Lie Detectors: On Secrets and Hypersecurity in Los Alamos

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The U.S. nuclear complex has always been haunted by the possibility of spies. At Los Alamos, some of these ghosts have names—Klaus Fuchs and Theodore Hall, for example—while others remain elusive, like the third Soviet agent long rumored to have worked at Los Alamos during the Manhattan Project.[1] Since the end of the Cold War, however, espionage, like the U.S. nuclear arsenal itself, has seemingly receded in the American imagination, psychically exiled as an increasingly quaint relic of a (nuclear) age now assumed past. Hence the widespread shock and bewilderment in 1999, as accusations of atomic espionage arose from the center of a surprisingly vibrant U.S. nuclear complex in New Mexico. Even more sensational than the initial accusations in March 1999 that China had covertly attained design information about the most sophisticated nuclear warhead in the U.S. arsenal was the announcement a month later that a U.S. nuclear weapons scientist at Los Alamos National Laboratory had illicitly downloaded to nonsecured computers almost the entire archive of nuclear weapons design codes developed during the Cold War era of nuclear testing. Of fourteen high-capacity

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1. On Klaus Fuchs, see Williams 1987; on Theodore Hall, see Albright and Kunstel 1997.

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computer tapes containing design codes for the U.S. nuclear arsenal, only seven could be accounted for, creating panic among officials about the missing tapes and their 806 megabytes of U.S. "nuclear secrets."

Suddenly the epicenter for nuclear fear at the national level, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) became the focus of an intense public debate in 1999. A Presidential Commission chaired by former Senator Warren Rudman concluded in June that Los Alamos National Laboratory conducted "science at its best, security at its worst." The commission accused Los Alamos scientists of a profound, institutionalized arrogance concerning security and declared the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) a "big, Byzantine, and bewildering bureaucracy," one that needed to be fundamentally reformed (PFIAB 1999: 8). By December, Wen Ho Lee, the chief suspect in the case, had become one of only a few people in U.S. history to be charged with gross negligence in handling classified information under the 1954 Atomic Energy Act. The fifty-nine-count indictment, filed on 19 December 1999, promised a life sentence for Lee, if convicted (see *United States v. Wen Ho Lee*, 79 F. Supp. 2d 1280 [D.N.M. 1999], *affirmed*, 208 F.3d 228 [10th Cir. 2000] [decided without published opinion]). Testifying at Lee's indictment hearing, the director of the nuclear weapons programs at Los Alamos stated that the missing computer tapes could change "the global strategic balance," while the head of Sandia National Laboratory warned the judge that letting Wen Ho Lee out on bail was a "you bet your country decision" (from transcript of bail hearing, U.S. District Court for the District of New Mexico, 27 December 1999). Indeed, by the end of 1999, it seemed that all the repressed anxieties of a post–Cold War nuclear world order could be located in the mundane form of seven missing Los Alamos computer tapes and their digital arsenal of nuclear secrets.[2]

Over the course of the next nine months, however, the case against Lee began to unravel—fantastically—culminating on 13 September 2000 with an abrupt turnaround by federal prosecutors. After fighting bail for nine months (and after keeping Lee either in solitary confinement or shackled since his arrest), prosecutors accepted a stunning plea agreement: Lee pleaded guilty to one of the original fifty-nine counts of mishandling classified information and was sentenced to time served (278 days). In the end, Wen Ho Lee—the man once portrayed as the sin-

2. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, in February 2000, supported the federal district court's decision to deny Wen Ho Lee bail, agreeing that Lee "presents a clear and present danger to the United States" and that "no combination of conditions of release would reasonably assure the safety of the community or the nation" (see *United States v. Wen Ho Lee*, 208 F.3d 228 [10th Cir. 2000] [decided without published opinion]).

gle greatest threat to U.S. national security in a half century—walked. Investigations into the case and how it was handled became the subject of congressional hearings, as well as of formal reviews at the FBI, the U.S. Justice Department, the Department of Energy, and at LANL. In fall 2000, Wen Ho Lee signed book and television movie deals to tell his story, while FBI agents entered a particular kind of purgatory: spending weeks methodically digging through the Los Alamos County landfill in hope of recovering the missing computer tapes (which Lee claims were thrown in the trash; see Pincus 2000).

This essay is less concerned with Lee's culpability than with interrogating what the institutional responses to the espionage allegations have revealed about America's nuclear project and the role of secrecy in enabling it. For while institutional responses to the Lee case played on the worst fears of the nuclear age—from atomic espionage to a new arms race to the possibility of nuclear war—they have also revealed important aspects of post–Cold War nuclear culture and policy in the United States and thus are well worth examining for their official, as well as more implicit, national cultural logics. Put another way, the search for the missing computer tapes at Los Alamos has troubled a secret governmentality, revealing not only the terms of conducting U.S. nuclear science after the Cold War, but also several different orders of nuclear secrets, secrets that have little to do with the production and maintenance of military machines.

Secrecy has always been a constitutive element in the U.S. nuclear complex. Indeed, with the invention of the atomic bomb in Los Alamos in 1945 came a powerful new kind of government secrecy and the very possibility of nuclear espionage.[3] During the Cold War, nuclear weapons took on the form of a national fetish in the United States, becoming simultaneously one of the largest and most dangerous industrial enterprises in U.S. history and a national project extravagantly protected from public discourse by official practices of secrecy. Nuclear weapons remain, therefore, ambiguous technosocial forms, simultaneously the material source of "national security"—the very arbiters of "superpower" status—and profoundly dangerous national products, which make claims on the life and death of citizens in a variety of ways. Secrecy has played a central role in mediating the national cultural contradictions embedded in the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Consequently, it is primarily in moments of crisis that the nuclear complex

3. On U.S. secrecy during the Cold War, see Moynihan 1998 and Shils 1956; for analysis of the scope of secrecy within the nuclear complex, see Burr, Blanton, and Schwartz 1998; and for Cold War secrecy practices among weapons scientists at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, see Gusterson 1996: 68–100.

becomes visible and its terms subject to analysis and renegotiation. The politics of keeping "nuclear secrets" and identifying "atomic spies" in Los Alamos, for example, have revealed the problematic identity politics operating within the U.S. nuclear complex at the end of the first nuclear century. Indeed, it is important now to recognize that the category known as "America's nuclear secrets" not only contains technoscientific information about how to build a nuclear weapon, it also addresses how race, citizenship, and security are defined at the very center of the U.S. nuclear complex.

What Is a Nuclear Secret?

The event that ultimately triggered the indictment of Wen Ho Lee in New Mexico for "gross negligence" in the handling of classified U.S. information actually took place seven years earlier, at Lop Nur, a nuclear test site in northwest China. There, on 25 September 1992, only two days after Los Alamos scientists conducted in secret what turned out to be the last U.S. underground nuclear test of the 1990s, China secretly exploded a nuclear device of its own. Both of these tests, however, were secret to their own citizens primarily, as seismic monitoring and satellite surveillance systems alerted governments around the world to both nuclear detonations. Indeed, this was not a hugely significant event in the United States until a Chinese weapons scientist visiting Los Alamos National Laboratory some months later happened to mention that the test had been exceptional: more precisely, it had involved a plutonium core that was not spherical but ovoid, a major technological advance that suggested Chinese success in producing a miniaturized nuclear warhead (Broad 1999). In the world of nuclear policy, miniaturized warheads are important not only because insights into how to build them are among the most closely held nuclear secrets, but also because the possession of sophisticated nuclear technologies (such as miniaturized warheads and intercontinental ballistic missiles) structures the power relations between nuclear states. Los Alamos weapons scientists began work on the first miniaturized nuclear warheads in the 1950s, part of a Cold War effort to increase exponentially the explosive power of nuclear weapons while simultaneously shrinking the weight and dimensions of nuclear warheads in order to place them on top of intercontinental ballistic missiles (Hansen 1988; MacKenzie 1990). By the mid-1960s, both Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories had succeeded in producing warheads that were thirty to fifty times as powerful as the bomb that destroyed the city of Hiroshima, yet so small that multiple warheads

could be placed on a single missile, each capable of reaching a different target (Hansen 1988: 197–206).

Since a miniaturized warhead has been part of both U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals for decades, China's 1992 test might seem a logical next step in the advancement of its own nuclear program, a basic technological milestone on the scientific path to nuclear super power status.[4] But then the plot thickens. In 1995, a Chinese official handed over to a CIA operative in Taiwan a stack of Chinese state documents. Included in the "walk-in" documents, as they are now known because they literally "walked in" the front door, was a manuscript describing the weapons that make up the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Most of the information was drawn from the open literature on U.S. nuclear weapons, with two key exceptions: one was the component layout of a miniaturized U.S. warhead, the other the measurements of a key weapons component within that system (Broad 1999). The documents immediately suggested to the U.S. Department of Energy counterintelligence officials that China had gained access to U.S. nuclear weapons schematics and specifically to the W-88 warhead designed at Los Alamos National Laboratory. This conclusion launched the first nuclear espionage investigation of the post–Cold War period, which went public in the pages of the *New York Times* on 6 March 1999, with Los Alamos weapons scientist Wen Ho Lee, a naturalized Taiwanese American, soon identified as the chief suspect in the case (see Risen and Gerth 1999).

There are several important elements in the development of this story: First, the United States was actively spying on Chinese weapons programs, monitoring their sites through satellite technology and inviting Chinese weapons scientists to Los Alamos just to chat. Second, Chinese officials went out of their way to make sure the United States understood the significance of their 1992 test. The CIA, in fact, now believes the walk-in documents were offered by a Chinese triple agent —that is, the Chinese official was authorized by his government to covertly give the documents to the United States (Risen and Johnston 1999; Loeb and Pincus 1999). Third, the story was leaked to the *New York Times* by U.S. government officials. So what constitutes a nuclear secret if this kind of circulation is possible within and between rival nuclear states?

4. Indeed, while U.S. officials accused Wen Ho Lee of disrupting the global balance of power, they consistently failed to mention how that balance of power was constituted: In 1999, the United States had deployed some 7,000 nuclear weapons around the world (with nearly 4,000 in storage that could be quickly reassembled) and a vast array of delivery systems, while China's nuclear arsenal consisted of roughly 400 weapons and less than 25 intercontinental missiles (see NRDC 2000).

It turns out that almost everything to do with nuclear weapons in the United States has been historically constituted as a nuclear secret, making the category highly elastic and thus politically charged. Information relating to nuclear weapons in the United States is officially "born secret," meaning it is "restricted data" subject to automatic classification (U.S. DOE 1996). This means that since 1943 a whole industrial infrastructure—a nearly $6 trillion national project and one of the largest industrial enterprises in U.S. history (Schwartz 1998)—has been shielded from public discourse. Consequently, nuclear secrecy evolved during the Cold War into an enormous state apparatus: By 1990, the DOE alone had hundreds of millions of pages of classified material to manage, in buildings scattered all over the country. These buildings were also filled with tens of thousands of workers, all of whom needed security clearances simply to be near the secrets (Burr, Blanton, and Schwartz 1998). Nuclear secrecy, however, has protected not only information about how to build a nuclear bomb and deploy a nuclear arsenal, but also information about the health and environmental effects of the nuclear complex itself and other matters that might generate lawsuits (see Welsome 1999; Schwartz 1998; and Moynihan 1998). Indeed, at times "national security" has meant protecting the U.S. nuclear complex from U.S. citizens rather than from foreign adversaries. This dynamic is most clearly illustrated by a recent Department of Energy disclosure that its agencies documented adverse health effects among nuclear workers at fourteen U.S. nuclear facilities dating back to the early 1960s (NEC 2000). This revelation contradicts the long-standing position within the U.S. nuclear complex that nuclear production does not affect workers' health. Indeed, it now turns out that even as the DOE vigorously denied and legally challenged claims by workers who believed their cancers were job related, the department was collecting data supporting those claims—data that immediately took the form of nuclear secrets, protected under national security protocols. Settlements over the next decade will be in the billions of dollars, involving workers and their families throughout the U.S. nuclear complex.

Based on a compartmentalization of knowledge and a need-to-know logic of access, this system of secrecy was designed as a nationwide mechanism of social control, creating hierarchies within places like Los Alamos National Laboratory that deal in classified material, while focusing workers' attention on the minute tasks at hand. For example, at LANL, while all nuclear workers need to have a "Q clearance" to move, as they say, "behind the fence," not all Q clearances provide the same levels of access to classified material. There are thirteen classificatory levels—or "Sigmas"—within the "Restricted Data" category, and each Q-cleared weapons scientist is allowed access to information based on his or her

Sigmas.[5] Thus, Sigma 1 has to do with nuclear weapons design information, but Sigma 5 has to do with numbers of weapons in the U.S. arsenal, and Sigma 10 has to do with chemistry and metallurgy of materials used in nuclear weapons (Burr, Blanton, and Schwartz 1998: 438–39). Thus, in conversation, U.S. weapons scientists must not only negotiate the need-to-know component of weapons work, they also must make calculations about how information is divided under these security protocols (Gusterson 1996: 79). In practice, this is a difficult cognitive process because nuclear weapons are integrated physical processes that do not break down easily along security lines.

Indeed, things are often classified in one context but not in another, which also makes the management of nuclear secrets a tricky business. For example, one weapons scientist explained to me how he breached security at Los Alamos simply by bringing a sack lunch into the plutonium facility. He left his lunch on his office desk and stepped out for a minute. He came back to find a commotion. A security officer informed him that the orange he left on his desk was, in fact, a classified object. He learned that any spherical object becomes a nuclear secret once it passes over the line demarcating the secure from the open areas of the laboratory, as it could be taken as a model for the plutonium pit that drives a nuclear weapon. The weapons scientist was told that in the future he could eat the fruit or store it inside his office safe with the rest of his classified documents, but if he left the orange out on his desk unsupervised it would be a security infraction that could be referred to the FBI for investigation. Similarly, nuclear weapons information that is widely available to the public on the Internet becomes classified and is subject to all the security protocols and penalties for disclosure the moment it enters the weapons divisions at Los Alamos. This is the flip side of the "born secret" concept, that information can slip in and out of being a nuclear secret depending on context and physical location.

But let us examine a more pertinent example in light of the espionage story: nuclear weapons computer codes. Computer codes are not only at the center of the allegations against Wen Ho Lee, they also have become increasingly politicized technoscientific constructs within the U.S. nuclear complex. In the 1990s, they were identified as the "crown jewels" of U.S. national security in one official context and as profoundly "unreliable" technology in another.[6] At Los Alamos,

5. The Lee case led to a substantial revision in how nuclear weapons information is classified, including the proposed addition of three new Sigmas. See "Sigma Category Definition" posted on the Federation of American Scientists' Web site at www.fas.org/sgp/othergov/doe/sigmas.html.

6. For example, while the computer codes were represented in Wen Ho Lee's bail hearing as the foundation of U.S. national security, two months earlier, during Senate hearings over U.S. ratification

physics information becomes automatically classified when it pertains to certain temperatures and energy regimes that are only possible in nuclear technologies. In a "security immersion" talk to laboratory personnel on 21 April 1999, Stephen Younger, the director of nuclear weapons programs at Los Alamos, described the complexity of a nuclear weapon this way: "While a nuclear weapon is operating, for the few nanoseconds it is really rolling, it is the brightest thing in the solar system, the hottest thing in the solar system. Some of them are the densest things in the solar system. So they achieve conditions that you just don't find in physics textbooks." The 1,030 nuclear tests that the United States conducted during the Cold War produced data about all these processes but did not produce what weapons scientists call a "first principle" understanding of nuclear explosions. This means that while the United States has been extremely successful in building highly sophisticated nuclear weapons, scientists cannot yet model with absolute precision all the physical processes that are important to achieving a nuclear explosion. Computer simulations have been used for decades to approximate the results achieved through nuclear tests at the Nevada Test Site, but they have never produced reliable calculations. Indeed, weapons scientists will say privately that after each nuclear test they still had to "tweak the knobs" or "dial in" the results; that is, they had to manipulate the data in the computer simulation to match the experimental results.

What are now referred to as the *legacy codes* are the enormous computer programs (consisting of hundreds of thousands of lines of code) developed during the Cold War to simulate the extreme temperatures, pressures, and velocities that make up a nuclear explosion. Given the complexity of the physical processes involved in the milliseconds leading to a nuclear yield, the computer codes have long been recognized as temperamental approximations. Since Los Alamos weapons scientists no longer have the most direct experimental means of testing nuclear weapons or of improving the calibration of the legacy codes (that is, detonating nuclear devices at the Nevada Test Site), one of the central post–Cold War weapons programs at Los Alamos is the new Accelerated Strategic Comput-

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of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the "unreliability" of the codes was repeatedly evoked as a means to defeat ratification of the treaty. Moreover, the DOE changed the security classification of the nuclear weapons computer codes after they discovered Lee had downloaded them. Previously, they were not classified as "secret" or "confidential" but under the "protect as restricted data" or PARD category, a much lower classification. While penalties still exist for mishandling PARD information, the security protocols are significantly less stringent than for "classified" or "secret" data. See Broad 2000.

ing Initiative (ASCI). Under this program, the U.S. national laboratories maintain the fastest computers in the world and have new divisions devoted solely to interpreting the data produced by the weapons codes. In the mid-1990s, weapons scientists lobbied for a long-term U.S. commitment to maintaining state-of-the-art computers at the national laboratories as well as for a fleet of new nonnuclear experimental facilities to replace underground testing. These efforts were successful (to the tune of over $45 billion in new projects) largely because the legacy codes were convincingly portrayed as an insufficient means of evaluating and maintaining the U.S. nuclear arsenal on their own. Thus, the legacy codes have served as political tools as well as technoscientific constructs and have been deployed tactically throughout the 1990s as a means of shaping nuclear policy debates in Washington, D.C., after the Cold War.

In light of the espionage allegations, it is important to note that the technoscientific communities that wrote the legacy codes do not believe they are sufficient nuclear production tools on their own (May 1999: 13).[7] In our conversations, weapons scientists pointed out that the legacy codes rely on an interpretive framework that has evolved out of a half century of work at the U.S. national laboratories. Consequently, weapons scientists were divided over how much the legacy codes would help a foreign weapons program. Weapons scientists tended to correlate the value of the legacy codes with the sophistication of that country's existing weapons program, suggesting that a successful effort to translate and interpret the codes would require advanced nuclear weapons knowledge. LANL weapons scientists agreed, however, that if U.S. computer codes were transferred to another country, that country would still need to conduct a range of physical tests —that is, a series of nuclear detonations—to mechanically achieve the technology modeled in the computer codes. Thus, it is unlikely that a country could produce a nuclear weapon derived from the legacy codes in perfect secrecy, given that the required nuclear tests would be world news. U.S. nuclear secrecy does not, then, in this case protect a set of specific industrial secrets, which if transferred to a foreign power could produce an overnight nuclear arsenal, but rather keeps foreign nuclear weapons programs from finding information that could, at

7. Indeed, a loose generational gap divides LANL weapons scientists on the question of the value of the computer codes without a complementary regime of nuclear testing. Several scientists who established their expertise during the Cold War resisted making decisions about the U.S. nuclear arsenal based solely on the codes, arguing that there can be no certainty without underground tests. On the other hand, a new, post–Cold War generation of weapons scientists, who were hired into a more virtual U.S. nuclear design environment, expressed more confidence that a computer-based stockpile program would be successful in maintaining U.S. nuclear weapons.

best, speed up the development of their own research programs by pointing them in the right technoscientific direction. In other words, it is quite possible for one nation to have another's nuclear secrets and not know what to do with them.

Concepts of security and practices of secrecy within the U.S. nuclear complex have consequently never been solely concerned with containing the spread of technoscientific data about nuclear devices. Indeed, the physical processes involved in producing a nuclear yield are not secrets in the traditional sense, as they are open to discovery by any party able to conduct the appropriate scientific research. Nuclear secrecy has functioned also as an internal mechanism of social definition and control within the United States, becoming a national cultural structure as well as a means of protecting engineering data on how to build a nuclear bomb. With this social context in mind, we can identify the first casualty of the espionage allegations at Los Alamos: an openness initiative at the DOE launched in 1994 as a direct response to revelations about covert human plutonium experiments conducted during the Cold War on U.S. citizens and to widespread concerns about environmental and worker health effects from the nuclear complex (Welsome 1999). Between 1995 and 1998 over 600 million pages of documents dating from the first twenty-five years of the nuclear age were declassified, part of a larger effort to restore public trust in the Department of Energy after the Cold War. But after the espionage story broke in March 1999, all 600 million pages were quickly reclassified and subjected to a second review process in the search for errant nuclear secrets (see Aftergood 1999; Stober 1999). Moreover, the DOE Office of Classification, which was famously renamed the Office of Declassification at the start of the openness initiative, was renamed once again in 1999, this time as the Office of Nuclear and National Security Information, a marker of the renewed importance of nuclear secrecy. And finally, as a result of the espionage allegations, nuclear weapons programs were moved into their own "semiautonomous agency" within the DOE. The new National Nuclear Security Agency is designed to build a "higher fence" around the nuclear programs, to make the nuclear complex less visible, after nearly a decade of revelations about its Cold War environmental, health, and security practices. Thus, one immediate consequence of the espionage allegations has been a programmatic effort to rejuvenate the nuclear complex as a secret society, to formally redraw the lines between public accountability and secret governmentality.

The recent national dialogue about "nuclear secrets" exemplifies what Georg Simmel (1906: 465) wrote about secret societies almost a century ago; namely, that people tend to commit the "logically fallacious, but typical, error, that everything secret is something essential and significant." Not all "nuclear secrets"

involve usable technological information about how to build a bomb. Indeed, nuclear secrecy can conceal the banal details of managing a large government bureaucracy as easily as more profound information regarding the health and environmental effects of nuclear production on U.S. citizens. This new post–Cold War fixation on security—at precisely the moment when the United States, by every measure, maintains the most powerful conventional and nuclear military presence on the planet—also demonstrates that secrecy is not merely a practical means of containing military technology in a world of competing nation-states. It is also a structural means of controlling the internal challenges and national cultural contradictions within the nuclear complex itself.[8] Secrecy, however, is also wildly productive: it creates not only hierarchies of power and repression, but also unpredictable social effects, including new kinds of desire, fantasy, paranoia, and—above all—gossip.

On Racial Profiling

In his essay "Gossip and Scandal," Max Gluckman (1963: 309) argued that "the more highly organized the profession the more effective is the role of gossip" in defining a sense of membership and thus "a most important part of gaining membership in any group is to learn its scandals." The gossip among weapons scientists in Los Alamos in 1999 was, from this perspective, unsurprisingly unified. I could not find a single weapons scientist at Los Alamos who believed that espionage had actually taken place at the laboratory. Indeed, they countered that the information given to China about the W-88 warhead was not precise enough to have come from Los Alamos and pointed to several hundred other possible sources for the information within the nuclear complex. As one weapons scientist put it:

> If Wen Ho Lee had intended to divulge specific W-88 information, he certainly had access to stuff far more specific and far more useful. To put an

8. This essay was written in fall 2000 and addresses primarily the security debates of the late 1990s. These security logics were even more visible in U.S. responses to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. By March 2002, the U.S. "war on terror" was functioning both as a mode of internal state governmentality (marked by a silencing of dissent, regular appeals to unnamed threats, and an expansive use of official secrecy) and as an international instrument for enhancing the U.S. position as sole global military superpower. Before 11 September 2001, the U.S. military budget was over $331 billion—higher than the military budgets of all of America's NATO allies, Russia, China, and the so-called "rogue states" *combined*. Since 11 September, the Bush administration has undertaken the largest military buildup since the height of the Cold War and is seeking military budgets of close to half a trillion dollars a year by 2007 (Defense 2001; Dao 2002).

> analogy around it, what was told to the Chinese was "We can run a three-minute mile," but we didn't tell them how. You know, it's like "How do you run a three-minute mile? My God, what's your training regime, what's your diet? What are your running shoes?" That's the rough equivalent of what the Chinese learned, but we sure as heck didn't tell them how.

In other words, because Los Alamos has designed the world's most sophisticated nuclear arsenal, the information leaked by a senior weapons scientist from such a facility would logically be not only perfectly accurate, but also immediately helpful from a weapons design perspective.

Among weapons scientists, gossip focused on China and on Washington politics. Weapons scientists speculated (1) that China leaked the documents to see if the information they had received about the W-88 was correct (an overreaction from the United States would demonstrate that it was correct); (2) that China wanted to send a message to Taiwan about its nuclear capability and simply used the United States as a messenger; (3) that China released this information to misdirect FBI attention to Los Alamos and thereby protect the real mole somewhere else in the nuclear complex; and (4) that the entire affair was an elaborately staged ruse in which China predicted a powerfully xenophobic U.S. reaction. In this last scenario, the United States would respond to the nuclear scandal by expelling all foreign-born scientists now working within the nuclear complex and stop the technological brain drain of Chinese scientists to the United States. Thus, China would reclaim its own scientists and damage the U.S. national laboratories in a single brilliant stroke.

What is particularly remarkable about this last bit of gossip is that it exchanges one threat with another, replacing fears of nuclear espionage against the United States with fears of an attack on the laboratory's multinational workforce. U.S. national security at Los Alamos has always been produced by an international workforce. During the Manhattan Project, it was the European physicists—Enrico Fermi, Leo Szilard, Hans Bethe, Edward Teller, and others—who ultimately made the project a success. In the 1980s, both Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories had directors that were naturalized U.S. citizens. And in the post–Cold War world, Los Alamos has come to rely even more heavily on foreign-born scientists to make up its workforce; today half of all Ph.D.s in engineering in the United States are foreign nationals (LANL Fellows 1999: 3). As predicted, the nuclear espionage allegations did create an immediate backlash against foreign-born workers at the laboratory, with Asian and Asian American workers suffering an increasingly hostile work environment. By the end of 1999, the climate within the laboratory had become so bad that a number

of prominent scientists left Los Alamos, while others, particularly in the nonclassified research areas, simply refused to recruit new scientists to the laboratory. This atmosphere of suspicion has profound implications for the future of the laboratory; for example, three of the top five recruits to the laboratory in 1999, all of whom were foreign nationals (from China, Russia, and India) refused offers, citing fears of a hostile racialized workplace as the reason (LANL Fellows 1999: 6). Indeed, laboratory gossip related stories of visas, postdoctoral positions, and offices being suddenly denied to foreign-born researchers; there were also fears that the new security badges encoded information about national origin and were being used to electronically track certain scientists.

In the context of these fears, *racial profiling* became an explicit discourse within the laboratory and other U.S. nuclear facilities. In an appearance on the television program *60 Minutes* in August 1999, Wen Ho Lee claimed to be a victim of racial profiling, an accusation that was soon supported by the head of counterintelligence at LANL, who was one of the key figures in the DOE investigation of the walk-in documents.[9] Lee was singled out in the investigation because he was a Taiwanese American who had made several trips to China in the late 1980s and because his wife, Sylvia Lee, also an Asian American laboratory employee with a Q clearance, had been an energetic host for Chinese officials visiting Los Alamos. Months after Lee's public indictment in the *New York Times*, however, and while he was under twenty-four-hour-a-day surveillance by the FBI, it was revealed that Lee had been given permission to go to meetings in China and that several Anglo scientists had gone to similar meetings at the time and had not been subject to similar investigations. Moreover, Sylvia Lee was hosting the parties for Chinese visitors to Los Alamos at the behest of the FBI and was working as one of their agents, further troubling the investigation. Indeed, Wen Ho Lee also worked at times as a covert operative for the FBI. In a sting against a Chinese scientist working at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in the early 1980s, Lee wore a wire and pretended to be a Chinese agent seeking U.S. nuclear secrets. Thus, he performed—at the FBI's request—a role federal agents would later accuse him of playing in earnest: that of Chinese spy (Stober 2000; Holscher 1999). One of the central unresolved issues in Lee's case, therefore, is what kind of an agent he was and at what time—a double agent, a triple agent, a confusion of the two, or simply a fellow with profoundly bad judg-

9. As head of the counterintelligence office at LANL, Robert Vrooman was in charge of the investigation into the "walk-in" documents and has stated: "The details of this investigation are still classified, but it can be said at this time that Mr. Lee's ethnicity was a major factor" (Vrooman 1999).

ment when it comes to managing U.S. computer codes. Lee has yet to explain fully why he moved the legacy codes from a secure to a nonsecure computer and to account adequately for the missing computer tapes containing the downloaded weapons codes. However, the investigation into his actions—his nuclear secrets—has revealed other nuclear secrets within the nuclear complex, secrets that compromise the legitimacy of the proceedings against him by virtue of their identity politics.

Lee has consequently become a complicated cultural icon since his arrest, simultaneously revealing a racial problem within the nuclear complex, the growing reliance of the national laboratories on foreign-born scientists, and the inherent dangers posed by scientists who understand nuclear weapons. Although he became the sole suspect in the investigation of the walk-in documents in 1995, the FBI concluded four years later that Lee could not have transferred the W-88 information during the right window of time in the 1980s and was also unable to show that Lee had transferred any classified information to a source outside the laboratory. Thus, even as the indictment process was warming up for Lee in 1999, the FBI was starting a brand new investigation into the walk-in documents. The missing computer tapes remain, therefore, a separate matter from the espionage allegations that initiated the investigation into Wen Ho Lee in 1995. Determining Lee's civil rights became part of a larger national debate about citizenship and race in the Department of Energy, a conversation fueled by Lee's pretrial treatment.[10] During Lee's bail hearing, FBI agents argued against releasing him because, they said, any utterance by Lee in Chinese could be used as a signal to family or friends to deploy the missing computer tapes. Suggesting that a seemingly innocent phrase like "Uncle Wen says hello" could be coded message, the FBI portrayed the entire Chinese language as a specially designed code for transferring U.S. nuclear secrets out of the country (a theory the FBI failed to apply equally to the English language). Lee was subsequently locked in solitary confinement awaiting his trial and allocated one hour a week with his family in the presence of an FBI agent during which the Lee family was restricted to speaking only English (see the transcript of bail hearing, U.S. District Court for the District of New Mexico, 27 December 1999).

While the espionage allegations provoked newly racialized discourses within the nuclear complex nationally, they also have revealed a deeper problem of race in Los Alamos. In July 1999, then Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson traveled to

10. Asian American organizations held rallies on Lee's behalf in New Mexico, California, and Washington, D.C., in 2000.

Los Alamos to assure laboratory staff that they would not be singled out for investigation based on race or national affiliation. While categorically denying an official policy of racial profiling within the DOE, Richardson was confronted with not only foreign national workers' stories of harassment at the laboratory, but also more specifically New Mexican concerns. Members of neighboring Indian pueblos discussed their long-standing issues with the laboratory over land rights, environmental effects, and hiring. Similarly, Nuevomexicano laboratory workers, who have spent much of the 1990s fighting the laboratory over employment practices, reminded Richardson that a major 1995 layoff at the laboratory was overturned by the courts for disproportionately targeting "Hispanic" workers—demonstrating racial profiling of another kind in Los Alamos (see Masco 1999). To address racial tensions throughout the laboratory's multicultural, international workforce, Richardson commissioned a study on racial profiling within the DOE. The report concluded that Asian Pacific Americans were experiencing a "hostile work environment" and a sudden "glass ceiling in promotions" and workers throughout the complex were experiencing an "atmosphere of distrust and suspicion" because of coworkers "questioning the loyalty and patriotism of some employees based on racial factors" (U.S. DOE 2000a). Acknowledging for the first time that racial profiling is a de facto reality within the nuclear complex, Richardson ordered a one-day stand-down of all DOE facilities to formally address the problem.

What these events reveal is nothing less than the racialized context of the bomb itself. Because nuclear weapons are ultimately tools of "foreign relations"—that is, they are designed to threaten or kill foreign nationals—they have in their cultural makeup the fundamental question of the Other. This is a two-tiered logic, however, one involving not only other nation-states that are targeted with nuclear weapons, but also the industrial logistics of the nuclear complex itself, entailing where nuclear facilities, tests, and waste are located in the United States and the specific communities they subject to risk. The environmental legacy of nuclear production from the Cold War is projected to be a half-trillion-dollar project over the next fifty years and to present a greater engineering challenge than the original Manhattan Project (U.S. DOE 1995). A recent DOE report, in fact, has revealed a once closely held U.S. nuclear secret; namely, that the cleanup of the Cold War nuclear complex is now a millennial project that ultimately relies on technologies that have yet to be invented. At 113 sites within the United States, the DOE is responsible for:

> remediating 1.7 trillion gallons of contaminated ground water, an amount equal to approximately four times the daily U.S. water consumption;

> remediating 40 million cubic meters of contaminated soil and debris, enough to fill approximately 17 professional sports stadiums; safely storing and guarding more than 18 metric tons of weapons-usable plutonium, enough for thousands of nuclear weapons; managing over 2,000 tons of intensely radioactive spent nuclear fuel, some of which is corroding; storing, treating, and disposing of radioactive and hazardous waste, including over 160,000 cubic meters that are currently in storage and over 100 million gallons of liquid, high-level radioactive waste; deactivating and or decommissioning about 4,000 facilities that are no longer needed to support active DOE missions; implementing critical nuclear non-proliferation programs for accepting and safely managing spent nuclear fuel from foreign research reactors that contain weapons-usable highly enriched uranium; *and providing long-term care and monitoring—or stewardship—for potentially hundreds of years at an estimated 109 sites following cleanup*. (DOE 2000b: 1; my emphasis)

The cost of Cold War nuclear production thus presents an unprecedented internal threat to U.S. national security.

The environmental legacy of the Cold War nuclear complex also disproportionately affects the poor and people of color, particularly in the West (see Kuletz 1998; Masco 1999). New Mexico, for example, one of the poorest and most ethnically diverse states in the United States, has a cradle-to-grave nuclear economy—from uranium mining to nuclear weapons design and missile tests to nuclear waste storage—all within its borders. Thus, it is important to look at the nuclear complex as an arena in which the borders of the national community are defined in two ways: first, by explicit practices of nuclear targeting (i.e., who is threatened with nuclear weapons) and, second, by which communities are forced to bear the environmental and health costs of the nuclear complex itself—in other words, to risk their health for the "security" of the nation. This tension between national security and national sacrifice is what secrecy works to repress, forcing events—like an espionage scandal—that periodically open up the U.S. nuclear complex to scrutiny to necessarily evolve into much bigger debates about the terms of citizenship and the parameters of national identity supporting America's nuclear project. As a return of the repressed, however, this ambiguity between national security and national sacrifice is also immediately subject to new forms of regulation that once again attempt to resolve this contradiction through a national cultural repression. This process is perfectly illustrated by the institutional response to the espionage allegations at Los Alamos in 1999.

As the foreign national workers, primarily located in nonclassified research areas, negotiated the racialized context of work at Los Alamos in 1999, the core weapons scientist community also faced a newly politicized workplace. In a broad effort to control classified information, disk drives were pulled off computers, and a new rule was instituted requiring two people to be present whenever classified data was moved between machines. New DOE security regulations for weapons scientists were also announced, concerning everything from classification rules to computer use to travel, private conduct, and even sex. In an effort to define what kinds of personal interaction weapons scientists can have with members of other nations, the DOE issued a new rule entitled "Close and Continuing Contact with Foreign Nationals" (U.S. DOE 1999a). After defining a "close contact" with a foreign national as a relationship that involves "bonds of affection and/or personal obligation" or where employees share "private time" with a foreign national, the ruling then turns to "sexual or otherwise intimate relationships":

> Personnel do not have to report one-time sexual or otherwise intimate contact with a foreign national if (a) there will be no future contact with the foreign national, and (b) the foreign national does not seek classified or sensitive information, and (c) there is no indication that personnel are the target of actual or attempted exploitation. However, if it is likely that future social contact with the foreign national will occur—even if the future contact is expected to be in non-close (non-sexual) social settings—the relationship must be reported as a close and continuing contact. If personnel have sexual or otherwise intimate contact *on more than one occasion with the same foreign national*, regardless of circumstances of likelihood for follow-up contact, the relationship must be reported as a close and continuing contact, even if there is no expectation of future contact. Such contact must be reported regardless of whether the foreign national's full name and other biographic data are known or unknown.

This policy declares that one-night sexual rendezvous between weapons scientists and foreign nationals are not a threat to U.S. national security but "close and continuing relationships" (that is, two-night sexual meetings) are (Hoffman 1999). It requires Q-cleared employees to report any repeated contacts, sexual in particular, that involve members of a list of twenty-five "sensitive country foreign nationals"—although the list itself remains classified. The "contact" rules stipulate what kinds of conversations and contacts are allowed and what kinds require sci-

entists to report immediately to their counterintelligence officer or risk, as they now say, being "Wen Ho Lee-ed." These new regulations for weapons scientists supplement existing security protocols, including the standard FBI security review necessary to gain admission to the nuclear complex and the regular five-year follow-ups that investigate sexual and spousal relations, financial standing, drug and alcohol problems, and mental health. Within the nuclear complex, workers are expected to report on not only their own problems, but also those of colleagues, neighbors, and family members.

These new regulations thus extend the expansive Cold War logics of security into a new realm of what we might call *hypersecurity*—an overdetermined effort to contain the nuclear referent through increasingly disciplinary structures of secrecy. What the hypersecurity protocols reveal, however, is that the most portable nuclear secrets are not in documents but are locked up in the experience and knowledge of weapons scientists. So what happens when a nuclear weapons scientist is fired? Individuals are recruited into the weapons science community with an implicit promise of lifetime employment; in exchange they relinquish their rights to publish in the open literature and agree to keep their entire work history classified. Consequently, weapons scientists have been sheltered from the periodic layoffs at the national laboratories and have left the weapons programs primarily through retirement, promotion, or by returning to basic scientific research at universities (which usually requires publishing in a second nonclassified research area while working as a weapons scientist). Wen Ho Lee is therefore not only one of the few citizens publicly tried for egregious mishandling of classified information under the 1954 Atomic Energy Act, he is also one of the few senior U.S. nuclear weapons scientists who have been formally cast out of the program since Robert Oppenheimer in the mid-1950s. Lee's work history is still classified, and he may well be unemployable in the United States after the publicity of his trial. And of course, as the FBI so carefully noted, he speaks Chinese.

The nuclear fear generated by the Lee case manifested in official quarters as an immediate desire to further regulate weapons scientists, producing a major institutional change at the national laboratories in 1999: the introduction of lie detector tests. The proposed polygraphs met with immediate resistance from weapons scientists, provoking the first unionizing effort in Los Alamos history and contributing substantially to the overall climate of fear within the laboratory. While participation in the polygraph program was officially deemed "voluntary," Q-cleared employees were simultaneously informed that failure to take the test would result in a loss of access to classified material (U.S. DOE 1999b). In other words, individuals who did not submit to the tests would be effectively shut out

of national security work. LANL scientists were concerned, however, not only about losing their jobs for not submitting to the tests, but also about the scientific validity of polygraph technology. They pointed out that Aldrich Ames, the convicted Soviet spy, passed four separate lie detector tests before he was arrested. As one young weapons scientist complained:

> The evidence indicates that polygraphs are ineffective and that polygraphs are unreliable. On a personal note, I also believe they are immoral. They take invasion of privacy to an entirely new level. It's one thing to look into my bank account, to search my briefcase, to scan my computer files, and to interview everybody I've known in the last ten years; but it's another thing to strap me up to a machine which claims to be able—and I'm quoting from the DOE's own briefing—to take a picture of my emotions. I love working at Los Alamos. I love the science, the community, the public schools, the mountains. . . . But if I refuse to take a polygraph, if I refuse to be party to what I consider a grotesque invasion of privacy, then I may not be able to stay here. I may be forced to leave. (U.S. DOE 1999c: 96)

Knowing that polygraph tests are not 100 percent accurate in determining truth from falsity and easily calculating the number of employees likely to be unfairly accused of hiding secrets, most Los Alamos scientists rejected polygraphs on the basis of their technological validity.[11] In doing so, however, they both misrecognized one of the central ways in which lie detector tests are used and reiterated a basic contradiction within the logics of the nuclear complex itself.

Weapons scientists have assumed that polygraph technology is about detecting lies, making the central question the ability of the technology to perform that task. However, the CIA and FBI regularly use polygraphs not only as a measure of truth or falsity, but also as a tool of interrogation and intimidation (OTA 1983: 100). In fact, the polygraph was used this way in the Wen Ho Lee investigation. Lee passed his first lie detector test in December 1998, but in an interview with the FBI in March 1999, he was told that he failed.[12] He was then reminded of the fate of executed atomic spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and was told he had already lost his job and his retirement (see transcript of bail hearing, U.S. District Court for the District of New Mexico, 27 December 1999). To explain why he

11. The accuracy of polygraph tests has been wildly disputed, from studies claiming a less than 1 percent false positive rate to those showing that more than 20 percent of those tested were falsely accused of lying (see OTA 1983).

12. An unclassified version of the interview is available at wenholee.org/transcript4868.htm.

might have failed the polygraph (that he had, in fact, passed), Lee acknowledged that he had been contacted by Chinese officials interested in his Los Alamos work while on a trip to China in the late 1980s. Lee claims that he did not give the Chinese officials any information, but he also did not fully report this conversation to counterintelligence officers at the time. Lee was ultimately fired for this breech of the security regulations at LANL. (Lee's illegal file transfers were only discovered later and remain a separate matter from the investigation into the walk-in documents.) The polygraph was clearly used in this case as an interrogation tool rather than a measure of truthfulness, a means of drawing out a confession rather than mechanically documenting the presence of untruths.

In a broader sense, the technoscientific politics of polygraph testing mirror those of the bomb itself. For just as polygraphs need not actually provide accurate data to evoke a confession—that is, to really detect lies with a spiking line on a piece of revolving graph paper—nuclear weapons need not actually be able to detonate to produce a nuclear deterrent. It is the perception that both technologies work that is the key to their success in achieving their stated social purposes: polygraphs in rooting out secrets, nuclear weapons in deterring nuclear war. Both are also technologies that offer the illusion of a high-tech answer to the problem of the social but ultimately fall back on brute intimidation as the means to an end. But what social purpose do lie detector tests serve when aimed at the core culture of the weapons complex, the nuclear weapons scientists themselves?

Since the end of underground nuclear testing in 1992, weapons scientists have focused less on creating new technologies—new nuclear secrets—than on maintaining old ones. Quite literally the $45 billion in post–Cold War upgrades to the laboratories are designed to allow weapons scientists to watch nuclear weapons age, albeit through state-of-the-art technologies and the fastest computers in the world. Exploding nuclear weapons at the Nevada Test Site—detonations that demonstrated to the world the viability of the U.S. nuclear arsenal—have been replaced by a technoscientific concern with the effects of aging on plastic parts, electronic fuses, and nuclear components. During the Cold War, international confidence in U.S. nuclear weapons technologies was achieved through underground testing, which functioned as a kind of international political theater, in which each nuclear detonation communicated the capability of U.S. nuclear technology to a global audience.

But while the Cold War nuclear complex was energized by the constant production of new technologies, new nuclear secrets that signaled U.S. strength to a presumed insurgent Soviet Union, the post–Cold War order has had to search for

an equivalent mechanism of threat for energizing the security logics that support the nuclear complex. In the 1990s, the national laboratories began replacing underground explosions with visits from foreign nuclear scientists as a mechanism for communicating the viability of U.S. nuclear technologies. However, what is missing from this equation is the international threat once provided by the Soviet Union, a perceived danger powerful enough to force conversations about nuclear fear to begin not in New Mexico where the nuclear waste is, for example, but to remain strictly outside U.S. borders. A combination of international threat and secrecy has always enabled this separation of spheres in the United States, where the accumulating sociocultural and environmental impact of the nuclear complex here at home is not seen as connected to the potential danger posed by nuclear arsenals located overseas.

The new polygraph program attempts, then, to structurally reintroduce weapons scientists to a particular calculus of threat. Polygraphs accomplish this by underscoring that each nuclear scientist can, in the eyes of the complex itself, potentially change the "global strategic balance of power." By doing so, the new hypersecurity regulations argue that nuclear secrets are in fact still powerful and dangerous, allowing those on the inside of the complex to reclaim the right to determine access to this central U.S. national project. Hypersecurity measures not only make each weapons scientist more conscious of his or her importance to the national order, they also produce greater degrees of self-monitoring for those willing to submit to them, making the secret society all the more secret, homogenous, and unified. Rather than simply watching weapons age, weapons scientists are being structurally reminded that they are responsible, in the language of the nuclear complex, for the "ultimate defense of the nation" and the safety of the "free world." The polygraph program attempts to accomplish this, however, by ratcheting up the level of risk in everyday life for weapons scientists—risk not only from foreign agents, but also from the counterintelligence officers within the nuclear complex itself. Hypersecurity measures rely on structural intimidation to produce a productive paranoia, one requiring weapons scientists to imagine themselves as ever more at risk in everyday life but also as ever more powerful and important in their ability to influence global events.

At the height of the controversy over polygraph testing in Los Alamos in 1999, I (JM) had this exchange with a weapons scientist (WS):

WS: We've been trained a lot about security, and we get a lot of counterintelligence training. You know what's really depressing? Motivated spies will be able

to get to you and open you up like [he snaps his fingers] like that and you won't even know it. If an intelligence service is so motivated they can infiltrate you, and they can get information out of you, and you won't even know it's happening.

JM: You mean like if you were traveling or kidnapped?

WS: No. Take this interview here. How do I know you're not working for a foreign intelligence service? You know this could be a very sophisticated way for a foreign intelligence service to come in and elicit information.

JM: Wouldn't they be less obvious in their approach? [In light of the espionage concerns I had arranged the interview through the laboratory's public relations office.]

WS: Maybe. But maybe if you are really good this is exactly how you would do it.

And on that note our conversation ended abruptly, as he became vulnerable to his own invented example, trapped by the possibility of an inadvertent confession—and the potential loss of nuclear secrets. Afraid that an inability to control his own speech might dangerously shift the global balance of power, this weapons scientist perfectly embodied the post–Cold War problem of how to deploy the perfect institutional response to a threat that is neither obvious or specific but ever present and potentially apocalyptic. In the context of hypersecurity measures, the test for weapons scientists becomes how to perfectly control oneself, to measure precisely risk in everyday interactions as well as internally, to find, in other words, a perfect technological and institutional mechanism for controlling psychosocial anxiety.

Thus, just as nuclear weapons have been repeatedly mobilized to deter social ambiguity on the world stage by increasing the technological ease/risk of nuclear war since 1945, so too are the new hypersecurity technologies intended to deter nuclear weapons scientists from stepping out of line by intensifying their experience of on-the-job risk. The new hypersecurity measures not only reinforce and reinvigorate the logics of nuclear secrecy at Los Alamos, however, they also effectively drive out those scientists unwilling to tolerate a hypersecure, racialized workplace. Thus, hypersecurity measures reiterate the problem of the nuclear age itself, for just as the Cold War produced hundreds of contaminated sites—national sacrifice zones—within the United States in the pursuit of national security, so too do the hypersecurity measures further compromise the very scientific institutions they are intended to secure.

Secrecy sets barriers between men, but at the same time offers the seductive temptation to break through the barriers by gossip or confession. This temptation accompanies the psychical life of the secret like an overtone.
Georg Simmel, *On Secrecy and Secret Societies*

Simmel underscores the profound cultural work that goes into keeping secrets; for within secret societies there is always a corollary desire for revelation and exchange that must be constantly regulated for the organization to survive. I have examined some elements of this tension by showing how what may ultimately prove to have been an imagined loss of secrets at Los Alamos National Laboratory has nevertheless resulted in the entire U.S. nuclear complex reordering itself under hypersecurity measures. In Simmel's terms, I have argued that the particular "overtones" that resonate within the U.S. nuclear complex, and that constantly threaten to overturn its official secrecy, concern three linked areas: first, how secrecy performs as a general mode of social regulation within American society, not simply as a means of controlling technoscientific data about the bomb; second, the problematic foundations of race and citizenship within the nuclear complex; and third, how nuclear security relies on a misrecognition of technology's ability to perfectly control social relations and eliminate risk. The allegations of espionage at Los Alamos in 1999 put these repressed aspects of the nuclear complex on public display, briefly troubling a secret governmentality until unprecedented hypersecurity measures were mobilized to reestablish the nuclear complex as a secret society, one that controls not only how weapons scientists think and behave, but also how much of America's nuclear project remains accessible to a larger public sphere. In other words, the nuclear complex recapitulated its essential contradiction in 1999–2000: that official secrecy maintains the distinction between national security and national sacrifice. In striving to keep the internal (economic, environmental, and social) costs of the national security state invisible, state secrecy both produces and enforces an official fiction; namely, that the only legitimate forms of nuclear security and risk are located outside the territorial borders of the nation-state.

It is important, therefore, to recognize the social costs of legitimizing a new national discourse about the need to protect "America's secrets." The Wen Ho Lee affair was simply the first in a series of widely publicized U.S. "security scandals" in 1999–2000 involving a potential loss of classified information. Officials responded to these events by evoking "America's secrets" as a self-evident cate-

gory, one needing no further explanation but requiring total protection regardless of the cost to the nation. For example, in 2000, after John Deutch, former head of the CIA, acknowledged that he had illegally stored classified information about CIA covert activities on his unsecured home computer, and after a State Department laptop computer containing "above top secret" information was lost, Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright intoned: "This is inexcusable and intolerable. Such failures put our nation's secrets at risk."[13] That no one even bothered to question this open declaration from the State Department that the United States keeps "secrets" reveals perhaps the truest legacy of the Cold War—after all, the fact that states keep secrets is supposed to be a secret! But as America's first multigenerational, global conflict, the Cold War, with all its expansive new forms of secrecy, became nothing less than an organizing principle in American society. One cultural legacy of that nuclear standoff is that an "at war" mentality is now a basic feature of the U.S. national imaginary, one that is easily provoked, deployed, and acquiesced to. Correspondingly, the institutional legacy of the Cold War remains a vast military complex that constantly needs new threats to justify its continued relevance and expansion (in the 1990s: possible nuclear espionage, a potential North Korean missile, and "rogue" regimes, to name just a few; after 11 September 2001: the global "war on terror").[14] Thus, it is important to see the recent security scandals not only in terms of their individual features, but also in terms of the role they play within a broader conflict in Washington over how to capitalize on the United States's current position as the world's sole military "superpower." The strategic manipulation of real or imagined "threat" is enabled by a secret governmentality (as the details are always "top secret"), but that secret governmentality is also further legitimated by the constant evocation of new threats (such as missing computer codes, phantom missiles, and potential terrorist acts).[15] If this circuit continues, then how the nuclear weapons complex

13. The accusations against former CIA director John Deutch were similar to those against Wen Ho Lee, but the cases were handled very differently. The disparity between the hard line taken against Lee and the latitude given Deutch (who was never jailed and was ultimately pardoned by President Bill Clinton) has been evoked by supporters of Lee as an illustration of both a double standard and the role of race within the Lee investigation.

14. See Nolen 1999 for an analysis of how the 1994 Nuclear Posture Review was derailed by competing political interests in Washington and was ultimately unable to do anything but reaffirm the Cold War nuclear status quo it set out to fundamentally reform. See Klare 1995 for an analysis of the invention and deployment of the "rogue" or "terrorist" state concept at the end of the Cold War.

15. In his 2002 State of the Union speech, President George W. Bush described these potential threats to the United States as a new "axis of evil" (see transcript at whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129–11.html). In the post–11 September environment, this conceptual linkage between diverse and divergent kinds of international threat is part of a larger ideological project to enable an unprecedented global mobilization of U.S. forces and military technology.

evolves in U.S. policy and practice, and how citizens are positioned in regard to U.S. national security over the next few decades, is very likely to be nothing less than an ever more strictly policed, ever more powerfully protected, nuclear secret.

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