



## The Racialized Surveillant Assemblage

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## The Racialized Surveillant Assemblage: Islam and the fear of Terrorism

### Abstract

Increasingly intense, multifaceted and integrated forms of surveillance are a central feature of Western national security attempts to counter the violence of 'Islamic terrorism'. However, there has been a lack of research examining contemporary regimes of surveillance as profoundly racialized. This study examines how counter-terrorism efforts are underpinned by ill-conceived accounts of radicalisation that pre-emptively construct Muslim-migrants as a threat to national security, thereby justifying practices of mass surveillance that further propagate racist discourses of uncertainty and risk. We advance an analysis of a *racialized* surveillant assemblage, that is generative of mutable, algorithmically determined profiles of the Muslim-as-terrorist. Such a regime of mass surveillance effectively puts all Muslims under suspicion. We highlight that, paradoxically, mass data-mining operations stifle, rather than aid, the identification of actual terrorist threats. This conditions a *paranoid* surveillant racism, through which Muslim populations become modulated as an *unknowable* threat of death and destruction.

Key words: Assemblages; Islam; Racialization; Racism; Radicalisation; Surveillance; Terrorism

## Introduction

Western state and media discourses conflate Islam, terrorism and immigration, resulting in anxious representations of Muslim-migrants, deemed to harbour a cunning capacity to evade capture. The Muslim-as-terrorist figure is fearfully constructed as an ambiguous and (un)knowable force of potential mass destruction. Media coverage of Islamist terrorist attacks on Western nations has merged anxieties about Muslims preparing and practicing terrorist violence inside national borders, with fears over the inability of 'the West' to protect itself from "marauding migrants" (Hopkins and MacAskill, 2017; Perraudin, 2015); thus, legitimising an (inter)national security state surveillance agenda. In Britain, proposed government amendments to existing counter-terrorism laws include reducing barriers to deport foreign terror *suspects*, and expanding surveillance measures to monitor online activities and access communication devices (Travis, 2017). In the USA, the current administration has introduced a series of draconian measures that ban citizens from mainly Muslim countries (Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen) from entering North America.

Contemporary nation-state responses to Islamic terrorist threats are acutely related to a preceding climate of racialized fear, that has conditioned the unprecedented application of mass surveillance strategies on racialized communities (Puar, 2007). Since the momentous events in New York on 11 September 2001, Muslims, whether of migrant

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3 status or citizens of Western nations, have been subjected to intense and degrading  
4 forms of counter-terrorism policing and punishment that include profiling, tracking,  
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8 arrest, detention without a right to a fair trial, and rendition. These integrated national  
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10 security strategies are indicative of an overarching state surveillance apparatus, which  
11  
12 authorises a plethora of interconnected data gathering practices. Such activities aim to  
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14 identify, know and eliminate a threat of terror. However, there has been little discussion  
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16 about how these intense regimes of mass surveillance racially construct the Muslim  
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This study, organised into three parts, explores the racialization of state surveillance regimes underpinned by the entanglement between notions of Islam and terrorism. Its purpose is to interrogate the concept of a surveillant assemblage (Haggerty and Ericson, 2000), as a *racialized* machinery of control, creating and profiling Muslims as a suspect population. Part I problematises discourses of 'new terrorism' and radicalisation via examining the *Prevent* programme in Britain. *Prevent* has institutionalised a *multi-agency* strategy that actively monitors the supposed risk to national security posed by Muslims. In Part II, *Prevent* is situated within a broader surveillant assemblage, premised on a racialized "pre-crime logic of security" (McCulloch and Pickering, 2009). A surveillant assemblage captures and algorithmically processes the everyday

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3 (inter)actions of a datafied Muslim-(as)-terrorist population. However, it is revealed that  
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5 the ever-growing bio-political operations of data-mining stifle efforts to identify actual  
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7 terrorist threats. In Part III, it is maintained that a *racialized* surveillant assemblage is  
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9 haunted by the fear of *unknowability*. This is in relation to a confluence between the  
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11 epistemological failure of identifying terrorists via mass data-mining operations, and the  
12  
13 historically enduring Orientalist contrivance of the inscrutable Muslim ‘other’. Thus, our  
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15 contention is that a surveillant assemblage, structured by a fear of not knowing, spawns  
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17 paranoid forms of racism, rendering migrant-Muslim populations as sites of  
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19 (trans)national insecurity, uncertainty and violence.  
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### 31 **I. New Terrorism and the Discourse of Radicalisation**

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33 The spectacular events in North America on 9/11 were a watershed in ordaining a global  
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35 ‘war on terror’ against Islamist groups. It was predicated upon a historical and racialized  
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37 agenda concerning the Orientalist construction of Islam as an evil that poses an  
38  
39 unprecedented danger to the West (Goldberg, 2009). However, 9/11 and subsequent  
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41 attacks in Europe also signify that the terrorist threat has *breached* Western borders.  
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43 Simply put, national security is threatened by the “enemy within”, as well as the “enemy  
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45 at the gate” (Fekete, 2009). Whereas the perceived threat of Islamist violence previously  
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47 haunted Western nations from afar, a perpetual war on terror coupled with accelerating  
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49 post-colonial migrations has led to such fears being located *inside* national borders.  
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3 Buttressed by pernicious mainstream media portrayals of migrants nefariously reaching  
4 Europe in search of refuge as hazardous to national security, the figure of the “enemy  
5 within” exacerbates prevailing dread over Muslim-migrant communities, and propels  
6 militarized intervention *locally* and abroad.  
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14 A reductive ‘new terrorism’ thesis has surfaced which seeks to grasp supposedly hyper-  
15 violent and globally-networked Islamist individuals and groups, who are motile and  
16 difficult to identify. These terrorists are considered to lack political motivation, deemed  
17 incorrigible and pathological in their abject antipathy towards the West, and are said to  
18 engage in a kind of terrorism that is less discriminating and more spectacular and lethal.  
19 “The new terrorism thesis sets up an understanding of an enemy that is not only more  
20 apocalyptic and dangerous, but also less amenable to traditional forms of control”  
21 (Burnett and Whyte, 2005, p. 5). A crucial - yet flawed - development of new terrorism  
22 thinking is the discourse of ‘radicalisation’ as the master concept accounting for the  
23 religiously-fueled violence against Western nations.  
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40 With terrorism seemingly de-politicised and correspondingly racialized on religious  
41 grounds, theological and/or psycho-social factors have been consolidated as the  
42 dominant narratives for expounding the process of so-called radicalisation. The former  
43 attributes radicalisation to Islam itself; the latter claims that Islamic theology becomes  
44 warped via “a ‘cognitive opening’, an ‘identity crisis’ or a group bonding process”  
45 (Kundnani, 2012, p. 14). These discourses inexorably generalise *all* Muslims as at risk  
46 from an ‘evil’ theology and a potential threat to national security.  
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3 Radicalisation was rarely mentioned in popular media before 9/11. However, since  
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6 2005, its adjuration stems from increasing fears over 'home-grown' terrorism, especially  
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8 across Europe (Sedgwick, 2010). Indeed, against the backdrop of the train bombings in  
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10 Madrid in 2004 and the London attacks of 2005, Western governments "looked for a  
11  
12 new discourse that could better guide their counter-terrorist efforts" (Kundnani, 2012,  
13  
14 p. 4). With the threat of terror deemed a "known unknown" (Burnett and Whyte, 2005),  
15  
16 the concept of radicalisation was reformulated by a state-funded industry of think-  
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18 tanks, advisors and university departments. Its purpose has been "to explore the  
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20 process by which a terrorist was made and to provide an analytical grounding for  
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22 *preventative* strategies that went beyond the threat of violence or detention"  
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28 (Kundnani, 2012, p. 4; emphasis added).  
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32 Popular media has reinforced simplistic notions of radicalisation, and played an  
33  
34 influential role in securing consent for racialized counter-terrorism strategies. Numerous  
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36 studies outline the hostile representation of Muslim-migrants, particularly in promoting  
37  
38 spurious links to terrorism (cf. Nacos, 2016; Said, 1997). Furthermore, increasingly  
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40 gendered accounts of radicalisation have circulated, including those concerning so-  
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42 called "Jihadi brides", which play on Orientalist tropes of the fervency, culpability and  
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44 inscrutability of believers of Islam (Jacoby, 2015).  
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50 These discourses of radicalisation have legitimised an increasingly preemptive and  
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52 militarized model of law enforcement. "What we ... see is a profound sway in the tenor  
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54 of temporality: the realignment from reactive to preemptive is a conversion from past-  
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3 tense subject formation to future-tense subject anticipation ..." (Puar, 2007, pp. 154-  
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6 155). Indicative of the blurring of the lines between police and military action, war and  
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8 peace, and domestic and foreign policy (Graham, 2011; McCulloch and Pickering, 2009),  
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10 is the institutionalisation of a mass counter-terrorism surveillance agenda. The  
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12 revelations by Edward Snowden exposed the illicit surveillance practices of Western  
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14 states, especially the NSA and the 'Five Eyes alliance', involving the USA, UK, Canada,  
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16 Australia and New Zealand (Farrell, 2013). In Britain, the multi-intelligence gathering  
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18 and analysis practices of counter-terrorism policing are coordinated with daily  
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20 procedures of other public and private bodies through *Prevent*, a controversial strand of  
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22 the British government's counter-terrorism strategy.  
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29 *Prevent* purports to "reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people  
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31 becoming terrorists and supporting terrorism" (HM Government, 2015, p. 2). However,  
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33 it stems from the racializing, de-politicising, and pathologising notion of radicalisation  
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35 discussed above. While *Prevent* officially looks to disrupt all forms of extremism across  
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37 all communities, it inevitably institutionalises a strategy of surveillance that primarily  
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39 impacts Muslim communities (Murtuja and Tufail, 2017).  
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45 *Prevent* initially operated on a voluntary basis. However, the UK Counter-Terrorism and  
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47 Security Bill (2015) makes it compulsory for workers in areas including education, youth  
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49 work and healthcare to report to the police any religious views, displays of allegiance  
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51 and affiliation, and/or behavioural patterns recognised by *Prevent* as 'indicators' of  
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53 radicalisation. The integration of law enforcement into schooling and social service  
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3 provision, indicative of a 'total policing' agenda that creates "Stasi-like networks of  
4 surveillance and bureaucracy" (Webber, 2015), is not new, since it was evident as early  
5 as the 1970s in response to 'black criminality' (Carby, 1982). Nonetheless, the 'total  
6 policing' of the threat of terror merges multi-agency and preemptive approaches to law  
7 enforcement, by institutionalising a surveillance programme that requires policing and  
8 non-policing agencies to gather information based on *risk assessment*, rather than  
9 criminality (Kundnani, 2016). This intelligence is used to *calculate* whether individuals  
10 (principally Muslims) are 'at risk' of radicalisation.  
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24 The construction and identification of 'at risk' Muslims *vis-a-vis* discourses of  
25 radicalisation and securitization condition racialized modes of mass surveillance. "Race  
26 offers the affect – the illusion – of certitude, of knowing the assigned place for self and  
27 others, of established (in a sense guaranteed) standing" (Goldberg, 2016, p. 32). Yet, it  
28 will be highlighted that mass surveillance renders race uncertain, unpredictable and,  
29 thus, amplifies racialized anxieties of not knowing. In Part II, we examine the role of the  
30 *racialized surveillant assemblage* in constructing Muslim communities as an *unknowable*  
31 source of terrorist violence.  
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## 48 **II. The Racialized Surveillant Assemblage**

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51 An influential study by Kevin Haggerty and Richard Ericson (2000) highlighted the  
52 convergence and increase in capacities of surveillance systems in relation to the  
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3 proliferation of biometric data (facial recognition, iris scans and gait analysis),  
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6 information flows (cell-phone records, internet and social media data-mining, CCTV and  
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9 GPS data), and the institutionalisation of multi-agency approaches to policing. These  
10  
11 authors identify a *surveillant assemblage* which brings "together a seemingly limitless  
12  
13 range of information to formulate categorical images or risk data profiles which render  
14  
15 otherwise opaque flows of information comprehensible" (Hier, 2002, p. 400).

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18 Assemblages are processes through which heterogeneous elements are arranged and  
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20 brought together in particular sets of relations. These connections produce forms of  
21  
22 regularity, yet are open to transformation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Thus, seemingly  
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24 discrete objects such as human bodies, racial categories, algorithms, knowledge,  
25  
26 institutions etc., are contingent and formed relationally.  
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32 Haggerty and Ericson (2000) note that much of the work on surveillance via Michel  
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34 Foucault focused on the panopticon as a mode of disciplinary power over the individual-  
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36 social body. However, they emphasize the operations of the biopolitical management of  
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38 whole populations in Foucault's analysis of aggregate forms of surveillance, via *security*  
39  
40 *apparatus (le dispositif)*. Thus, the surveillant assemblage marks a transition "toward  
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42 rhizomatic networks of control ... inscribed into the practices of everyday life" (Ajana,  
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44 2005, p. 2). For example, everyday activities including watching YouTube videos,  
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47 communicating via social media and mobile phones, patterns of consumption, and  
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50 travelling to and congregating in certain places, are being connected and parsed by  
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3 intelligence agencies in their attempts to create *risk* profiles of populations and predict  
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6 terrorist attacks (Munk, 2017).  
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9 Foucault's post-panopticon account of security apparatus influenced Gilles Deleuze's  
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11 (1992) contention of "societies of control": biopower renders the individual as a  
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13 "dividual", characterized by dynamic profiling rather than a fixed subjectivity. Whereas  
14  
15 disciplinary power molds the docility of human bodies, control societies modulate the  
16  
17 body through an assemblage of networks. The surveillant assemblage de-territorializes  
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19 the 'real' body before re-assembling it "in different settings through a series of data  
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21 flows" (Haggerty and Ericson, 2000, p. 611). These de-corporealized bodies, or "data-  
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23 doubles", are more mobile, measurable and, as Maša Galič et al. (2016) state, can be  
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27 allowed or denied  
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32 access to a multitude of domains (places, information, things) ... The doubles  
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34 flow through a host of scattered 'centres of calculation' (e.g. forensic  
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36 laboratories, statistical institutions, police stations ... and military headquarters)  
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38 in which they are re-assembled and scrutinised for developing strategies of ...  
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41 control (p. 14).  
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46 Louise Amoore (2009) advances a cogent account of how such centres of *algorithmic*  
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48 calculation are increasingly ubiquitous in operations of surveillance: "Rules of  
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50 association are produced by algorithms ... In effect, algorithms appear to make it  
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52 possible to translate probable associations between people or objects into actionable  
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3 security decisions" (p. 52). Amoore is influenced by Foucault's notion of "'a continuation  
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5 of war by other means' ... Algorithmic security ... functions through a war-like  
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7 architecture. It deploys an 'architecture of enmity', a drawing of the lines between  
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9 self/other; us/them; safe/risky; inside/outside ... " (2009, p. 15).

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14 Notably, Haggerty and Ericson (2000), as well as Amoore (2009), do not explicitly  
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16 consider processes of *racialization* in their accounts of contemporary regimes of  
17  
18 surveillance. Nonetheless, Amoore's attention to the distinctions between us/them via  
19  
20 deviations from the norm assists in elaborating our discussion of a *racialized* Muslim  
21  
22 surveillant assemblage. That is, as Simone Browne (2015) writes:  
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27 Racializing surveillance is a technology of social control where surveillance  
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29 practices, policies, and performances concern the production of norms  
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31 pertaining to race and exercise a 'power to define what is in or out of place' (p.  
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33 16).  
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38 The work of Foucault (2003, 2004, 2009) has been critical for grasping the relationship  
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40 between biopolitics, racism, and the production of norms. Biopower defined a *norm* of  
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42 development to which individuals were measured against. Those who conformed were  
43  
44 "normal", while those who did not were "abnormal". Moreover, as Foucault declares:  
45  
46 "... it is not the normal and the abnormal that is fundamental and primary in disciplinary  
47  
48 normalisation, it is the norm" (2009, p. 85). His key contention is that modern state  
49  
50 racisms are concerned with the biopolitical management of the abnormal.  
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3 While the *norm* is fundamental to all forms of biopower, it is useful to distinguish  
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5 between what Foucault (2009) highlights as “normation” and “normalising power”.  
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8 Disciplinary power operates as a mechanism of normation, such as racialized  
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10 inclusion/exclusion based on identifying the normal/abnormal subject through the  
11  
12 imposition of the norm. Somewhat in contrast, normalising power emerges in societies  
13  
14 of security (control): “we have a plotting of the normal and the abnormal, of different  
15  
16 curves of normality ... The norm is an interplay of differential normalities” (Foucault  
17  
18 2009, p. 91). Thus, rather than the disciplinary enforcement of the norm on individuals,  
19  
20 security apparatus modulate the population - enabling modes of racialized “differential  
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22 inclusion” (Sharma and Sharma, 2003), and attempting to arrest, that is, *make*  
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24 *knowable*, racialized mobilities. As Amoore (2009) contends:

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32 algorithmic war re-inscribes the imaginative geography of the deviant, atypical,  
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34 abnormal ‘other’ *inside* the spaces of daily life. ... [T]he outside can be inside—in  
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36 the body of the migrant worker (deferentially normal in the space of the  
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38 economy and abnormal in the spaces of immigration) ... [or] the refugee  
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40 (afforded the hospitality of the state but biometrically identified and risk-rated)  
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42 (p. 56).

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47 A racialized surveillant assemblage acknowledges that boundaries and borders are  
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49 increasingly networked, and have become more unstable and fluid. In fluid space,  
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51 objects “aren't well defined. Thus, even the boundary between the normal and  
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3 pathological ... isn't given ... A fluid world is a world of *mixtures*" (Mol and Law, 1994, pp.  
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6 659-60).

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9 In societies of control, the mobile Muslim-migrant-'terrorist' is not necessarily easily  
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11 rendered a knowable object of securitization. Actual or fomenting Muslim terrorists can  
12  
13 pass as docile citizens, inconspicuously mixing into a nation-state that is transitory,  
14  
15 unable to secure its borders (Ahmed, 2004). In securitizing societies, those within  
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17 Western national borders but racialized as out of place, "have to be unmasked as  
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19 strangers, as threats" (Goldberg, 2016, p. 30). Counter-terrorism policies such as *Prevent*  
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21 attempt to address the seemingly unknown, and make palpable such types of hidden or  
22  
23 nascent terrorists. However, driven by discourses of radicalisation that construct  
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25 Muslims as a threat *yet to materialise*, they do so through an opprobrious surveillant  
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27 assemblage in which racially-coded processes contribute to categorising the *whole*  
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29 Muslim population as a "suspect community" (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009).  
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38 Critical to understanding the consolidation of Muslims as a "suspect community", are  
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40 the processes of *racialization* underpinning the *surveillant assemblage* that produces  
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42 Muslim populations as a potential threat. If we conceive race only as embodied  
43  
44 phenomena, then the de-corporealized bodies of the surveillant assemblage suggests  
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46 that race no longer functions as the means for categorising the abnormal or  
47  
48 pathological. However, such an understanding is predicated on an epistemological  
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50 reckoning of race, narrowly framed by the question of *what is race?* From an alternative  
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52 materialist perspective, a different interrogation is performed by asking *what does race*  
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*do?* (Saldanha, 2006), and *how is it enacted?* (M'charek et al., 2014). This Deleuzo-Guattarian-inspired approach conceives race as an emergent *event*.

Race is ... a precarious, open-ended achievement constituted through diverse relations and connections between material and conceptual elements that might include skin colour, segregation, clothing, religion, colonialism, DNA ... language, migration, and fear (Swanton, 2010, p. 2238).

In the case of suspect individuals, their patterns of movement, sites of congregation, mobile phone apps, use of encryption services, social media and internet search activity, types of luggage, (length of) facial hair, clothing, associations, etc., become *charged by race*. It is when these diverse elements - marked as deviant - are algorithmically connected to data-bodies, that categories of 'Muslim-(as)-terrorist' materialise in the surveillant assemblage.

In the fluid space of control societies, while ethno-racial profiling by state agencies persists, there is nothing necessarily *essential* about what constitutes a Muslim terrorist (cf. M'charek et al., 2014). Race - and contingently, 'Muslim' and 'terrorist' - become *informational*, as Jasbir Puar (2007) elaborates:

In statistical terms, race and sex are experienced as a series of transactional informational flows captured ... and render bodies transparent or opaque, secure or insecure, risky or at risk, risk-enabled or risk-disabled, the living or the

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3 living dead. Terrorist bodies as a 'statistical population' ... perversely transcends  
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5 national boundaries ... uncontainable, spontaneous, and untraceable ... (p. 160).  
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9 To further grasp the operations of a racialized surveillant assemblage, we can draw on  
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11 John Cheney-Lippold's account of the algorithmically generated "measurable type",  
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13 which produces dynamic modes of informational or datafied categorisation in  
14  
15 biopolitical regimes of surveillance.  
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19 A measurable type is a data template, a nexus of different datafied elements  
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21 that construct a new, transcoded interpretation of the world. These templates  
22  
23 are most often used to assign users an identity, an algorithmic identification that  
24  
25 compares streams of new data to existing datafied models. Categorical  
26  
27 membership is assigned based on algorithmic fit: if one's data is spoken for 'as if'  
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29 it was produced by a 'terrorist,' for example, one is seen to be a terrorist  
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35 (Cheney-Lippold, 2017, p. 47).  
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38 The measurable types of 'Muslim', 'migrant' and 'terrorist' are probabilistic, motile  
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40 categories that change in relation to the algorithmic fit they are based upon. Disciplinary  
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42 regimes of surveillance involve " ... 'sticking' signs to bodies: the bodies who 'could be  
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44 terrorists' are the ones who might 'look Muslim'" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 132). In control  
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46 societies, those that 'look Muslim' operate beyond a scopic regime that fixes terror  
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48 suspects as discernible objects of knowledge. "Measurable types" actualizing profiles of  
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50 terror suspects are not concerned with directly identifying or uncovering individuals. As  
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3 such, "it is not the personal identity of the embodied individual but rather the actuarial  
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5 or categorical profile of the collective which is of foremost concern to the surveillant  
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7 assemblage" (Heir, 2002, p. 402). The categorical profile of terror suspects is primarily  
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9 informational, generated by biopolitical algorithmic processes. The knowability of a  
10  
11 Muslim terrorist is displaced from individual identification, towards probabilistic  
12  
13 affinities. Thus, the Muslim-*could be terrorist* becomes a mutable association *racialized*  
14  
15 *by its degree of (ab)normality*, and determined by opaque, fuzzy logic algorithmic  
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17 calculations of securitization.  
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24 The Muslim-as-terrorist is a "measurable type" of the surveillant assemblage, which is  
25  
26 compelled to overcome the challenge of (the lack of) knowledge about the new  
27  
28 terrorism. It is crucial that "... making the terrorist knowable makes terrorism actionable  
29  
30 and potentially controllable" (Burnett and Whyte, 2005, p. 6). However, as these  
31  
32 authors add, "there remain limits upon its 'knowability.' Although we can estimate the  
33  
34 threat of the new terrorism, we can never really know its full potential" (p. 6). This  
35  
36 problem of *un/knowability* will be explored in Part III, as it is critical to revealing how a  
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38 surveillant assemblage is structured by a racial paranoia.  
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### 48 **III. (In)security and Racial Paranoia**

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51 A key consequence of a racialized surveillant assemblage is the profiling of Muslim  
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53 populations in terms of the *risk* they pose to Western nations. The statistical modelling  
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3 of risk and threat are imbricated with practices of normalisation in the biopolitical  
4  
5 management of populations. What Foucault (2004) identified as the “apparatuses of  
6  
7 security” serve to *predict and prevent* any probable risks that may occur.  
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10  
11 The “enemy outside” fuels fear over imagined territorial intrusion, while the “enemy  
12  
13 within” amplifies paranoia “and the drive for self-protection at all costs” (Goldberg,  
14  
15 2016, p. 31). Expectancy, proximity and fear prompt a “pre-crime logic of security”  
16  
17 (McCulloch and Pickering, 2009), that materialises *and* is reinvigorated through  
18  
19 coordinated surveillance strategies such as *Prevent* (discussed above). Pre-crime is  
20  
21 framed by calculation and uncertainty, in the anticipation of risk and pre-emption of  
22  
23 threat. “Counter-terrorism pre-crime measures envisage specific serious harms and  
24  
25 criminalize those whom it is believed will commit these imaginary future harms”  
26  
27 (McCulloch and Pickering, 2009, p. 629).  
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35 The surveillant assemblage exalts the pre-crime logic of security. Its “epistemological  
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37 will-to-knowledge” (Puar, 2007) is determined by making the *unknown known*, via  
38  
39 “high-tech surveillance systems which mine data accumulated about the past to identify  
40  
41 future threats” (Graham, 2011, p. xii). Yet, the new terrorism perverts and makes  
42  
43 impossible the desire to be “free from fear when there is no longer anything unknown”  
44  
45 (Adorno and Horkheimer, cited by Jones and Clarke, 2006, p. 308). The pursuit of  
46  
47 security, or, more precisely, the condition of *insecurity* in an age of new terrorism is  
48  
49 haunted by the idea of an endless series of threats, taking place at anytime and  
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51 anywhere. These might be the horror of weapons of mass destruction, a 'dirty bomb', a  
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weaponized hi-jacked aircraft, or smaller-scale, spontaneous attacks using everyday objects such as vehicles or knives.

The construction of the Muslim-migrant as an unknowable threat to national security shifts migration from an act of seeking refuge, to one of war (Graham, 2011). A racial paranoia fuels strategies that prioritise managing and halting migration to Europe and the USA, over moral obligations to offer safety and asylum. Furthermore, official reports maintaining that there is no evidence connecting the movement of refugees with terrorism (Dearden, 2016), have had negligible impact on the increasing fortification of Western borders.

What defines the terrorist threat is that it is *yet-to-come*: "A threat is unknowable ... It is a form of futurity yet has the capacity to fill the present without presenting itself. Its future looming casts a present shadow, and that shadow is fear" (Massumi, 2005, p. 35). Ahmed (2004) and Puar (2007) have astutely observed that fear does not simply reside in the object of the suspect body. Rather an *affective economy of fear* eludes containment; it circulates across pools of bodies and creates mutable suspect populations. Thus, the anticipatory logic of the new terrorism is threatened by the fear of the impossibility of fully knowing: "What is being preempted is not the danger of the known subject but the danger of not-knowing" (Puar, 2007, p. 185).

The unknowability of the new terrorism has led to the expansion of security protocols and control measures, and, in particular, the normalisation of mass surveillance, as a

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3 means to counter the looming threat. However, as Jeffrey Monaghan (2014) attests,  
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5 there is "an inherent paradox of security governance—or (in)security governance—  
6  
7 whereby an increase in regimes of security have co-inspired an increase in the  
8  
9 perception and construction of security threats" (p. 486). In other words, the cycle of  
10  
11 expanding security measures incites feelings of insecurity across society - escalating the  
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13 fear of the unknown terrorist and the never-ending threat they pose.  
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19 The *fear of not knowing* is at the heart of what we argue to be a profoundly delusory  
20  
21 surveillant assemblage. The failure to apprehend suspects who have gone on to commit  
22  
23 'terrorist' attacks is symptomatic of an inherent irrationality and *paranoia* in the  
24  
25 counter-terrorism strategies of *mass* state surveillance. There have been multiple cases,  
26  
27 including the Paris attacks in 2015 and the bombing in Manchester in 2017, in which the  
28  
29 perpetrators were 'known' beforehand to security agencies (Mason, 2017). Mass data-  
30  
31 mining operations have caused a 'data deluge', which inadvertently makes it more  
32  
33 fraught to derive meaningful security information. The vastly expanded surveillant  
34  
35 capacities of Western states - whether through the clandestine operations of the UKs  
36  
37 GCHQ and USAs NSA, or legitimized by the USA Patriot Act (2001) - have floundered in  
38  
39 providing actionable data for averting terrorist atrocities (Webber, 2016).  
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48 What *appears* beguiling is that while mass surveillance of suspected terrorists is  
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50 demonstrably flawed and ineffective, Western democracies continue to pursue it. It is  
51  
52 widely agreed amongst security experts that surveillance at a mass-scale cannot avoid  
53  
54 what is known as the "base-rate fallacy" (Munk, 2017; Schneier, 2005). The surveillant  
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3 assemblage, with its sophisticated algorithms, identifies and conjoins disparate  
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6 elements of data flows into suspect terrorist categorical profiles rendered as deviant.  
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9 Yet, “it’s a very difficult job to identify suspects, just from slightly abnormal patterns in  
10  
11 the normal things that everybody does” (Goldacre, 2009).  
12

13  
14 Consider the work of Robert Brumnik et al. (2011), who identify the probability of  
15  
16 apprehending real terrorists in a population. This type of Bayesian calculation involves a  
17  
18 set of assumptions: a probability of 0 identifies an individual as not a terrorist; and  
19  
20 conversely, a probability of 1 means they certainly are. Furthermore, the following is  
21  
22 estimated: the proportion of terrorists in the population (base-rate); the probability of  
23  
24 mass surveillance identifying real terrorists; and, the probability of identifying innocent  
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26 people as terrorists (false positives).  
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33 The population of the USA can be used as an illustration, which is estimated at 300  
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35 million. Firstly, Brumnik et al. assume there could be 1000 real terrorists in this  
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37 population, that is, 1 in 300,000 (which is, in fact, a high estimation). Secondly, they  
38  
39 assume that mass surveillance detects 40% of these real terrorists (a high detection  
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41 rate). And thirdly, there is a mis-identification rate (false positives) of 0.01%. This results  
42  
43 in identifying 400 real terrorists and 30,000 falsely accused people. Based on these  
44  
45 figures, the authors calculate the probability of identifying a real terrorist in the USA as  
46  
47 *close to zero*. Thus, it is extremely difficult to correctly identify actual terrorists based on  
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49 techniques of mass surveillance.  
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3 The problem is that the base-rate of real terrorists in any population is relatively very  
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5 low, which results in their identification via operations of mass surveillance to be near  
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7 impossible (Munk, 2017). Surveillance at a mass-scale may be only effective if the base-  
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9 rate is relatively high. For example, identifying real terrorists (by achieving a probability  
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11 of near 1), necessitates fatuous assumptions, such as, there being *one million* actual  
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13 terrorists in the USA, along with an exceptional 90% accurate detection rate. A security  
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15 scenario that imagines 1 in 300 real terrorists in a population can be nothing less than  
16  
17 *paranoid*. It also prompts regular human rights abuses, wrongly accusing and targeting  
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19 many innocent individuals.  
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26 Since state security agencies are cognisant of the inefficacy of mass surveillance, it begs  
27  
28 the question, on what grounds is the pursuit of surveillance at a mass-scale rationalised?  
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32 Our contention has been that a circuitous, unfathomable *fear* of terrorism fuels the  
33  
34 expansion of state surveillance. Although, this account needs elaboration with respect  
35  
36 to considering the *racial (il)logics* of the surveillant assemblage.  
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39  
40 The insecurity of Western nations is not merely bound by a generalised looming fear of  
41  
42 the new terrorism. Rather, at work is a more complex and deep-rooted paranoia  
43  
44 regarding the unknowability of the 'other' and the threat it supposedly poses - animated  
45  
46 by the fear among Western nations of "losing control" in a globalising, miscegenating  
47  
48 world whose borders are rupturing (Sharma and Sharma, 2003). The project of  
49  
50 Orientalism has been ensnared by the struggle to bifurcate Europe and its abject,  
51  
52 inscrutable 'other' (Said, 1978). While the racialized subject has been constructed so  
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3 that it can be 'known', demystified and contained, the constitution of Muslim  
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6 subjectivity rests on modern racial assumptions that define it as embodying an unknown  
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9 but, nonetheless, deadly threat.

10  
11 David T. Goldberg (2009) writes that Islam, in the European imagination, is constructed  
12  
13 as rejecting the values of life (respect for women and gay people; freedom; scientific  
14  
15 enquiry). Accordingly, "*the idea* of the Muslim ... has come to represent the threat of  
16  
17 death" (Goldberg, 2009, p. 165). However, the construction of Muslim subjectivity is  
18  
19 paradoxical in that racist logic 'reveals' the Muslim subject as a lethal threat which  
20  
21 requires exposing. In doing so, it renders the Muslim 'other' - Islam itself - as an  
22  
23 unknowable force and, thus, a *potential* source of violence, death and destruction on  
24  
25 the one hand, and a source of uncertainty and paranoia, on the other.

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33 There is an inherent difficulty of the state in demystifying the Muslim 'other' in relation  
34  
35 to the problem of terrorism (Burnett and Whyte, 2005). Orientalist fears over unknown  
36  
37 'difference' reinforce a racial paranoia. This paranoia, in turn, institutionalises a mass  
38  
39 state surveillance agenda that is ineffectual, *and*, due to its dysfunctionality, proliferates  
40  
41 and enrages the paranoid racism from which it manifests (Goldberg, 2002).

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46 The irrationality of mass surveillance seemingly self-sabotages the state's ability to  
47  
48 identify real terrorists. However, possessed by a racial paranoia which represents the  
49  
50 whole Muslim population as a "suspect community", a corollary, if not a sequestered  
51  
52 'agenda', is arguably one of mass *political control* of Muslim-migrants in general (cf.  
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3 Brumnik et al., 2011). The identification of the Muslim-*could be terrorist* as a  
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5  
6 “measurable type” becomes the *de facto* categorisation of all Muslim-migrants *vis-a-vis*  
7  
8 a racialized surveillant assemblage.  
9

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11 A prevailing critique of *Prevent* highlights the conflation of "political dissidents and  
12  
13 numbers of ordinary Muslims with individuals whom most would regard as terrorists,  
14  
15 thus obfuscating rather than clarifying any possible genuine threat" (Fekete, 2009, p.  
16  
17 50). The operations of a racialized surveillant assemblage suggest that the (near  
18  
19 impossible) identification of genuine terrorist threats is not what explicitly fuels the  
20  
21 mass surveillance strategies of Muslims. Rather, the racialized surveillant assemblage  
22  
23 exemplifies a deeper, historicized and paranoid fear of Islam as "... the unknown, the  
24  
25 unpredictable, the uncontrollable" (Goldberg, 2002, p. 23). It promises an all-  
26  
27 encompassing, absolute biopolitical management and control of a motile Muslim-  
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29 migrant population that can only exist as a force of death in the West.  
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## 41 **Conclusion**

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44 Both settled and migrant-Muslim populations have been subject to sweeping forms of  
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46 governmental scrutiny by Western states since the pivotal events of 9/11. A new  
47  
48 terrorism thesis, underpinned by ill-conceived discourses of radicalisation and a “pre-  
49  
50 crime logic of security”, has effectively placed Muslims under relentless suspicion and  
51  
52 stricture. It has legitimised execrable pre-emptive counter-terrorist strategies, which  
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3 essentialise all Muslims as potential suspects. While the rise of surveillance regimes  
4  
5 targeting Muslim groups have been noted by scholars, this article has uniquely  
6  
7 interrogated the emergence of a *racialized* surveillant assemblage.  
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11 What is distinctive about a surveillant assemblage identifying Muslims as potential  
12  
13 terrorists is its basis on algorithmic calculations of deviance from a fomenting racialized  
14  
15 norm. Rather than only relying on the fixed phenotypical features of racial embodiment,  
16  
17 this surveillant assemblage produces motile, datafied bodies by drawing on an array of  
18  
19 elements (biometrics, behaviours, mobility, religiosity, data trails etc.), which become  
20  
21 charged by race. Modalities of racialized deviance are attached to these datafied bodies,  
22  
23 producing *mutable* categories of Islamic terror suspects. State surveillant processes  
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25 designating individuals and groups as 'Muslim terrorists' have become increasingly  
26  
27 opaque, unaccountable and divergent.  
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35 The racialized surveillant assemblage not only buttresses a pre-crime logic of security, it  
36  
37 also feeds *in*-security - the fear of an unknowable-yet-to-come terrorist threat. Critiques  
38  
39 of practices of mass surveillance have demonstrated the near impossibility of  
40  
41 successfully identifying real terrorists. The irrationality of mass state surveillance is  
42  
43 symptomatic of a racial paranoia. Rather than only attempting (and inevitably failing) to  
44  
45 identify real terrorists, a racialized surveillant assemblage resolves to *control* Muslim  
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3 The *technological sublime* (Mosco 2005) of the surveillant assemblage, and fantasy of  
4 the biopolitical management of *whole* Muslim populations is an ominous development.  
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6 Since the revelations by Snowden, the unaccountable expansion of state surveillance  
7 regimes pervading everyday life have been laid bare by security researchers and media  
8 commentators. Nonetheless, the specific targeting of Muslims by a racialized surveillant  
9 assemblage warrants further investigation and action. The extra-judicial violation of  
10 Guantanamo Bay's "state of exception" (Agamben, 2008) appears no longer contained  
11 to the inmates of this enclosure. The distinction between 'innocent' Muslims and  
12 'genuine terrorists' collapses in a racialized surveillant assemblage that places all  
13 Muslims under suspicion. By profiling Muslims via programmes such as the UKs *Prevent*  
14 agenda, the pre-emption of terrorism too readily slides into iniquitous practices of  
15 containment.

16  
17 Brian Massumi wrote "Insecurity...is the new normal" (2005, p. 31). To this end, the  
18 normalisation of insecurity *vis-a-vis* the war on terror has actualized into a paranoid fear  
19 of Muslims whose existence in the West depends on their containment. This fear not  
20 only continues to fuel societal forms of anti-Muslim racism, but threatens human rights,  
21 liberty and freedom for all groups. A racialized surveillant assemblage is not exceptional;  
22 rather it reveals the ubiquity of technologies of control in contemporary Western  
23 societies.

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