclear security state, shocked by suicide-hijacker attacks on two American cities, remade itself under the logics of counterterror. The politics of shock are central to the conceptualization of the national security state as a distinctly American form of power. We might think of the reclassification project as not only a sign of the deep commitment of the counterterror state to official secrecy and covert action in all its forms, but also as an effort to purge evidence of the inability of the national security apparatus to perfectly predict the future—to anticipate and mediate crisis and thereby produce a normalized everyday, unbroken by trauma. It is as if the failure to prevent the suicide hijackers in 2001 created a reverberating anxiety not only about the attacks but also about the concept of national security itself, connecting seemingly disparate and historically distinct expert judgments within an alternative understanding of American power, an infrastructure of failure rather than success. The failure to predict global events, let alone protect U.S. citizens and cities from violence, haunts U.S. security culture today, creating the constant drive for new technical capacities and the increasing militarization of American life. It also generates professional desires for revenge against those who have revealed the institutional weakness of the global hyperpower. These administrative commitments fuse the problem of futures, infrastructures, expertise, and international competition with affect in a new way, one that creates the expectation of a total anticipatory control of the future even as that possibility breaks down from one second to the next, producing the grounds for serial shocks (and thus, perpetual trauma).

During the Cold War constituting, mobilizing, and exploiting existential danger was a central domain of national politics, with each federal election in part based on how prospective leaders would handle the production of nuclear technologies as well as manage the minute-to-minute threat of nuclear attack. Evoking existential threat became the core vehicle for build-

ing a military-industrial state, pursuing rivalries between political parties, and mobilizing ideological campaigns on both the Right and the Left. Nuclear fear was thus a total social formation in the second half of the twentieth century, mobilizing all aspects of American society through specific images of the end of the nation-state. This negative view of the future was balanced by investments in a welfare-state apparatus devoted to improving the conditions of everyday life for citizens in terms of health, education, and the environment (Light 2003). Thus, the catastrophic as well as the utopian potentials of the nuclear state were explicit terms of public discourse, making both panic and promise the basis for the domestic political sphere. Americans now live in a postwelfare state society, which is no longer so formally invested in improving the qualities of collective life through social programming; thus, terror has increasingly become the primary domain of everyday politics in the early twenty-first century. The lack of a positive vision of the collective future is pronounced in the United States today, and it is amplified by the increasingly blurred public memory of the historical evolution of the security state itself. Indeed, the proliferation of Cold War nuclear panics is rarely discussed as a model for contemporary counterterror politics, leaving largely unexamined the truth or falsity of official claims of Soviet nuclear advantage: the 1950s bomber gap, the 1960s missile gap, the 1970s window of vulnerability, and the 1980s Soviet first-strike capability. But it is important to recognize that these domestic productions, as iconic moments in American politics, were emotional recruitments before they were technological or military claims of fact. These episodes were domestic political campaigns of threat proliferation before, and sometimes even after, the technological and scientific reality of Soviet military capabilities had been determined. From this perspective, terror has a specific American logic and domestic history, one that since 1945 has drawn on the destructive capacities of nuclear weapons to focus social energies, unlock resources, and build things. In the twentieth century, the United States remade itself through the atomic bomb, using nuclear fear as a coordinating principle for U.S. institutions, citizen-state relations, and geopolitics alike (Masco 2006).

The counterterror state, like the countercommunist state before it, attempts to install through domestic affective recruitments a new perception of everyday life that is unassailable. The campaign to normalize threat is the flip side of identifying and articulating new kinds of danger, allowing new forms of governance to be pursued as a necessary counterformation.

Consider, for example, the following official statements about insecurity in the United States framed in the future conditional:

> This situation will continue as far ahead as anyone can foresee. We cannot return to "normalcy." This is the "new normalcy." Only by winning what at best will be a long war of endurance can we hope to avoid . . . the very possible destruction of civilization itself. (quoted in Chernus 2002, 44)

> Homeland security is not a temporary measure just to meet one crisis. Many of the steps we have now been forced to take will become permanent in American life. They represent an understanding of the world as it is, and dangers we must guard against perhaps for decades to come. I think of it as the new normalcy. (Cheney 2001)

As far as anyone can foresee. The first statement—from July 1953—is by Eisenhower administration official James Lambie, who was charged with developing a national communications strategy to mobilize citizens in the thermonuclear age. In response, he helped craft one of the largest public education campaigns in U.S. history (a program that we remember today as civil defense), devoted to teaching citizens to fear the bomb in a specific way so as to prepare them for a potentially short nuclear or long cold war. The second evocation of a "new normal"—from an October 2001 speech to the Republican Governors Association—is by Vice President Dick Cheney, who also attempts to standardize danger and to create a new psychic infrastructure capable of accommodating a permanent, imminent danger. In both cases, existential threat is presented as both novel and emergent and is then positioned as the baseline reality for a new kind of everyday American life. Future crisis is projected—as concept—to be the basis for life at institutional, technological, and affective levels, reordering domestic politics and geopolitics in a startlingly economical gesture.

Declaring a "new" normal is thus anything but new as a state security practice in the United States. However, the objects, logics, and consequences of defense have significantly changed with the shift from the twentieth century's nuclear "balance of terror" to the twenty-first century's "War on Terror."[3] Interrogating the links between the first decade of the Cold War and the first decade of the War on Terror is a central project of this book, which pays specific attention to how technological revolution, surprise, normality, and terror have been used to orchestrate a new kind of security culture. I pursue these comparisons not because they are absolutely sym-

metrical or simply code shifts from nuclear fear to terrorism, but because each iteration of the national security state announces itself through acts of normalization and naturalization (see Der Derian 2002). It is increasingly important to understand how historically crafted images and logics of imminent danger allow feelings to be nationalized and directed to produce antidemocratic actions and policy. These affective logics constitute a specific zone of interaction between citizens and the state, one that is the very basis for the social contract (which Hobbes once defined as the exchange of public obedience for collective security). As we shall see, national security affect is a special kind of collective experience, one that is central to enabling the technological and administrative capacities of the security state. Infrastructures—affective, imaginative, and material—are linked in the production of American power today, creating an unprecedented global projection of American fears and desires in the name of existential defense.

The Threat Matrix

Since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, surprise and its opposite, anticipation, have been foundational concerns of the U.S. national security state. A formal rationale for the 1947 National Security Act (which created the Department of Defense, the National Security Council, and the CIA) was to prevent a nuclear Pearl Harbor—to prevent strategic surprise in the nuclear age.[4] U.S. policy makers immediately understood the power of the atomic bomb to be revolutionary, enabling U.S. leaders to threaten rival nations with "prompt and utter destruction," as President Harry Truman did in July 1945, or with "shock and awe," in the language of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on the eve of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.[5] The ability to shock (at both psychic and material levels) and not experience shock, in other words, became a primary goal of the American security state after 1945. The national security state also sought right from the beginning to politically exploit the psychological effects of nuclear fear as much as the destructive physical capacities of nuclear weapons. This formulation of security makes the near future as well as the human nervous system specific objects of state scrutiny, with perceptions and temporalities of danger the guiding administrative logics of the security state.

At the start of the Cold War, the United States transformed an anticipated Soviet nuclear capability into the rationale for building a global technological system, which became the always-on-alert infrastructure of mutual assured destruction. The nuclear strategist Albert Wohlstetter (1958) famously

called this the "delicate balance of terror," a phrase that underscores the Cold War's affective logics but not always its material reality. Indeed, the era of most acute nuclear paranoia in the United States was a largely self-generated effort to mobilize and coordinate citizens, officials, military personnel, and major social institutions through a new concept of nuclear terror. In the first decade of the War on Terror, the United States also committed to building an ever-expanding, always-on-alert global security apparatus, but one that had an astonishing new range of interests (weapons, people, data, microbes). This is a broad-based effort to create a kind of American power that can administer the global future, prevent rivals from amassing threatening power, and is never deterred or shocked. Counterterror is a project subject to constant failure, and precisely because it fails constantly, it energizes a hyperactive, and increasingly planetary, U.S. security apparatus, one that is forever striving to realize its imaginary potential.

For defense experts, the challenge of the September 2001 attack was not only its spectacular violence but also the shocking display of American vulnerability (see RETORT 2005). The fact that the global nuclear hyperpower could still suffer strategic surprise—and by suicide hijackers armed not with atomic bombs and state-of-the-art bombers, but with simple box cutters and commercial airplanes—challenged the existing rationale for the massive multigenerational investment in defense. The U.S. nuclear complex alone has cost over $6 trillion since 1943, a federal expenditure exceeded only by those for the nonnuclear military and social security (S. Schwartz 1998). Rather than enjoying the end of history with the demise of the Soviet Union and the start of a new, unipolar American century, U.S. security experts were shocked and shamed by the ease with which the attacks were carried out. Indeed, the attacks transformed the most powerful security apparatus in the world into a nervous system in a state of global panic (Taussig 1992). Immediately after the attacks, President Bush ordered that all potential threats made to U.S. interests around the world be routed directly to the White House. This unfiltered "threat matrix" became a daily exercise in expanding the field of imminent danger for decision makers, as unvetted threats piled on top of one another to create a world of seemingly endless and varied forms of danger, with verifiable information mixed in with rumor, error, and hearsay (Mayer 2008, 5).

By embracing an amplifying economy of fear, policy makers became the most terrified of American subjects. When a second wave of attacks hit on September 18, 2001, in the form of anthrax-filled letters aimed at top

elected officials and figures in the news media, the result was a spectacularly consequential dislocation: the U.S. Congress moved into improvised facilities while its members deliberated some of the most important security legislation in U.S. history; at the same time, prominent media figures who might otherwise have been reporting on those deliberations instead focused on securing their work spaces from biological agents, while generating a proliferating and hysterical media narrative of imminent attack. In this context, key White House officials came to believe they had been victims of a chemical warfare attack when a "sensitive, specialized sensor, designed to alert anyone in the vicinity that the air they were breathing had been contaminated by potentially lethal radioactive, chemical, or biological agents" sounded (Mayer 2008, 3). This alarm led Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and others to believe that they might have been lethally infected by nerve gas. A faulty White House bioweapons sensor played a significant role in the evolution of the War on Terror, creating an affective atmosphere of immediate danger to officials huddled in their most secure facilities. At this moment of vulnerable uncertainty, every worst-case scenario might have been playing out in real time—a cascading set of imagined horrors and potentials. The ever-expanding threat matrix created both escalating responsibilities and new institutional opportunities to pursue specific visions of American power, which in turn allowed a vast range of interests to quickly agree on "terror" as the operative principle for a renewal and expansion of American power in the twenty-first century.

The inability to perfectly predict and preempt low-tech terroristic violence in 2001 enabled a new vision of the future to emerge among security experts, one in which nearly every aspect of American life was potentially at risk from unknown forces, requiring not only a conceptual remaking of the concept of "security" but also a new global apparatus to achieve it. Identifying threat, in all its myriad forms and temporalities, transformed the state security project from a focus on capabilities—that is, an expert effort to identify existing technological capacities of known enemies—to a world of *what ifs*. A key innovation of the counterterrorist state is this commitment to using the imaginary to locate danger. Since 2001 scenarios, speculations, and hypotheticals have been endowed with the power to drive American policy across the spectrum of government agencies, which are now charged not only with administering a day-to-day lived reality but also with responding to threatening probabilities, potentials, and possibilities *before* they become fact.

Consider, for example, how one branch of the Department of Defense (DOD) currently defines both its mission and U.S. national security:

> The Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA) was established in 1958 to prevent strategic surprise from negatively impacting U.S. national security and create strategic surprise for U.S. adversaries by maintaining the technological superiority of the U.S. military. To fulfill its mission, the Agency relies on diverse performers to apply multi-disciplinary approaches to both advance knowledge through basic research and create innovative technologies that address current practical problems through applied research. DARPA's scientific investigations span the gamut from laboratory efforts to the creation of full-scale technology demonstrations in the fields of biology, medicine, computer science, chemistry, physics, engineering, mathematics, materials sciences, social sciences, neurosciences and more. As the DOD's primary innovation engine, DARPA undertakes projects that are finite in duration but that create lasting revolutionary change. (Defense Advanced Research Project Agency n.d.)

To prevent strategic surprise at home while creating it for others through revolutionary technological change. DARPA announces itself programmatically here as an unending series of Manhattan Projects, using the full spectrum of scientific inquiry for U.S. national advantage. The success or failure of U.S. national security is thus determined by the register of surprise—a highly slippery term whose negation requires a specific ability to read the future, as well as the capacity to anticipate intentions, accidents, and opportunities on a global scale. DARPA's mission statement also assumes nothing less than a permanent war posture and a planetary field of action.

When amplified across the global U.S. national security apparatus, the logics of threat designation and preemption transform counterterrorism into a project of constant affective recruitment and capacity generation. The Congressional Research Service estimates the formal costs of the first decade of the War on Terror at $1.4 trillion (Belasco 2011)—a vast U.S. expenditure that is in addition to the costs of maintaining the largest formal military budget in the world, which has almost doubled since 2001 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2011). The Watson Institute at Brown University estimates that total costs of the first decade of counterterror come closer to $4 trillion (Costsofwar.org 2013). The first decade of the War on Terror has produced multiple fronts: many Manhattan Project–like research programs located across the military sciences

(from drones to cyberwar to biosecurity); the creation of a second defense department in the Department of Homeland Security; and a vast new commitment to intelligence gathering, data mining, global digital communications systems, and, above all, new forms of expert threat perception. Dana Priest and William Arkin have shown that since 2001 a new intelligence apparatus has been built that is too big for any single person to understand its reach, level of redundancy, or output. The authors found that over 850,000 people now have security clearances in counterterrorism alone, and generate some 50,000 reports a year. Priest and Arkin were able to identify "1,271 government organizations and 1,931 private companies" working on "programs related to counter-terrorism, homeland security, and intelligence at over 10,000 locations across the United States" (Priest and Arkin 2010, 1; see also 2011). Committed to recognizing vulnerabilities in the global web of U.S. interests and imagining proliferating vectors of foreign and domestic threat, the catastrophic terrorist future is now a competitive domain for security experts at multiple agencies and companies—making disaster calculation the major growth industry of the new century. The worst-case terrorist scenario is produced across this spectrum of expert activity, dictating the terms of the counterterror formation, and maintaining a charged hold on the concept of security as well as the future. The paradox is that despite this commitment to preemption and the fact that the United States outspends almost all other countries combined on its security, Americans in the twenty-first century are caught in multiple forms of crisis (economic, environmental, and political).

Counterterror is a mode of global engagement that attempts to extend U.S. military dominance but one that paradoxically generates new forms of insecurity: by installing technological and bureaucratic capabilities to preempt imagined threats, counterterror simultaneously creates new forms of uncertainty, ripple effects from expert practices that create their own realities and retaliations and threats. Every system has built into its infrastructure a future crisis: the counterterror state is loading new capacities into the future as well as the conditions of possibility for new nightmares not yet realized (Cazdyn 2007; see also Berlant 2007). This is not quite the epistemic murk that Michael Taussig (1987) encounters in the mutual terror of colonial-native encounters in rubber-boom Colombia, as its domain is the future instead of the present. But by allocating conceptual, material, and affective resources to ward off imagined but potentially catastrophic terroristic futures, the counterterror state also creates the conditions for those catastrophic futures to emerge. It does so by generating new arms

races; increasing international blowback from war, covert actions, and drone strikes; and by not responding to existing suffering at home and abroad with the same urgency as it addresses real and imagined terrorist acts. A perverse effect of the counterterror system is that failure and disaster, like surprise and shock, can be absorbed as part of its internal circuit, authorizing an expansion of the number of objects to be surveilled and secured, empowering expert speculation about the various forms of danger that might emerge from an ever-shifting landscape of information and potential threat. Thus, for defense experts most of all, an affective recruitment to constant crisis is one of the chief effects of the counterterror formation—which is self-colonizing, opening a potentially endless conceptual space of worry and projected dangers.

Counterterror thus approaches the American future as both already ruined—a boundless source of violence—and as perfectible—a conceptual universe requiring radical social and technological engineering and intervention. One powerful effect of these administrative logics is that demilitarizing becomes increasingly impossible to imagine, as potential dangers pile up for experts, while citizens *feel* increasingly insecure with the diversion of funds and psychic energies from everyday welfare to anticipatory defense (see Gusterson and Besteman 2009). Counterterror, then, constitutes itself as an endless horizon, providing a self-justifying rationale for radical expenditures and action—offering a potentially eternal project for the security state. For when can the future ever be perfectly secured? When can terror ever be eradicated from both thought and action? Threat, as an imaginary engagement with the future, is limitless, offering an ever-expanding field of potentials, possibilities, and fears for counterterror governance.

Gaming Death

Perceptions of the future are affectively laden, as well as tied to expert judgment and information; they are based on feelings and intensities that can be nonrational but that link people together through threat-based projection. Put differently, one can be afraid only of that which one knows to fear. Fear requires a kind of familiarity with danger that the future does not allow us full access to. In the realm of esoteric military technologies—weapons of mass destruction, for example—the general public has no expert knowledge to draw on and must instead be educated to think and *feel* a particular way about technological capacities and worst-case outcomes. Rehearsing the end of the nation-state at the level of imagination has consequently been a core American project since the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima

and Nagasaki, with each generation embracing its own concept of nation-ending apocalyptic danger, consolidated most powerfully in the image of the mushroom cloud.

The innovation of the War on Terror is that it formally rejects *deterrence*, with its focus on global stability, as an objective in favor of *preemption*—an unending manipulation of the future for national advantage. The counter-terror state is devoted to locating and/or conjuring up images of dangers from an unrealized future and then combating each of those alternate futures *as if* they were material and imminent threats. In this way, imagined futures and the affects they produce have become institutionalized as national security policy, creating a form of expert judgment that is at war with its own apocalyptic imaginary before it meets the real world, creating a massively productive form of militarization that is easily delinked from evidence, facts, or the observable in the name of confronting and eliminating potentially cataclysmic future danger. How did this kind of governance come to be?

The origins of the preemptive, counterterror state reside in the logics and lessons of the Cold War. The nuclear arms race, with its minute-to-minute calculation of threat and advantage and the always ready-to-launch nuclear war machine, was an effort to stabilize the present by loading nuclear destruction into the everyday and continually displacing it by a few minutes into the future. Mutual assured destruction promised that any state that started a nuclear war would only minutes later be destroyed by it, an unprecedented compression of time, space, and destructive capability in the name of global defense. To make this system work, U.S. defense experts not only built nuclear weapons and delivery systems that could function in any environment, launch within minutes, and operate on a planetary scale, but they also gamed, modeled, and fantasized future war scenarios incessantly (see Ghamari-Tabrizi 2005). Locating security in intercontinental missile systems that were never fully tested and trusting a vast web of machines, institutions, and people to respond perfectly in the first moments of global crisis, the nuclear war machine was designed first and foremost to produce fear of the near future in adversaries and to harness that fear to produce a stable bipolar world. The Cold War system was therefore saturated with affective and imaginary recruitments as well as anticipatory logics. Deterrence, however, restrained both sides of the conflict, putting a break on both U.S. and Soviet desires and aggressions. The Cold War focus on nuclear weapons and delivery systems also set material parameters for the speculative expert imaginary; it focused experts' attention on the numbers

and types of Soviet weapons, their deployments and machinic capabilities (speed and force), as well as on the psychologies of nuclear command and control. These technoscientific forms were never free of political calculation but had a material basis: Donald MacKenzie (1990) has shown how the accuracy of intercontinental missiles was determined in the United States not by exacting experimental proof but rather by a political consensus among all the interested scientific, military, and industrial parties (adding an unacknowledged uncertainty to nuclear targeting going forward). Similarly, Lynn Eden (2004) has shown how the urban consequences of fire from nuclear explosions fell out of formal nuclear war planning in the 1960s, enabling the development of nuclear war and civil defense concepts that vastly underestimated the material effects of each detonation and allowed far greater numbers of U.S. weapons to be deployed globally (see also Gusterson 2008).

In other words, although nuclear war remained at the conceptual stage after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, it was fought incessantly at the level of the imagination, with an unending state-based commitment to trying to model, game, intuit, and assess the likely actions of all parties in a nuclear conflict. By contrast the future imagined by counterterror officials today is an endless spectrum of threat, with a proliferating set of objects, vectors, scales, and possibilities—a spectrum that is literally not bounded by time, space, technology, or the rules of evidence. By defining terror as constantly emergent, the counterterror state also assumes an open-ended futurity that cannot be deterred by external forces. As Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld (2002) famously put it in a press conference about the (ultimately fictional) threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction before the U.S. invasion, the counterterror state needs to make not-yet-visible dangers its central concern because:

> Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know. And if one looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones. And so people who have the omniscience that they can say with high certainty that something has not happened or is not being tried, have capabilities . . . they can do things I can't do.

"Unknown unknowns" can now be the basis for war. Here, Rumsfeld transforms a catastrophic future at the level of the speculative imaginary into an urgent problem of counterterror. Security is thus constituted as both a necessity (to defend against catastrophic shock) and as an unachievable goal (as the future is an inexhaustible source of threat), a perverse logic that the counterterror state uses to drive increasing calls for resources, technical capacities, and agency. In the first decade of counterterror, a strategic mobilization by security officials of the unknown, not yet emergent, or invisible danger has powerfully overturned long-standing American democratic values about the rule of law, the treatment of captives, the surveillance of citizens, and the necessity of covert actions. It has transformed intuitions and desires into policy, invalidated long-standing forms of expert judgment that worked to constrain official fears by attending to material reality, and—as a result—has enabled deadly actions in the absence of facts. Rumsfeld's vision—precisely because it transforms the unknown into a space of terror requiring immediate action—simultaneously validates and eliminates the possibility of factual evidence, creating both a rationale for unrestrained American power and a security apparatus of constantly expanding capacities and infrastructures. This logic renders security itself obsolete, replacing it with a constant conceptual agitation and physical mobilization. Threat (as pure potential) is used to enable a radically active and ever emerging counterterror state, allowing action to be favored over restraint, possibilities over capabilities, hypotheticals over knowledge.

Excitable Subjects

The uniquely destructive capabilities of nuclear weapons and the speed of their potential delivery constituted a new kind of technologically mediated existential threat after 1945, one that made feelings (fear, terror, shock, aggression, futility, revenge) a new national project. I argue in this book that the first and most powerful effect of the nuclear revolution in the United States was the constitution of a new affective politics, one that informs the evolution of the national security state to this day and that is key to the formation of the counterterror state. Put differently, in the age of thermonuclear war, the security state became a committed affect theorist, investing substantial multidisciplinary resources in efforts to understand public morale, contagious affects (panic, fear, terror), resilience, resolve, and the long-term effects of stress. The nuclear balance of terror was always an all-encompassing formation, creating a new executive (a president preauthorized to start a nuclear war any second of the day) and a new citizen-subject

(recruited to reorganize everyday life around the minute-to-minute reality of nuclear danger). Military science funded extensive research on affects, feelings, and emotions with the goal of both psychologically strengthening and militarizing American society, using nuclear fear to calibrate officials and citizens alike through a new image of collective death.

National security affect has thus become a new kind of infrastructure—a "structure of feeling," to use Raymond Williams's felicitous phrase (1978, 132)—that is historically produced, shared, and officially constituted as a necessary background condition of everyday life (see Stoler 2009). It is based on fears that are officially sanctioned and promoted as a means of coordinating citizens as members of a national security state. It can be a specific and negative form of what Kathleen Stewart calls "ordinary affects" (2007), in the sense that certain kinds of fear are now coded into social life as potentials that can be triggered by small events—fear of the unattended suitcase in the airport, for example—or directly recruited by official statements, such as terrorist alert warnings. National security affect also relies on a specific political aesthetic, one that rehearses certain forms and images to produce what Jacques Rancière calls a "sensuous shock" that limits thought as much as expands it (2009, 6; see also M. Hansen 2004). The goal of a national security system is to produce a citizen-subject who responds to officially designated signs of danger automatically, instinctively activating logics and actions learned over time through drills and media indoctrination. An individual's response to this kind of emotional call (in either the affirmative or negative) reveals his or her membership in a national community. Indeed, the production of a fearful and docile public in the nuclear age has been historically matched by the rise of vibrant activist movements (across the antinuclear, peace, justice, and environmental spectrum), counterpublics that mirror the intensities of officially sanctioned nuclear terror in pursuit of different collective futures.[6]

An affective atmosphere of everyday anxiety (Anderson 2009), grounded in an understanding that accidents, disasters, and attacks can happen at any moment of the day, is transformed into individualized emotion by specific events, becoming a personalized and deeply felt experience. As Stewart puts it, "what affects us—the sentience of a situation—is also a dwelling, a worlding born from an atmospheric attunement" (2011, 449). I argue in this book that national security affect has a specific form in the United States, one that is tied to a deep structural investment in the atomic bomb and that has been recalibrated and expanded since 2001 to address a new concept of terror (consolidated in the logic of the WMD). American citizens have been

taught through official and mass-media campaigns to attune themselves to the possibility of terroristic violence as an unlimited daily potential. This new concept of terror maintains the minute-to-minute threat made familiar by decades of Cold War nuclear culture, but it is different in that it is an open-ended concept, one that links hugely diverse kinds of threats (nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons to be sure, but also attacks on the public image of the United States, computer hacking, infectious disease, and disruptions to daily life, to name but a few) and treats them all as equally imminent, equally catastrophic.

Counterterror today requires a continual expansion of the security state, reaching a limit only when its key objects attain planetary scale (exhausting space) or when federal monies run out (exhausting resources). That is, counterterror sets no conceptual or territorial limit to defense, scaling its problems up to the ultimate spatial unit—the earth—while offering an unlimited call for resources to secure life from the species to the population to the individual to the microbe. In this manner, counterterror produces a highly mobile sovereignty, one that uses the potential of catastrophic future events as a means of overcoming legal, ethical, and political barriers in the here and now and that is endlessly searching for new objects of concern. However, this commitment to total security—and the constant failure to achieve it—creates an unending bureaucratic circuit where shock requires ever more militarization and normalization in the name of warding off future shock.

A war on shock, like a war on terror, locates national security within the human nervous system itself, constituting a peculiarly embodied psychopolitics (Orr 2006) that fuses an energetic apocalyptic imagination with both an immediate and deep future. Conceptually, a national security project of this kind would seem to offer only two means of achieving stability: first, by changing the nature of the individual at the level of emotions, senses, and psychology so that he or she experiences threat in a different manner—a project of normalization through militarization; and second, by changing the global environment in the hope of eliminating the possibility of danger. The Cold War state and the counterterror state in specific formulations have attempted to do both: endeavoring to produce a new citizen who is tuned to the specific threats of the age and psychologically capable of supporting permanent war, while simultaneously mobilizing U.S. economic and military power to change the international system, in the hope of eradicating threat on a planetary basis. However, the impossibility of this dual effort to produce a completely compliant citizen incapable of resisting the

national security state or to eliminate danger on a planetary scale creates an endless feedback loop of shock, normalization, and militarization. We could say that this recursive system is what constitutes the United States as a global hyperpower, but an increasingly fragile one—as experts see danger coming in all physical dimensions (land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace) as well as in all temporal conditions (past, present, and future). This requires a new kind of expert psychopolitics that is not grounded in the effort to establish facts but rather is committed to generating speculative futures (imagined dangers of cataclysmic scale) that it will then need to counter. Security thus becomes a highly conceptual enterprise, one that moves past statistical, fact-based, or capability-based assessments of risk (see Collier 2008; De Goede 2008). Threat assessment—with all its imaginative, affective recruitments—becomes the chief domain of counterterror.

The inability to perfectly predict and counter threat creates in the American security system the opportunity to constitute nearly every domain and object of everyday life as a potential vector of attack, creating a national security project that performs as a nearly perfect paranoid system, but one with planetary reach. Peter Sloterdijk has noted that a nervous condition is an attribute of globalization, which he sees as:

> the establishment of the system of synchronous stress on a global scale. This has progressed to such an extent that those who do not make themselves continuously available for synchronous stress seem asocial. Excitability is now the foremost duty of all citizens. This is why we no longer need military service. What is required is the general theme of duty, that is to say, a readiness to play your role as a conductor of excitation for collective, opportunist psychoses. (Sloterdijk and Henrichs 2001, 82)

Excitability is now the foremost duty of all citizens. The circulation of affect, the ability to be coordinated as subjects through felt intensities rather than reason at a mass level, is a core aspect of modern life (see Mazzarella 2010; Clough 2007, 19; Orr 2006). The atomic bomb is one key origin of this kind of governance (see Lutz 1997, 247), a WMD that greatly expanded American power but that also created a world of constant existential danger, one that was quite formally managed for generations by suturing collective life to an imminent destruction located in each minute of the day. A security culture of existential threat was embedded quite thoroughly in American society and U.S. security institutions by decades of Cold War, allowing national politics of every kind (domestic, international, activist) to be positioned as

a matter of collective life or collective death. From this perspective, *terror* is a familiar mode of governance in the United States, one that was merely reconstituted in 2001 with a new set of objects, ambitions, and concerns.

Living Code Orange

National security affect is productive whether it is reinforced by material or verifiable dangers or simply exists as a background register in everyday life. It is an atmosphere (Stewart 2011; Anderson 2009) that can become a deeply felt emotional structure when directed by mass media or official declarations into a collective event. It can start from the top down, creating lines of intensity between the national leadership and the citizenry, or short circuits in the democratic process by raising the stakes of critiquing official action. Citizens can also opt out of the national security public sphere all together by nonattention or generate specific counterpublics to it. Official White House statements, however, draw on a classified universe of information that citizens know exists but cannot interrogate, making counter-terror often a one-way communication. After the 2001 attacks, the classified threat matrix and the mass media combined to generate a national nervous system, one that promoted a growing sense of vulnerability in the United States and transformed the basic structures of everyday life into vectors of possible terrorist attack. Mass transit systems, nuclear power plants, electrical grids, the banking system, food, air, and water all became objects of mounting hysteria as possible targets of the next strike. White House officials incited this affective environment as part of a larger political strategy that would culminate in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 to rid that country of fictitious weapons of mass destruction. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that when the national security leadership appears scared and tells citizens to be scared, there are few options open to the public.

The ability to shape public fears—to give image and form to threat—is one of the key powers of the counterterror state today, and one of its primary domains of sovereignty. When security state officials announce an imminent, existential threat based on classified material who, or what, can push back on that statement in real time? In such moments, citizens are left with only two options: acquiescence or denial. This on-off structure of engagement inevitably works to enable security state actions, as it functions to disable political resistance and countermobilizations (easily dismissed by officials as uninformed about the true nature of risk in the world and working on vastly slower time scales). National security affect, however, also requires cultural work to maintain; its intensities decay over

time, and the rehearsal of specific forms of threat can become normalized, a background condition of everyday life. Counterterror attempts to turn feelings—the ability to be called to an image of danger and be excited by it—into a national infrastructure, a set of ideas, images, and affective intensities that can be instrumentalized.

From this perspective, the Homeland Security Advisory System announced by presidential directive on March 11, 2002, was a remarkably straightforward effort to calibrate public fear at the national level—a technology designed to synchronize citizens via terror (see figure I.2). The color-coded system attempts to fine-tune institutions, officials, and citizens through an escalating scale of terroristic danger, moving from green (low), to blue (guarded), to yellow (elevated), to orange (high), and finally to red (severe). Backed by official promises that the warning level would be elevated only in response to specific credible information (always classified), the system nonetheless raises immediate questions: Why five levels? And how is a "guarded" threat to be technically distinguished from an "elevated" one? The goal of this system is explicitly to provide a matrix or grammar for threatening potentials, installing terror as a permanent condition of American life. Enabling affective escalation is its chief project. Code Green, the first threat level, for example, marks a "low risk of terrorist attacks," not the absence of terror, and from 2002 to 2011, the national threat level was never less than Code Yellow (elevated). Although the threat level had immediate implications for transportation security, police, and first responders, announcements of shifts in the system were rarely accompanied by discussions of actual sources of information, as officials sought to protect their sources and methods of intelligence during wartime.

On December 22, 2003, for example, the new Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge raised the national alert level to orange. In his announcement of the change, he stated that "information indicates that extremists abroad are anticipating near-term attacks that they believe will rival, or exceed, the attacks in New York and at the Pentagon," but he then noted that U.S. officials had no specific information on where or when an attack might be planned and advised citizens to simply "continue with your holiday plans" (quoted in Mintz 2003). Thus, a near-term catastrophe is officially announced, one that could come from anywhere on the planet, take any form, and involve any region of the United States or its vast range of global interests. This is an official appeal to participate in being generally terrorized, followed by an appeal not to alter one's life in any significant manner. It is an invitation to pure excitement. Ridge activates here a terror-

FIGURE I.2. Homeland Security Advisory System chart, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

normalization circuit that the security state has relied on since the invention of the atomic bomb to mobilize citizens by evoking an inchoate existential danger as normative everyday reality. A pure technology of fear generation, the alert attempted to distill, purify, and amplify menace through all instruments of state power. The color-coded warning system was a central tool in building the national state of anxiety leading up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq on March 17, 2003, when the threat level repeatedly jumped back and forth between Yellow and Orange in anticipation of the U.S. attack. An affective atmosphere was cultivated via alerts and mass-media speculations in which any kind or scale of violence was deemed possible, allowing rumor and fantasy to amplify pressure on the public to support, or at least not resist,

counterterror activities. The alert system addressed citizens not as thinking subjects capable of evaluating information but as raw nerve endings, part of a national nervous system that could be excited to enable a U.S. invasion of Iraq (see Prados 2004). The threat advisory system became a central part of a highly sophisticated mass-media campaign by White House and Pentagon officials to implicitly link the 2001 attacks to Saddam Hussein and thus justify the U.S. invasion as a legitimate form of defense and national revenge. The failures to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq or a link between Saddam Hussein's government and Al Qaeda are irrelevant to the affective politics promoted here, because counterterror can use feelings alone as a justification for radical action.[7]

The logics of preemption rely on affect to suture a potential future to a current reality at the level of feeling. Commenting on President Bush's post-war argument that invading Iraq was the only course of action, despite the ultimate failure of each of the rationales used to justify the invasion, Brian Massumi suggests that the anticipatory logics of preemption are locked in a perfect affective and temporal spiral:

> The invasion was right because *in the past there was a future threat.* You cannot erase a "fact" like that. Just because the menace potential never became a clear and present danger doesn't mean that it wasn't there, all the more real for being nonexistent. The superlative futurity of unactualized threat feeds forward from the past, in a chicken run to the future past every intervening present. The threat *will have* been real for all eternity. It will have been real because it was *felt* to be real. Whether the danger was existent or not, the menace was felt in the form of fear. What is not actually real can be felt into being. Threat does have an actual mode of existence: fear, as foreshadowing. Threat has an impending reality in the present. This actual reality is affect. Fear is the anticipatory reality in the present of a threatening future. It is the felt reality of the nonexistent, loomingly present as the *affective fact of the matter.* (2010, 53–54)

What is not actually real can be felt into being. In other words, the feeling of existential threat is enough to justify any response to it. As the human organism is designed for self-preservation in the face of danger, one cannot but respond to an overpowering threat (even an imaginary one). By locating the rationale for radical action not in material facts but in feelings, this type of thinking installs a permanent alibi for official actions that are otherwise unjustifiable.[8] It also constitutes the fullest form of a war on, and

through, emotion, since anticipatory defense constitutes the potential of feeling terror as the enabling reality, rather than expert judgments of technologically verifiable, material dangers.

For it to be possible to declare war on terror, terror must be made manifest as a structure one can feel with some regularity; for an emotion to be an enemy, it must be made ever present. For the first decade of the War on Terror, Americans lived mostly at Code Orange—the level denoting a *high risk* of terrorist attacks.[9] This elevated call to a militarized alertness eventually became normalized for many citizens, appearing primarily in the endlessly repeated security announcements of terroristic danger in U.S. airports, a form of background noise that nonetheless amplified the policing powers of a wide range of security personnel including the Transportation Security Administration (founded in 2001), the Department of Homeland Security (founded in 2002), the FBI, and local police. But normalizing specific kinds of potentials to enable counterformations has always been a primary goal of the national security state. The federal government first considered a color-coded warning system at the start of the Cold War. It was initially proposed in *Report of the Project East River* (Associated Universities 1952), a monumental study of how to redesign American domestic life (cities, suburbs, industries, emotions) in light of the nuclear revolution (see Galison 2001; Oakes 1994). Intended to alert Americans to potential Soviet nuclear attack, the proposed warning system was a specific early effort to devise a means of calibrating and mobilizing citizens through nuclear fear. A decade before the Soviet Union actually had a nuclear arsenal capable of producing an existential threat to the United States, U.S. policy makers launched a civil defense campaign with three goals: teaching citizens to fear the bomb as an imminent danger, giving them enough information about nuclear war and emergency measures to enable them to act at a time of crisis, and teaching them emotional self-discipline in the attempt to modulate the difference between fear (constituted as a productive state) and terror (imagined as an unsustainable, paralyzing condition).[10] The rehearsal of national destruction through a national media culture was crucial in cultivating the affective atmosphere of nuclear crisis a decade before the technological infrastructure to fight a global nuclear war actually existed (see Fenrich 1997; Oakes 1994). Nuclear fear has been a highly effective organizing principle of American life for generations. It has produced not only a deeply militarized society but also many forms of resistance among citizens, who have felt not only fear and terror but also anger and the need for collective mobilization on a wide range

of issues involving war, civil rights, and the environment. Indeed, locating oneself along the spectrum of fear to terror has been the basis for an emerging social contract in the nuclear age—one that today seeks less to mobilize citizens through calibrated fear than to immobilize them by confronting them with multiplying terrors.

By the 1960s, the technological infrastructure of the Cold War constituted a very real existential threat to humanity, one that could easily have rendered much of the planet lifeless in only a few hours of nuclear warfare. Stateless terrorist groups today can cause much damage, mayhem, and death, but they are not an existential threat in the same way that thousands of always-on-alert nuclear weapons loaded into intercontinental missiles, bombers, and submarines are, and of course were, during the height of the Cold War. Thus, although American understandings of existential threat are informed by decades of Cold War, providing a set of images and logics well honed by decades of nuclear politics, there is a significant difference in the kinds of danger informing counterterror today. The War on Terror—precisely because the threats are potentially hyperviolent but not existential—mobilizes many of the techniques of emotional management used in the Cold War system but redirects them to new ends. Specifically, the counterterror state proliferates danger rather than regulating it, rehearsing vulnerability in public to amplify threat rather than establishing a psychosocial space of sustainability located somewhere between fear and terror—as the Cold War system attempted to do. The War on Terror is ultimately an inflationary regime, one that attempts to exhaust the field of danger by recruiting new objects and possibilities and that engages the category of threat as existential as a matter of principle. Counterterror transforms governance from the improving of populations into the administration of negative potentials. Thus, the counterterror state grounds many of its core programs, desires, and concepts in Cold War notions of nuclear threat and emotional management—and specifically attempts to merge the existential threat of the atomic bomb with many new objects in the ever expanding category of the WMD—but it is also a new state formation, one that is producing a distinct national security culture in the twenty-first century.

Infrastructures, Critical and Otherwise

The Theater of Operations is an examination of the affective and imaginative logics of the national security state. It focuses particularly on how the institutions (cultural, material, and expert) supporting the Cold War balance of

terror were transformed after 2001 into a global War on Terror, a seemingly nonsensical attempt to eliminate a primal emotional state. In this regard, there is a paradox at the center of U.S. national security: despite the vast commitment to security and proliferating objects of official concern, the counterterror state does not recognize the terrorizing effects of collapsing national infrastructure (roads, highways, levies, and dams), the devastating effects of unregulated capitalism (on jobs, housing, and pensions), or the destabilizing effects of toxic industrial substances on the environment (from polluted air and water to climate change). Thus, a foundational logic of the security state is that it recognizes those threats that allow it to produce a militarized counterformation and ignores everyday forms of violence that require other, nonmilitarized forms of governance. The security apparatus, in other words, determines what constitutes *terror* to enable its own field of action. The increasing vulnerability of citizens to environmental disasters, health crises, and economic volatility does not engage the counterterror apparatus, although these crises can feed its affective conditions of possibility.[11] Indeed, national security culture tries to affectively redirect the fears and injuries produced by collapsing infrastructure, unregulated finance, and toxic environments by giving the ultimate danger a name. In the twenty-first century, the "terrorist with a WMD," to use President Bush's favorite formulation, is the perfect image of an unlocatable menace with apocalyptic potential, one that requires an unrestrained national security state to combat it in perpetuity. The slow violence of capitalism, industrial toxicity, or aging infrastructure is no match for this image of threat, which is at once everywhere and nowhere, invisible until it is suddenly catastrophic. As we will see, the *terrorist* as well as the *WMD* are highly elastic categories, subject to constant modification. Together, they offer perhaps the purest form of threat projection imaginable, one devoid of specific content (and thus able to be filled with nearly anything) but nonetheless capable of being felt as existentially consequential. Counterterror offers an almost pure emotional appeal, one that seeks to engage a larger affective culture produced by generations of nuclear crises but that does so by amplifying it from a specific formulation, a concern with the atomic bomb, to one that views technology itself as a source of fear (including weapons, planes, computers, viruses, and box cutters). This formulation creates a terroristic menace of nearly infinite scope and capabilities, enabling a counterformation that seeks to be equally total, one that obviates borders and assumes a planetary field of action in the name of defense (see Siegel 1998).

This book unpacks the evolution of counterterror in American security culture but also underscores how the constitution of a pure threat (the "terrorist with a WMD") works to leave unaddressed the increasing vulnerability and insecurity of everyday American life at the level of health, welfare, economy, and environment. The War on Terror is both a massive drain on the U.S. economy and a huge distortion in American politics. For example, in addition to the $4 trillion already spent on the War on Terror, the United States operates as many as a thousand U.S. military bases around the world—a material footprint requiring constant maintenance, protection, and support.[12] Concurrently, the nonmilitary infrastructure of the United States—its roads, bridges, levies, dams, schools, airports, sewers, and water systems—achieve mostly D grades from the American Society of Civil Engineers (2012) in its annual report card on structural integrity and public safety. Thus, when the latest homeland security campaign quite rightly asks citizens "If You See Something, Say Something" (see figure I.3) as a form of collective security, it also limits the things citizens can report, rejecting a wide variety of objects that are also quite capable of producing fear and terror: homelessness and poverty, decaying infrastructure and toxic environments, and extreme weather, to name but a few. Social structures of abandonment (Povinelli 2011), including the physical wearing out of a population (Berlant 2007) or rendering a class of citizens expendable via slow violence (Nixon 2011), also reveal a submerged "state of emergency" that the security state's concept of sovereignty does not address (see also Weston 2012; Gusterson and Besteman 2009). How the national security state acknowledges, calculates, engages—and/or ignores—danger is, then, a complicated matter, one that each chapter of this book attempts to address from a specific vantage point.

Infrastructure is a key concept in this book, referring here not only to the material structures that support social life in complex urban societies but also to the imaginative and affective contexts that enable fear to be nationalized on specific terms. Infrastructures (material, imaginative, and affective) reveal the priorities of a given historical moment. The Cold War state built not only atomic bombs but also a national highway system, not only a military-industrial complex but also a welfare state. The War on Terror has been enormously productive in the sense of building a new global war machine, a second defense department (the Department of Homeland Security), new biosecurity and cybersecurity programs, and so on, but it has not considered crises in the domains of health, finance, and the environment to be a security matter. Nonetheless, infrastructure is a

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FIGURE I.3. National Terrorism Advisory System poster, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

central concern of the counterterror state. In its 2003 *National Strategy for the Physical Protection of Critical Infrastructures and Key Assets*, the Bush administration committed itself to preventing terrorist actions that would:

1) Impair the federal government's ability to perform essential national and homeland security missions and ensure the general public's health and safety;
2) Undermine state and local government capacities to maintain order and to deliver minimum essential public services;
3) Damage the private sector's capability to ensure the orderly functioning of the economy and the delivery of essential services; and

4) Undermine the public morale and confidence in our national economy and political institutions. (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2003, 11)

This list defines a break in the seamless quality of everyday life, across services and perceptions, as the domain of terror. It also implicitly promises to deliver a world without such events, projecting a vision of an everyday life unbroken by surprise, let alone trauma.

Counterterror constitutes a significant shift from the kind of state security that Michel Foucault (2003) theorized as the basis for the modern era. The new focus on creating a resilient critical infrastructure immune to disruption circumvents an older form of the security state that was devoted to statistical reasoning, population governance, and that sought to define and improve the citizenry across a wide spectrum of interests (health, wealth, life span, education, and so on) while protecting the territorial borders of the state from external danger.

Under the current logics of counterterror, it is now a national infrastructure (made up of experts, technologies, capabilities) that is essential to the security state, not its citizenry. But because acts of terrorism are so rare in the United States, not even registering statistically in relation to other forms of death and injury, they must be conjured to be countered. Simulated disaster (hypotheticals, war games, scenarios) becomes a ritual performance that both makes counterterror governance visible and establishes its technical limits (see Adey and Anderson 2012; Beck 2007, 11; Schoch-Spana 2004). Andrew Lakoff has productively named this "vital system security" (2008a, 37), a new modality of governance that focuses on the continuity of systems over populations. The goal of vital systems security is a resilient society that can preempt or absorb any kind of trauma and maintain its basic functions. Vital systems security promises to secure the infrastructure of society by attending to everyday forms of vulnerability, but its primary effect is to manage both experts and the national community at the level of affect and emotion. As Ulrich Beck notes, "nobody can appeal solely to an external reality in dealing with risks," for "the risks which we believe we recognize and which fill us with fear are mirror images of our selves, of our cultural perceptions" (2007, 13; see also Furedi 2006).

Critical infrastructures and the related commitment to *disaster preparedness*, however, are ever emerging projects evoking no consensus definitions (see Falkenrath 2001). The security of the citizen is replaced here by a focus on the survival and operability of the institutions that make up society,

which immediately raises the issue of how to coordinate the vast range of public, private, and military structures, networks, and institutions that exist in twenty-first-century America. Consider, for example, the outline of critical infrastructures recognized by the 2003 *National Strategy* (see figure 1.4). This list is a recipe not for security but for a full-spectrum paranoia, since nearly 2 million farms, 137 million postal delivery sites, 590,000 highway bridges, 2 billion miles of cable, as well as 5,000 airports, 5,800 hospitals, 80,000 dams, 104 nuclear power plants, 460 skyscrapers, and 5,800 historic landmarks all need to be protected every second of every day from every imaginable vector of attack. What is striking about this list is its diversity and range: critical infrastructure involves the railroads as well as the tracks they run on, not simply nuclear power plants but the electrical grid itself, not only emergency services but the "250,000 firms in 215 distinct industries" that make up the "Defense Industrial Base." A vast spectrum of risk here becomes a singular form, since terrorism directed against any object in society is constituted as equally meaningful, equally terroristic, equally catastrophic. This is nothing less than a domestic version of the global threat matrix—a field of proliferating potentials, each of which requires programmatic scrutiny by the counterterror state, creating in practice an endless opportunity for threat selection, amplification, and exploitation.

This concept of critical infrastructure flattens risk across radically different objects and domains from emergency rooms and sewage treatment facilities to objects of national pride (like parks and urban monuments) and symbols of American power (such as the World Trade Center and the Pentagon). Not many of these items constitute the ground for an existential risk, yet the critical infrastructure concept as a counterterrorism provision positions them *as such*, which allows for radical new forms of policing at home and new militarism abroad. For example, the electrical grid is increasingly positioned not as a public utility but as a critical infrastructure to be protected by official secrecy (National Research Council 2012), and simply taking tourist photographs of historical landmarks—such as the Hoover Dam, the Statue of Liberty, or the Pentagon—can now be interpreted as a form of potential terror requiring preemptory police action (Simon 2012). Thus a new kind of security state is emerging in the twenty-first century, one that treats all endangered objects equally at the level of expert analysis and that considers a potential disruption of the system (at the level of institutions, thoughts, or emotions) as equivalent to its destruction.

The opposite of danger in this concept of security would be nothing less than a *world without events*—an elimination of accidents, malfunctions,

THE PROTECTION CHALLENGE

Agriculture and Food	1,912,000 farms; 87,000 food-processing plants
Water	1,800 federal reservoirs; 1,600 municipal waste water facilities
Public Health	5,800 registered hospitals
Emergency Services	87,000 U.S. localities
Defense Industrial Base	250,000 firms in 215 distinct industries
Telecommunications	2 billion miles of cable
Energy *Electricity*	2,800 power plants
Oil and Natural Gas	300,000 producing sites
Transportation *Aviation*	5,000 public airports
Passenger Rail and Railroads	120,000 miles of major railroads
Highways, Trucking, and Busing	590,000 highway bridges
Pipelines	2 million miles of pipelines
Maritime	300 inland/costal ports
Mass Transit	500 major urban public transit operators
Banking and Finance	26,600 FDIC insured institutions
Chemical Industry and Hazardous Materials	66,000 chemical plants
Postal and Shipping	137 million delivery sites
Key Assets *National Monuments and Icons*	5,800 historic buildings
Nuclear Power Plants	104 commercial nuclear power plants
Dams	80,000 dams
Government Facilities	3,000 government owned/operated facilities
Commercial Assets	460 skyscrapers

*These are approximate figures.

FIGURE 1.4. U.S. critical infrastructure "Protection Challenge" list, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

acts of terror, or surprise. Rather than balancing a national security appara-
tus with a welfare state, as in the Cold War model of state and nation build-
ing (matching images of nuclear destruction with the promise of a con-
stantly improving society), the counterterror state folds governance into
the rubric of existential risk and asks experts and citizens alike to remain
perpetually agitated and tuned toward an announced spectrum of potential
violence. It performs *care* by proliferating discourses about vulnerability
rather than building better infrastructure, which in many domains is today
much more likely to collapse from aging and structural fatigue than from a
terrorist attack. In this way, the critical infrastructure concept creates a mode
of governance that works primarily at the affective level to create a universe
of endangered objects and institutions, and to focus administrators on the
problem of managing the complexity and vulnerability of those institutions
during a terrorist attack, instead of simply rebuilding and securing aging
American infrastructures.

Infrastructure is the enabling architecture of a system (Larkin 2013; Star
1999). As such, it is also a lived structure, offering the naturalized condi-
tions of possibility for everyday life. Historically, however, the United States
builds, rebuilds, and extends its security apparatus during times of national
panic—mobilizing a perceived crisis to install new technological capacities
and expand administrative commitments. One key innovation of the War
on Terror has been to transform U.S. domestic defense into a planetary
project, with agencies from the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Agency to
the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reconstituted as counter-
terrorism agencies with a global mandate. Consider, for example, the FBI's
internal assessment of its changing mission in the first decade of counter-
terror (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2011), revealing a new "global foot-
print" consisting of 56 field offices, 381 resident agencies in the United
States, and 76 international offices (see figure I.5). Note how the strategic
vision of the FBI as a counterterror agency has become *threat driven* and
not crime driven, *global* instead of domestic, *networked* rather than insular,
and now focused primarily on *national security* and only secondarily on
law enforcement. Four days after the 2001 suicide-hijacker attacks, the di-
rector of the CIA, George Tenet, presented to President Bush a "Worldwide
Attack Matrix" that described "covert operations in 80 countries either un-
derway or that he was now recommending" consisting of everything from
"routine propaganda to lethal covert action in preparation for military at-
tack" (Woodward 2003, 68). This worldwide attack matrix may have been
the first act of the U.S. war on Al Qaeda, but it was merely the start of a

FBI Strategic Shifts

We have defined our strategic vision through the Strategy Management System. Our vision takes shape in the FBI's Strategic Shifts, which describe how the FBI will transform to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

	Roles	
Law Enforcement	Roles	National Security and Law Enforcement
Case-Driven	Focus	Threat-Driven
Quantitative Evaluation (Case-Based)	Measurement of Success	Qualitative Evaluation (Threat-Based)
"Restrict; and Share What You Must"	Information Sharing	"Share; and Restrict What You Must"
Contributor	Intelligence Community	Full Partner
Domestic	Scope	Global
Tactical	Senior Management	Strategic
Ineffective Communications	Internal Communications	Effective, Relevant, and Timely Communications
Operational Silos	Organization	Integrated Team Approach
Inefficient and Ineffective HR Processes	Human Capital	Highly Efficient and Effective HR Processes
Agent/Support	Culture	Team of Professionals
Antiquated and Disparate IT Systems	Information Technology	Mission-Enhancing Integrated IT Systems; Productivity Tools
Applying Developed S&T	Science & Technology	Developing and Applying Optimal S&T
Budget Drives Strategy	Resource Management	Strategy Drives Budget

FIGURE I.5. "FBI Strategic Shifts, 2001–11," Federal Bureau of Investigation.

more systematic global response, one that would soon proliferate objects of concern—moving from specific governments to military technologies, to transportation networks, to communication systems, to named terrorists, and eventually to microbes.

Thus, one structural effect of anticipatory defense is an ever-expanding universe of objects to secure, scaling the problem of security up increasingly from the territorial boundaries of the state to the planetary level. This advances the Cold War security state's concern with military logistics and the establishment of global knowledge systems (see Farish 2010; Edwards 2010) by seeking the capacity to intervene anywhere on the planet a threat might arise, before it materializes. It also militarizes infrastructure itself: if you use the Internet, go to the hospital, fly on a plane, send a letter, or use a cell phone, you become part of a counterterror system that is interested in comprehensively archiving telecommunications, identifying travelers, monitoring infectious diseases, scanning letters, and accruing

detailed knowledge about over 800,000 people on an ever-growing global watch list (see Dilanian 2013). It is impossible today to use modern infrastructure—including anything related to communication, transportation, public health, or finance—in the United States and not become the object of state surveillance and data archiving, which is one of the most profound achievements of the War on Terror. A fundamental change in the nature of individual privacy has been but one foundational effect of counterterror, which attempts to "connect the dots" of potential threats by capturing and mining digital information for anticipatory signs.

One of the perplexing questions about a war on terror, therefore, is how to define its boundaries, battlefields, and home fronts. All wars have theaters of engagement that define battle spaces, and the boundary between the foreign and the domestic has historically been a central way of establishing law and setting limits to the scale of officially sanctioned violence. For Samuel Weber, "theatricality is defined as a problematic process of placing, framing, situating," or as an "imposition of borders" in a disputed space (2004, 315). One important aspect of counterterror is that its theater of operations has been construed from the beginning as planetary, meaning that there is no space, object, or person that cannot be construed in some fashion as on the front line of this new kind of conflict, and thus of potential concern to the U.S. security apparatus. The complexity of this world-without-borders approach to counterterror ensures immediate and constant slippage between the desire for a planetary theater of operations and the very real limitations on American power. As Carlo Galli has argued, the War on Terror is the end of a Schmittian politics in which friend-enemy distinctions supported the territorial security of a state (see also Dillon 2007); it is instead a war fused with the logics of globalization in such a way that the demarcation between foreign and domestic is no longer the crucial definition of security:

> Politics, in the global age, is the coincidence of real insecurity and illusory security; it is the concurrence of real conflict and the specter of peace. In general, the State-operated distinction between secure internal space and dangerous external space has vanished, leaving us with our current "risk society." Globalization is the epoch in which the State no longer protects its citizens from external turbulence. The principle of *protego ergo obligo* ("protection, therefore obedience") was the load-bearing column of modern politics, but in the global

age, anything can happen anywhere, at any moment, precisely because the State no longer filters disorder from the external environment (terrorist acts, migratory flows, the movement of capital) and is no longer capable of transforming it into internal peace. In this context, the "public" no longer assumes the traditional institutionalized form of politics, the State; it is now the event that, for better or for worse, immediately touches the lives of many "private" individuals with particular importance and intensity. (Galli 2010, 158)

It is now the intensity of the event that matters. The "intensity" of the event is the language of affective politics, one in which the visual event—the televised image of the World Trade Center in flames, the "shock and awe" bombing of Iraq, or the abandoned citizens of New Orleans awaiting rescue after Hurricane Katrina—can be a global structure, gathering different individuals, cultures, and motives around the psychosocial force of highly mediated, but brutally real, violence (Massumi 2011; see also RETORT 2005; S. Ahmed 2004).

The collapsing of time and space, together with the anticipatory preemption of catastrophic futures, remakes the question of security into a postnational formation, even as the counterterror state (across the administrations of both George W. Bush and Barack Obama) has sought to extend and secure American power through it. There is a profound disconnect between threat as a global condition necessitating a state security apparatus and the counterterror state's commitment to extending U.S. hegemony through an ever-evolving state of emergency. The formal merging of offense and defense animates the most destructive aspects of American power and underscores why counterterror as a global project is perpetually undermined by a continual slippage between threat perceptions and material conditions. As Anne McClintock (2009) has pointed out, the U.S. counterterror state was established through a simultaneous commitment to attaining absolute military power and recognizing totalizing threat, a foundational contradiction that makes the War on Terror both violent on a new scale (as danger is perceived to be everywhere) and a paranoid system ultimately at war with itself. This is because anticipatory preemption begins with imaginative projection and cannot be exhausted through taking action in the world or by factual accumulation: there is always another level to the imaginary, more potential dangers to preempt, other nightmares to locate and eliminate.[13]

WMDs, or "The Nature of the World We Live In"

The "terrorist with a WMD" formulation is at the center of the new counterterror state, a crucial reworking of long-standing American nuclear fears and security logics that both establishes an imminent, if inchoate, threat and makes that threat a future-oriented, conceptual infrastructure whose scope is ever expanding. The atomic bomb became the organizing fetish of the security state after 1945, linking technoscientific, military, political, and psychosocial projects under the image of the mushroom cloud.[14] The nuclear revolution not only "drastically altered statecraft" and the very concept of war, as Robert Jervis (1989, 2) has shown, but American society largely built itself through the bomb, remaking its geopolitics, cities, environment, and institutions via nuclear fear (Masco 2006). Garry Wills argues that the bomb altered American life "to its deepest constitutional roots" (2010, 1), creating a new concept of unchecked authority in the form of a president with command and control of a global nuclear arsenal and distorting other American institutions—including the courts, Congress, and the military—in favor of a nuclear-powered commander in chief. Wills argues that the United States has been in a state of perpetual emergency since the start of World War II and has built a national security apparatus for the nuclear age that exists largely outside of constitutional law (237). The logics of nuclear terror are thus deeply embedded in American society, providing institutional, ideological, and cultural resources to the War on Terror (see Gusterson 2004 and 1998; see also Oakes 1994). But although the twentieth-century nuclear security state was focused on the specific technologies (bombs, warheads, missiles, planes, submarines, and so on) enabling global nuclear war, the twenty-first-century counterterror state is devoted to preempting a new kind of ultimate danger—the "terrorist with a WMD"—a figuration that converts specific and long-standing American nuclear fears into an emerging danger of potentially infinite form and duration.[15] In crucial ways, the War on Terror is thus the ideological fulfillment of the Cold War state project, creating an institutional commitment to permanent militarization through an ever-expanding universe of threat identification and response.

The "terrorist with a WMD" combines two poorly defined concepts into an image of total danger, one that cannot be deterred but only preempted through anticipatory action. Without linkage to the WMD category the terrorist of the early twenty-first century could not rise to the

level of an existential danger that requires a total state mobilization or a global American security apparatus. But, like terrorism itself, the WMD is an emerging concept, one that in a single decade has undergone a radical redefinition and expansion.[16] The term *weapon of mass destruction* was coined by Cosmo Gordon Lang, the archbishop of Canterbury, who first used it to comment on the German aerial bombing of civilians at Guernica, Spain, in 1937, but it took on lasting nuclear connotations with the U.S. use of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. It was codified by the United Nations as a nuclear referent in 1948, when weapons of *mass* destruction were identified as those weapons (radiological, biological, or chemical) that have "characteristics comparable in destructive effect to those of the atomic bomb" (UN Commission for Conventional Armaments 1948). Although the term *WMD* occasionally appeared in arms control negotiations through the second half of the twentieth century, it was rarely used by U.S. security experts, who preferred to designate specific technologies, and with them specific degrees of threat and ideal countermeasures (see Perkovich 2004; Vogel 2007). The Cold War security state apparatus, in other words, relied on a kind of precision in calculating threats that the concept of WMD does not allow.

When the Bush administration switched, in the late fall of 2001, from a discussion of the actual attacks—that is, suicide-hijackers and anthrax letters—to the general category of the WMD in its public discourse, it was a strategic decision to expand the potential field of danger and endow a wide range of objects with the existential threat culturally identified with the atomic bomb (see Mayer 2008). In its *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, the Bush administration declared:

> Weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—nuclear, biological, and chemical—in the possession of hostile states and terrorists represent one of the greatest security challenges facing the United States. We must pursue a comprehensive strategy to counter this threat in all of its dimensions. . . . We will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes and terrorists to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons. We must accord the highest priority to the protection of the United States, our forces, and our friends and allies from the existing and growing WMD threat. (U.S. White House 2002b, 1)

A comprehensive strategy to counter threats in all dimensions. Although this document seems to articulate a familiar kind of existential threat to the nation (one evoking the multigenerational Cold War nuclear arms race),

the category of the WMD articulated here provides an expansive new frame for danger itself. Only two years later, for example, the new Department of Homeland Security offered the following definition in its first *National Response Plan*:

> Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD). As defined in title 18, U.S.C. 2332a: (1) any explosive, incendiary, or poison gas, bomb, grenade, or rocket having a propellant charge of more than 4 ounces, or missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, or mine or similar device; (2) any weapon that is designed or intended to cause death or serious bodily injury through the release, dissemination, or impact of toxic or poisonous chemical or their precursors; (3) any weapon involving a disease organism; or (4) any weapon that is designed to release radiation or radioactivity at a level dangerous to human life. (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2004, 74)

Explosives, toxins, diseases, radiation—any . . . similar to . . . more than four ounces. The WMD category, despite its seeming precision (measured down to the ounce), scales endlessly here and becomes an open-ended concept capable of grabbing future technologies via the "any weapon" language. It includes any intentional chemical or biological attack (raising immediate questions about insecticides as well as sexually transmitted diseases as potential WMDs), but it also scales explosive dangers in a surreal manner. Under this definition, a partial stick of dynamite (containing a few ounces of explosive power) is in the same category as the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima (equivalent to 13,000 tons of TNT) or a hydrogen bomb (holding a force measured in the millions of tons of TNT) whose total destructive effects could involve hundreds of square miles (see Eden 2004). This is not a definition that makes sense from a technical or military point of view, but it is a key affective political tool of the War on Terror. Like the figuration of the *terrorist*, the WMD acronym activates more than simply a technical or administrative description of fact; it is now a phantasmatic force in American society, gaining meanings and intensities over time, operating primarily on psychosocial and political levels.

After a decade of counterterror, it is now impossible to know what the term *WMD* refers to in everyday official usage, except that the threat might be lethal—potentially massively so.[17] A terrorist alert concerning a WMD remains a deployment of the signifier of ultimate crisis (drawing on the nation-ending potential of the atomic bomb) but it may well reference a

kind of danger that not long ago would have been considered a routine police matter, not a subject for collective national emergency. Evoking the WMD is, therefore, both an emerging logic and a calculated means of enabling maximal state agency without actually designating the degree or kind of threat. This is a profound shift in U.S. security logics, one that has important legal, institutional, and military consequences. It is also iconic of the counterterror state form, which seeks to maximize executive power under emergency conditions as a basic principle. When questioned about the limits of executive power in conducting the War on Terror by Fox News in 2008, Dick Cheney—former vice president and the chief architect of the counterterror state—replied:

> The President of the United States now for fifty years is followed at all times, 24 hours a day, by a military aid carrying a "football" that contains the nuclear codes that he would use and be authorized to use in the event of a nuclear attack on the United States. He could launch a kind of devastating attack the world's never seen. He doesn't have to check with anybody. He doesn't have to call the Congress. He doesn't have to check with the courts. He has that authority because of the nature of the world we live in. (Cheney 2008)

Because of the nature of the world we live in. Here, Cheney uses nuclear threat as a means of rationalizing all lesser forms of executive action in the world, constituting an all-powerful commander in chief beholden to no one in the domain of national security because he or she has been pre-authorized to launch a nuclear war. This notion of power draws, as Wills (2010, 3) has described at length, on the conceptual power of the bomb in American society (see also Masco 2006; Hecht 2012). The subsuming of nuclear danger into the even broader category of a WMD threat has significant consequences not only for the War on Terror as a global military campaign but also for American society writ large. It has enabled radical actions in the name of defense, while also masking a startling fact about the War on Terror and WMDs.

The 2001 attacks on the United States—and the expansive U.S. operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia in response to them—are profound acts of violence. However, it is important to recognize a disturbing reality, one that is visible only by looking back across the first ten years of the War on Terror: the WMDs responsible for escalating the 2001 terrorist attacks from terrible mass violence to something that could be constituted as an existential threat to the nation-state were all made—

either literally or imaginatively—within the U.S. national security complex itself. From the anthrax letters, now attributed by the FBI to a U.S. biological warfare expert, to the fictitious WMDs from Saddam Hussein's Iraq produced rhetorically inside the Pentagon—these twenty-first-century dangers have been homemade, using material and imaginary resources produced by the U.S. security apparatus itself. To be direct: in the first decade of counterterror, the "terrorist with a WMD" has been a "made in the U.S.A." production at affective, imaginative, and material levels. This fact reveals the extraordinary power of deeply structured nuclear fear a half century after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and of military-industrial capacities to mobilize the U.S. public as well as the war machine. As such, this book assesses not only the new material (scientific, political, military) capacities supporting the counterterror state but also the affective and imaginative infrastructures that are required to build a permanently militarized society.

Overview of the Book

The Theater of Operations investigates the cultural logics, technological fears, and political ambitions that had to be in place for a (literally nonsensical) War on Terror to be thinkable. It traces how the Cold War balance of terror was remade into the War on Terror as a means of extending American hegemony into the twenty-first century. The book traces the remaking of the nuclear security state as a counterterror state and assesses the resulting shifts in a variety of domains of American national security culture enabled by the politics of shock. It theorizes a new modality of citizen-state relations mediated by a shock-terror-normality circuit that produces two things: the promise of a world without events—that is, a perfectly secure every day unbroken by surprise, and, with the inevitable failure of that project, the continual drive to expand the security project in the name of producing a world without shock. This circuit is a key feature not only in defining a national security state after World War II; it also helps explain why nonmilitarizable threats—relating to climate, finance, domestic infrastructure, and health—fail to rise to the level of a national security problem despite the widespread destruction and terrors that they produce. To this end, *The Theater of Operations* addresses the following questions: How does a nuclear hyperpower—perhaps the most secure and powerful state in human history—come to embrace vulnerability and fear as the basis for its political order? How does a country commit to a permanent war posture grounded in covert actions, existential threat, and preemption while maintaining an ideology of openness, law, and democracy? And finally, how does a society

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define and limit its security project when the future is anticipated to be filled with emerging terrors, presenting a proliferating field of objects and spaces to be militarized in the endless pursuit of defense?

The chapters that follow mobilize methodological techniques drawn from science studies, ethnography, historical anthropology, media studies, and critical theory. Informed by two decades of ethnographic work in the national security sciences, each chapter offers a genealogical assessment of a set of practices (technological, imaginary, affective) that I think of now as infrastructural to U.S. national security as a distinctly American formation. I emphasize throughout the political and cultural force of threat identification in American society, and I focus on the ways in which specific logics and practices of insecurity are transformed into collective events in the domestic sphere. My project is ultimately a consideration of American self-fashioning through terror, interrogating the specific forms of fear that have enabled a new kind of state security apparatus to emerge, one that all too readily rejects democratic commitments in favor of perpetual trauma and militarism.

Chapter 1, "'Survival Is Your Business,'" is an examination of the emotional management projects of the early Cold War—and specifically, the legacy of civil defense drills and visual image campaigns that installed a distinct concept of existential danger in American culture. I suggest that the multigenerational project of instilling fear of the atomic bomb created the terms for the affective politics of disaster that follow, and I interrogate the repetition of certain images of atomic destruction that now circulate in American culture as unrecognized citations of nuclear propaganda. I argue that one of the central achievements of civil defense in the early Cold War was to nationalize images of the end of the United States and to transform them into a strange new form of nation building, thereby investing nuclear ruins with a counterintuitive national affect.

In chapter 2, "Bad Weather," I ask how, and when, does it become possible to conceptualize a truly planetary crisis? The Cold War nuclear arms race installed one powerful concept of planetary crisis in American culture, in the form of global nuclear war. But the science enabling the U.S. nuclear arsenal also produced unintended by-products: notably, a radical new investment in the earth sciences. Cold War nuclear science ultimately produced not only bombs but also a new understanding of the earth as an integrated biosphere. Thus, the image of planetary crisis in the United States was increasingly doubled during the Cold War—the immediacy of nuclear threat matched by concerns about rapid environmental change and

the cumulative effects of industrial civilization on a fragile biosphere. This chapter examines the evolution of (and competition between) two ideas of planetary crisis since 1945: nuclear war and climate change. In doing so, it offers an alternative history of the nuclear age and considers the U.S. national security implications of a shift in the definition of planetary crisis from warring states to a changing climate in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 3, "Sensitive but Unclassified," tracks the conversion of the United States from a countercommunist to a counterterrorist state formation via an examination of the expanding logics of state secrecy. Starting with an analysis of a new category of state information known as "sensitive but unclassified," the chapter theorizes a secrecy/threat matrix as a core project of the national security state. In doing so, the chapter assesses the ideological linkages between the WMD and the secret from the Cold War through the War on Terror. This chapter argues that the long-term effect of compartmentalized state secrecy is to fundamentally devalue knowledge and expertise, and it assesses the impact of such devaluation on the democratic state form. The result of the secrecy/threat matrix is a world where affect and desire, regardless of verifiable facts, become the rationale for military action.

In chapter 4, "Biosecurity Noir," I examine the emerging logics of biosecurity as an emblematic project of the counterterror state. Here I explore the strange fact that in response to anthrax attacks by a U.S. bioweapons expert in September 2001, the United States built a new biosecurity infrastructure, one that proliferates exponentially the numbers of experts and types of research on dangerous biological agents. I argue that biosecurity installs capacities in the future that are unknown, setting the stage not only for the potential preemption of a deadly virus but also for creating new kinds of danger. Thus, the chapter considers how the expert recognition of danger in a world without borders and the desire for a world without events frames the evolution of a major new security infrastructure. It also explores the expansion of the WMD concept to include biological threats that are naturally occurring, allowing an emerging biosecurity apparatus to see potential terror in every biological organism on the planet. This chapter documents the full conversion of the Cold War system—the management of emotions, enemy formations, planetary threats, and state secrecy—into a counterterrorist state formation—installing new expert capacities as well as new structures of emergency into a deep future.

I conclude with "Living Counterterror," an evaluation of the first decade of the War on Terror, which focuses on the new material, imaginary,

and affective infrastructures informing U.S. national security. Engaging a group of national security professionals in Nevada, who were once known as nuclear weapons specialists but were remade after 2001 as homeland security, counterterrorism, and WMD experts, I explore the ongoing trauma of the 2001 suicide-hijacker attacks for members of the security state. I show how the 2001 terrorist acts have been constituted as a permanent injury within the defense world, a kind of loss that can never be overcome despite a hyperactive planetary theater of counterterror operations. I consider how expert national security affect informs the production of an ever-emerging security apparatus, demonstrating how terror, in all its proliferating forms, continues to dominate American visions of the twenty-first century.