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Putting the Migration-Security Complex in its Place¹

‘we [should] not allow ourselves the facile, rather theatrical declaration that this moment in which we exist is one of total perdition, in the abyss of darkness, or a triumphant daybreak, etc. It is a time like any other, or rather, a time which is never quite like any other’ (Foucault 1994: 126).

Securitization or Problematization?

For many commentators on immigration, the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington signaled a profound and unprecedented turning point. Observing that a critical aspect of the political response to the attacks has been the creation of an entire migration-security complex, John Tirnan’s (2004) introduction to a recent collection on migration and security is typical in this respect. Writing about the response taken within the American homeland itself, he has documented some of the more immediate ways in which this complex was forged. Based on the widespread perception that the culprits for the attacks were ‘porous borders, generous entry policies, violations of the terms of entry, and the entry of immigrants from the Middle East more generally’ (2004: 2), a widespread public anxiety about immigration has been intensified. At the level of the law, this has sanctioned certain dramatic moves not least the rapid expansion of state powers under the USA Patriot Act to detain aliens without due process. But there have also been developments changing the very structure of the state and the organization of sovereign power. For instance, Tirnan points to the bureaucratic fusion of migration and security. The most immediate institutional expression of this fusion is surely the abolition of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the transfer of its functions and units into the Department of Homeland Security whose mandate it is to ‘prevent and deter terrorist attacks and protect against and respond to threats a hazards to the Nation’ (DHS 2004; quoted in Inda 2006: 153).

According to Tirnan, the forging of this nexus of migration and security is not limited to the US homeland. In one country after another, he notes,

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the pursuit of al Qaeda cells, conducted by various security agencies has uncovered not only their money-laundering activities, their brief alliances with organized crime, or the geographic expanse of the network. This international 'war on terror', a campaign which forms the global counterpart to the project of homeland security, has also revealed that:

Virtually all of this illegal activity, designed to support a large, dispersed network of political violence, was conducted by migrants, underscoring along with the US military and police campaign to destroy or disrupt their actions, the newly minted connection between security and migration, or, to use an unwieldy term, the "securitization of migration"

(Tirman 2004: 3)

While many Europe-focused scholars would not dispute Tirman's depiction of September 11 as a catalyst in accelerating the securitization of migration, they would probably want to insist that this nexus is not quite as 'newly minted' as he suggests. More specifically, they would perhaps point out that his is a somewhat partial and rather US-centric view of a much wider process. For the fact is that scholarship in Europe has for quite some time found itself debating the origins, tendencies, dynamics and consequences of the securitization of migration (Bigo 2002; Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002; Heisler and Layton Henry 1993; Huysmans 1995; Huysmans 2000). In these accounts, the migration-security nexus is not a post-9/11 phenomenon but a complex whose *durée* is somewhat longer; its formation conditioned by the interplay of numerous events and processes operating on multiple scales and temporalities. The following quotation illustrates this point and is, I would venture, typical of the way in which a great deal of international relations and critical security studies has understood the context of the securitization of migration.

The last decades of the twentieth century were marked by a dramatic change led by the development of globalization, the enhancement of transnational flows, and the end of bipolarity. The construction of the European Union, the emergence of new economic agreements such as NAFTA, the deterritorialization of markets, physical borders, and identities, the increase of migration flows, the construction of the Schengen area, and the fragmentation of major states (e.g., the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia) have raised questions about Westphalian state sovereignty and identity.... In consequence, Western societies are witnessing the emergence of many existential and conceptual anxieties and fears about their identity, security, and well-being. As Martin Heisler asserts, migration is at the focal point of the interrelated dynamics of identity, borders, and orders. By its transnational character, its dynamics, and its impact on people and institutions at all levels, migration is

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posing a serious challenge to the long-standing paradigms of certainty and order
(Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002: 23).

Securitization theory is of course not a unified voice but, like any thriving intellectual enterprise, a space of lively and often productive disagreements. For instance, its practitioners may share the basic proposition that migration is not naturally a question of security but only becomes so subject to particular social processes. However, there is little common agreement on what the most relevant processes are. In one version it is the successful performance of particular speech acts and discursive enactments which explains how an issue becomes securitized (Buonfino 2004; Waever 1995). In another, which draws its analytical insights from Foucault and Bourdieu, one finds the insistence that besides the rhetorical configuration of security, it is necessary to consider

the dynamics of institutional fields, including the inter-bureaucratic struggles of security professionals, certain technical practices of security, and the constitution of specific security domains (Bigo 2000; Huysmans 2006).

However, it is not such theoretical differences that interest me here, so much as one particular assumption which most participants in the securitization debate do happen to share. This is the assumption that it is now, in our time, in the recent present, that migration has become a security concern. It is the perspective that says migration only becomes a security issue in the period following the demise of geopolitical bipolarity, or perhaps in the period that began with the crisis of Keynesian welfarism. Before this time, the assumption goes, migration policy was much closer to labour policy. It was therefore less controversial and politicized than today. This is perhaps why students of security have largely confined their attention to the recent present, and left migration history to historians, and perhaps the occasional political scientist looking for patterns of path dependence.

Studies in the securitization of migration have privileged our own time, and shown little inclination towards undertaking historical reflection and analysis of earlier politicizations of migration. This is perhaps one reason why they have only partially grappled with the changing forms, objects and rationalities associated with securitization. But this is not because they have neglected the shifting thematic foci of security practices. After all, there is certainly an awareness in this literature that fields and objects of security can vary. For instance, in a particularly influential intervention, Waever (1995) identifies ‘societal security’ as a growing concern within politics after the Cold War. Societal (in)security names a situation where threats are less likely to be associated with aggression from other states, but instead with challenges to society, and in particular cultural, national and social identity.

But, despite this sensitivity towards the existence of different, historically-constituted security fields – societal, national, environmental, etc. – there is still a tendency in writing about the securitization of migration to attribute

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a core meaning to security, to find a kernel of security that remains unchanged across time and institutional space. For instance, Waever insists that ultimately ‘Security means survival, it means “this is an existential threat with a point of no return”’ (Waever 1996: 108). Often, insecurity is associated with the presence of dangerous others who pose existential threats to our survival.

This understanding of security as being, at its core, a matter of existential threat has influenced the way in which scholars of migration have understood risk. Although risk has not always been explicitly theorized in studies of the security-migration nexus, there seems to be an underlying assumption that risk is a question of danger and threat, and often contamination posed by foreign bodies. Ibrahim’s discussion of the racial subtext of the securitization of migration is typical in this regard. ‘This [racialized] discourse has been possible through the broadening of the concept of security and the linking of risk and threat to migrants’ (Ibrahim 2005: 164). Here, risk is understood as a potential for harm embodied in particular behaviours and/or types and classes of persons.

The problem with this understanding of risk is that it overlooks the multiple different ways in which risk has been interpreted and deployed as a political technology. For instance, it overlooks the fact that within the logic of *social* security – and it is quite striking how rarely that securitization theory has addressed this particular kind of security practice - the meaning of risk

was displaced away from an association with types of persons and threats, and associated much more closely with the properties of social and economic processes under conditions of industrialism, urbanism and market capitalism.

This quite different understanding of risk is particularly evident in the conception of unemployment which became dominant within post-WWII welfare states. Whereas once unemployment had been viewed as a risk to be borne by the individual and their community, the Beveridgean and Keynesian view which came to be inscribed in the design of much social and economic policy saw it as a risk to which workers were inevitably exposed under industrial capitalism, a risk which could be effectively mitigated by state systems of social insurance. Within the diagram of the social state, unemployment was governed not so much as an existential threat as an everyday risk, not dissimilar from personal theft or the work-related accident, susceptible to bureaucratic management through actuarial calculation and monetary compensation (Defert 1991; Ewald 1991; Walters 2000).

The argument of this paper is that by placing contemporary questions of migration in a broadened historical field of inquiry, it becomes possible to shed new light on issues of risk and security. It becomes possible to see, for instance, that what we today call 'risk' and 'security' are not at all constant but in fact the correlates of specific kinds of political games and governmental technologies; that migration has been politicized, dramatized and problematized through languages and technologies other than 'security'; and

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that by engaging with these other problematizations of migration, we get a sharper and more specific understanding of what security and risk mean today within the migration field.

With this aim in mind this chapter calls for greater genealogical sensitivity in research on the migration-security nexus, the complex which I want to call, for want of a better term, 'homeland security'. If genealogy can be regarded as a 'history of the present', this is because it seeks to 'undertake an analysis of those objects given as necessary components of our reality' (Dean 1994: 33). Such a move entails that we make a conceptual shift: from an investigation that places the concept of 'securitization' at its heart to one oriented by the idea of problematization. As Foucault has put it, this is 'a matter of analyzing not behaviors or ideas... but the *problematizations* through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought' (Foucault 1997: 11). It is not a matter of jettisoning the analytics of security so much as putting 'security' in its place. It is a question of finding what happens once we treat the things that are today bundled under the rubric of security not as the self-evident response to a political event (e.g., '9/11') nor the expression of a sociological process with roots in other macro-processes (e.g., globalization or transnationalization), but as a particular and contingent form of problematization.

The aim of the chapter is to put the securitization of migration in its place. In order to do this it is necessary to centre my discussion not on contemporary events within the migration field, but a particular episode in the recent past. The event I have chosen is a specific episode in the interwoven histories of anti-immigrantism and immigration control in the United States – the so-called 'wetback crisis' which exploded into public life in the early 1950s.² As the following two sections of the chapter explain, this 'crisis' centred upon the presence of legal and illegal seasonal migrant workers from Mexico toiling in the fruit and cotton fields of the Southwest US. Drawing upon newspaper reporting of this crisis, I seek to reconstruct certain aspects of the political imagination presupposed by the debate about the wetback. Among other things this exercise reveals that inasmuch as this crisis was debated as a question of security – and this was not

always the case - this was frequently in terms of its implications for the *social* security of Americans, and also, to some degree, of the migrants themselves.

In a final section I use this account of the ‘wetback crisis’ to pose a series of questions about the contemporary migration-security complex. By comparing the paradigm of homeland security, which has become quite central in thinking about migration today, with that of social security, it becomes possible to cast certain features of the former in a new light. I shall focus on three particular aspects of today’s migration-security complex: its metagovernmental character, the centrality of a problematic of identity-security, and the political obsession with borders. In short, the chapter reveals that a more critical and reflexive account of the present requires us to recognize not a singular process of securitization, but the play of and between changing forms of problematization.

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The ‘Wetback Crisis’, 1951

From March 25 to March 29, 1951, the New York Times published a series of five investigative reports concerning ‘the economic and sociological problem of the “wetbacks” – illegal Mexican immigrants in the Southwestern United States’ (New York Times 1951a: 1). Authored by Gladwin Hill, this five part series not only offers us a window onto the ways in which questions of illegal immigration were posed in the early 1950s. It was also something of a political event in its own right, bringing national attention to, and sparking widespread media interest in the so-called ‘wetback problem’, and which had, until that time, existed largely as a local matter (Calavita 1992: 47; Flores 2004: 2). What can this series tell us about the ways in which certain forms of migration were problematized?

The situation in the Southwest, parts of the deep South and the Far West, according to Hill, is that of a ‘ceaseless and steadily increasing tide of illegal immigration from Mexico into the United States’ (New York Times 1951a: 1). It is estimated at more than one million individuals per year. ‘They sneak across the thinly-patrolled 1,600 mile border between Brownsville, Tex., and San Diego, Calif., in an unending hegira from Mexican unemployment and wage levels as low as 40 cents a day, seeking farm work and any other labor available in this country’ (New York Times 1951a: 1). While the term ‘wetback’ is deemed pejorative and offensive today, it seems to have been the standard description at the time. Writers like Hill always placed the word in quotation marks, not to suggest a certain critical distance from it, but merely, it seems, to mark it as an unusual term, perhaps on the assumption that a national audience might be unfamiliar with it. Nearly every article uses the term but always feels bound to explain it – a reference to ‘those who swim the Rio Grande, the Texas-Mexico boundary’ (New York Times 1951a: 1). In 1954, a mass deportation drive would take the name Operation Wetback.

Hill’s series is highly critical of the situation he encounters. He goes to great lengths to challenge what had been the prevailing view, namely, that this was just a ‘picturesque cat-and-mouse game on a grand scale between a mass of amiable Latins and an overwhelmed border patrol’; a regional curiosity in which an annual ‘invasion’ of migrant labour crossed the border as a ‘regular essential and harmless supplement to the domestic harvest forces’ (New York Times 1951a: 41). The situation was much more serious. At its heart was the vulnerable and hyper-exploited condition of the migrant worker by the large-scale agricultural industries, ranches and farms that were the principal magnet, and indeed active recruiters, of this migrant labour.

Prevailing wage levels are described as tantamount to peonage, and the working conditions compared to ante-bellum slavery. All of this was going on under the nose of the Immigration Service, the Border Patrol and local law authorities, leading Hill to make what would be a frequent analogy between the governance of illegal migration and the days of prohibition when

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‘wholesale violation of the laws of the United States was being ignored, tacitly sanctioned or overtly encouraged by a large cross-section of the population’ (New York Times 1951a: 1).

Hill and other journalists sought to force the wetback issue into the spotlight of national politics. But it was not as though this practice of utilizing Mexican workers – both authorized migrants and the ‘illegal’ – was particularly new. On the contrary, immigration from Mexico had gained momentum since before World War One. Whereas the Quota Restrictions of 1921 and 1924 reduced levels of European immigration, Mexicans and other migrants from the Western Hemisphere were exempt. Within official circles Mexico was regarded as a ‘back door’ which, given its geographical proximity, offered a source of flexible and easily deportable labour for the expanding agricultural economy of the Southwest (Calavita 1994: 58-61). This ‘flexibility’ was amply demonstrated in the 1930s when, in the context of the worsening economic depression, public charge clauses were activated as a pretense for ‘repatriating’ approximately 400,000 Mexican and Mexican-American workers and their families (Ngai 2004: 72) – an act which Ngai (2004: 75) describes as a ‘racial expulsion program exceeded only in scale by the Native American Indian removals of the nineteenth century’.

This temporary importation of Mexican workers to meet the agricultural economy’s demand for cheap, non-unionized labour was formalized in the 1940s in the form of the Bracero programme. This began in 1942 as a measure of expediency to meet war-related labour shortages with so-called ‘guest-workers’, but proved useful enough to employers and state officials that it was placed on a more permanent footing following the end of the war. Bracero was expanded in 1951 in conjunction with the passage of Public Law 78 which legalized certain forms of quasi-bonded, ‘contract’ labour in the agricultural sector of the US economy (Calavita 1992: 43-4). Referring literally to ‘one who works with their arms’, Bracero has been described as ‘a labor contracting system by which the US government negotiated the temporary importation of 4.8 million Mexican workers’ between 1942 and 1964, when the programme was eventually ended (Akers Chacón and Davis 2006: 140).

Together with undocumented ‘wetbacks’ – and the line between them was typically very blurred - Bracero workers constituted a mass source of vulnerable labour that would fuel the growth of the agricultural industries in the post-war period.³ In one of the most sophisticated historical accounts of this phenomenon, Ngai argues that this ‘transnational Mexican labor force’ constituted ‘a kind of “imported colonialism” that was the legacy of the nineteenth-century American conquest of Mexico’s northern territories’. For this was a workforce governed by new social relations ‘based on the subordination of racialized foreign bodies who worked in the United States but who remained excluded from the polity by both law and by social custom’ (Ngai 2004: 129). It could certainly be argued that the history of illegal immigration since this time will be very much the story of changing forms of this inclusive-exclusionary practice.

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The crisis of the 1950s was met with a dual pronged response that in essence continues to set the terms of the politics of illegal immigration today. One prong would be a set of repressive measures, including the enhancement of border patrol agencies, and a mass 'round up' and deportation under the auspices of Operation Wetback. It would invoke fears of the risk of communist infiltration and employ military style tactics of enforcement. According to the INS, over one million migrants were apprehended during the fiscal year of 1954 alone (Nevins 2002: 34). The other prong was to refashion the Bracero programme, expanding it, and moving it closer in form to state-managed recruitment. This move was rationalized by the argument that a state-guaranteed supply of flexible labour would wean farm employers away from their reliance upon illegal workers.

But while it is possible to identify these continuities with and anticipations of contemporary policy, there are a number of features concerning the political framing and 'response' to the wetback crisis which stand out as quite peculiar from the perspective of today. It is these that I highlight in the following section because of the way they serve to enhance the intelligibility of the current migration-security complex.

Illegal Immigration and the Security of the Social

As we noted at the outset, securitization theory tells a story of a migration field which *becomes* securitized. It is as though the rhetoric, practices and politics associated with security seep out from the geopolitical and military sectors and infiltrate a terrain that was previously unmarked by any security logic. Our encounter with the moment of the wetback suggests a need to amend this view. At least as far as the migration of Mexican workers was concerned, migration was certainly not framed as a security issue as it is today. But questions of illegal immigration and security were connected in a different sense. The so-called 'wetback' issue was perceived as threatening *the security of the social*. To grasp the specificity of the wetback problem, and thereby to better particularize the nature of current security discourses, it is necessary to consider how the problem of illegal immigration came to be posed at the level of the social.

Governing the social

The social is typically understood within the social sciences as referring to universal properties and characteristics of human existence. However, Foucauldian-inspired research has suggested a more specific and historicized understanding of the term (Donzelot 1988; Rose 1996; Walters 2000). As Rose has argued, the social is best approached as a new formula of rule which materialized in multiple ways across countless institutional sites sometime around the middle of the nineteenth century. Its emergence is unthinkable outside its relationship to a whole series of intellectual machineries

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and political technologies, such as social statistics, the social survey, social work and social insurance, which together crystallized the possibility of new ways of governing human affairs. As the twentieth century progressed, the social would find its most influential political articulation in the guise of 'welfare', a 'formula of rule somewhere between classical liberalism and nascent socialism' (Rose 1996: 48).

Among other things, social governance entailed a particular conception of risk. I have already touched on this above, but it deserves to be re-emphasized here since this approach to risk

associated with the welfare state offers a point of contrast to the notion of risk at work in contemporary schemes and dreams of homeland security. It is nicely summarized by Simon when he notes that whether we speak of Keynesianism, Fordism, collectivism, or the social, it was a matter of depicting 'social life as distributions of aggregate risks that could be governed by redistributing them', and engaging such social risks using technologies as varied as insurance, case work and urban planning (Simon 1997: 176).

The wetback issue condensed a whole series of concerns about work, crime, illness, morality, citizenship, and security, much as the discourse about illegal immigration does today. However, the way in which these connections were imagined was definitely shaped by these logics of social security, broadly understood. We have already seen evidence of this logic in the particular style of reporting conducted by the *New York Times*. Here I want to consider a further illustration that comes from a Presidential address before Congress on the subject of illegal immigrants from Mexico. The fact that no less an authority than the President of the USA could frame the discussion of illegal immigration in decidedly social terms attests if nothing else to the political normality of the social point of view at this time.

According to President Truman (1951), the problem of the wetback stemmed in considerable part from the fact of their impoverished living conditions, and the way in which such concentrated poverty bred related problems of unemployment, poor health and crime which rippled out into the broader society. Truman laments the situation of the illegal immigrant 'left in abject poverty', but also how their presence fostered a situation in which 'Thousands of our own citizens, particularly those of Latin descent, are displaced from employment or forced to work under substandard conditions.' While Truman called for greater resources to prevent unauthorized border crossing and illegal employment, he noted that such prohibitive measures were not sufficient. Using a language which is strongly reminiscent of the dominant approach to another key 'social' question in the 1950s, namely unemployment, he spoke of the need for better organization and regulation in the agricultural economy with, for instance, the surveillance of labour market needs so that a more 'rational' assessment could be made of the balance needed between temporary foreign and domestic labour supply.

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But the problem was not merely one of mitigating the poverty of migrant labour by improving standards and controls in the labour market. The illegal status that so many migrant workers endured was also a problem in its own right. The really interesting point to note here is that, at least as far as the Presidential address is concerned, illegality is registered as problematic not primarily because it symbolizes a violation of national law, a transgression of state borders, or a criminal propensity on the part of its subjects – all perceptions which vitalize the politics of immigration today. It is a problem because of the way it places its subjects outside the regime of liberal citizenship. 'Since these unfortunate people are here illegally, they are subject to deportation if caught by our immigration authorities. They have to hide and yet must work to live. *They are thus in no position to bargain with those who might choose to exploit them...* They are unable, therefore, to protest or to protect themselves' (Truman 1951; my emphasis).

Liberty-security

Truman's speech is significant in part because it suggests that discourse about illegal immigration was underpinned by a conception of a normal subject which is in key respects quite different today. Underlying the President's remarks is the idea of the subject as a rights-bearing collective worker, capable of engaging in industrial bargaining and political activity. The illegal

immigrant deviates from this norm. The significance of this deviation, and its relevance for our discussion of security becomes apparent once we note that Truman's form of liberal reasoning contains more than a trace of the logic of liberal security which Foucault describes in his lectures on governmentality. Burchell has summarized this nicely when he observes that under modern conditions 'The objective of a liberal art of government becomes that of securing the conditions for the optimal and, as far as possible, autonomous functioning of economic processes within society or, as Foucault puts it, of enframing natural processes in mechanisms of *security*' (Burchell 1991: 139). Put differently, the viability of market society depends upon the cultivation of free subjects capable of identifying and asserting their own interests. The security of state and society is thus pegged to the preservation of conditions in which the subjects of government are capable of fending for themselves. Illegal immigration appears as a problem precisely because it threatens to erode such a state of affairs. In other words, it threatens to undermine the delicate but dynamic balance between a socialized society and a capitalist economy that is the hallmark of governing according to the formulae of welfare.

Seen in the light of this social problematization of the illegal immigrant, certain features of the Bracero Programme appear in a slightly different light. For one of its features was that it sought to establish certain minimum standards with regard to the employment and residence of its subjects. For instance, the version of the programme iterated in 1942 specified

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minimum wage and day rates, as well as a subsistence wage for workers unemployed for more than 25% of their contract period. It also conceded to the migrant workers the right to elect representatives to discuss complaints with employers, and in a later version, issued standards as to the provision of means and housing by employers (Calavita 1992: 19-20, 46). Scholars have documented the extent to which employers sought to circumvent or simply ignored these social regulations, and the reluctance of official agencies to enforce them. But as inadequate as they may have been, the very existence of such regulations attests to the fact that the technology of the social provided a kind of repertoire of practices for the governance of illegal immigration at this time.

So it seems there was a discourse in the 1950s which saw illegal immigration as a set of processes endangering the security of the social. To recognize this is not to claim that such a discourse was universal or hegemonic, nor that all commentators expressed the relatively sympathetic position seemingly espoused by the President. For example, 'Operation Wetback', the mass 'repatriation' of workers to Mexico, was conceived and executed as though a military operation, and legitimated by the familiar language of undocumented migrants as 'an actual invasion of the United States' (Head of INS, quoted in Ngai 2004: 155). Clearly, illegal immigration may have been officially perceived as a social problem, but it was at the same time imbricated in the logic of national security.

Social or Homeland Security?

Our discussion of the wetback crisis points to the existence of a migration-security nexus that significantly predates the period that many commentators associate with the securitization of migration. As we have seen, one possible explanation is the fact that we are dealing not with a singular securitization process but the existence of multiple security formations. In this final section I want to use the preceding sketch of a social problematic of illegal immigration to raise some questions about the nature of contemporary securitizations of migration and risk. My

argument is that although there is still a problematization of illegal immigration from the perspective of social security, this is not the dominant articulation of migration as a security issue today.⁴ Instead, we are dealing with a different set of programmes and technologies, and a different politics of security. I want to call this, for want of a better term, the game of *homeland security*.

Fluid subjects

While homeland security is no less messy and coherent as an assemblage of discourse, technology and subjectivity than social security, it is nevertheless possible to form at least a rough impression of how this paradigm intersects with questions of migration. Here it is useful to briefly consider the political

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imagination presupposed in typical journalistic reports. Consider the following excerpt from *Newsweek* (2004: 32):

How easy is it to make oneself over into a desperate Afghan refugee who deserves asylum in the West? Thousands of Pakistanis, Iranians, Central Asians and other Muslims have done it. Last week I did it, too. First, I found one of the dozens of underground “travel agents” in Peshawar who specialize in smuggling illegal immigrants. Through him I arranged passport photos of me looking vaguely Afghan.... The photos were handed over to my agent, and a set of fraudulent documents ordered up. Now I was “Mariana Ali” from Bamian, where many Afghans look vaguely Chinese.

Melinda Liu, the journalist in question, goes on to explain that she was then given additional documents that would be useful in fabricating a claim for asylum. These included a forged letter purporting to be from Taliban intelligence authorities threatening her with investigation for teaching English to girls. All this, of course, came at a price. For instance, a visa to Ukraine before September 11 would cost you as much as \$2500 but could now reach \$4000.

Or consider the following introduction to an article entitled “Why our borders are out of control”:

The headlines usually belong to the most desperate: to the Mexican border-jumpers, the Chinese entombed for months below deck, the Haitians who disembark from ramshackle freighters along the docks in Miami.... [But] While the United States seeks new ways to thwart gate-crashers, about half of all illegal immigrants walk unchallenged through the front door. Fraudulent passports and visas, questionable claims of asylum and bureaucratic bungling, help tens of thousands reach American soil and stay indefinitely.
Newsweek (1993: 25)

The article goes on to note how Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman, the ‘Egyptian fundamentalist cleric’ whose followers were charged with the first attack on WTC, had been admitted into the country numerous times despite the revocation of his green card, and the appearance of his name on a State Department watch list. This narrative of perpetrators slipping through the net to commit their crimes would be amplified a hundredfold following the second attack on the Twin Towers. One enduring feature of the narrative of ‘September 11’ is the observation that the immediate perpetrators all entered the US legally.

These are merely two of countless journalistic reports concerning illegal immigration. But they reveal certain things. In the case of the wetback, the burden of insecurity fell mainly though not exclusively upon social and

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economic mechanisms of impoverishment. In this sense, there was a kind of family resemblance between illegal immigration and other social problems such as unemployment, literacy, infant mortality, regional underdevelopment, and poverty – all problems which were deemed manageable by the systems of welfare and social security. But in the above quotes it is possible to discern how the locus of insecurity has shifted. Although the ramifications of illegal immigration for the income and work of Americans continues to be at issue – according to *Time* (2004) the failure to control the border ‘holds down the pay of American workers and rewards the illegals and the businesses that hire them’ – the terrain of the problem has clearly changed. It is no longer a matter of processes like de-unionization and impoverishment working themselves out within a nationally-unified socioeconomic system. Instead, there is a new political imagination preoccupied with the play of mobilities, and populated by elusive persons (terrorists, asylum-seekers, smugglers) and mercurial things (contraband, drugs, weapons) that are able to move about almost undetected, exploiting the smooth, networked spaces, but also the seemingly ungoverned borderlands of a ‘global’ world. The governmental imagination moves from a focus on the deep, interior spaces of national societies and economies to the manifestly superficial, open space of the ‘transversal’ (Bigo 2000: 171). Whereas before insecurity was to be addressed by state-bureaucratic interventions aiming to restore the equilibrium between society and economy, under the paradigm of homeland security it is much more a game of governing access, targeting weak points and risk factors, preventing intrusion, tracking movement, verifying identity, and detecting the undetected. Illegal immigration enters into a new problem series, a ‘paradigm of suspicion’ which, through countless reports, inquiries and statistical experiments, generates a risk-oriented knowledge focused upon systematic affinities between certain forms of immigration, terrorism, organized crime, drugs and smuggling (Shamir 2005). The discursive relationships within this cluster of problems comes to the fore, while the socioeconomic context of migration is de-privileged and must settle for being only one amongst a host of factors. The strong identity which social security fostered between illegal immigration and the space of labour is almost entirely dissolved. In turn, illegal immigration itself becomes one more form of risky mobility, and a symptom of ‘our broken borders’.

Risky subjects

In her examination of what she calls ‘biometric borders’, Amoore does much to clarify the role which technologies of risk come to play in the governance of migration and the paradigm of homeland security. Noting how the ‘deployment of electronic personal data in order to classify and govern the movement of people across borders has become a key feature of the contemporary war on terror’, she examines the case of the US VISIT

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programme (Amoore 2006: 341). In many ways both a public policy and a security ‘solution’ marketed by management consultants and other technicians of risk, US VISIT works by utilizing and interfacing over 20 existing databases from travel, immigration, health, education, police and other authorities. Using this information, the itinerant subject is profiled and encoded in terms of degrees of risk. Logics of precaution and pre-emption come to the fore: ‘The guiding

assumption... is that encoded risk profiles can be used as a basis to predict and prevent future acts' (Amoore 2006: 340).

This account of US VISIT can be situated alongside a growing body of richly contextualized studies examining particular schemes, programmes and technologies of borders and bordering (Salter 2004; Sparke 2006; Verstraete 2001). Such work represents an important contribution to our understanding both of the logic of homeland (or, in the European case, Schengenland) security and the way in which the war on terror is reshaping the securitization of migration. The focus on specific practices reveals that if homeland security serves to govern illegal immigration as a form of risk that is isomorphic and integrated with other risks, it does so not merely through repeated discursive enunciations but at the level of durable, technical inventions (Huysmans 2006). However, the intelligibility of the modes of governance associated with technologies like US VISIT can be further enhanced when we place them in the kind of genealogical trajectory I have been outlining in this chapter. There are two points I want to make in light of the earlier discussion of social security and illegal immigration.

The first concerns what I want to call the *metagovernmental* character of the contemporary migration-security nexus. In the case of the Bracero programme, one sees how governmental intervention operates at the level of social and economic processes. For instance, a knowledge of the employment conditions of Mexican migrants has as its correlate certain attempts, however limited, to assure minimum wage rates on farms. The governmental objective is to manage levels of poverty both amongst migrant workers, and within the agricultural sector more widely. With US VISIT, as with many similar programmes of homeland security, governance operates at a somewhat higher order and a greater remove from social processes. If we can speak of metagovernance, it is because US VISIT operates upon statistical and biographical knowledge generated by other governmental domains, such as education and travel, but puts this information to work for other purposes, namely the identification of anomalous or risky patterns of behaviour. US VISIT contributes to the wider phenomenon of 'reflexive government' (Dean 1999) which treats existing governmental systems and practices, and their respective systems of identification, as a complex governmental domain in its own right.

Recognizing that identity, understood in a technical-administrative rather than a political-cultural sense, is now a domain of government with its own density, irreducibility and economy sheds new light on certain

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emerging issues in the migration field. First, it relates to the fact that seemingly new kinds of problems like 'identity theft' and 'identity fraud' have moved to the centre of migration and security agendas. Second, it also corresponds with the perception that the verification of identity – for example, through the technologies of biometrics - is a new growth industry (Muller 2004). Finally, it also helps to explain how terms like 'the undocumented' have emerged as new discursive markers for the subjects of illegal immigration, and even, in the case of the 'sans-papiers', a site of political community and contestation (Balibar 2000; McNevin 2006). Since the documentation of identity for governmental purposes is not at all recent, but in fact a feature of most modern, bureaucratic systems of rule (Caplan and Torpey 2000), the question of why identity-security enjoys such a prominent status within contemporary security politics is surely one that begs further scholarly analysis.

My second observation concerns a new kind of subject that is presupposed by the logics of risk that are so central to the game of homeland security. Certainly on this note we should not

ignore the fact that the war on terror has added new identities and ethnicities to the long history of anti-immigrantism (Gerstle 2004), a history that has played itself out around a series of racialized Others. If the undocumented Mexican labourer was, as Ngai puts it, the 'prototypical illegal alien' (Ngai 2004: 71), and while an equation between Latino/a identity and illegality persists, it is now that Arabic or Muslim identity is constituted as the dominant racial marker of insecurity in the age of terror (Ibrahim 2005).

However, while politically crucial, to focus only on the changing ethnicizations of migration-insecurity would lead us to overlook certain transformations at the level of the cultural and technological production of the subject. That is, it would lead us to neglect new forms of individuation. Here Deleuze's brief but highly suggestive reflections on 'control societies' are particularly helpful (Deleuze 1995). Deleuze doesn't speak of risk specifically, but what he calls 'control' certainly has strong affinities with risk-based governance. He observes that whereas modern, disciplinary societies featured a productive tension between masses and individuals, today we are witnessing the emergence of the 'dividual', the fragmentary subjective counterpart and effect of a society dominated by databanks, identity profiles, samples and markets.

Deleuze's discussion of the dividual is provocative but somewhat vague. As I have argued elsewhere (Walters 2006: 191), it can be sharpened if we relate it to the changing aims and objectives of governance. It could be argued that the birth of the dividual corresponds with a certain scaling back of the ambition of governance. This is perhaps the case as we follow the line from social to homeland security. We saw in the case of the wetback that governmental intervention took the amelioration of poverty and the improvement of the general social condition of the population as a key aim. By contrast, while it is incredibly ambitious in terms of its will to know the

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riskiness of its populations, and in meeting the technical challenges this poses, the paradigm of homeland security is quite limited in another respect. It is interested only in practices of population division, segmentation, sorting and threat neutralization. Like a burglar alarm or a firewall, the security it offers to the privileged 'inside' - an interior space it simultaneously constitutes - is the reduction of exposure to harm, and nothing more. This shift can be captured quite neatly by the changing significance of poverty. For the apparatus of social security, poverty is something to be managed and reduced. For homeland security, according to Roy (2004; cited in Shamir 2006: 202), 'poverty is being slyly conflated with terrorism' so that merely possessing the nationality of a poor nation has the potential to mark the bearer as an elevated risk. Improving the condition of this subject is marginal to the political agenda; the only concern is to govern their access. This is perhaps another way in which poverty itself is shifted from the register of social security and development and moved towards the overlapping space of homeland and geo-military security; another way in which even poverty becomes securitized (Duffield 2001).

Porous borders

This discussion of risk, profiling and dividualization leads me to the final point I want to make concerning homeland security, and what it is we gain by reading some of its features against my earlier historical moment. This final point concerns the extraordinary political, technological and symbolic importance that is today attached to borders. One feature of the burgeoning interest in border studies across the social sciences has seen scholars document the drawn out processes through which a US-Mexico border in its current state has been assembled, and the implications of such processes for national identity, territory and sovereignty. For

instance, Nevins observes how 1940 was a turning point for the institution of the Border Patrol. For it was in the context of the outbreak of World War II that the national administration 'played an important role in constructing immigration and border enforcement as issues of national security' (Nevins 2002: 30). At this time, the INS would be transferred from the Department of Labor to Justice and 712 new border guards added, doubling its force. Elsewhere, researchers have begun to explore the seemingly paradoxical phenomenon of 'rebordering' (Andreas 2000), whereby processes of economic globalization and liberalization, and the demilitarization of many border areas, have been accompanied by the appearance of new forms of bordering directed towards the policing of risky mobilities. The apparent bounding of the EU with an 'external frontier' is one example of this practice (Anderson and Bigo 2003; Walters 2002). But the prototype is the remaking of the US-Mexico border. While the NAFTA has been pursued to liberalize the movement of goods, there has been in parallel a dramatic escalation of border control. Describing the rise of a 'border-centred strategy

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of immigration control', Cornelius offers a sense of this transformation when he notes that public expenditure on border enforcement quintupled from \$750 million in 1993 to \$3.8 billion in Fiscal Year 2004, and the size of the Border Patrol tripled to more than 11,000 agents.

It seems that the advent of the war on terror, and its institutional embedding in systems of homeland security, has served not only to intensify this project of rebordering, but to accelerate its projection outwards across networks of surveillance as well as inwards throughout society, confirming that borders are not only territorial lines but complex networks of surveillance and control (Bonditti 2004). At the same time, the fact that President Bush has recently signed into law a plan to add an additional 700 miles of fortified fencing to the existing system of defense at the US/Mexico border (BBC 2006), coupled with the nightly TV images of border-jumpers and the vigilantes who hunt them, means that a more traditional conception of the border has certainly not vanished. On the contrary, it has in certain respects only become more prominent. Hence a more complex situation now exists in which we see a 'vacillation of borders' meaning that they are 'no longer localizable in an unequivocal fashion' (Balibar 2002: 91).

But one thing which has perhaps not always been sufficiently explored by this growing literature on border studies concerns the changing significance of the border within the political imagination. Reading contemporary news reporting about illegal immigration and comparing it with the reporting of the wetbacks it becomes quite clear that the position of the border within political debate has changed quite significantly. The 1950s certainly saw renewed attempts to expand the Border Patrol and consolidate the border as a legal and territorial limit – a move that was at times politically contested by certain border communities. However, if news reporting is any guide, within the popular imagination the border seems to have had a relatively minor status. Despite the fact that the pejorative name 'wetback' referred to the phenomenon of migrants wading across the Rio Grande, it was only occasionally that reporting focused explicitly on the border crossing activities of migrants, and then only as one amongst many aspects of 'wetbackism'. Rarely did the border feature as a metaphor or a symbol.⁵ On the contrary one finds a very mundane and de-dramatized language which speaks of the 'international boundary' (New York Times 1951b: 31) or of actual border regions, such as the 'Texas-Mexico boundary' (New York Times 1951a: 1). Public attention was far more focused on the living and working conditions of the migrants than it was on the journeys they made to reach the United States, or the fact they had illegally crossed the border. The equation of borders and security had yet to become central within popular discourse about migration.

Compare this with media debates today where the border has become a privileged signifier: it operates as a sort of meta-concept that condenses a whole set of negative meanings, including illegal immigration, the threat of terrorism, dysfunctional globalization, loss of sovereignty, narcotic smuggling

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and insecurity. For instance, for several years, the much watched *Lou Dobbs Tonight* show on CNN has almost nightly carried a segment entitled 'Broken Borders', where it polemicizes against 'illegal immigration' at the southern border. Popular reporting traffics under such titles as Broken Borders, Porous Borders, Borders out of Control, all terms that are interchangeable with 'illegal immigration' in a way that was not common in the 1950s. At the same time, the border holds out the promise of a solution to these hazards. Within today's political culture in the US, and in many other liberal democracies, the border has been elevated to the point where it now sits proudly alongside the family, community, neighbourhood, flexibility and other key terms in the political lexicon that Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001) call the 'new planetary vulgate'. Like these other terms, the border does not have to justify itself. Public debate can appeal to it as a self-evident political value.

There are of course multiple ways of imagining and naturalizing the nation-state and its power to confer life and security on some while with-holding such privileges from others. With the talk of broken borders, or whenever the question of security is posed as 'who left the door open' (Time 2004), or with the very idea of homeland security, it seems that nation and state power come to be legitimated through a particular set of associations – the warm, intimate notions of *home*. Contemporary migration controls may or may not be biopolitical, but as I have argued elsewhere at greater length, they are certainly more and more *domopolitical* (Walters 2004).

Conclusion

A great deal of the literature on the securitization of migration tends to embody a tacit assumption. It is that we already know what security is. Different fields may come to be securitized, but we nevertheless know security when we see it. We know it because it speaks a certain language in which the grammar of threat, and the idiom of risk are prominent. We recognize it because of how it identifies and almost requires the existence of certain enemies, be these anarchists, communists, illegals, or most recently Islamicist terrorists. And it is evident to us because security employs characteristic moves, whether these are the call for better forms of identity profiling and inspection, or the sanctioning of exceptional measures, of Patriot acts expedited deportations and extraordinary renditions. The fact that we hear of these terms and practices on an almost daily basis encourages a certain kind of familiarity with them. We live in close proximity to this migration-security complex, so close that it is easy to take its definitions and presuppositions about risk and security for granted.

Putting this migration-security complex in its place is a matter of using a certain kind of historical practice to establish a degree of critical distance from some of the elements which make up this complex. It is a matter not of denying its political importance so much as refusing its capacity to define

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the present in unequivocal terms, and hopefully lessening the hold which certain understandings of security exercise on our political imagination. It is matter of approaching the present from a

slightly different direction so that its more prominent features can be apprehended in a different light. If the present could be likened to a city, then it's a question of discovering streets and other routes (tunnels, demolished buildings, catacombs?), or perhaps other modes of representation, that enable one to encounter that old town square at a different angle, to see its monuments from a different perspective. Using the 'wetback crisis' of the 1950s as my historical cut, I have tried to show that particular features of today's migration-security complex are far from self-evident. The fact that there was relatively little official or public concern with the identity documents of Mexican migrants then, or that there was not much of a language of 'borders' in use to express generalized anxieties of insecurity and violated sovereignty, or that the migrants were almost axiomatically defined as 'labour' and associated with 'social' issues – all these findings suggest there is much about the migration/security nexus today that is not as obvious as it seems.

But in addition to its potential as an instrument of defamiliarization, the kind of genealogical sensibility towards which I have gestured has a second significance. This is the possibility of identifying political logics and imaginations that are harder to see if we confine our analyses to the contemporary moment. Here I want to elaborate the point I raised at the end of the previous section concerning the place of 'home' within the complex of homeland security. One of the more striking things which emerges from a survey of news reporting about illegal immigration is the prominent role which images and metaphors of home play in constructing a notion of the space and the collective subjectivity that is to be secured. I would not want to give the impression that homeland security is a coherent discourse lacking any contradictions. It is probably better to see it as a rationalization of a whole host of contradictory political objectives and policy projects than a singular logic working itself out. But while we should not over-rationalize it, we can nevertheless note that this discursive space does serve to draw a set of associations and overlaps between the image of the state and that of the domestic space of the home. Hence border control comes to be justified as a precaution against various types of criminal incursion, and risk management figures as a technique – not unlike the firewall on a home computer – of balancing openness towards a world of transactions and flows with the need to ensure the integrity of the space inside. This leads to a certain irony when we place the rise of homeland security alongside the political trajectory of the social security project. At the same time that the privatized logics of personal finance, risk management and other elements of 'prudentialism' (O'Malley 1996) are taking over much of the terrain once governed by social insurance and other, related forms of social security, the image of the endangered household is going in the other direction. It is becoming mobilized (though surely not for the first time) as a figure of

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collective and public identity. For in the figure of homeland security, the home becomes nothing less than the privileged signifier for collective identity and a revived politics of national and geopolitical in/security. The defense of society gives way to the protection of the home.

Notes

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² Rather than substitute less offensive proxies (e.g., undocumented migrant) for terms like wetback and illegal immigrant, I retain them since for historical and analytical purposes I want to foreground how

particular persons and acts are named and specified under particular historical and social conditions. Hence if I write 'illegal immigrants', this is not to affirm such terminology, but to use it as a shorthand for 'those subjects known as or named "illegal immigrants"'. For an excellent discussion of the problematic political and epistemological status of terms like 'illegal immigration', see De Genova (2002).

³ The blurring of legal and illegal status was particularly evident in the practice of 'drying-out wetbacks': state officials would have illegal workers literally step over the border so they could be instantly readmitted legally for the purposes of temporary employment. See Calavita (1992).

⁴ It is much more common today that the illegal immigrant is problematized not just as one who undermines welfare through offering a source of low-wage competition, or whose substandard living conditions directly contaminate the community, but through their presence, and that of their children, within public education and welfare services where they drain away scarce resources. Accordingly one sees a politicization of access and eligibility by grass roots movements. Just as 'welfare fraud' comes to function as an explanation for the difficulties of welfare under neoliberal conditions, the eviction of the illegal from the welfare system serves to displace questions about social citizenship.

⁵ One of the few exceptions I have found is a *Business Week* article entitled 'Wetbacks in Middle of Border War' (*Business Week* 1953)

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