Proposal: The fear and biopolitical control of the ‘terrorist other’

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Abstract:
“I think Islam hates us,” Donald Trump said as a presidential candidate in a CNN interview in March 2016, conflating the religion with ‘radical Islamic terrorism.’ Trump’s statement exemplifies the prevailing fabricated enemy and resulting Islamophobia in the context of the ‘global war on terror.’ Since 9/11, powerful actors are using abstractions, ideologies, and narratives—that are usually defined along racial lines—to conjure up a fear so permeable that it serves to legitimize massive levels of violence in the name of self-righteousness. How do the racist abstractions, ideologies, and narratives that are associated with Islam and Muslims produce fear and insecurity in the body politic? What role do surveillance tools and predictive technologies have in regulating and controlling an already insecure population?

The aim of my investigation is to demonstrate how the construct of the terrorist enemy is a form of biopower in the way that the depictions and representations of Otherness, as defined by Edward Said, take on a regulative function that maintain social and racial hierarchies. First, I argue that the terrorist serves as an abstraction that exhibits the dangerousness of the Other. Second, I show that the terrorist is securitized as an enemy that should be feared. Finally, I explain how the unpredictability of the terrorist enemy has introduced new surveillance technologies that are used for its eradication. Consequently, those individuals and groups who are identified as a threat to security and the existence of life itself are justifiably obliterated as human beings.