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Introduction

Our citizens have new responsibilities. We must be vigilant.

—President George Bush, address to the nation, November 8, 2001

Vigilantes at the Last Frontier

In the August heat of the New Mexico desert, fifty miles north of the border with Mexico, homeland security has become a pressing local issue. The question posed is this: If the U.S. government can't do the job of policing the border, who will?

The Dickerson Auction Barn in Las Cruces is gradually filling up. Two young men, skinheads, looking disaffected. A couple in their sixties, dressed as if they've just come from church, the woman with a large bouffant hairdo. A man playing Daniel Boone, shaggy hair, gun holster at his waist and knife in a sheath strapped to his leg, with his wife and preteen son, clearly disgruntled by this Sunday afternoon outing. Dozens of single men, young to old, mainly white, many ranchers dressed in cowboy boots and hats fill the aluminum chairs. A small group of protesters, many of them Latino students and

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faculty from New Mexico State University, stand along the wall. Local police officers mill around. They await the words of Bob Wright, who has called this meeting to establish the Las Cruces chapter of the Minuteman Civil Defense Project, a border watch group that is gaining strength along the border as well as in other parts of the United States.

“President Bush after 9/11 asked America to be vigilant,” says Wright, a lanky man in a cowboy hat. He says that the Minutemen in Arizona, who ran a well-publicized campaign in April 2005, have assisted the Border Patrol in thousands of arrests. In urging people in the audience to sign up to patrol the New Mexican–Mexican border, he calls on the audience to do their “civic duty” in helping their country, to be “another pair of eyes” in these “extraordinary times.”

Hundreds of people along the border have responded to the Minutemen’s call. Many arrive at designated border spots in their RVs, pulling out their lawn chairs and settling down to watch for “aliens.” It’s a new leisure activity, one that doubles as civic duty. In taking up President Bush’s post-9/11 call for all Americans to be vigilant, they are practicing a “kinder, gentler” form of vigilantism. In a time of national crisis, Bush calls on citizens to do their part to protect the nation by reporting any unusual activity and constantly being prepared, thus protecting their own households and property as well as their communities. Answering this appeal, border vigilantes have entered the mainstream: In 2005, the Minutemen earned the praise of the Bush administration as well as the invitation to speak to congressional committees, prompted the head of the Border Patrol to call for the formation of a volunteer civilian patrol based on the Minutemen model, and were represented on NBC’s popular show *The West Wing*. Chapters sprang up throughout the country; border security became an issue in Tennessee, Minnesota, and Maine. Nearly every national news outlet has done features on the group.

The Minutemen’s mainstreaming speaks to the current state of the U.S.–Mexico border: Long considered a peripheral, marginalized zone, the border has now become central—indeed, the model site of neoliberal governance. As both national governments withdraw, private organizations and individual citizens must take up the slack. The relationship between citizen and state is mediated by the free market (in the form, for example, of NAFTA) and its articulation to private property. Many of the Minutemen are ranchers along the border, as angered by trespassing on their property as they are by the threat of terrorists entering from the south. The citi-



Figure 1. Minutemen break-away group patrols California-Mexico border, July 2005. Photo © 2005 David McNew/Getty Images News; used by permission.

zen/consumer/subject acts responsibly, with enterprise, to constantly produce membership in the nation. The Minutemen operate by a code of ethics that distances the group—at least rhetorically—from the nasty history of vigilantism along the border: lynchings of Mexicans and African Americans in the South by border vigilantes and white supremacists. They claim not to “take the law into their own hands,” meting out punishment as they see fit, but rather to call the Border Patrol and even assist undocumented people in need of water and medical assistance. They rearticulate the individualism of frontier justice; they offer a communitarian ethic of protecting their communities and the nation during a time when the national government can’t (or won’t, some argue) do the job. Whereas some vigilantes don’t care at all about the judicial system or due process, the neoliberal vigilante actually perceives himself to be a solid citizen. Volunteerism is one important component of the neoliberal agenda, as can be seen in the Bush administration’s call for religious organizations and other private entities to do the work of the welfare state.

Yet a withdrawal of the state doesn’t completely capture the current climate on the border. Neoliberalism is complicated by the post-9/11 pressures

to build up the Border Patrol and secure the nation, even while keeping the borders open to ever-expanding trade with Mexico. Although the heightened attention to the border as a site linked to global terror began immediately after 9/11, it became particularly intense when, in the summer of 2004, the Justice Department leaked news to the major media outlets that a Saudi pilot named Adnan El Shukrijumah—rumored to be an al-Qaeda operative—was spotted in an Internet café in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, possibly recruiting, possibly planning attacks or entry into the United States. The FBI issued a border-wide alert for Shukrijumah, Attorney General John Ashcroft offered \$5 million for information about him, and Latin America was named “the potential last frontier for international terrorism.”¹ That makes the U.S.-Mexico border the most likely point of entry for “terrorists” to enter the United States.

None of the rumors were verified, but it was more than enough to make the Minuteman mission seem perfectly reasonable and necessary, perhaps even to lay the groundwork for acceptance of more extreme variations of the vigilante. There are already those elements in the group—not the watchful citizen doing his volunteer duty but rather the violent, gun-toting renegade racist determined to take the law into his own hands and punish the “illegal aliens” who can be easily lumped together with terrorists. The Minutemen occupy not only a physical borderland but also a political borderland, an ambiguous space between adhering to the law and proclaiming its ineffectiveness and thus irrelevance. As national founder Chris Simcox said at a meeting in March 2003—before the Minutemen went mainstream—“So far we’ve had restraint, but I’m afraid that restraint is wearing thin. Take heed of our weapons because we’re going to defend our borders by any means necessary.”² There was just a hint of that sentiment at the Las Cruces meeting, when Simcox, the rally’s featured speaker, emphasized his belief in the law but his frustration with “Washington”: “We must force our government to do their job by threatening to do it for them.”

This issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* examines conditions along the border in a post-9/11 world. As several essays demonstrate, the border has become a paradigmatic site of neoliberal governance in both economic and political terms. In economic terms, Alicia Schmidt Camacho argues that the “forms of exchange and consumption that have underwritten neoliberal development have come to depend on the social relations institutionalized in the border region: in particular, an economic caste system that demands workers well-versed in both service and low-skilled labor, whose

weak social integration assures that they make relatively few demands on either state.” In political terms, U.S. governmental officials sanction the Minuteman movement even as Mexican officials disseminate brochures on how their citizens who cross the border might survive the hazards of the desert and other perils that threaten lives (see Schmidt Camacho)—both governments thus acknowledging that the Border Patrol cannot stop people desperate for work. Vigilantes step into the space between the state and the market, representing community values, providing humanitarian assistance, and acting as neighborhood/border watch groups. They appeal to a U.S. population that is growing accustomed to thinking less in terms of guaranteed securities and rights and more in terms of individual responsibilities and desires.

These communitarian and consumerist impulses work with rather than against a military buildup along the border. If the Minutemen are recognized and represented as “just doing their civic duty,” and if the Border Patrol acknowledges that they need the group’s assistance, and if together they still can’t do the job, then calls for more technological and military resources, new deployments of Border Patrol agents, and constantly expanding detention centers where undocumented immigrants are held for long periods of time without representation or hearing dates are accepted by the American public as an acceptable and even expected development. The Minutemen proclaim their adherence to the law, but, in turn, their claim that the law is not being upheld as more “illegals” and “potential terrorists” cross the border becomes the reason for deploying exceptional measures that exceed the law but are accepted by the lawmakers and the public. In this sense, the border is no longer a strange, exotic, and dangerous space but rather one of the primary sites where the particular kind of neoliberal yet militaristic governance of the post-9/11 era can be exercised. The border is characterized by what Giorgio Agamben called a state of exception—the condition that obtains when governing bodies legitimate the suspension of certain rights in the name of national security, or the greater good of the nation, or the global war on terror.

Along the border, this state of exception has a particular physical arrangement, delineated by heightened surveillance at border checkpoints, more Border Patrol vans cruising the streets with officers that are better armed than ever, and calls to build actual walls along some stretches of the border (such a wall already exists in Tijuana, as Santiago Vaquera-Vásquez describes in this issue). Stretches of the border have become like Agamben’s

camp: “the space that opens up when the state of exception starts to become the rule. In it, the state of exception, which was essentially a temporal suspension of the state of law, acquires a permanent spatial arrangement that, as such, remains constantly outside the normal state of law.”³ The state of exception allows, indeed requires, exceptional measures—yet these measures no longer seem exceptional but rather a commonsense aspect of the post-9/11 world; as Agamben says, “Faced with the unstoppable progression of what has been called a ‘global civil war,’ the state of exception tends increasingly to appear as the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics.”⁴

In the permanent state of exception that makes the border paradigmatic, senators from border states become experts on global affairs. Says Republican senator John McCain of Arizona: “I am worried about our border. We now have hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people who are crossing illegally every year. And we are now seeing a larger number of people crossing our southern border who are from countries of interest as opposed to just Latin America.”⁵ McCain thus links the history of the border as one that is porous to the South with the post-9/11 fear of the East, making his state a central node in the global war on terror. This is a savvy move, for it allows McCain to both draw on the history of demonization of Mexicans and other Latin Americans who enter to look for jobs and also to seamlessly connect this group of Others to a new group of Others—terrorists from “countries of interest,” the new border lingo for the Middle East and other sites linked in the U.S. imaginary to al-Qaeda. In this demarcation of the Other, Mexicans may become less threatening, due to their very proximity and familiarity. Indeed, as I discuss below, even the Minutemen support the creation of a guest worker program, referring mainly to Mexican workers. On the other hand, the continual production of a category of Others based largely on race may be easily adjusted to include any brown person, given the “appropriate” circumstances.⁶ Such was the case in London in the summer of 2005, after the subway bombings there, when police chased, shot in the head five times, and killed an innocent Brazilian, Jean Charles de Menezes, purportedly because he was wearing a bulky coat in the summer, but surely also because he was brown. Similarly, the Spanish government produces a category of undesirable Others as it patrols its border with Morocco—a narrow and deadly strip of the Mediterranean Sea—in an attempt to keep Africans from entering, as Ana Manzananas Calvo argues in her article comparing the U.S.-Mexico and the Spanish-Moroccan borders.

Despite its dominance, the United States is not having any more success “winning the war” on the border than it is winning anything in Iraq. Migrant deaths have reached new highs (Manzanas, Sadowski-Smith, Camacho Schmidt), murders of women continue unabated and unresolved in Ciudad Juárez (Wright), environmental conditions remain worrisome to many (Hill, Sadowski-Smith), and the drug cartels are more powerful than ever. Ironically, says Tony Payan, the “four major cartels have become increasingly efficient and flexible hierarchies, ready to respond to the contingencies of the drug war and the technological innovations at the border instigated by the Department of Homeland Security.” And the effects of “free trade” in Mexico are to keep pushing its people north to find jobs, even as they maintain their attachments to home, as shown in Laura Lewis’s discussion of the transnational ties forged between Mexican communities in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and San Nicolás, a rural community on Mexico’s southern Pacific coast.

The Last Frontier?

What moment does the Bush administration invoke when it refers to countries south of the border as “the last frontier”? The time of Manifest Destiny, when Anglo frontiersmen pushed their way west, incorporating land that belonged to Native Americans and Mexicans, a push that culminated in the U.S.-Mexico War and the signing in 1848 of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which forced Mexico to cede half its territory to the United States? The time when nation building required gaining control over territory and marking that control with the transformation of frontiers into borders? The time after 1848 when native Mexicans, the *Tejanos* of Texas, rebelled against the loss of land and the failure of the treaty to grant them rights of citizenship? The rebellion prompted “frontier justice,” as practiced by the Texas Rangers, who formally organized in 1873 to protect the land of ranchers from incursions by its previous owners. The Rangers committed numerous atrocities, producing the very unrest they claimed to squelch as native Mexicans rebelled. Bush, the parodic Texan in his cowboy hat and too-tight jeans, is perhaps nostalgic for these days when the Rangers reproduced the frontier that was so critical to the production of masculinity even as the frontier threatened to disappear. (Bush, after all, did run Major League Baseball’s Texas Rangers, an irony that’s difficult to miss.)

The Border Patrol was formed in 1924 in an attempt to grant some legiti-

macy and regularity to the policing of the border, yet its connections to the Rangers were clear: The “anointed ‘grandfather of the Border Patrol . . . was Jefferson Davis Milton, one of the original Texas Rangers.”⁷ Many of the administrators and district directors were former military men; the rank-and-file recruits were often young men who wanted to “engage in macho exploits, many were too fast on the trigger, could often be found in corner bars, or even milked their neighborhood contacts to set up smuggling rings.”⁸ There were numerous attempts to make the Border Patrol more respectable and representative of the nation at a time when, after World War I, Congress was enacting legislation to make it harder for Mexicans to enter the country and easier for them to be deported. One sees some of these same players today at the Minuteman gatherings: the Daniel Boone character, the skinheads, and former law enforcement officials. One of the speakers at the Las Cruces meeting was Richard Humphreys, who worked for twelve years in law enforcement and testifies to how the Border Patrol supports the Minutemen.

It is not just Mexicans who historically have provided the rationale for heightened policing. The “last frontier” also has been invoked to create fears about “leftist terrorists” farther south. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan warned that the Sandinistas in Managua were just “two days’ driving time” from Harlingen, Texas. During the same time period, United States-funded right-wing forces in Guatemala and El Salvador forced many people, from leftist guerrillas to nonpartisan campesinos, to flee for their lives and cross the border into the United States. From the turmoil he created, Reagan identified a pool of terrorists to justify heightened border patrol. One military analyst in the Reagan administration “predicted the rise of extremist groups that would ‘feed on the anger and frustration of recent Central and South American immigrants who will not realize their own version of the American dream.’”⁹ To further establish the threat of terrorism from the south (and thus eventually from within), in 1986 Reagan announced that drug trafficking was a threat to national security and declared the War on Drugs. Combined with the threat from leftists in Central America, the Reagan administration justified declaring its own state of exception, legitimating the collusion of the Border Patrol and the military. The Department of Defense became involved in a wide range of antidrug activities. The Border Patrol became responsible for drug enforcement, which allowed it access to high-powered military-issue rifles such as semiautomatic M-14s and M-16s.¹⁰ It was a period of low-intensity conflict, of expanded use of heli-

copters, night-vision equipment, electronic ground-sensor systems, television surveillance equipment, and airborne infrared radar.¹¹ The buildup continued under George Bush Sr. and under Bill Clinton. Although Clinton was initially more interested in free trade than in immigration issues, he joined in the rhetoric about the border and terrorists after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993, saying, “The simple fact is that we must not and will not surrender our borders to those who wish to exploit our history of compassion and justice. We cannot tolerate those who traffic in human cargo, nor can we allow our people to be endangered by those who would enter the country to terrorize Americans.”¹²

When the current Bush administration invokes the border as the last frontier, it performs a delicate balancing act between maintaining the idea of a frontier that justifies states of exception while simultaneously promoting the success of the United States in transforming the frontier into a manageable border that protects the nation even as it facilitates trade. Today’s state of exception must be normalized in order to convince the public that both conditions obtain. Here’s where the Minutemen prove useful to the administration.

The Communitarian Ethos

As exemplary neoliberal subjects, the Minutemen have been warmly received in Washington. They met in May 2005 with members of the Congressional Immigration Reform Caucus at the invitation of its chair, Tom Tancredo, who said, “I would like to thank the Minutemen on behalf of the millions of Americans who can’t be here with you today. You are good citizens who ask that our laws be enforced. When did that become a radical idea?”¹³ In the summer of 2005, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales was asked about the Minutemen and said he wished they “would let federal law officers handle border security but did not begrudge them their right to watch for border crossers as long as they don’t break the law.” He added: “My own view is that it’s a free country.”¹⁴ Asked for his opinion about the Minutemen, Jarrod Agen, an agency spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security, said, “Homeland security is a shared responsibility, and the department believes the American public plays a critical role in helping to defend the homeland.”¹⁵ Robert Bonner, commissioner of Customs and Border Protection, which encompasses the Border Patrol, even said that the agency might create “something akin to a Border Patrol

auxiliary.”¹⁶ The consideration, he said, was a direct result of observing the Minutemen groups: “It is actually as a result of seeing that there is the possibility in local border communities, and maybe even beyond, of having citizens that would be willing to volunteer to help federal agents catch illegal immigrants.” He told the Associated Press that the agency was exploring ways to “organize a citizen effort,” but the next day the Department of Homeland Security refuted him, saying the department had no plans to develop a civilian volunteer force.¹⁷

Bonner, however, was merely following the urgings of his commander in chief. During the same speech, in November 2001, in which he urged Americans to be vigilant, President Bush urged them to become volunteers. He announced a new program: “Communities of Character, designed to spark a rebirth of citizenship and service.” In his list of possible volunteer duties, he included “new defense services similar to local volunteer fire departments, to respond to local emergencies when the government is stretched thin.”¹⁸ By everyone’s admission, the Border Patrol is stretched very thin—as currently staffed, it cannot sufficiently monitor the 2,000-mile-long border, especially outside the major ports of entry (twin cities such as Ciudad Juárez–El Paso). Here’s where the Minutemen step in as enterprising citizens, answering the government’s call to do what might be considered the government’s job. The Minutemen are quick to assert their desire to work with the Border Patrol; said Chris Simcox at the Las Cruces meeting, Border Patrol agents are “great Americans and support us 100 percent. They respond almost every time we call them.” The Minutemen become visible proof that the American public not only welcomes but also participates in the nation’s defense, making other acts of homeland security, such as the USA Patriot Act, seem more consensual. At about the same time the Minutemen were getting considerable media attention, in the summer of 2005, the USA Patriot Act was renewed with little fanfare.

Volunteers operate in the territory between the state and the free and amoral exchange of the market, supplying the “compassion” in conservatism. Although many of the Minutemen (such as ranchers) are concerned about their private property, this is not the frontier ethos of “each man for himself” but rather the reinvigorated and “caring” citizen acting responsibly within his community. “It’s our civic duty to help law enforcement,” says Simcox. As Nikolas Rose describes the communitarian ethos, “Politics is to be returned to society itself, but no longer in a social form: in the form of individual morality, organizational responsibility and ethical com-

munity.”¹⁹ The good vigilante is the organizer of the neighborhood watch group—or the border watch group. The Minutemen are eager to assert their code of ethics. Wright says they have a strict “standard operating procedure” (SOP) that prohibits contact with any undocumented person. This SOP is breached only when immigrants need water or medical assistance, which the group is quick to assert it provides; Simcox says he has helped save 160 lives.

The group also subscribes publicly to the inclusive definition of the nation that flourished after 9/11, vehemently disclaiming protesters’ charges that they are racist: “There is not any racism. We are not an anti-immigration group,” says Wright. To provide visual proof of this claim, one of the speakers at the Las Cruces meeting is Al Garza, a veteran of the U.S. Marines, a self-described “fifth-generation American of Spanish, Italian, and Yaqui descent,” who relates the stories of his many relatives who have died fighting for the United States: “America is a country where freedom has been purchased at a heavy price.” Garza says that as a “Hispanic,” he was skeptical about the Minutemen when he first heard of them, but then accompanied Simcox on his rounds one day and decided that “this isn’t a white supremacist group, this is a border watch group. I said, ‘Where can I sign up?’”

In a neoliberal state, argues David Harvey, the “institutional arrangements considered essential to guarantee individual freedoms are strong individual property rights, the rule of law, and the institutions of freely functioning markets and free trade.”²⁰ The state’s role is to secure and protect these rights—hence the contradiction of intervention in the name of freedom. Unlike the Texas Rangers, who were indiscriminate in their racism, the Minutemen are willing to concede that some undocumented people are not terrorists but, rather, desperate for work. As Simcox put it, “These are innocent victims of their governments who aren’t guaranteeing them jobs.” The Minutemen support the creation of a guest worker program; says Bob Wright, “All we ask is that immigrants come through the gate and sign the guestbook.”

A guest worker program temporarily resolves the tensions inherent in the need, on the one hand, for a mobile labor force and, on the other hand, for secure borders. It answers the question of how the very people one defines as threats to national security and purity can also be given some kind of provisional legal status given their critical status to the economy—to the homes and gardens of middle-class Americans, to the hotels and restau-

rants of every city, to the meatpacking plants of Iowa and Nebraska, to the vineyards and orchards of California. Both Presidents Fox and Bush have called for a guest worker program, although they disagree on the form it would take, and one rationale is that such a program would help distinguish between legitimate workers and potential security threats. As Magdalena Carral, commissioner of the Mexican National Migration Institute, has argued, “The regularization of undocumented Mexicans in the United States would allow for the identification of a large segment of people already settled in the country that do not represent a security threat. The contribution of these Mexicans to the U.S. economy has been recognized by the U.S. private sector.”²¹ The market sets the terms for “the rule of law” — “aliens” can become temporarily legal and thus gain some rights if they prove their worth to the nation as productive workers and potential consumers. This is just a temporary state of belonging, however, for Bush’s guest worker program requires that workers eventually return to their home countries.²² The border must remain open to the *regulated* flow of workers back and forth as well as to the flow of goods back and forth across the border — produced in the maquiladoras by cheap Mexican labor and consumed in the United States, a process expanded by the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994.

In this neoliberal environment, it comes as no surprise that one of the examples of human rights abuses cited by Minuteman opponents is linked to consumerism. In their patrols along the Arizona border in April 2005, several members of the Minutemen detained a Mexican man and forced him to pose for a picture holding a T-shirt with the man, Bryan Barton, who had spotted him. The shirt said, “Bryan Barton caught an illegal alien and all I got was this lousy T-shirt.”²³ One wonders if the T-shirt was made just across the border.

“Ordinary People”

The work of the good citizen/volunteer provides the legitimation for more insidious and violent forms of vigilantism and state-sponsored militarism that come to seem necessary, even normalized, given the current security crisis. If Homeland Security and the volunteer force are doing all they can to seal the borders, doesn’t that then suggest there is a need for more militaristic solutions? “You are ordinary people, but these are extraordinary times,” Wright told the potential volunteers in Las Cruces.

Adherence to the law today becomes the rationale for future violations of the law. Some Minutemen chapters have said they will carry weapons. In California, a Minuteman group led by Jim Chase urged volunteers to bring baseball bats, Mace, pepper spray, and machetes, until the Border Patrol learned about it and raised concerns. Chase said that instead they would carry guns: “The guns are for one reason—to keep my people alive,” he said.²⁴ The Minutemen are attracting neo-Nazis even if they are not recruiting them. According to Amanda Susskind and Joanna Mendelson, researchers for the Anti-Defamation League, the first weekend of Minutemen events was endorsed by Shawn Walker, spokesman for the neo-Nazi National Alliance, a group that describes illegal immigration as an “invasion” that will cause white people to be a “minority within the next 50 years.”²⁵

Internet Web sites for different border vigilante groups show the overlap of the right-wing extremists, the Minutemen, and the military. For example, at Ranchrescue.com, one is greeted with the words: “Private property first, foremost, and always.” The featured image in October 2005 is of a Border Patrol van flanked by two U.S. Army Stryker armored vehicles on the New Mexican border, and the headline reads: “US Army Deploys Stryker armored vehicles to NM border, apparently in support of Minuteman Project.” Beneath this image is a photo of two armed men wearing black ski masks and camouflage clothing, holding a U.S. flag. It’s an ad for Border Rescue Arizona’s Operation Eagle, which seems to be the group’s name for its current mission to “reclaim” the border from “drug-running terrorists.”

The vigilante in neoliberal times functions not as a complete renegade but rather in conjunction with, or at least alongside, the government, both entities acting outside the law, in the name of the law, in order to enforce the law. The Border Patrol responds to the Minutemen, and vice versa; after Simcox organized the Minutemen in Arizona, the Border Patrol announced that it would dispatch five hundred new Border Patrol agents to that state.²⁶ Government officials, as cited above, support the vigilantes. A climate is created in which the suspension of civil rights seems legitimate. The USA Patriot Act, for example, expands the definition of “terrorist activity,” then gives the government considerable power to detain people linked to any such activity, if the attorney general or his deputy “has reasonable grounds to believe” the person has any links to terrorism. If the person held is charged with any violation at all, such as a minor infraction of immigration law, he or she can be held indefinitely.²⁷ The judicial system has assisted in creating camplike conditions of extended detention where detainees

have virtually no rights. Agamben argues that the passage of the Patriot Act reveals the extent to which the state of exception has become permanent, for under it individuals have no legal status, thus “producing a legally unnamable and unclassifiable being” subject to a “detention that is indefinite not only in the temporal sense but in its very nature as well, since it is entirely removed from the law and from judicial oversight,”²⁸ a situation made visible at sites such as Guantánamo Bay. Along the border there are growing numbers of detention centers; many of them are contracted out to private entities and are becoming the mainstays of local economies.

Security and Economy

At the intersections of security and economy lies the truth of neoliberalism’s defense of the powerful. Any attempt to prevent “terrorists” from entering the United States must not infringe on corporate profits. When he was head of Homeland Security, Tom Ridge declared: “Mexico is one of our largest trading partners and it is absolutely critical that we prevent terrorists from infiltrating the commercial chain to launch an attack.”²⁹ This statement is a slightly balder version of the concerns expressed by the House of Representatives’ Subcommittee on Infrastructure and Border Security, which held hearings on this matter in 2003 and summarized their goal: to figure out “how to balance security enhancements with the flow of people and commerce across our borders. The global trading system is increasingly reliant on the swift delivery of goods produced overseas. America’s economic stability requires that goods and people cross our borders in and out of the country regularly without long delays. Our security also requires that we know who and what is entering.”³⁰ The United States needs Mexico’s cooperation in negotiating commerce and security; the two countries reached a “smart border” agreement, for example, which included measures such as the Secure Electronic Network for Traveler’s Rapid Inspections, a system that allows the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection to accelerate the inspections of low-risk pre-enrolled crossers (see Payan’s article for a critique of this system).

Given its reliance on the maquiladora industry, Mexico has had little choice but to work with the United States on border control as well as launching its own Operativo Sentinela, sending 18,000 soldiers as well as its navy to protect air and sea ports, borders, and key infrastructure and tourist spots. All this could have been averted, from Mexico’s point of view.

As one of the rotating members of the United Nations Security Council, Mexico staunchly opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq—along with China, France, Germany, and Russia. Gustavo Carvajal Moreno, president of the Mexican congressional foreign affairs committee, “pointed out that U.S. vulnerability to external attacks should have counseled against any unilateral action against Iraq. . . . Because of our shared border, such action and possible retaliation against the U.S. made us vulnerable too.”³¹ The Security Council passed a resolution saying that Iraq was in “material breach” of previous resolutions, authorizing a new inspection, and reiterating a warning of “serious consequences” if Iraq would not comply with disarmament requirements. Military action should be a last resort. The United States insisted that inspections would not work and pressed ahead. Mexico’s foreign minister, Luis Ernesto Derbez, presciently called into question U.S. claims linking Hussein and al-Qaeda.³² All of these entreaties, obviously, went unheard by a U.S. government determined to invade Iraq.

Security is in fact an economic issue, but not just in terms of U.S. wealth. This was the case made by Mexican ambassador Ruiz Cabanas at a 2003 forum of the Organization of American States in Barbados. He argued for “emphasizing the geographical and thematic diffusion of security threats born out of political, economic, public health, and environment conditions in the hemisphere” and “reminded his audience that ‘human security’ had become an essential element of hemispheric security.”³³ As long as there is poverty throughout Latin America, produced in no small part through the policies of neoliberalism, people will not be secure: Their lives are in a constant state of insecurity and uncertainty about their next meal, their next doctor visit, and the safety of their drinking water. These issues cannot be addressed purely through military means, warns Carmen Moreno, former Mexican ambassador to the OAS, given the devastating history of military intervention: “This is not a good idea, especially if we consider the strength of the armed forces in relation to the fragility of democracy in some OAS countries.”³⁴

When the U.S.-Mexico border becomes a normalized state of exception, the U.S. government finds it easier to expand the very contours of the border, again in the name of national security. The House of Representatives subcommittee report quoted above said that one component of the U.S. strategy to build “smarter borders” is through “pushing our borders out, pushing our zone of security out beyond our physical borders so America’s borders are not the last line of defense, nor the first line of defense, against

terrorism.”³⁵ Mexico becomes the permeable barrier between the United States and the rest of Latin America, a purported breeding ground for terrorists; history repeats itself with the variation that Middle East terrorists (Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda) replace the “communist threat” of the Sandinistas, the FMLN in El Salvador, and other leftist movements—or, rather, that they all join together. There is already considerable evidence to show that the United States is using 9/11 as a rationale for weakening what Moreno calls the fragile democracies that are recovering after decades of brutal military rule in many Latin American countries. In El Salvador in 2004, for example, the campaign of former FMLN guerrilla and presidential candidate Shafik Handal was weakened when the State Department suggested that he had ties to international terrorism and that if he won, the United States would consider El Salvador to be supporting international terrorism, “thereby blocking all financial remittances made by Salvadorans working in the U.S.”³⁶ Handal was subsequently defeated by the conservative ARENA Party—which was responsible for many of the death-squad killings in the 1980s. U.S. conservatives have also tried to link Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Lula da Silva in Brazil to “international terrorism.” The Bush administration has adopted an “Effective Strategy Doctrine” that says “vast ‘ungoverned spaces’ in Latin American nations provide fertile ground for terrorists to take root,” and it has used this notion of ungoverned spaces to legitimate a 52 percent jump in the number of Latin American police and soldiers trained by the U.S. military between 2002 and 2003.³⁷ With all of that “ungoverned space” to bring under control, the U.S. government is warranted, it appears to the wider public, in turning to the Minutemen and other vigilante groups who will help maintain the U.S.-Mexico border as a governed space, the “last frontier” in what Agamben calls a “global civil war.”³⁸

Resistance arises from within the discourses and material conditions of neoliberalism, as many of the articles here describe. The *Ni Una Mas* movement based in Ciudad Juárez protests the murders of hundreds of women, many of them maquiladora workers, as Melissa Wright describes in her analysis of the restraints of operating within the world of nongovernmental organizations. Transnational communities represent the possibilities carved out of global flows, as migrants persist in the face of xenophobia and economic hardships, Laura Lewis shows. Numerous poets and artists along the border have articulated the everyday lives of border residents as alternative narratives to the discourse of neoliberalism; these narratives are analyzed here in the essays by Sadowski-Smith, Camacho Schmidt,

and Manzanitas Calvo. Finally, this issue offers original cultural production that represents the variegated life of the border in the autobiographical essay by Santiago Vaquera-Vásquez, the poetry of Arturo Dávila, and the photography of Alejandro Lugo. While resistance cannot escape the terms of neoliberalism, then, rearticulation is possible and indeed necessary for the imagining of a new—more just and life-sustaining—configuration of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Notes

- 1 Olga R. Rodriguez, "Terror—Latin America," Associated Press, August 21, 2004, www.newslibrary.com (accessed July 10, 2005).
- 2 Quoted in Amanda Susskind and Joanna Mendelson, "Extremists at Border: Minuteman Project about More Than Enforcing Policy," *L.A. Daily News*, May 15, 2005, www.dailynews.com (accessed July 4, 2005).
- 3 Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 39.
- 4 Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 2.
- 5 Quoted in Jim Malone, "U.S. Continues to Tighten Immigration Following 9/11 Attacks," VOA News, May 3, 2005, www.voanews.com (accessed July 4, 2005).
- 6 Most recently, Harvard professor Samuel Huntington expressed this fear of the brown Other. In an article in *Foreign Policy*, he warned of "the intense and continuing immigration from Latin America, especially from Mexico," that is threatening the linguistic and religious foundations of the United States. He asks, "Will the United States remain a country with a single national language and a core of Anglo-Protestant culture?" Or, ominously from his point of view, are we witnessing the "transformation [of the United States] into two peoples with two cultures and two languages?" Huntington, "The Hispanic Challenge," *Foreign Policy* (March/April 2004), www.foreignpolicy.com (accessed July 10, 2005).
- 7 Alexandra Minna Stern, "Tracking the Border Patrol: Gender, Race, and Boundary Maintenance," in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*, ed. Samuel Truett and Elliott Young (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), quote on 312.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 307.
- 9 Quoted in Timothy Dunn, *The Militarization of the U.S.-Mexican Border, 1978–1992* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 26.
- 10 Dunn, *The Militarization of the U.S.-Mexican Border*, 53.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 58.
- 12 Quoted in Joseph Nevins, *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the "Illegal Alien" and the Making of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 89.
- 13 Jim Gilchrist, "Minuteman Going National, Will Start in New Mexico," June 11, 2005, www.libertypost.org (accessed July 10, 2005).
- 14 Leslie Linthicum, "AG Won't Discuss High Court Chances; Gonzales in Town for Border Talks," *Albuquerque Journal*, July 7, 2005.

- 15 Duncan Mansfield, "‘Minuteman’ Groups Grow," *Albuquerque Journal*, July 18, 2005.
- 16 "Border Patrol Considering Use of Volunteers, Official Says," *New York Times*, July 21, 2005.
- 17 Jeremiah Marquez, "No Plans for Border Patrol ‘Auxiliary,'" *Albuquerque Journal*, July 22, 2005.
- 18 "President Discusses War on Terrorism," Address to the Nation, November 8, 2005, archives.www.cnn.com/2001 (accessed July 6, 2005).
- 19 Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 174–75.
- 20 David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 64.
- 21 Magdalena Carral, "Migration and Security Policy Post-9/11: Mexico and the United States," paper presented at the Second North American Meeting of the Trilateral Commission, New York, November 14–16, 2003.
- 22 As this issue went to press, Congress was debating different versions of a guest worker program, and Bush's position on whether he would support sending the workers home after a certain number of years or allow them to apply for citizenship was not clearly stated.
- 23 "Border Volunteers Cleared of Wrongdoing," April 8, 2005, cnn.usnews.com.printthis.clickability.com (accessed April 20, 2005).
- 24 Quoted in Mansfield, *Albuquerque Journal*.
- 25 Susskind and Mendelson, "Extremists at Border."
- 26 "Sources: 500 New Agents to Patrol Arizona Border," March 29, 2005, cnn.usnews.com.printthis.clickability.com (accessed April 20, 2005).
- 27 John Greenya, "Immigration Law in Post-9/11 America," *DC Bar*, August 2003, www.dcb.org/forlawyers/washington_lawyer/august_2003 (accessed July 4, 2005).
- 28 Agamben, *State of Exception*, 3–4.
- 29 Quoted in Loretta Bondi, *Beyond the Border and Across the Atlantic: Mexico's Foreign and Security Policy Post-September 11* (Washington, DC: Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2004), 90. Bondi, a former Italian journalist, is a member of the resource group advising the United Nations High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change. Between May 2003 and March 2004, she interviewed dozens of Mexican and U.S. policy makers for this book.
- 30 "Balancing Security and Commerce," Hearing before the Subcommittee on Infrastructure and Border Security of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2005), 1–2.
- 31 Bondi, *Beyond the Border*, 12.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 54.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 58.
- 35 "Balancing Security and Commerce," 8.
- 36 Nico Armstrong, "Crying Wolf: International Terror and the New Shadow upon U.S.-Latin American Relations," *International Studies Review* 2 (2005): 3–14, quote on 5.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 8.
- 38 Agamben, *State of Exception*, 2.