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# Surveillance in Public Rituals

## Security Meta-ritual and the 2005 U.S. Presidential Inauguration

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This article uses the second inauguration of President George W. Bush in January 2005 as a case study to show that surveillance procedures in state-sponsored public rituals themselves have a ritual form. This security meta-ritual is a practice of separation of insiders from outsiders through which the state security apparatus transforms a potentially dangerous everyday public life into a new social reality. In this newly created space of public interaction under maximum control, a safe space is created within which public ritual can take place without interruption.

**Keywords:** *ritual; surveillance; security; secret; public; framing*

High black gates and an army of security highlighted the border between real Washington and inaugural Washington. . . . All signs of normal life were absent: the ice cream store, the bank, the camera store all closed. Even the newspapers in the boxes were a few days old. If people had come to the inauguration to display their sentiments to Washington, Washington wasn't there.

—"Spectators," 2005

The observations above by a journalist reporting on the 2005 inaugural events from Washington, D.C., express how surveillance procedures performed by the state security apparatus for this occasion changed the social environment in the city. The "real Washington" of normal, daily, routine social life was transformed into "inaugural Washington," a new type of social space within which the mobility that is normally a part of daily life is brought to a standstill. The inaugural Washington is a sterile area where normal life is suspended and a surveillance-sanctioned order imposed in its place. In this article, I demonstrate that the process of transformation of this public space from one of routine daily life into a sterile area has a ritual form in the way it separates insiders from outsiders and brings about a new kind of sociopolitical reality. What we see are two closely related but analytically distinct

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social phenomena: the inaugural events and what I call a “security meta-ritual.” The latter encircles these events and ensures that they will take place uninterrupted. I am suggesting that we are observing the emergence of a new type of ritual that makes public the efforts of the modern state to provide personal, communal, and state security under conditions of uncertainty. These efforts are based on surveillance practices whose goal is to provide security on the basis of prospects for maximum control over all mobility.

*Surveillance* refers to the ability to identify, classify, monitor, track, channel, and block the movement of individuals, objects, and communication across social, physical, and virtual spaces. This type of ordering of mobility goes beyond the Foucauldian form of governmentality based on disciplinary practices supported by scientific and popular discursive knowledge about forms of abnormality (Foucault, 1975/1995). As Deleuze (1992) has suggested, surveillance practices expand Foucauldian governmentality to include control of mobility of individuals inside state boundaries and beyond. This ordering is made possible through continuous innovations in different kinds of technologically and scientifically based procedures (Bogard, 1996; Lyon, 2001). These procedures allow for the classification of individuals, as well as information and objects attached to them, into regulatory taxonomies that make surveillance workable (Handelman, 1998, pp. x-lii). Although the impetus for the expansion of surveillance to all domains of our private and public social life was provided through exceptional measures of emergency circumstances (Agamben, 2005), observers argue that this practice has now become normalized, making the state of exception a generalized form of governmentality (Bigo, 2006).

Through the practice of surveillance, a state security apparatus, suprastate security alliances, and private surveillance enterprises endowed with state power promise to deliver security under conditions of uncertainty. Security in this context is an all-encompassing concept in that it includes not only matters traditionally within the domain of national defense policy but also individual and communal perceptions of safety (Waeber, 1995). Uncertainty is seen as a threat that comes in the form of violence and disorder. This threat is collectively articulated as an expectation that preemptive actions must be taken to counteract this uncertainty (Beck, 1992). The practice of surveillance constitutes a process of ordering of social life in ways the state security apparatus deems it necessary to provide security in the face of what is seen as an uncontrollable future.

In its promise to deliver public safety, the apparatus takes secrecy as its default position. The apparatus maintains that ways in which surveillance is put into practice is not to be subjected to public debate because surveillance strategies are said to effectively provide security only when the workings of surveillance are kept outside the sphere of public deliberation. The apparatus sees secret monitoring and classifications of individuals, swift decision making, and preemptive ability as a strategic advantage in facing imminent but unspecified threats of destruction. Public evaluation of security claims by knowledgeable members of the public sphere is seen as a

weakness because the public is said to be undifferentiated, encompassing both those who are to be protected and others who may potentially be a threat. The state security apparatus functions within what Masco (2002) calls the culture of secrecy, an official position of the apparatus that protects its workings from public discourse. Given the seal of secrecy to these procedures, how does surveillance as a process of ordering of social life become publicly visible?

As Lyon (2006) suggests, we are becoming aware of how surveillance procedures order our public and private life through certain technologies and procedures that have become an integral part of our public spaces, among them closed-circuit television cameras monitoring public activity, metal detectors and handbag inspectors prying through our personal belongings, and imposing concrete blocks channeling public flow. These are the more visible elements of what has been evolving, particularly in the Western urban areas, into intentionally designed surveillance architecture and surveillance-friendly landscaping (see Graham, 2004). Recent public disclosure in the United States of the secret and unlawful interception of private communication over fax, Internet, telephone, and cellular phone reveals where the limits of the private lie in the eyes of the state security apparatus.<sup>1</sup>

In Western-style democracies of the 21st century, however, such monopoly over surveillance in the name of public and state security cannot be exercised as a privilege of the sovereign or of those in positions of power. It must be understood as an obligation of the state to its citizens and demonstrated to be an exerted effort to control the uncertain and preempt the unpredictable. Through this exercise of surveillance—which must be seen to have been performed so that it can be understood to have been done effectively—are emerging certain public spaces where these processes are highly concentrated and most visible. They are meant to order the movement of large numbers of people and objects within a physically bounded space. Such spaces tend to be major nodes at which global flows of people and objects are made to intersect for the purpose of being subjected to individual inspection. These spaces are maximally equipped with specialized technologies and highly trained operatives who perform procedures of separation of insiders who are allowed to pass from outsiders whose intentions have been identified as a threat to security. This visibility of the spatial concentration of ordering power in public spaces, which are often also interstate border crossings, currently comes to the forefront particularly at airports (Adey, 2004; Salter, 2005). There are indications that spaces of concentrated mobility, such as train and bus stations, may soon be included as well.<sup>2</sup>

How surveillance procedures order social life is also made public during occasions of collective social activity we call public rituals. These large-scale collective cultural activities in public places are particularly interesting for our understanding of how surveillance is made public because they depend on *in situ* participation and cannot be reduced to media spectacles (Dayan & Katz, 1992). Some events are organized for the purpose of attracting large numbers of visitors from around the world, which brings the world's attention to the host community (Roche, 2000). Other such

events, including presidential inaugurations, are an integral part of the political process in that their performance before a general audience gives legitimacy to the democratic process. Acting on uncertainty generated during these types of rituals has become a massive undertaking of spatial and human control through surveillance. The purpose of these surveillance procedures is to control this uncertainty to a maximum degree so that it can be demonstrated that the state security apparatus can create a secure public space within which a public ritual can take place without disruption.

Particularly in the case of state-sponsored public rituals, I argue that this process of transforming a potentially dangerous everyday public life into a new social reality of maximally controlled space of public interaction exhibits a ritual form. This activity of creating a secure social space so that a given public ritual can unfold within its secure domain is a practice I will call security meta-ritual. Here, the prefix *meta* refers to a higher level of ordering acted out by the state security apparatus and its satellites to ensure to the public that its collective activity can safely unfold within its domain. The security meta-ritual is therefore a ritual practiced to provide an enclosure so as to be able to encompass, shape, and direct the process of another ritual within its frame. Their relationship is hierarchical in that the former is in a meta relationship to the latter. The two are nevertheless closely intertwined and dependent on each other in the sense that there could be no security meta-ritual without a public event and, in the same way, a public event will not be allowed to happen without a security meta-ritual (Handelman, 2004, pp. 104-107). Below, I analyze how this process of classification of safe and unsafe brought into existence a new social reality so that another public ritual, the second inauguration of President George W. Bush in January 2005, was able to unfold within its enclosure.

The data for this article combine several sources. Prior to the inaugural events, I took notes of my telephone conversations with a variety of officials involved in their preparation. From January 19 through January 21, 2005, I conducted on-site ethnographic fieldwork. The inauguration and the parade tickets were made available to me through the office of Arlen Specter, the senator for the state of Pennsylvania. I also made use of mass-mediated reports and various documents related to these events.

## **Surveillance in Public Rituals: A Security Meta-ritual of the Modern State**

Faced with uncertainty and threat, writes Mark Salter (2005), "government agents are struggling to introduce new rites of passage that will somehow contain the contagious violence inherent in the terror threat" (p. 39). Salter discusses the process of ritual ordering at airports, public spaces where the ritual transformation of individuals from unsafe to safe is highly visible. He demonstrates that this is a process of separation of insiders from outsiders through a temporal sequence characteristic of the *rites de passage*, analyzed by Arnold Van Gennep (1909/1960), with their

preliminal, liminal, and postliminal phases. The preliminary separation from everyday life at home begins with the individual decision to undertake a journey to another country and one's submission to the ordering logic of acquiring passports and visas, filling out entry cards, and standing in appropriate lines in preparation for entry interrogation. The liminal period is a process of interrogation on the part of the apparatus and what Salter calls the confessional disclosure of true intentions on the part of the traveler. This exchange follows a very specific script and demeanor, where a clear question is expected to be followed by a clear answer. Humor, small talk, and joking are interpreted as threatening to the authority of the interrogator and a successful outcome of this exchange. This process will bring into existence new types of individuals who will be categorized as either safe or risky. The postliminal period entails the incorporation of the new individual into the state by linking information about him or her with different data sets, a process that yields profiles of welcomed individuals and undesirable individuals.

Salter's (2005) analysis of airport surveillance brings forth several important aspects of practicing surveillance in public ways. First is his focus on the ritual process rather than the ritual symbolism. Ritual symbolism was important to Durkheim (1912/2001), who saw in ritual an expressive medium through which collective emotions, group identity, and group solidarity are generated and reaffirmed. Writing at approximately the same time, Arnold Van Gennep (1909/1960) shifted the focus of ritual theory on the ritual process through the studies of the rites of passage, such as childbearing, marriage, and funeral. Van Gennep demonstrated that these rites were not simply symbolic practices. They were first and foremost carefully orchestrated and controlled processes of a series of stages through which group members were able to emerge anew into a transformed social reality. The primary concern of these types of rituals was not to symbolically communicate collective affinity but to bring about a transformation in social relations. In this type of ritual, order making is given primacy over symbolic expression. Van Gennep's schema of the ritual process makes it possible to grasp that for the types of rituals that provide orientation and order to dealing with uncertainty, it is necessary that they be carefully controlled to minimize the possibility of failure. This is also the nature of surveillance rituals. Rituals involving surveillance are not concerned with Durkheimian expressiveness and affectivity as much as they are focused on bringing into existence a new social reality.

The second important point in Salter's (2005) analysis of surveillance rituals at airports is his observation that everyone who chooses to enter this process is a willing participant in this ritual of order. This type of ritual therefore generates membership not through collective effervescence, as do the types of rituals studied by Durkheim (1912/2001), but through the act of participation in its process. In Durkheimian terms, the purpose of ritual is to generate solidarity and collective identity among the participants. This is made possible through the capacity of ritual to generate symbolic meaning and effect among those who take part. In contrast, rituals whose primary focus is to bring into existence new social reality generate membership

first and foremost through the logic of separation of insiders from outsiders. In the case of the security meta-ritual of the modern state, this means bringing into existence a secure social space through separation of safe from unsafe. Everyone who enters this process of separation is a full participant in this ritual of order, regardless of whether one identifies with or otherwise approves of these processes.

Turning to ritual theory for insights into understanding surveillance processes may seem counterintuitive if one views ritual as a symbolic, formalized activity and surveillance as a quintessentially utilitarian practice. Yet this turn to ritual should not be surprising. Surveillance has become the primary means through which states control uncertainty, act on perceived threats, and facilitate the resulting change within their borders. If, as ritual scholars have suggested, all important transitions and changes in social life are ritualized to some degree, then ritual theory should be a fertile ground for insights into the transformative processes of surveillance. Van Gennep's (1909/1960) schema of rites of passage is a step in the right direction in that it captures structure of process, but it is not sufficient for understanding how ritual relates to uncertainty.

It was Victor Turner (1969) who first developed this relationship more fully by expanding on the notion of liminality. In the context of the events of September 11, 2001, and other similar events elsewhere, Turner's liminality could be understood in two ways. These assaults on public infrastructure have exposed the public as vulnerable and came to be seen as striking examples of what security is not. As I discuss in more detail below, in macrosociological terms, this is a period of reconfiguration of governmentality, first, in the sense of how a citizen relates to the state, and second, in terms of protection of the population within state borders. In these terms, security meta-ritual publicly acts on this uncertainty by demonstrating that it can bring into existence a sterile area through maximum control of mobility.

In macrosociological terms, the setting of ritual into motion becomes a process that creates uncertainty of a different kind. The process of ritual itself creates a liminal space, which is an in-between period where the social relations before the ritual are suspended but relations that come after ritual is completed have not yet developed. This liminal period, argues Turner (1969), is a condition of potentiality and therefore great uncertainty. This means that many things can transpire and move the public ritual in different directions unless the ritual process is carefully directed and controlled. Here, the security apparatus steps in to control this process. It is this relationship between uncertainty and security meta-ritual that enables the transformation of what I referred to above as real Washington to inaugural Washington.

We are thus observing the emergence of a ritual that is characteristic of the modern state, where protection from uncertainty and an uncontrollable future has become a major preoccupation as the state promises to deliver security to the people within its borders. These are rituals of order, processes that publicly facilitate transformation from dangerous to safe, from uncertain to secure, from undifferentiated to classified, from a social world of danger to a safe and secure social space.

Below, I analyze the process through which the security meta-ritual unfolded during the second inauguration of President Bush at the Mall in Washington, D.C., on January 20, 2005. The inauguration was first designated as a “national special security event,” which classifies the event as vulnerable to disruption and therefore in need of protection by the security apparatus. This classification draws on collective memory of the past. This demonstrates that a total mobilization of all available resources is necessary for the purpose of enabling the transformation from unsafe to safe. The mass media are an important partner in this process because they serve as a channel through which the apparatus communicates to the public how to behave in this space, what is allowed, and what would be sanctioned. All who wish to participate are expected to cooperate. The security meta-ritual purifies the social space of the everyday life into a sterile area of tightly controlled mobility within which the inauguration is able to unfold without interruption.

### **The Security Meta-ritual of the U.S. Presidential Inauguration in 2005**

The U.S. presidential inauguration is a cyclical type of ritual that takes place every 4 years. The event has come to be performed on January 20 in Washington, D.C., on the west side of the Capitol Building, overlooking the Mall and its memorials (for details, see Boller, 2001). A presidential inaugural committee, formed months before the presidential election day, organizes the events. The president-elect chooses the details of the program. The 2005 presidential inauguration events included the 10 a.m. prayer service at St. John’s Church; the morning procession from the White House to the Capitol; the inaugural day luncheon at the U.S. Capitol; the noon presidential oath of office, also called the swearing-in ceremony, on a platform outside the Capitol Building; the 2 p.m. inaugural parade from the Capitol along Pennsylvania Avenue toward the White House; the viewing of the parade at the reviewing stand in front of the White House; and the inaugural balls in the evening (Curl, 2005; “Washington Daybook,” 2005).

On the day of the inauguration, newspapers reported that some 100,000 visitors were expected to fill the lawn of the Mall for the swearing-in ceremony and then align Pennsylvania Avenue for the inaugural parade (Wilgoren, 2005). The official celebratory balls are organized for friends and extended family members, donors, political party supporters, volunteers, and others who contributed to the election campaign of the winning president. The swearing-in ceremony in front of the Capitol Building is open to the public. I was informed that tickets for this event were available through the senators’ offices. Each senator was given 200 swearing-in ceremony entry tickets to distribute to their constituents. For the senators, this is an opportunity to reward supporters from their home states. In terms of attending the inaugural parades, entry tickets are needed to sit on the bleachers, whereas standing areas along the parade route have traditionally been free of charge.

The 2005 presidential inauguration saw changes in terms of public access. "Things are very different this year," a spokesperson for the event related to me on the phone in early December. "The way we manage information and access is very different this time around. The event has been declared a national security event." Such a designation is a symbolic marker of a security meta-ritual in that it communicates to the public that the state security apparatus has determined that this particular public event is vulnerable to disruption. Therefore, all available resources will be mobilized to service the apparatus in its practice of the security meta-ritual. What follows is an analysis of the process through which this ritual brings to life a new social reality of personal safety and security.

### **A National Special Security Event**

When we focus on the ritual practice, it is useful to think about how a ritual begins so that we may be able to follow its process. The exact beginning and ending of rituals are difficult to determine, particularly if they include large numbers of people and require extensive preparation and planning prior to its actual enactment. A good way to think about the start of security meta-ritual is when a public announcement is made that a particular public event has been identified as vulnerable to disruption and therefore in need of protection. This announcement is usually communicated through the mass media. Following reports in the local newspaper from the time when they first appear through the time when they stop reporting on the events helps us understand the beginning and the ending of a security meta-ritual.

The recent centralization of the U.S. state security apparatus through the Department of Homeland Security brought to public attention the actual institutionalization of this specific status for certain public events by classifying them as national special security events. For Handelman (2004), this is an example of a classification in terms of a bureaucratic logic that specifies what constitutes a threatening act and in what ways the possibility of such an act is to be identified and preempted, by whom, and for which segment of the public event. The task of acting on uncertainty through surveillance is entrusted to the state, which is given a monopoly over surveillance in exchange for the promise to deliver security. It is therefore understood that surveillance will be performed by a state security apparatus and its enterprises endowed with the power of the state. The Web site explains what the designation means in the following terms:

When an event is designated a National Special Security Event, the Secret Service assumes its mandated role as the lead federal agency for the design and implementation of the operational security plan and coordinator for all Federal resources deployed to maintain the level of security needed for the designated events. . . . The goal of such an operation is to prevent terrorist attacks and criminal acts. . . . The Secret Service is responsible for planning, directing and executing federal security operations at designated NSSE's [national special security events]. The Secret Service also provides federal, state

and local law enforcement partners who provide substantial, critical support to the protective mission with the necessary guidance and training regarding their role in the overall operational security plans. (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2004)

The process through which a public event is designated a national special security event is not fully disclosed. A press release posted on the same site lists three considerations that are said to contribute to this status: the higher the profile of participants, the greater the need for special surveillance attention; the larger the size of the event, the greater the security requirements; and the greater the symbolic significance of the event, the greater the assigned possibility of disruption. Following the bureaucratic logic of classification (Handelman, 2004), once a type of event is classified, all subsequent events of this kind are likely to be similarly categorized, and at the same time, the list can potentially be expanded into a wide range of taxonomies of special security events.

*Security* is the term used in interstate defense policy and the state's monopoly of the legitimate use of force to defend its interests in relation to other states. Naming a public event a national special security event displaces the notion of security from the domain of global, interstate military relations to that of a local, place- and time-specific public ritual (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998). As Bigo (2006) argues persuasively, this conflation of national security with personal safety relates to a new form of governmentality that extends globally and locally through a newly conceived security apparatus whose traditional roles associated with the military, the police, and the domestic and the international secret service have been blurred. The protection of an event from disruption therefore no longer means policing but "an operation," a military-type intervention (Bajc, n.d.). This is not just an event requiring security but a special security event. This does not indicate a transition from a social situation of nonsurveillance to one of surveillance. It suggests, instead, a shift from whatever is otherwise regular surveillance to a time- and place-specific, elevated surveillance. Any such ritual activity rests on a narrative that explains why a ritual is important.

### **Drawing on Collective Memory of Events Past**

Rituals are based on narratives that explain why a ritual is practiced, how it relates to a social group that performs the ritual, and what a ritual is to achieve. We observe that security meta-ritual draws from elements of a group's collective memory to establish the grounds for its continued reenactment. The presidential inauguration is a public ritual of the nation-state through which the current leader of the state is absolved from his power and the leader-elect installed in his place. This means a voluntary giving up of power of a previous leader to a new leader who peacefully takes over. A successful transition of power endows the state with integrity and provides it with legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens, a process particularly important for the second inauguration of President George W. Bush, whose reelection was replete with

questions of legitimacy. The process of such a public ritual must therefore be carefully controlled to ensure a desired outcome.

The mass media remind us that the state security apparatus and its order-making practice have been gradually coming to the fore, sometimes making their practice more visible and sometimes receding into the background. Newspapers compared the surveillance practices of the 2005 inauguration with those of President Nixon, whose term in office coincided with the unpopular U.S. involvement in the war with Vietnam.

About 2,000 troops, including members of the 82nd Airborne Division, were flown into Washington for Richard M. Nixon's inauguration in 1969, and some were stationed along the parade route. The military also helped protect the parade route for Nixon's second inauguration, in 1973. In recent decades, uniformed guards have played a mostly ceremonial role and specialized response teams stayed backstage. (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2004)

With the 2005 inauguration, the security meta-ritual comes front and center, with its narrative making a strong connection to the events of September 11, 2001, when the World Trade Center collapsed and the Pentagon was badly damaged following the crash of airplanes into these buildings. Rather than treating these developments as a criminal act, the state interpreted them as an act of war, an attack on itself and its people (Huysmans, 2004). It also took on the role of protector by promising to prevent such acts from occurring again.

Security is always tight on Inauguration Day, but it will be magnified for the first inauguration since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Law enforcement officials have been preparing for months to protect U.S. and world leaders and citizens who attend. The military will support civilian authorities, if needed, and officials said they plan to project a much more forceful image than since at least the time of the Vietnam War. (Horwitz & Hsu, 2004, p. A10)

The state security apparatus was keenly aware of what its security meta-ritual was to say to the world that observed the event. Its meta-ritual was to communicate a vision of what it takes to bring about public safety and security the apparatus has promised to the public. It was to convey the power of the apparatus to monitor the movement of people, objects, and information in the state's domain. Its public practicing of surveillance also communicates just how powerful and all encompassing its non-public, secret procedures must be.

## **Mobilizing the Media**

Mass media are indispensable in the process of enactment of security meta-ritual, because a state security apparatus seeks to engage the general public in the transformative practices of its own meta-ritual and the public ritual within its frame. Media centers serve as the hub for this information flow. For this presidential inauguration,

as for other events on Capitol Hill, the radio and TV galleries at the Capitol serve as places for media briefings and press conferences. Access was available only to credentialed staff and media members who applied for entry passes and were approved for a special permit. For this inauguration, applications had to be submitted before December 15 for the January 20 events. Seeking such permission for myself in the capacity of researcher in November 2004, I was told by a spokesperson that “the way we manage information and access is very different this time around [so that] even the journalists have to be fingerprinted and go through a background check.” Pressed for time, I decided not to pursue this any further.

Judging from activities at the Israeli Press Center in Jerusalem and the Palestinian Press Center in Bethlehem that were set up for the visit of the late Pope John Paul II in March 2000, I observed that the state security apparatus engages the public by instructing and communicating particular details about these processes (Bajc, n.d.). This information flow is unidirectional, moving from the state security apparatus spokespeople through the journalists or the Internet to the general public. This transaction is concentrated within media centers, where up-to-date information is provided through briefings, press conferences, printed press releases, and live feeds on television screens of different parts of the event. The policy of the “need-to-know” information-access hierarchy in security and surveillance practices positions the mass media closest to the source. Although journalists receive information from the same source, their outlets have different cultures of reporting and aim to reach different audiences. Local city papers tend to carry the most detailed information. In the case of the presidential inauguration, this meant *The Washington Post* and the less-known and more conservative *Washington Times*.

Mass media are the connection between the apparatus, whose nature is to operate in secrecy and away from public scrutiny, and the general public, for whom the public ritual is enacted. In practical terms, elevated surveillance means major interruption in the routine daily life of people, on one hand through continuous media coverage (Dayan & Katz, 1992) and on the other hand through reordering of the physical social space they inhabit on a daily basis. Public rituals designated as events vulnerable to disruption bring surveillance procedures, otherwise operating in the background and away from the public, into the forefront of public visibility in the form of a meta-ritual. The challenge is to understand the dynamics through which this ritual process of surveillance creates a social order of security and what kind of social order this new reality exemplifies.

## **Mobilization of Other Possible Resources**

As soon as the mass media begin to detail the practices of the security meta-ritual, we learn that all possible resources will be brought to bear on the process of separating insiders from outsiders and the making of a sterile area. As was the case with the Pope’s visit to Jerusalem in 2000 (Bajc, n.d.), the media conveyed the message that no threats to disrupt the 2005 inaugural events had been reported. The security

meta-ritual performers explain to the public that the decision to designate this event a national special security event was not based on any concrete information that the event is actually in danger of being disrupted. Nevertheless, the security meta-ritual will mobilize all possible resources to preempt such a possibility. At this point an obvious question arises: What response is reasonable in this context? In the case of the security meta-ritual performers, the answer to this question becomes reformulated through the following logic: If we did not use all the possible resources to enact this security meta-ritual and something should happen, people would ask, Why did you not use all the resources available? In other words, there is a logic built into this ritual process that assumes uncertainty can be contained and controlled through ever more improved technology and ever more perfected security procedures (Bajc, n.d.).

Law enforcement authorities do not have specific information that al Qaeda or another terrorist group is targeting the inauguration. But the events will attract political leaders from throughout the country and the world and will be staged outside symbols of American democracy, officials said. 'The inaugural is a rich, symbolic, highly visible target,' said the FBI supervisory special agent who oversees the National Capital Response Squad. . . . The squad works closely with the Joint Terrorism Task Force in the FBI's Washington field office to monitor and respond to terrorist threats. (Horwitz & Hsu, 2004, p. A10)

Entrusting protection from disruption to the state security apparatus ensures not only "that the event transpires without incident" but also "that sufficient resources are brought to bear in the event of an incident." (Horwitz & Hsu, 2004, p. A10). The security meta-ritual of the 2005 inauguration aimed to mobilize all possible institutions and monetary resources to this end. Because the event was a national special security event, not only local but also state and federal agencies and technologies of order were employed in a total mobilization of all available agencies. This assortment of surveillance apparatus mobilized for this purpose reflects the blurring of traditional roles, responsibilities, and boundaries between agencies of order now combined to be simultaneously employed globally and locally to maximize the possibility of control of mobility (Bigo, 2006). We learned from the newspapers that the landscape in Washington, D.C., was

filled with military personnel, FBI agents in full SWAT outfitting, snipers on rooftops and scores of bomb-detecting dogs. The region's air defenses have been strengthened to prevent intruder aircraft, and sensors will be deployed throughout the area to detect biological, chemical or radiological material. About 2,000 out-of-town officers will help with security and traffic details. Undercover officers will work the crowds, and D.C. police officers will be posted every six to eight feet along the parade route. . . . D.C. police officials . . . requested help from scores of police departments east of the Mississippi River . . . [drawing in] 1,600 to 2,500 officers from other jurisdictions. (Horwitz & Hsu, 2004, p. A10)

This urge to impose order on uncertain conditions using surveillance technologies and operatives has a particular underlying logic that drives the process of the creation of order. The state is eager to control the inauguration to be able to communicate to the public that its surveillance procedures otherwise performed away from the public eye can bring about a secure space in which the transfer of power can take place as intended. Therefore, no chances can be taken. The maximum possible control of the outcome of the inauguration can be achieved through the maximum possible use of the resources the apparatus will need to practice its meta-ritual. The higher the numbers of the security meta-ritual performers involved and the more sophisticated surveillance technology used, the better its ability to control unpredictable events and prevent the unwanted from occurring. This logic gains credibility from its scientific basis; surveillance technology has undergone continuous improvement because of the belief that better science will bring about more security (see Bogard, 1996). On the other hand, as Beck (1995) suggests, there is an expectation from the general public that the state security apparatus will provide security.

No expense is considered to be too high when it is a question of bringing into existence a zone of safety, so that each practice of a security meta-ritual tends to stretch further the limits of available resources. The officials of the District of Columbia expressed dissatisfaction with the use of city resources for this purpose:

The city's costs for the inauguration will total \$17.3 million, most of it related to security. City officials said they can use an unspent \$5.4 million from an annual federal fund that reimburses the District for costs incurred because of its status as the capital. But that leaves \$11.9 million not covered, they said. . . . "We want to make this the best possible event, but not at the expense of D.C. taxpayers and other homeland security priorities," said Gregory M. McCarthy, the mayor's deputy chief of staff. . . . The \$17.3 million the city expects to spend on this inauguration marks a sharp increase from the \$8 million it incurred for Bush's first. (Hsu, 2005, p. A1)

This inauguration event had an estimated cost of \$30 million to \$40 million for the program. The media did report that the event was "eligible for federal money" (Bradley, 2004), but it did not specify just what kind of an expense was generated through the security meta-ritual itself and how much of that money actually reached the city.

The mobilization of all possible resources makes it possible for the security meta-ritual to be performed flawlessly, efficiently, and effectively so that the maximum possible control can be exerted on the circumstances within which the public event is allowed to proceed. There is a particular logic built into this process of maximum mobilization through which the security apparatus creates a secure social order out of conditions of uncertainty. It works with an underlying assumption that events that have not yet occurred can be brought under control through preemptive actions. By implication, the more resources at the disposal of the apparatus engaged in these preemptive processes, the higher the likelihood of a perfectly sterile area.

Should the unintended happen, the failure of the security meta-ritual would be attributed not to the impossibility of perfectly controlling uncertainty but to the lack of resources used in the meta-ritual process.

## Separating Insiders From Outsiders

Security meta-ritual imposes order on what is defined as an uncertain situation. Order is brought to existence through a transformation of the everyday social space to a ritual space of safety. This meta-ritual is performed according to the design of the state security apparatus. In ritual terms, this is called a text, a script, or a narrative. This script outlines a process through which insiders will be separated from outsiders and unsafe space turned into a safe space so that a sterile area can be created.

The ritual purification of space begins by examining the physical space within which the public ritual is to take place, inch by inch, removing everything deemed potentially dangerous, then sealing off the area. Next, specifically designed entrances into the sterile area, now ubiquitously known as checkpoints, are created for those who have been preselected to attend a public ritual. Finally, people and objects are divided into those who may come inside the sealed area and the rest, who must remain outside. The ordering of insiders and outsiders has several forms.

The first aspect of the separation of insiders from outsiders involves self-selection. As is the case with many large-scale public events, some locals leave the area whereas others come in from outside. In the case of the inauguration, for the people in Washington, D.C., this was a work-free Friday, which for many meant a long-weekend vacation. At the same time, people from all over the country and many from abroad came to Washington, D.C., for the occasion. This change in population was very evident on the local transit system. As is the case in any metropolitan area, early morning subway trains were crowded with people standing. It looked like any other rush hour except that on this Friday, the people were not carrying briefcases and reading the morning newspaper. Instead, the passengers were a mix of those dressed in colorful scarves; red, white, and blue garb; *Kerry-Edwards* T-shirts; and floor-length fur coats and cowboy hats. One could hear them discussing which subway stop would get them closer to the parade route. The youth hostel downtown was filled with people young and old, in company or alone, from abroad and locally, from Alaska to Florida. Some came to join the protesters; others simply hoped to get a glimpse of the events. As I explain below, the inaugural events were mainly accessible to those who were able to secure the tickets. No one at the youth hostel I spoke with had one.

Another form of separation takes place through a system of zoning. The most purified area was the sealed space between the Capitol and the White House within which the public event actually unfolded. Because the inaugural event was centered between the Capitol Building and the White House, the zoning had a form of concentric circles with various degrees of sterility. We learn from the daily news that

unauthorized boat traffic was barred from 16 miles of waterways along the Potomac and Anacostia rivers in the District [of Columbia]. Small private aircraft were barred from 3000 square miles over the Washington-Baltimore area, a ban enforced by F-15 and F-16 fighter patrols and Army antiaircraft missile units. Rail shipments of hazardous materials were halted through the city, and a CSX Corp. rapid-reaction team stood watch. ("Crowd Control," 2005, p. A32)

This process of ordering is comprehensive in its coverage of space. It exerts control over the airspace above the ritual space, the actual physical grounds of the space, and below the surface of the sterile area. The purification process included "miles of underground Metro and sewer tunnels, sealing manhole covers, closing streets and surveying the more than 450 downtown buildings with at least a partial view of the parade route (Horwitz & Hsu, 2004, p. A10). In addition, "street closings spread as far as one-half mile from the parade route, twice as far as publicized" ("Crowd Control," 2005, p. A32). When the process was completed,

nearly 200 square blocks were closed to traffic or access to them was restricted. . . . Outside that security zone, only the occasional car rolled along roads that are normally filled with commuters, buses, delivery trucks and all manner of workaday vehicles. ("Crowd Control," 2005, p. A32)

Another form of ordering in this meta-ritual process of bringing into existence a social space of security is to discourage the public from actually attending the ritual. Rather than inviting the citizenry to descend on the Capitol for a weekend-long celebration at the ceremony of the renewal of the country, mass-mediated advertisements indirectly suggested to the public it might be better to stay at home and watch the public ritual on TV:

Unwilling to battle the cold and crowds? TV's got you covered with hours of programming. Playing it smart by staying home for today's presidential inauguration? Find a comfy chair, pop open your favorite beverage and bask in TV's warming glow. The broadcast, cable and local networks have you covered. . . . C-SPAN has commentary free coverage all day starts at 8 a.m. and will cover seven balls throughout the night. Plus, it will take phone calls from viewers throughout the day on both sides of the isle. Feel free to call from that comfy chair. ("Guide," 2005)

In situ participation is essential to the kind of public rituals for which security meta-ritual is enacted. As is the case of the U.S. presidential inauguration, not only does the public transfer of power give legitimacy to the state but the event itself has come to have a sense of tradition so that it has meaning for many Americans who like to attend. To this end, newspapers reported, the Department of Homeland Security spokesman stressed that its "goal [was] to provide as safe an environment as possible, so America can enjoy one of its greatest celebrations, which is the inaugural celebration for the president of the United States" (Horwitz & Hsu, 2004, p. A10).

Yet all of these events seemed accessible to ticket holders only. Whereas the balls are organized to reward contributors to the elections and other donors and supporters, the parade has traditionally been staged for the general public. This parade typically features participants from all 50 states, whose high school and community bands and cheerleader groups march along the route preceding the official presidential motorcade, which delivers the president from the Capitol, where he had just been sworn in, to the White House, where he is to reside during his presidency. The tickets were made available through a variety of sources. For the guests from Philadelphia, \$15 tickets were distributed during the morning reception. There are indications that the inaugural parade has become a kind of a commodity. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that tickets were sold by the Presidential Inaugural Committee for \$125, “mostly to invited guests,” and that “few protesters had bought tickets” (“Laud, Peaceful Protest,” 2005). According to *The Washington Post*, free access to the parade was not to be found anywhere along the route from the Capitol to the White House. The same was the case with the official swearing-in ceremony.

Reducing attendance to those who are able to secure entry in advance should also be understood as one of the means for controlling mobility inside the system of sterile zones. Many people are still under the impression that access to such public events is open. On a comparative note relevant to this argument, on December 31, 2005, in New York City, people continued gathering from early afternoon to way past midnight for the well-known New Years Eve party in Times Square, which is televised worldwide every year. I attended the event myself to be able to get a sense of how access works for this event in comparison to other types of public rituals. The streets surrounding Times Square were blocked, and the human traffic coming out of the subway stops was diverted through a system of metal barricades in the direction opposite from the square. The police kept yelling at us, “Go home!” and as midnight was approaching, they charged on their horses toward the crowd, which refused to leave. We were able to see fireworks high in the sky, and at times we could even hear some noise from that direction, but the police continued to block access to Times Square all the way through mid-morning. A woman from Ohio standing next to me in the crowd related to me that she

will never tell people at home what I experienced here. They will never believe me. People don't know what is going on. They will never believe me that the police came with horses. I will just tell them that I had a good time and I won't tell them anything else.

In the case of the 2005 inauguration, an official from the inaugural committee related to me in early December that “there is no such thing as a pass. If you are 3 years old, you need a ticket. If you want to come to the ceremony for any reason, if you don't have a ticket, you can't go in.” When the goal is a sterile area with maximum control of mobility, fewer people means less mobility to survey and less work to control uncertainty in public ritual.

## Cooperation

Those who made it through the initial processes of sorting and separation were then expected to follow the rules to the letter. The press release from the Capitol police made it clear that “all individuals attending the inaugural ceremony must adhere to security screening procedures before entering the event site” (U.S. Capitol Police, 2005, p. 1). Those who wished to participate in the inaugural event had to first take part in its security meta-ritual. Local newspapers published announcements with clear instructions about the timing of the event, specific directions to the site, detailed maps of specific street closures, and the timing of these closures. The Capitol police released a detailed outline of what would constitute proper behavior for the participants in the security meta-ritual and which items carried by their bodies would or would not pass the sterilization process.

Anyone planning to attend is encouraged to arrive early, dress appropriately for the weather, be patient, and to utilize Metro to Union Station, Capitol South, Federal Center, or Judiciary Square. . . . Firearms, weapons of any kind, ammunition (either real or simulated), explosives of any kind (including fireworks), knives, blades, or sharp objects (of any length), aerosol sprays, coolers, thermal or glass containers, mace, pepper spray, sticks, poles, pocket or hand tools (such as a leatherman), packages, backpacks, large bags, duffel bags, suitcases, laser pointers, posters, signs, placards (including supports structures), animals other than guide dogs or service dogs assisting handicapped individuals, strollers, chairs, umbrellas, alcoholic beverages, and any other items at the discretion of the security screeners that may pose a potential safety hazard. (U.S. Capitol Police, 2005)

Once inside the sterile area, there was yet another set of prescriptions concerning what would be accepted as proper behavior by the participants. A “blogger” posted on a Web site excerpts from news reports that describe how the parade performers were instructed to behave inside the sterile area and what they were told to expect in terms of surveillance. The parade included marching bands, color guards, pompon dancers, handbell ringers, drill teams on horseback, Civil War reenactors, and many others from all over the country. The parade group leaders were “receiving almost daily phone calls from inaugural organizers to apprise [them] of new security procedures” (Lowy, 2005). They were informed that they would be bused to a parking lot where first their buses would be sniffed for bombs by dogs and then they themselves would be passed through metal detectors. They would then get back on the bus and be delivered to heavily guarded tents at the National Mall, where they would spend most of the day. They would be allowed to go to portable toilets accompanied by a security guard. They were specifically warned

not to look directly at Bush while passing the presidential reviewing stand, not to look to either side and not to make any sudden movements. “They want you to just look straight ahead,” said Danielle Adam, co-director of the Mid American Pompon All Star

Team from Michigan, which also performed in the 2001 inaugural parade. . . . “Last time we went security was really tight,” Adam said. “This time we got almost like a book of things we needed to fill out beforehand.” (Lowy, 2005)

This was a national special security event. The security meta-ritual performers did everything in their power to ensure maximum control of the meta-ritual process and, through that, the outcome of the public ritual itself. There was a sentiment among those present at the inaugural event that the state security apparatus should perform its surveillance as it deems necessary in its attempt to control the conditions of uncertainty. At a morning reception for ticket holders prior to the inauguration, I asked a young professional what kind of surveillance he expected to experience on the Mall:

“We have to be prepared for everything. My girlfriend just got back from a trip. She had two one-way tickets so she was searched in all inappropriate places and she was touched. But I told her that we need to be prepared. It happens even to celebrities. It was on TV the other day. So, we should be prepared.”

At the time the inauguration and its security meta-ritual were unfolding, there was a public debate over the National Security Agency’s right to spy on Americans’ communication with those outside the U.S. border. A poll conducted by *The New York Times* and CBS suggested that the majority of Americans felt that the most important issue in times of war on terror are not civil liberties but protecting the people. To the question, “In order to reduce the threat of terrorism, would you be willing to allow government agencies to monitor the telephone calls and e-mail of Americans that the government is suspicious of?” 68% said yes. Americans would be willing to allow the government to spy on people’s phone conversations and e-mail exchanges in such a case (“New Poll,” 2006). This sentiment was also present at the inaugural events. Another question that imposes itself starkly at this point is how it is that Americans, known for their conception of privacy, freedom from government interference, and spirit of “the western frontier,” have come to rely on security procedures to bring about a collective sentiment. I pose this question for reflection. A discussion on this issue is beyond the scope of this article.

## The Security-Sanctioned Order

Control of uncertainty is sought through the process of purification that brings into existence a ritual space of security. This was achieved through concentric zones of enclosure. Within these zones, human behavior was ordered according to the prescriptions of the security apparatus. The unwanted human behavior was removed, blocked, or redirected away from the ritual space.

“That is as secure a stretch of road as exists anywhere in the world.” Said Michel E. Rolince, on-scene commander at the FBI’s Command and Tactical Operations Center,

where about 30 agents monitored video feeds, answered telephones and tracked incident reports on a giant computer screen. . . . Massive anti-terrorism preparations for what federal authorities promised would be the most secure inauguration in U.S. history . . . [meant that] an army of 13,000 federal, state, and local law enforcement officers and military troops chased down tips, policed public disturbances and reported few major incidents. . . . Authorities established a security gantlet that they hoped would place a “sterile” seal around downtown, processing tens of thousands of people through 22 checkpoints while holding traffic as far as a half-mile away. (“Crowd Control,” 2005, p. A32)

Access to the Inaugural area followed the logic of the spatial design that in many ways resembles Foucault’s (1995) analysis of the plan for a response to the fear of the plague by authorities in a 17th-century French town. For Foucault, this plan was one of the “models of disciplinary mechanisms” (p. 197) that he observed emerging in Europe at the time that exemplified “a utopia of the perfectly governed city” (p. 198) through enclosures, people fixed in segmented spaces, and observers at every point. In the case of the security meta-ritual for the 2005 inauguration, the design was printed in the metropolitan daily newspapers and also on the back of the invitations. This design was also used for the open-air Mass during the Pope’s visit to Jerusalem in 2000 (Bajc, n.d.). Whereas the open-air Mass security zone for the Pope’s visit was brought into existence from a barren space with no residents, the inaugural sterile area had to subsume the existing urban landscape. Both produced what Foucault calls “a segmented, immobile, frozen space” (p. 195), itself organized as a spectacle of separation of the insiders. Ritual participants who did make it through the purification process meant to separate them from others who remained outside, were themselves hierarchically divided.

The inaugural zone was oriented toward the U.S. Capitol, from which there extended subzones of access. Clusters of subzones were marked with different colors, and within subzones, areas were marked as seating and standing. The president and the highest government officials were seated on a structure built high above the ground, making the inaugural oath visible from all directions. Below were 16 zones of seating areas, marked as blue to the right of the president and as red to his left. Farther out on each side were standing areas. Immediately behind the blue zones were green zones; behind them, red zones, followed by yellow zones. First Street marked the border between these four colors and the rest of the zone, which continued along the Mall beyond the reflecting pool farther west, away from the Capitol. This distant zone was marked as the color gold. If the subzones of the four colors closest to the Capitol were made available to various supporters of the officials in office, the gold subzone was for everyone else. The sterile area had a built-in structure of hierarchy based on proximity to the president or others in the government.

The inaugural ceremony was accessible to those who had gone through the security meta-ritual first. This began with securing an entry ticket for the event. My group was given blue and green tickets, which meant that we had to enter the zone through specially designated entrances or checkpoints, marked on the tickets and on the site with

a corresponding color clearly visible from afar. There were 10 gates in total, 6 for the golden zones and 1 for each of the other colors. After the early-morning meeting at the Hart Senate Office Building, where the Republican senator of Pennsylvania Arlen Specter spoke briefly, we were escorted by his staff through the underground tunnel to another building for refreshments. At 10:30 a.m., we were escorted out of the building for a 5-minute walk toward the green gate to attend the inaugural ceremony, which was to start at noon. Closer to the gate, the security meta-ritual operatives became visible, standing high on a platform, asking us to wave our ticket high in the air. The street narrowed as if entering a funnel, bordered by concrete blocks on either side, into a narrow path toward the entrance.

This is perhaps the starkest moment of the security meta-ritual, where participants demand to see that surveillance is indeed performed as the security apparatus claims to do in its routine day-to-day practice out of the public eye. This is the moment of public demonstration of the otherwise secret surveillance practices. "And this is the only security we will get today?" asked a woman in her early 50s walking next to me. She passed through a security check before entering the senator's office, she needed a ticket to attend the inauguration, she was escorted by the senator's staff to the entrance of the inauguration, sharpshooters were visibly lined up along the rooftops of the buildings to our right, and yet something did not feel right to her. She had come to accept a particular way to be the right and proper passage from safe to unsafe, from exclusion to inclusion. This process, as practiced by those who pass from safe to unsafe at airports (Salter, 2005), was awaiting us just a few meters further down.

Slowly, our movement came to a halt, body next to a body, no way forward and no way back. The roof of a huge white tent hovered over the green entrance gate. Under the tent were three sets of security operatives, checking each and every participant before entering the sterile zone. Each participant was told to put his or her personal belongings other than clothes on a table next to the metal detector. An operative then watched the participant go through the metal detector. Next, the participant was asked to spread arms and stand with legs spread apart. The operative raised his bare hand to the participant's neck and slid it along the front of the body down to the legs. Next, he bent down to touch between the legs. The participant was then told to turn around and the operative touched along the back starting from the top at the neck and sliding down again. When this was completed, the operative turned to another operative to see if the personal belongings had been sterilized, again, one item at a time. Then the participant was given back his or her belongings and was allowed to proceed through the tent into the sterile area, inside which the inauguration was unfolding.

The security meta-ritual followed its own rhythm and its own succession of events, undeterrred by the public ritual that was unfolding within its domain. By the time I passed through the tent, the participants of the inauguration inside the sterile area were singing the last words of the national anthem. It was 12:25 p.m. I had missed the ceremony, as did most of the people in my group. Those who wanted to

participate at the inauguration were required to partake in the security meta-ritual first. Their inaugural experience was shaped by the experience of the security meta-ritual. I was among the first few from my group to enter. I stood there for a moment, confused and disoriented. It seemed as though few people were inside. Two men in their early 30s from my group passed me by, rushing in the direction of the stage. They had told me earlier they spent several years working for the government in Washington, D.C. I followed. Working our way through a cluster of onlookers, we were stopped by a green fence, which separated our subzone from the one in front of us. "This is ridiculous!" exclaimed one of the two. "Well, it's either this or terrorism," replied the other. The exchange was brisk and brief. There was no further reflection exchanged. The two turned around and immediately headed for the exit. Again, I followed, this time very much aware that without an intimate knowledge of the topography of the area, I likely would not have been able to find my way through the metal barriers, checkpoints, closures, and crowds to the very specific checkpoint entrance assigned to my inaugural parade ticket.

The spatial layout of the parade had a similar color-coded design of spatial segmentation. Orange-ticket holders were allowed to enter between Third and Seventh streets, farther down were green ticket security gates, farther along the avenue were blue gates, and so on. The last set of bleachers was aligned along the street that separates the White House and Lafayette Square, what used to be G Street but has been closed to traffic for several years. This was the silver-coded part of the parade, the last part of the parade where the president, who otherwise drove along Pennsylvania Avenue in a heavily armored limousine with scores of security performers running in front, beside, and behind the vehicle, actually stepped out of the vehicle and walked for the last couple hundred feet to the White House, allowing the media crew to capture the historic moment of the inaugural parade.

The ticket for the inaugural parade was to ensure access to a bleacher, which meant a seat on an elevated platform overlooking Pennsylvania Avenue. "Come one, come all was the message from Presidential Inaugural Committee organizers," wrote a daily, then added that the organizers distributed bleacher seats for some 40,000 and assured that "there will be plenty of room for 60,000 other people" to stand along Pennsylvania Avenue without a ticket (Dwyer, 2005, p. A1). Yet bleachers were aligned along the Avenue in such a way that no standing area seemed available. "With long stretches of Pennsylvania Avenue lined with bleachers and reserved for ticket-holders or protesters, where can the general public stand and watch the 55th Inaugural Parade?" asked *The Washington Post* ("Public Space," 2005, p. A9). The dissenting views to this purification process of the security meta-ritual were expressed through the legal system prior to the event. In addition to public protest, the legal system remains the only venue through which surveillance procedures can be challenged (Agamben, 1995/1998, 2005; Paye, 2004). The Partnership for Civil Justice filed a lawsuit regarding public access to the parade route, but the U.S. district judge who was hearing the case offered no clear answer. The *Post* reported that the judge "said he saw

some evidence that the inaugural committee was being more restrictive than in the past. But he declined to issue an injunction, noting that the inauguration was only 48 hours away" ("Public Space," 2005, p. A9). It seemed as though the legal system had failed the plaintiffs.

The boundaries of the innermost zone of the sterile area were the sites where the insiders and the outsiders faced each other for brief moments. Those who protested the security meta-ritual and its public ritual within were designated in their own zones outside and away from the inner core of the sterile area. They made themselves visible by becoming trespassers and infringing on the sterile area by marching toward a parade gate. Such was the case with a group of protesters with protest signs on their bodies and high in the air approaching the gate on Seventh Street and D Street, the westernmost edge of the orange zone of the parade. Just as I noticed the protesters, some 10 vehicles loaded with armed personnel, batons in their hands, came rushing in. The vehicles stopped, the personnel jumped off in unison, sped to the oncoming protesters, encircled them, and forced them into running back in the direction from which they had come. There was a woman wearing a green hat taking notes. She said she was an independent legal observer. "What happened?" I asked. "The police completely overreacted," she exclaimed. "Just now, they rushed in and formed a wedge around the protesters who were peaceful and did nothing wrong." A policeman on the other side of the road had a different understanding of what had just transpired. "They did not let anyone in close to the checkpoint," he said. "The demonstrators blocked the traffic, so they came to clear the road." When the police dispersed the demonstrators, the checkpoints reopened for the parade ticket holders to continue moving through the gate, following the exact same procedures as the participants were subjected to for the swearing-in ceremony. Protesters belonged to different civic groups and organizations. While the protesters who made themselves noticed were pushed out, other protesters stood quietly, mixed with the people waiting in line to pass through the checkpoint into the sterile area of the parade. "All the fur coats this way, please!" called a woman in her early 20s with a peace sign on her coat, her voice cynical but subdued. Another, in her early 60s, holding an inaugural ticket in her hand, turned around and shouted back at her, "Four more years!"

The inaugural experience depended on where the participants stood in front of the Capitol and along the parade route. Those who made it into the subzones of blue, green, red, and yellow were able to see the president clearly. The rest were in the golden zone and only heard him speak. Those who made it to the bleachers clapped and waved enthusiastically when the heavily armed motorcade passed by and cheered the parade. A front-page photo in *The Washington Post*, taken from behind the president addressing the audience in front of him, suggests how the president himself might have experienced the security meta-ritual. He is shown standing on the platform behind a thick piece of see-through bulletproof glass, addressing the crowd of fur coats and hats along the Mall spread along the snow-covered Washington and its memorials. The

snow and the crowd mask the miles of fences and checkpoints, and these, in turn, keep hidden from view those others left outside the sterile zone.

## Conclusion

Assuming that surveillance in state-sponsored public rituals is simply a utilitarian activity of crowd control whose sole purpose is to keep public order and prevent crime is a mistaken position. Such reasoning blinds us to the processes of enculturation, of acceptance of surveillance as a cultural norm that is not only necessary but desirable. This bringing about of public security through a meta-ritual legitimates surveillance practices of the state security apparatus and normalizes the social order it creates. Underlying the surveillance procedures is a claim that the state security apparatus has the right to keep it secret as to how surveillance is practiced in order to achieve security. By bringing into existence the ritual space of safety, security meta-ritual communicates to the public that the social reality of security is possible and can be achieved when participants follow the guidelines and the rules of public behavior set by the security apparatus.

I have tried to demonstrate that surveillance procedures, otherwise performed in secrecy, become public through a process that exhibits a ritual form. What I call security meta-ritual is a process of setting boundaries. These boundaries are not based on kinship, nationalist, religious, or other identity ties. They are based on bureaucratic classification of things, people, and their behavior into categories of safe and secure as opposed to unsafe and dangerous. This classification is done at the discretion of the security apparatus and without input from the individuals who are being classified. This practice of separation of insiders from outsiders transforms the everyday social life into a security-sanctioned order, which is a sterile area within which behavior is prescribed by the security apparatus. I have provided some examples of such prescriptions, including the instructions concerning what was allowed so that one could pass the checkpoints and, once inside, how to avoid sudden movement and looking at the president so as not to attract suspicion.

I argue that it is important to distinguish analytically between a public ritual and a security meta-ritual. The former is a part of public, political social activity. The latter is performed by a state security apparatus, an amalgamation of law enforcement institutions, private enterprises, military establishments, and intelligence services whose work is protected with a seal of secrecy. The performance of the security meta-ritual brings about a ritual zone of safety, bounded by a special protective shield within which the symbolic and emotional aspects of the public ritual are allowed to transpire. The designation "national special security event" assures that no public ritual with this label will be allowed to take place without the accompaniment of the security meta-ritual. We are observing the emergence of a new type of ritual that makes public the efforts of the modern state to provide personal, communal, and state security under conditions of uncertainty.

This article is intended to stimulate thought and research about public displays of surveillance. It outlines the process of the security meta-ritual as a series of stages with the purpose of providing a framework for future, detailed ethnographic observations of security meta-ritual surrounding public events of other kinds and in other cultural and social settings. Such data will allow us to engage in cross-cultural comparisons at multiple levels: different cultural perceptions of uncertainty and implementation of surveillance as a means to achieve security, the types of spaces in which meta-ritual and its public event are performed, how the past shapes this enactment and its legitimation, the extent of the resources mobilized for this purpose, the process of classification of insiders and outsiders, the willingness of the public to cooperate in this process, and the role of the mass media in communicating between the state security apparatus and the public.

Because public rituals of the type discussed here are cultural practices that leave behind documentation which testifies to their practice through time, they can also be studied in historical-comparative terms. Using archival material such as video footage, media briefings, newspaper reports, and reports from the meetings of the organizing committees would allow us to study how the role of the security apparatus in these kinds of rituals has emerged historically. Such cross-cultural and historical-comparative approach can help us understand how these newly emerging imperatives of social control are reshaping cultural understanding of safety and security in different social environments. Such comparisons would enable us to study how public rituals themselves are changing as a result of the security meta-ritual, that is, how surveillance and security are changing the way public rituals are organized and how they are practiced. This kind of analysis would also be a step in the direction of analyzing how uncertainty, security, surveillance, and ritual intersect so that a security meta-frame is able to be brought to existence within which a reality of safety and security can be experienced.

## Notes

1. The type of surveillance disclosed was interception performed by the National Security Agency of telephone and e-mail exchanges between people in the United States and people overseas by presidential decree rather than traditional court order subpoenas (Risen & Lichtblau, 2005).

2. The new bus station in Jerusalem, Israel, operates its surveillance following the procedures used at the airport. Similar attempts are in progress in spaces of public transport in the United States. The New York subway now has signs informing passengers that their bags may be subjected to search (Lueck, 2006).

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