What’s at Stake?  When was the US not hyped up by our leaders against constructed enemies?
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Looking Back Over 60 Years


Strauss, Fox News in Age of Fear. 2016.

Porter, Manufactured Crisis…Iran Nuclear Scare. 2014.

Rothkopf, American Leadership in an Age of Fear. 2014.

OMNI: Be a Giraffe

OMNI’s Newsletters on Fear

TEXTS

Techniques of Arousing Fear


Glassner might appear to be distracted into triviality by the numerous fearsomeness of our society—Martians, plane wrecks, black men, smack, youth, crime, campuses, immigrants. But his book provides an excellent rhetorical handbook of mechanisms of fear-making: for example, how fears are sold, small dangers rather than large, exaggerated examples, overstated statistics, faulty diagnoses, misdirection, perpetuating prejudice, wars rather than police. In contrast, the books in this newsletter are about major dangers, but particularly the most threatening of all: nuclear war and global warming.

Trump: Fear and Loathing in the White House

Review: “Scary Stuff” by George Packer.
With “Fear” and Trump, Bob Woodward Has a Bookend to the Nixon Story.
Almost half a century later, the ghost of the scandal that launched Woodward’s career haunts the Trump White House. By George Packer. The New Yorker, September 24, 2018 Issue.

Bob Woodward’s “Fear” belongs on a shelf with the literature of mad kings, next to Robert Graves’s “I, Claudius,” featuring the Roman emperor Caligula, and Ryszard Kapuściński’s “The Emperor,” about the last days in the court of Ethiopia’s Haile Selassie. Those books are masterpieces of fictionalized history, while “Fear” is a remarkable feat of reporting conveyed in prose that couldn’t be called literary. But they resemble one another in their atmosphere of antic dread—the claustrophobic, gut-tightening sense that power has come utterly unmoored from reality, and no one in the palace is safe from the wild impulses of the ruler. There’s nothing comparable in American journalism, except maybe Woodward’s “The Final Days,” co-written with Carl Bernstein, about the downfall of Richard Nixon. Yet even Nixon—drunk late at night and talking to paintings in the White House residence—seems relatively sane and pitiable compared with Donald Trump. You half expect to find Woodward’s Trump ordering the execution of the entire National Security Council, declaring himself a god on Twitter, then anointing his daughter as heir to the throne.

The title of the book comes from Trump’s definition of “real power,” whether in terms of political clout or the ability to bully a woman he has victimized. But the fear around his Presidency has nothing to do with his skillful use of intimidation, and everything to do with the dangerous consequences of his erratic behavior. At Trump’s core lies a need always to look strong, which, of course, makes him look weak. In several scenes, one adviser or another struggles to find the right, flattering words that will keep the President from starting a nuclear war.

No one has any respect for Trump. In the course of the book, his chief of staff calls him “an idiot”; his Secretary of State ups it to “a fucking moron”; his Secretary of Defense compares him to an eleven-year-old; his top economic adviser and his personal lawyer consider him, respectively, “a professional liar” and “a fucking liar.” (Various denials have been issued.) Gary Cohn, the economic adviser, tells the President to his face that he’s “a fucking asshole,” while Trump calls Cohn “a fucking globalist.” When Cohn first tries to resign, Trump mocks him for being under his wife’s thumb, not to mention treasonous. There’s no end to the Cabinet members and generals whom Trump is eager to insult in front of their colleagues, or to fire by tweet. A coarse and feckless viciousness is the operating procedure of his White House, and the poison spreads to everyone. Only snakes and sycophants survive.


This article appears in the print edition of the September 24, 2018, issue, with the headline “Scary Stuff.” George Packer is the author of, most recently, The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America.
Trump’s Triumphant Fear Machine


KIRKUS REVIEW
A provocative look at the science and psychology behind fear-based politics.

Demos senior fellow Abramsky’s (The House of Twenty Thousand Books, 2015, etc.) argument feels simultaneously complex and familiar: constant sensationalism via social media and selective journalism of the Fox News variety has overwhelmed rationality within society. “Our anxieties and terrors were being nurtured by people and institutions who stood to make a buck out of those fears,” he writes. “In the campaign for the US presidency in 2016, those fears were nurtured as never before.” This American tendency to make fundamental decisions “with worst-case-scenarios as a psychic backdrop” is creating a more oppressive society, particularly for the poor and people of color, while corporate or criminal interests may profit. In crisply organized chapters, the author links a particular fear-driven aspect of life, such as extreme firearm or “prepper” culture or obsessive “helicopter parenting,” to the science behind brain chemistry and pattern recognition that may explain the ease of conditioning us to be fearful. He notes this occurred on a national level following 9/11, when citizens permitted the attackers’ fanaticism “to dictate the terms of our policy discourse.” Similarly, Abramsky is disturbed by Donald Trump’s rhetorical embrace of torture, which he views as an attempt to make his supporters complicit in any such actions. While more benign, he draws connections to fear-based movements such as preppers or anti-vaccination parents as part of a broader trend against rational risk calculation: “It turns out that pretty bizarre understandings of risk and fear are the norm rather than the exception.” The author argues that neurologists are using MRIs to understand how “simple presentiments of risk” have left us vulnerable to the manipulations of bigots. Though his argument can seem broad or overly tailored to current trends, Abramsky presents a clearly written synthesis of science and
sociology.
A thoughtful progressive feint against the vulgar fearmongering of the moment.

THE PAST 60 YEARS

Obsession with Security

**FORTRESS AMERICA: How We Embraced Fear and Abandoned Democracy** by Elaine Tyler May. 2017.

Publisher’s Description:

An award-winning historian untangles the roots of America’s culture of fear, and argues that it imperils our democracy.

For the last sixty years, fear has seeped into every area of American life: Americans own more guns than citizens of any other country, sequester themselves in gated communities, and retreat from public spaces. And yet, crime rates have plummeted, making life in America safer than ever. Why, then, are Americans so afraid—and where does this fear lead to?

In this remarkable work of social history, Elaine Tyler May demonstrates how our obsession with security has made citizens fear each other and distrust the government, making America less safe and less democratic. *Fortress America* charts the rise of a muscular national culture, undercutting the common good. Instead of a thriving democracy of engaged citizens, we have become a paranoid, bunkerized, militarized, and divided vigilante nation.

**Roger Ailes Fox News Fear Factory**


This is the safest time in human history. So why are we all so afraid? [http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/why-were-living-in-the-age-of-fear-w443554](http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/why-were-living-in-the-age-of-fear-w443554)

For the media and politicians, your fear is worth billions Jen Senko believes that her father was brainwashed. As Senko, a New York filmmaker, tells it, her father was a "nonpolitical Democrat." But then he transferred to a new job that required a long commute and began listening to conservative radio host Bob Grant during the drive. Eventually, he was holing himself up for three hours every day in the family kitchen, mainlining Rush Limbaugh and, during commercials, Fox News.

How Roger Ailes Built the Fox News Fear Factory *Rolling Stone* 2011. (See: Gabriel Sherman's best-selling book on Ailes, *The Loudest Voice in the Room*, which details Ailes' rise to power and how he built Fox News into a cable news behemoth.)
The onetime Nixon operative has created the most profitable propaganda machine in history. 

Inside America's Unfair and Imbalanced Network

"It reminded me of the movie Invasion of the Body Snatchers," Senko says. "He used to love talking to different people to try to learn their language, but then he became angry about illegal immigrants coming to the country, that they were taking jobs from Americans, and that English was becoming the secondary language."

Senko is not alone. A California schoolteacher says her marriage fell apart after her husband started watching Fox News and yelling about government plots to take away his guns and freedom. On the left, my friend Phoebe has had to physically remove her mom, who she describes as a "Sam Seder news junkie," from family functions for raging against relatives about the "dark place" this country is going to.

"All of these emotions, especially fear, whip people up into a state of alarm and they become angry and almost evangelical about what they believe," says Senko. "It's like a disease infecting millions of people around the country."

If this election cycle is a mirror, then it is reflecting a society choked with fear. It's not just threats of terrorism, economic collapse, cyberwarfare and government corruption – each of which some 70 percent of our citizenry is afraid of, according to the Chapman University Survey on American Fears. It's the stakes of the election itself, with Hillary Clinton at last month's debate conjuring images of an angry Donald Trump with his finger on the nuclear codes, while Trump warned "we're not going to have a country" if things don't change.

Meanwhile, the electorate is commensurately terrified of its potential leaders. According to a September Associated Press poll, 56 percent of Americans said they'd be afraid if Trump won the election, while 43 percent said they'd be afraid if Clinton won – with 18 percent of respondents saying they're afraid of either candidate winning.

Trump's rhetoric has only served to fan the flames: "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists." "It's only getting worse." "You walk down the street, you get shot."

Build a wall. Ban the Muslims. Obama founded ISIS. Hillary is the devil. Death, destruction, violence, poverty, weakness. And I alone can make America safe again.

But just how unsafe is America today?

According to Lewis & Clark College president Barry Glassner, one of the country's leading sociologists and author of The Culture of Fear, "Most Americans are living in the safest place at the safest time in human history."

Around the globe, household wealth, longevity and education are on the rise, while violent crime and extreme poverty are down. In the U.S., life expectancy is higher than ever, our air is the cleanest it's been in a decade, and despite a slight uptick last year, violent crime has been trending down since 1991. As reported in The Atlantic, 2015 was "the best year in history for the average human being."

So how is it possible to be living in the safest time in human history, yet at the exact same time to be so scared?
Because, according to Glassner, "we are living in the most fearmongering time in human history. And the main reason for this is that there's a lot of power and money available to individuals and organizations who can perpetuate these fears."

For mass media, insurance companies, Big Pharma, advocacy groups, lawyers, politicians and so many more, your fear is worth billions. And fortunately for them, your fear is also very easy to manipulate. We're wired to respond to it above everything else. If we miss an opportunity for abundance, life goes on; if we miss an important fear cue, it doesn't.

"The more we learn about the brain, the more we learn it's not something that's supposed to make you happy all the time," says Andrew Huberman, a Stanford neurobiology professor who runs a lab studying fear. "It's mostly a stress-reactive machine. Its primary job is to keep us alive, which is why it's so easy to flip people into fear all the time."

In other words, our biology and psychology are as flawed and susceptible to corruption as the systems and politicians we're so afraid of. In particular, when it comes to assessing future risks, there is a litany of cognitive distortions and emotional overreactions that we fall prey to.

MORE (a major article) http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/why-were-living-in-the-age-of-fear-w443554

Manufactured Iran Scare


CAPSULE REVIEWMay/June 2014 IssueMiddle EastIran

Reviewed by John Waterbury.

Porter is a journalist who has reported on Iran for several years. He argues that Iran’s nuclear energy program is peaceful and that widely cited evidence of the Islamic Republic’s attempts to design nuclear weapons relies on fabrications concocted by Israel and the United States. He takes seriously the declarations of Iran’s supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, and of his predecessor, Ruhollah Khomeini, that nuclear weapons are un-Islamic and that Iran does not seek to develop them. To explain Iran’s record of deception relating to its nuclear program, Porter claims that U.S. efforts to prevent Iran from developing its civilian nuclear program have left Tehran with no choice but to work covertly and cover its tracks. He points to domestic political factors in Israel and the United States to explain why Tel Aviv and Washington would conspire in this alleged ruse to mislead the world about Iran’s intentions. The risk for Israel and the United States, of course, is that they might have to go to war to confront a threat that, Porter alleges, they know does not exist.

NATIONAL INSECURITY: BUSH AND OBAMA FEAR-BASED POLICIES

American Leadership in an Age of Fear by David Rothkopf. Public Affairs, 2014. 496pp. [These related books are in Mullins:
A distinguished journalist and scholar looks at the shaping of America’s national security and foreign policy for the past decade.

We live, writes Rothkopf (Power Inc.: etc.), in an age of fear in which the instant delivery of horrific images ratchets up the dread of terror attack, even as the country suffers a financial meltdown. These national emotional traumas help account for the swings in our policymaking, from the George W. Bush administration’s “overheated” response to the 9/11 attacks to the consequent temporizing of the Barack Obama administration, desperate to be seen as “un-Bush.” Bringing to bear his own government experience and decades of writing about these issues, Rothkopf sympathetically examines the two presidents and their principal advisers—he’s interviewed over 100 of them—and demonstrates how the sense of threat informed so many of their decisions during this highly charged era. Focusing evenhandedly on the personalities that transformed so much of our foreign policy and national security strategies, he considers the Bush team’s second-term makeover, the surge in Iraq, his handling of the 2008 financial crisis and the role played by national security in that year’s election. The author examines the construction of the Obama foreign policy team, the failure of Richard Holbrooke’s AfPak shop within the State Department and of George Mitchell’s efforts in the Middle East, the illusory “pivot” to Asia and “reset” with Russia, the secret outreach to Iran, and the flat-footed response to the Arab Spring, the drone war, and the widespread and largely unknown (until the Snowden disclosures) cyberwar. Rothkopf emphasizes the difficulty of properly calibrating our policy amid the zeitgeist of fear, and he makes some proposals that might allow us to better adjust.

A sharp, immensely readable account of how we’ve arrived at this juncture and where matters stand as we anticipate the election of a new president.

JOIN OMNI
What is the mission of OMNI?
With the Quakers (the AFSC, FCNL):
a world free of war and the threat of war,
a society with equity and justice for all,
a community where every person’s potential may be fulfilled,
an earth restored. . . .
(my addition: an informed, fearless, defiant public).
With the United Nations:
Adhering to the UN’s Charter and the UDHR.
The entire peace, justice, and ecology movement, of which OMNI is a part, seeks to create a better world. OMNI was created in 2001 precisely because numerous social organizations existed in NWA, but not one to promote world peace actively through social and economic justice, equality, human rights, and democracy, and to demote violence, cruelty, secrecy, surveillance, and political repression, especially by banning nuclear weapons, connecting local and global. Later (by 2006) we added the even more urgent problems arising from warming. OMNI was never intended to be or perceived as a passive or lukewarm or entertaining undertaking. Plenty of organizations exist for that. Or turn on Prime Time.

BE A GIRAFFE
DON’T FEAR, STICK YOUR NECK OUT
Something New and Maybe Wonderful
Ann Medlock via uark.edu
Mon, Nov 26, 2018, 11:49 PM (9 to Jam hours ago)

Celebrate Arkansas’ Giraffe: SAM TOTTEN, preeminent opponent of genocide: scholar and rescuer.

A sample of OMNI Newsletters on Fear, exposing the sources and consequences, and suggesting cures.
US WAR ON/OF TERROR
Newsletter #12, June 12, 2015
Contents of OMNI’s Newsletters on US Culture of Fear, #2, November 19, 2007

Fear-Up Technique

Molly Ivins v. Fear-mongers

3 Local Writers v. Fear

George Arnold: Ann White and White Flour Scare

Washington County Court  House Security

Terrorism Xenophobia

Nuclear Enemies

Police Shoot to Kill

Pentagon/White House Use of Fear

From Before WWII to Bush-Cheney

Diverse Public Fears
CONTENTS US Culture of Fear #3, January 16, 2011.
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/2011/01/newsletter-3-on-fear.html
Manufacturing Fear
Books
Robert Reich on START and Intolerance
Noam Chomsky
Fear Social Justice?
War on Terror Fear Mongering
USA Today on Social Security
More Books on Fear and Critical Thinking

Contents US Culture of Fear #4
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/2013/03/fear-and-fear-mongering-usa-newsletter-4.html
Dick, Religious Discrimination and Persecution
Dick’s Letter to Free Weekly, Fear-Based Foreign Policy
Donahue’s Film, Body of War
Engelhardt’s Book on Fear USA
Lieven Review of Mueller, Terrorism Hype
Engelhardt, US National Security State Terror Threats
Lean, Fear of Muslims
Wallechinsky, Big Pharmas, Profits from Disease Threats
Horwitz and Wakefield, Anxiety or Mental Disorder?

END FEAR NEWSLETTER #5 January 25, 2019

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Eaarth

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