

International Biopolitics

Foucault, Globalisation and Imperialism

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Abstract: In this article, I present a new Foucauldian reading of the international, via Foucault's concept of 'biopolitics'. I begin by surveying the existing Foucauldian perspectives on the international, which mostly take as their point of departure Foucault's concept of 'governmentality', and mostly diagnose a 'global governmentality' or 'global biopolitics' in the current era of globalisation. Against these majority positions, I argue that analysis of the contemporary international through the lens of Foucauldian biopolitics in fact shows us that our world system is marked by a parasitic imperialism of rich sovereign states over poor ones, carried on at the level of populations.

Keywords: biopolitics; biopower; Foucault; governmentality; international

It is the distant man who pays for your love of your neighbour.¹

Of all civilizations, the Christian West has undoubtedly been, at the same time, the most creative, the most conquering, the most arrogant, and doubtless the most bloody.²

Biopolitics and Governmentality

Michel Foucault taught us that power is everywhere (see Kelly, 2008). His published analyses were targeted to reveal what he saw as the unexamined relations of power, in such a way as to challenge the dominant state-centred understanding of power. During the late 1970s, however, in lectures that have only lately become widely available, Foucault did himself turn to analyse the power of the state, first through the development of his concept of 'biopower', and then that of 'governmentality'.³

Foucault's focus here was almost exclusively in relation to domestic policy, however: he made no serious attempt to study the power

relations that obtain between polities.⁴ In this gap, a literature has grown up applying Foucault's thought to the international. Most famously, perhaps, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have purported to apply Foucault's concept of biopower to argue that there is in fact a new worldwide 'network power', called Empire (Hardt and Negri, 2000: xiv). Though Hardt and Negri use the notions of 'biopolitics' and 'biopower' in a way that seems to imply that they mean to use Foucault's concept (Ibid.), however, their usage has nothing in common with Foucault's.⁵ Most tellingly, they define 'biopower' and 'biopolitics' as polar opposites (Hardt and Negri, 2004) where Foucault uses the two terms interchangeably (as I will do henceforth).⁶

A literature has, however, also grown up which is unambiguously Foucauldian in treating the international, a Foucauldian approach to international relations which primarily employs Foucault's notion of governmentality, rather than his notion of biopower/biopolitics. Within this literature, we can distinguish between those who claim there is a 'global governmentality' and those who are critical of such a claim. The former school argue that we are in an era where 'governmentality' has assumed global proportions. Other have criticised this approach, however, as I will. Mitchell Dean has, from a governmentality perspective, recently reasserted—indeed, asserted that it must be obvious to everyone today—that the national state has a continued basic importance in the contemporary era of 'globalisation' (Dean, 2007). Jan Selby has argued that Foucauldian approaches to the international fail by simply 'scaling up' Foucault's analysis of domestic politics to the international level, seeing a global governmentality, a global biopolitics where there is none (Selby, 2007).

I endorse both these critiques. The 'global governmentality' perspective itself is far from unitary, however, because of the ambiguities in the term 'governmentality', as developed by Foucault. Sometimes Foucault applied the term to mean a conjunction of ideas and practices, a 'governmental rationality', at other times to mean government itself; at times he uses it in an historically limited sense, and at others in a more expansive sense, equating in fact to his notion of power in general.⁷ Some scholars, for example Nancy Fraser, use the term 'global governmentality' without troubling to define the term 'governmentality' at all, but all in using the concept latch onto one or other sense developed by Foucault.

Fraser, for her part, ultimately identifies 'governmentality' with government in a conventional sense: for her, global governmentality is a matter of global government, the emergence of a global tier of

government above nation-states. Nicholas J. Kiersey, on the other hand, uses the term in the narrow sense of a global governmental rationality, claiming that there is today one rationality that is dominant across the world, namely neoliberalism (Kiersey, 2009). Michael Merlingen, takes ‘governmentality’ in the most general sense developed by Foucault, to mean power in general, arguing that power operates at an international level, in an international network of power relations.⁸ Lastly, Michael Dillon and Julian Reid have used the term ‘global governmentality’ while taking ‘governmentality’ to be more or less synonymous with Foucault’s concept of biopolitics.

Kiersey and Merlingen’s claims here are then rather limited: neither imply that there is anything particularly extraordinary going on at the international level. This is not to deny the usefulness of their work, rather simply to point out that their analyses differ from Fraser’s and Dillon and Reid’s in not diagnosing any major change in the structure international relations in the era of ‘globalisation’.

Clearly, there are developments in this era that point in the direction of ‘global governmentality’, in the sense of world government – for one thing, the development of international institutions and international law, pointed to by Fraser (2003). Dillon and Reid (2001) however argue the exact opposite to her: ‘biopolitical governance seeks to govern without government’; that is, what we are seeing today is some kind of global governmentality that works differently to the government of nations. This is redolent of Hardt and Negri’s view, and that of other scholars of globalisation, who have argued that today it is the powers of capital, of transnational corporations, above the nation-state that define global politics. Like Hardt and Negri’s vision of ‘biopolitical’ ‘Empire’, Dillon and Reid’s departs from Foucault, although to nowhere near the same extent. Foucault does not distinguish between ‘governance’ and ‘government’, as Dillon and Reid do, nor indeed does he suggest that biopolitics can be opposed to government in any sense.

‘Biopolitics’, in contrast to ‘governmentality’, has a well defined and invariant meaning in Foucault’s work, and moreover, the notion of biopower is the one concept in his entire body of work that Foucault actually does apply to international relations, in the final lecture of *Society Must Be Defended*, which concerns the way biopolitical states—‘biopolitics’, as I have called them (Kelly, 2004)—relate to their outsides, namely via the mechanism Foucault tendentiously calls ‘state racism’.

Foucault defines biopolitics/biopower as a *technology* of power, implying that it is invented at a particular time, can incorporate

different particular techniques and inventions, can be deployed flexibly by any agency and transmitted as know-how. Biopower is for Foucault specifically the technology that enables the control of populations. It involves techniques as diverse as censuses, ballots, hydrography and insurance policies, encompassing governmentality. 'Population' is itself constituted by biopolitics: there is no 'population' in the modern sense before biopolitics. Population only appears as such in the eighteenth century; before that, 'population' just referred to people being present in a given area, not a 'political personage' (Foucault, 2009).

The meaning of the emergence of the population can be understood by contrast with the previous technology of control over people en masse, which Foucault calls 'sovereign power'. Sovereign power was a technology of spectacular and extraordinary physical violence: people were kept in check primarily by sudden, ad hoc interventions by the sovereign, enforcing fealty on pain of death. In contrast to the 'biopolitics' of biopower, sovereign power is 'thanatopolitics' (Foucault, 2000: 416): the former controls people through the use of life, through caring for people's organic wellbeing, while the latter uses death, or exposure to the risk of death, to keep people in line. The former has replaced the latter as the dominant mechanism of the state domestically. However, thanatopolitics remains necessary as a tool at the limit of biopolitical regulation: while biopower may reduce the likelihood of a rebellion, say, there is still no technology for controlling a rebellion once it has broken out and is threatening state authority other than the use of lethal force; similarly, thanatopolitics is the technology to which states resort in their confrontations with one another, Clausewitz's 'politics by other means'.

Hence, Dillon and Reid's claim that biopolitical governance means governing 'without government' seems to miss the central point about biopolitics, that it is an aid to governing. True, there is in fact nothing about the concept of biopolitics that implies government in the narrow sense of an institutional state apparatus: it is conceivable that we might see a biopolitics that is entirely private, or entirely privatised. Historically, this is not how biopolitics has operated, but can we say that there is today a *global biopolitics* that operates in this way, without global government, as Dillon and Reid claim? Indeed, is there a global biopolitics *at all*, as Maija Holmer Nadesan has similarly claimed, albeit in passing, constitutive of a global population governed in global governmentality (Nadesan, 2008: 189)?

Foucault himself was, I think, clear enough that there was no global biopolitics in his own time, citing that 'outside the Western

world, famine exists, on a greater scale than ever' as one axis on which life 'escapes' 'techniques that govern and administer it', but of course it is possible that things have changed in the intervening decades (Foucault, 1998). The question of whether there is a global biopolitics, rather than 'global governmentality', comes down to whether these two things exist: a global *population*, and a global *apparatus* that would allow its constitution and regulation. If there are no such things, it would rule out not only the existence of a Foucauldian global biopolitics as such, but would also imply that any 'global government' that might exist is not of the same order as conventional, national governments.

Borders

The first point against the existence of a global biopolitics, is the continued existence of borders between states. While territorial borders have arguably declined in importance, this belies their displacement in favour of what William Walters has appropriately dubbed the 'biopolitical border'.

Biopolitics as it has historically existed has always had its border. On Foucault's account this is necessitated by the clear contradiction between biopolitics and thanatopolitics: the former tries to extend and maximise life, while directing it, where the latter either allows it to continue without direction or destroys it. To deal with this contradiction, where both are in operation, a principle of demarcation must exist to determine who is covered by which technology. This principle is what Foucault calls 'state racism'.⁹ Thanatopolitics must be deployable against enemies of the state both inside (for example, criminals) and outside its borders. State racism is the device by which these elements are differentiated from the population cared for by biopower. The use of the term 'racism' here is a mark of Foucault's genealogy of this exclusion, through Western discourses of 'race war'. Foucault's point is that those outside the population are declared to be of a different 'race', and those inside who are deemed to be its enemies are declared to be an unhealthy element of the 'race'. Even though the explicit vocabulary of race is today taboo in official discourses, insisting on the term 'racism' reminds us that the functional distinctions remain.

The international dimension of state racism occurs at the border of the biopolity. The biopolitical border is different to the border as ordi-

narily conceived, which is as a territorial division between the land of one state and the land of another. The biopolitical border divides not land, but populations. The biopolitical border increasingly replaces the older, 'geopolitical' border, particularly within the European 'Schengenland':¹⁰ biopolitical borders between the old nation-states remain, while the old territorial borders cease to operate as barriers to the movement of people. This displacement is a new one: even after the birth of biopolitics, the territorial boundary was long the primary means of separating populations.¹¹ States remain territorial, of course, and as such the biopolitical border to an extent incorporates the territorial border: the territorial border can operate as a place where people are filtered as to what population they belong to, but the biopolitical border extends elsewhere, both within the territory of the state and outside it.

People cross territorial borders, without being allowed to join the population associated with the territory into which they cross, just as they are allowed to leave that territory without being assumed to have left the population. Illegal migrants are in precisely this position of having crossed territorial borders without being able to surmount the biopolitical border: once they have penetrated the national territory, they find themselves biopolitically excluded, albeit to different extents in different territories; in some places they may be able to access health care, to send their children to school, to obtain drivers' licences, but they never enjoy the full range of protections of the legal resident. Legal immigrants may face obstacles too: they may be on limited visas, which restrict their access to welfare provisions. Today more than ever there are a range of interstitial states between inclusion and exclusion, a many-layered, highly selective biopolitical border. Doubtless, the notion of a population is something of an abstraction—we cannot always clearly assign an individual to one population or another—but the degrees of biopolitical inclusion are precisely mapped out in policy, states and institutions going to the trouble of clearly defining whom they will help and under what circumstances, classifying different kinds of residence and citizenship. These rules follow particular exclusionary principles, which can be analysed.

The biopolitical border is permeable broadly on the basis of advantage to the inside: while not perfect in this regard, it operates to allow what is advantageous to pass through it inwards, and reject or even expel (deport) what is disadvantageous. This principle of selection has of course been noted by thinkers who do not make use of the notion

of biopolitics in making them, albeit most notable among these are two French philosophers, Étienne Balibar and Robert Castel, who were close to and clearly influenced by Foucault.

The granting of asylum to refugees is something of an exception to this principle of biopolitical advantage, but refugee policy may certainly be understood as a form of self-interestedness by states: the international conventions that govern asylum were agreed on because they at the time suited the signatories; refugees, moreover, are generally accepted only from countries to whose regimes the recipient nation is hostile, demographically weakening those countries and facilitating opposition exile groups.¹² If there is, on the other hand, any indication that refugees are bringing about any degradation of the stability and wellbeing of the recipient population, this is taken as a contraindication to the current asylum regime. Ultimately, politicians do not argue that we ought to allow refugees in for humanitarian reasons *despite* their burdening the population with various problems; even refugee advocates typically claim that the population ultimately benefits from refugees. Allowing any and all economically active people into Western countries regardless of their background and skill-set is indeed itself seen by some as good for the population, because their youth and high-birth rates fend off the demographic catastrophe promised by the declining birth-rate of the rich countries. The population benefits from getting full-grown workers, without having to support them economically through a non-productive childhood. The orthodoxy today is that one must meet more stringent criteria than mere capacity to work, however.

This migration moreover has an effect on the outside: broadly, migration to First World countries strengthens the recipient population at the expense of the populations that produced them. One group whose migration is generally encouraged by First World governments are professionals with a crucial biopolitical role, such as health professionals, and those with technical and technocratic knowledge. There are flows here between all countries, but it has been shown in medicine, perhaps the most biopolitically important profession, that this 'brain drain' of people flows regularly from poorer to richer countries, hierarchically leading towards the richest countries, with the United States the ultimate beneficiary (Ncayiyana, 1999). Overall, the people who come to rich countries from the poor countries are themselves better off and better skilled than the average in the countries they come from: people in the Third World typically do not have the resources to reach the West, even illegally. This is true also of the

refugees who reach the West, at least relative to the much greater mass of refugees who do not.

On the other side of the ledger are the remittances sent home by migrants, remittances which now constitute the main form of external finance in Sub-Saharan Africa (The World Bank, 2006). If such remittances lead to economic growth that will cause the relevant economies to develop such that they do not lose qualified personnel, then this might in the long term compensate for the short term loss of people. They have not done so far, however, but rather have acted as an impetus for people to emigrate, thus degrading the developmental capacity of the country.

The overall impact of the migration regime is not merely self-serving, but a form of biopolitical parasitism, by which rich countries draw life from the pool of humanity outside its population. I mean this less metaphorically than might be imagined. Thus, far from a global biopolitics or global population, at the border we see the starkest of contrasts between different populations, a membrane that not only divides populations, but is the point of suction of vitality from one side to the other.

Barry Hindess has claimed, however, that there is in this nevertheless a global governmentality that falls short of a global biopolitics, in the shape of a 'supra-national regime of government' that operates precisely by 'the division of humanity into the populations of particular states' (2002: 130). Hindess here question-beggingly assumes that humanity is naturally unitary, a 'global population', of which all nations are 'sub-populations', whereas actually no populations exist (for Foucault) prior to their biopolitical constitution (2000: 1486; 2002: 130). Hindess understands that the division of populations one from another is artificial, but not that some work via the state is required to constitute them individually as such in the first place; Hindess' argument is rather that it is the division inaugurated by the Peace of Westphalia alone that constitutes them (2002: 131). But this characterisation of Westphalia is inaccurate: the Westphalian order, like the treaties from which it derives its name, is not supranational but *international*. It is not something in addition to the sovereign states, but an agreement among them to respect one another: it implies *no* supranational or even international institutions, and on the contrary presupposes the prior existence of sovereign states to agree to it. It establishes moreover no mitigation of their rights beyond a common agreement to limit their actions in respect of one another. Hindess speaks of a conspiracy to prevent the movement of popula-

tions over borders, but really there need not be any such conspiracy—even if in practice there are sometimes such conspiracies. The control of the movement of populations is not part of the Westphalian systems, and while multilateral treaties may involve reciprocal arrangement to police the movement of people, this does not imply supranationality, but rather precisely international agreement. Moreover, in any case, it is possible for the policing of borders to be unilateral in the Westphalian system: one country may police people coming to and fro between it and its neighbour without the neighbour doing anything at all.

It is not biopolitics itself that makes borders necessary: rather, it is the exclusion of masses of people from biopolitical care that makes them necessary; if there are to be people outside, who want to come in, but who are not allowed, then sovereign power must be deployed against them to prevent them getting inside. This exclusion means that there is no global biopolitics, that the biopolitics that we have in the First World is not globalised. This exclusion is biopolitically necessary, because the demographic outside is a risk, since the biopolitical provision, or indeed the general level of wealth, on the outside is lower than that afforded to the population inside, creating the motivation for a movement of people across borders into our biopolitics. Were our biopolitics globalised, this would mean there would be no biopolitical border: neither a need to exclude others, nor anything from which to exclude them.

Aid

One might argue that there is a countervailing phenomenon to the accumulation of human capital through our selectively permeable borders in the deployment of medical and technical personnel from the rich countries to poor countries in aid programs, and indeed as volunteers. Of course, as we have seen, the general trend of such migration of personnel is overwhelmingly in the opposite direction, and those from rich countries who work in poor countries do not typically stay in the latter long term, thus do not enrich the population in the same way that economic migrants to the rich countries do.

However, the flow of aid from the rich to poor countries is increasing, which would seem *prima facie* to be a contrary tendency to any parasitism. Yet, the overall effect of aid is, like that of migration controls, in the self-interest of the richer countries. One should be wary

indeed in this regard of what is called 'aid', since loans, including World Bank loans, that shackle recipients, are sometimes categorised as aid, and even less conditional aid is typically given in situations where there is an obvious strategic interest to the donor;¹³ the largest aid recipients by far today are the oil producers Iraq and Nigeria, for example.

Certainly, there is no question of any serious sacrifice being made by the First World to help the Third in aid donation. The UN has set a benchmark for aid of 0.7 per cent of donor countries' GDP and it is not being met.¹⁴ Private donations pale in comparison to the still ultimately insufficient donations of states.

There is moreover a tactical logic to aid. Aid has the general function of security for the donor country: it keeps the stability of recipient countries within a range of tolerances necessary for geopolitical security, prevents famine and disorder, which in turn prevents the problems of one area spilling over into other areas, as well as greasing the wheels of trade (particularly in the case of aid to middle income countries), and serving a propaganda function. There is no hidden conspiracy here: these functions are all quite explicit, government spending on aid being justified explicitly on the basis of self-interest that aid is necessary to geopolitical stability, good for trade, that it will help our friends and enhance our reputation abroad.

Aid is not an optional extra to the security of the donor populations. It is rather an external projection of domestic policy, like the use of thanatopolitics. The clearest example of this is aid targeted at (preventing) pandemics: disease can cross borders, so global efforts to combat such diseases are protective to any given population. In principle, it might be possible simply to quarantine one's population, but of course this would have far-reaching negative consequences, particularly economic. AIDS is the prime example of a pandemic today which the rich countries try to control: USAID spent \$2.8 billion on fighting AIDS in 2006. Compare this with the \$100 million expenditure fighting malaria in 2005; malaria kills more people, but will not spread to the rich biopolities. Indeed, one of the main claims now made by campaigners seeking funding for anti-malaria campaigns is that malaria is catalysing the spread of HIV; this might explain recent increases in funding to anti-malaria programs. There is no question that in the case of AIDS, calls for funding to fight it in the Third World are routinely couched in terms of security—although some have also conversely argued that the AIDS pandemic has positive security outcomes by controlling population growth, which licenses some level of indifference on the part of governments (Elbe, 2005).

Now, humanitarian and development aid neither kills people nor lets them live—rather it makes them live, which makes it a case of biopolitics. It is an inferior biopolitics, however, applied only to protect the core population, as Mark Duffield has argued: ‘International development, with its avowed aim of reducing poverty and strengthening social resilience is a biopolitical technology. It is a biopolitics, however, that is different from that associated with the massified insurance-based safety-nets of developed society’ (Duffield, 2006). The inferior biopolitics of the outside resembles the biopolitics of the inside insofar as it involves monitoring and intervention. Aid may look like a global biopolitics, then, as Dillon and Reid have claimed: ‘biopolitical global development and aid policies constitute a complex population that one might call “the global poor”’; since where there is a population, there is a biopolitics, this implies that there is ‘a form of global biopolitics’ (Dillon and Reid, 2001: 48). However, the inferior biopolitics is so haphazard that it barely counts as biopolitics, providing no guaranteed minimum: there is of course no world state, hence no world population; some people in the world are left entirely outside this inferior biopolitics, and the coverage of billions varies wildly across time and space. International organisations, such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) play a critical role in the inferior biopolitics, particularly in data collection (Elbe, 2005), and also in coordination of responses to biological problems in the Third World, but they are responsible for a small proportion of aid dispersal; most aid still comes directly from First World national treasuries, as does most of the budget of these organisations.

Aid is not only self-interested, moreover, but, like the migration regime, tends actively to undermine biopower in the Third World. Here we are taking a position similar to that of dependency theory in international relations. The difference is our basis: we do not argue on the basis of a relationship between economies through trade, but simply that aid interferes crucially and specifically with biopolitics in a way that harms aid recipients quite autonomously from any economic ‘dependency’; in this way, our argument is immune to the empirical objections that have largely discredited dependency theory.

Criticisms of aid as unhelpful are made by libertarian economists such as James Shikwati, though the direction of our conclusions is entirely opposite to theirs: while the libertarian-influenced critique of aid is of a piece with a critique of government intervention, a biopolitical perspective tells us that government is a necessary element of a

social system, and it is the development of the whole, including of government itself, that is retarded by intervention from outside. Our position has more in common with that of Yash Tandon's critique of 'aid dependence' (2008).

The aid system involves flows from without, which has certain corrupting effects, which vary according to the distribution conduits for aid. Aid distribution can be either through local agents, or directly by the donor organisation. In the former case, distribution can either be delegated to the state or to 'civil society' organisations. There is a tendency for donors to try to avoid distribution through official, state channels because of concerns about corruption. The concerns are well placed: aid is a powerfully corrupting influence, but on anyone who touches it, not just the state; aid's value itself constitutes an incentive to misdirect it.

If the donors disperse funds directly to governments, those governments are now getting their funds from somewhere other than their population. Where even brutal regimes have to show some concern for their population qua the ultimate source of their power, regimes which are recipients of aid have less reason to care about the wellbeing of their people—or, rather, they now have to appear to care about the welfare of their population for the purposes of satisfying donors, but it is the donors' consent, not the population's, that now becomes the main concern. Governments may still be concerned about rebellions, but they can now buy off the people over which they rule with money from outside, rather than cultivating their countries' endogenous productive capacity. For all donors' newfound concern with 'good governance', the effect of aid is to undermine the relationships necessary for functioning biopolitics.

If, on the other hand, as is increasingly the case, donors bypass governments and deal directly with civil society, this leads to the irrelevance and atrophy of the state, in favour of organisations that do not perform the coordinating functions required for biopolitics, and, moreover, like the government that receives aid, are as a result less likely to be profoundly concerned about the people in their care. As Mark Duffield has argued, the fashionable model of 'sustainable development' in fact makes people, rather than states, responsible for their own biopolitics, thus ruling out the development of the complex governmental biopolitics of developed nations (2006).

Aid directly administered by Western governments or NGOs, on the other hand, means that people have a relation to those organisations, not to their own state, or even their own civil society: they have

less reason to care about their own state, to engage with it politically, to pay taxes, since their limited biopolitical provision comes from elsewhere, but of course they cannot enter into the same sorts of relationship of political involvement with foreign states or NGOs as they can with local stakeholders, since these states and NGOs do not get funds directly from aid recipients. Direct aid thus effectively undermines biopolitics.

Clearly, we cannot address the empirical case for aid here in the required detail: this work remains to be done; what we say here amounts only to a hypothesis about the relation of aid to biopolitical society. We hence cannot state that aid is an utterly decisive factor in biopolitical development, such that aid will always prevent such development, or in the absence of aid such development will always occur. We cannot thus simply point to examples of countries that have or have not developed as conclusive cases: only detailed studies on the operation of aid in specific cases can shed light here. We moreover cannot assert that it is impossible to give aid that strengthens biopolitics as such: a possible example of such aid is the Marshall Plan by which the U.S. funded European reconstruction after World War II. Reasons for any success of this plan in contrast with aid include: the achievement of a careful administration of funds (funds were managed by joint committees of representatives of the donor, local governments, and civil society, and used to buy either consumables or to invest in industry); the fact that the aid was not ongoing, so did not allow for the development of patterns of dependency or corruption; and the fact that it was in response to a specific situation of devastation (caused by the war) which was not itself a stable, ongoing state of affairs. One type of payment that might be implemented similarly are reparations for past injustices.

Duffield suggests there has been a retrograde shift, from the Cold War situation in which Third World nations were built up by either side, as in the Marshall Plan, to a situation in which states are not built up at all, only civil society—Duffield sees this as a return to the colonial policy of Native Administration, albeit within a different and more diffuse institutional framework (Duffield, 2005). Certainly, aid policy today is very similar in key respects to the colonial policy: colonialism was the same as aid in biopolitical terms, casting itself as philanthropic, while having consequences that are rather different. The pure building up of *states* though is of dubious merit: many states supported by either side during the Cold War were disastrously unsuccessful; as we have indicated, the supply of aid to states is a powerful

corrupting force that might enable the rulers to buy support, or might build resentment against them, but either way is unlikely to lead by itself to development per se.

What is clearly the case is that aid is sometimes given explicitly with the aim of undermining government, as in the case of USAID's budget of \$15 million for 2006, designated specifically for undermining the Cuban government by building up civil society.¹⁵ What is astonishing indeed is that where the United States government gives aid to Cubans precisely to undermine their government, it gives it elsewhere apparently oblivious to its potential to do exactly the same thing.

It is not that philanthropy and government assistance in general cleave the state and population apart: when they originate within the same polity, philanthropy and welfare are elements of a biopolitical whole, which incorporates both governmental and non-governmental organisations. It is true that domestic philanthropy may assuage the development of demands for the state intervention necessary to constitute a biopolitics, but once a coherent control of population has developed, philanthropy slots in as an adjunct.

Similar effects are of course seen in Western domestic biopolitics: much of the welfare bureaucracy manifestly lacks concern with the wellbeing of the people in their care, since their money comes from above, not from those they are supposed to help. The heaviest users of the welfare system are of course generally the least powerful, but the taxpayers who pay for social insurance, both because there is some chance they might need it (i.e., they pay for it precisely as insurance for themselves) and because it alleviates social problems, have a well-established and regular relation with the biopolitical arms of the state, mediated by the electoral system, through which they can demand transparency, efficiency and responsibility. With external aid, things are another step removed: the taxpayers with whom the aid funds originate are geographically removed from the aid dispersion, and have much less stake in it.

That said, these problems of aid dependence do not divide neatly at the territorial borders, since biopolitical borders are so much more complicated. The same effects may occur within territorial borders, and so, indeed, within one and the same *official* population: similar dynamics occur between the Australian metropole and remote Aboriginal communities in Australia for example, in terms of the social destructiveness of aid and encouragement of emigration. Here, questions of the ontological status of nation and self-determination must be raised which cannot be considered in this article.

I reject the conclusion, however, of Hardt and Negri that the First and Third worlds have become so interpenetrated that hard distinctions between them have become impossible (Hardt and Negri, 2000). While it is true that in most Third World countries, there are elites who effectively live like they are in the First World, this does not mean that these people are part of First World populations (though some are—those with the appropriate dual citizenships or expatriates), nor are there any who are in the population (as opposed to simply the territory) of the First World who live without biopolitical protections in the way that billions do in the Third World. Just by dint of being in the First World, one enjoys 24-hour electricity provision, basic emergency medical care, free schooling for ten years for children, safe water on tap. Citizens enjoy many more protections than that, broadly conforming to a basic welfare regime that seeks to keep citizens in minimal housing and financial conditions far exceeding billions of people in the Third World.

A graphic demonstration of the continuing parasitism of the biopolitics of the wealthy countries is the contemporary reaction to climate change. It is obvious that the First World are the primary producers and beneficiaries of the agents of climate change, and that the Third World will bear its brunt disproportionately. Until recently the First World produced climate change in ignorance, and then to some extent in denial, that it was doing so. Now that governments recognise what is happening, their actions are hardly convincing: certainly they are unwilling to make any kind of sacrifice in terms of their own biopolitics, just as they are unwilling to sacrifice any economic output. However, they are committed to action, as indeed they must commit, since maintenance of the health of their populations depends on it. One policy response has been to promote the use of ‘biofuels’, the use of organic matter to produce fuel.¹⁶ This has meant the conversion of food into fuel (or of food-growing land into fuel-growing land). The result, in short order, has been a spike in world food prices, and malnutrition and starvation in its wake.¹⁷ The world food price spike has also been driven by the increase in the price of oil, which has increased the price in transportation of food, but this is surely merely another manifestation of the same problem: it is more important that we can drive than that the poor can eat. Here, we see a clear contradiction of First World biopolitics and any kind of global biopolitical concern, and moreover another indication of parasitism.

Imperialism

What we see here, as in the cases both of aid and migration, is precisely a strategy of power in Foucault's sense: not something that is explicitly aimed at by the actors involved, so much as a positive, productive, stable strategic effect that exceeds the states' and NGOs' explicit aims, but does so in a way that produces the status quo. We are not then claiming that there is a deliberate attempt to sabotage the biopolitical development of Third World countries, only that that is the effect of existing practices.

This strategy can be called 'imperialism'. This is indeed already its name: though contested, debated and disputed, the Marxist concept of imperialism (as opposed to the traditional use of the concept to mean a territorial policy of imperial expansion) refers broadly to regular relationships by which one part of the world benefits at the expense of another part.¹⁸ Specifically, we are influenced in applying it by the classical use of the term by Lenin, to refer both to the age of the dominance of finance capital (which would seem to be upon us today if it ever has been) and a stage of capitalism in which certain states have become *parasitic*—indeed, our use of that term is also influenced by Lenin (Lenin, 1997). We cannot here however of course assess Lenin's argument or (therefore) how ours might relate to it in any detail.

Our account is of a biopolitical imperialism, a biopolitical dimension to imperialism as understood in the Marxist sense.¹⁹ It adds the dimension of population to the existing economic accounts of imperialism. Economics is of course closely tied to biopolitics, to the well-being of the population and the functioning of administration. The economic dimension of imperialism is something that has been extensively studied and debated: we cannot deal with it here.

Biopolitical imperialism is not meant to be an historically new form, unlike Hardt and Negri's Empire. Imperialism has been biopolitical for a long time: as long as both biopolitics and imperialism have existed concurrently. Mike Davis' work on nineteenth century imperialism, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, is instructive in this regard (Davis, 2001). Davis shows through case studies of India, China and Brazil that imperialism, present either in the form of direct government or that of economic interest, horribly devastated the welfare apparatuses of these countries, such as they were, during the nineteenth century. As Davis points out, this pattern is originary to the existence of a 'third world', and reverses the situation which existed

prior to the French Revolution, in which state welfare provision was far more advanced in the Orient than Europe (Davis, 2001: 281).

Moreover, the populations of these countries were decimated precisely in order to benefit European populations—the most graphic example of this is the export of foodstuffs in massive quantities to Britain from India while Indians starved in their millions (Davis, 2001: 299). It would seem the situation a century later is similar in its broad pattern. The IMF-World Bank complex's imposition of 'structural adjustment' austerity measures have mandated slashing spending on basic biopolitics and the conversion of economies to exporting to the First World. Imperialism ensnares through direct investment (buying resources and the means of production) and by 'development loans', both of which foster the harvesting of surpluses from the economy, not biopolitics. Investors may take care of their workforce, but they don't take care of the country more generally.

Neoliberal economic reform in the periphery refers precisely to the dismantling of biopolitics. In the centre, neoliberalism is imposed with care and consideration, not absolutely; although there has been dismantling here, biopolitical protections are not simply trashed, but they are in the periphery. That is, the introduction of neoliberalism in the centre occurs in the context of a state that is still fundamentally concerned with the welfare and consent of a population, whereas elsewhere it is imposed from without, overriding such concerns.

The states and civil societies of the First World essentially do not care about humanity outside their populations and derive a benefit for their own population at the expense of those outside. As Foucault puts it in explicating the relation of the subject to the pre-biopolitical sovereign, those outside are 'neutral' 'from the point of view of life and death' (Foucault, 1997). This allows the life of those outside to be actively imperilled for any benefit, no matter how marginal, accruing to those inside. The biopolity assumes, in respect of the masses outside its population, 'the right to take life or let live' (Ibid., 241): this 'right to take life' is an aspect we have yet to examine, the use of force—war—as the thanatopolitical tool for the regulation of the outside.

The biopolitical dimension of imperialist war runs in two directions: the domestic biopolitics of war, and the use of a biopolitical degradation as a tool of war. Both directions contradict the existence of a global biopolitics. Biopolitics, Foucault argues, led to a new form of war: 'Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended,' says Foucault, 'they are waged on behalf of the

existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter' (Foucault, 1998: 143). Moreover, biopolitical war licenses the *exposure* of entire populations to the slaughter: when a danger is to the population itself, the populations itself as such may be exposed to death in order to meet it.²⁰

This is not just about the technology of mobilisation and the logic of government then, but also, I would argue, about the attitude of the population. With biopolitics, the population owe their life to the state, and as such back the state against the biopolitical exterior: loyalty to nation qua biopolity is occasioned simply by the fact that, for most people, there is no alternative source of life-security, no matter how bad their state may be in absolute terms. The converse of the exclusion practised at the border is a sense of inclusion among the core population, the non-criminal, full-citizen, resident group that is the mainstay of any population.²¹ While there are inequalities in provisions amongst this group, most obviously where biopolitical institutions are in the private sector and are therefore only accessible to some, this does not stop the basic provision providing a basis for a sense of national solidarity.

Biopower is not a complete explanation of national solidarity, but does advance our understanding of it. Before biopower, there was no national solidarity, only xenophobia towards people who looked or behaved differently. Society was not bound together by this xenophobia, but by bonds of fealty to lords, by threats, by honour codes, by religion. This radically changed in the biopolitical era, with nationalism becoming a primary element in a new national bond, facilitating the emergence of the nation-state as the pervasive form of political organisation in the nineteenth century, and allowing war to become struggle between peoples.

The nation state is genuinely concerned with the security of the population, because, unlike the feudal, dynastic ruler, it is necessarily bonded to the population. As Foucault puts it, there is a transition from 'the safety (*sûreté*) of the Prince and his territory' to 'the security (*sécurité*) of the population and, consequently, of those who govern it' (Foucault, 2009: 65). This does not mean the nation state will not take risks with that security: biopolitics is not simply about helping people to stay alive, but the maximisation of the life of the population. It is thus potentially dangerous, because it may persecute some in the name of a greater good, because it may become belligerent, and because it may undertake in these respects audacious gambits which have ultimately seriously deleterious effects on the population. Nazi

Germany is for Foucault the supreme example of all of these biopolitical tendencies: it exterminated portions of its own population in the name of a pure and healthy population, it waged war killing millions more people and devastating vast areas in order to secure *Lebensraum* for its population, and these programs culminated in terrible destruction being visited on that selfsame population, a risk that the regime embraced (Foucault, 1997: 260). Nazism was merely one extreme manifestation of biopolitics, incorporating many other facets, but it was thoroughly biopolitical nonetheless.

Today we no longer see the wholesale gambling of populations in the inter-imperialist war in Europe that we saw twice in the twentieth century. However, we have recently seen a return to a sanctioning of death in war: for two decades after Vietnam, the West embraced the doctrine of the ‘zero-death war’, the practice of war that does not significantly endanger one’s own soldiers, yet since 11 September 2001, many thousands of American soldiers have died on the battlefield. This is not a return to the scale of American losses, or to the conscription, of the Vietnam War, but it is nevertheless indicative of national biopolitics, and not a new national biopolitics, but rather a pre-existing national biopolitics that allowed this kind of war: that is, the perception of threat after 11 September 2001 was such that it made it politically possible to endanger the lives of members of the U.S. population on the field of battle; since there was danger to the population already, this kind of risk is acceptable. Even if the link between 11 September 2001 and the war in Iraq was almost non-existent in terms either of official state discourse or the formal facts, it is I think entirely clear that 11 September 2001 made that war possible, and it did so because Americans felt threatened by the Middle Eastern other.

There is also a biopolitical dimension to the conduct of war, the destruction of biopolitics, which has been a consistent feature of war for as long as wars have been waged against biopolities. During the period of zero-death war, Iraqi biopower was deliberately destroyed, beginning with an embargo in 1990 and air attacks in 1991, both of which continued until the final invasion of Iraq in 2003. The air strikes typically attacked military targets inside Iraq, but this category was conceived widely enough to include civilian infrastructure, degrading the biopolitical capacity of the country. The embargo was a kind of direct biopolitical attack, used to pressure the Iraqi government via the denial of the materials of biopolitical care for the population. There was a quite explicit intention here to sever the bond

between the population and the state, to inspire uprisings. The third and final stage was the invasion, which aimed at accomplishing what had always been desired, the outright destruction of the Iraqi government and much of the state apparatus.

Administration is indispensable to biopower: without it, the population is beyond care and beyond control. The invasion smashed the state structure, and, while there have been efforts to rebuild the state, destruction also continued under the occupation. In areas where local governmental structures formed that were considered acceptable by the invaders, some kind of reconstruction has occurred; where there was resistance, the occupiers continued to use the same tactics of assault that they used previously against the entire country: embargo, air strikes, invasion, abolition of government. It was indeed not only the invasion, but the ongoing presence, which was destructive; a recent *Lancet* study indicates that, to 2006, coalition forces killed more and more Iraqis each year after the invasion.²² In response, many of the skilled personnel crucial to biopolitics fled the country. Here of course is not a deliberate destruction for its own sake, but a general subsumption of biopolitical concerns under the strategic goals of the invasion and occupation, which belies the existence of global biopolitics, or even the furtherance of a policy of creating a global biopolitics.

What one sees happening today Afghanistan is what we saw happening in Vietnam in respect of local biopolitics, captured vividly in General Curtis LeMay's injunction 'to bomb them back into the Stone Age'. This proved to be impossible—despite America's best military efforts, metallurgy cannot be bombed out of a population—but one certainly can destroy biopower through bombing. In Afghanistan, bombing destroyed the closest thing to a real government the country had had for at least fifteen years, in wrecking the Taliban regime. True, Taliban-ruled Afghanistan wasn't biopolitical, but this was not the fault of the 'medievalist' Taliban so much as the condition of the country, namely war-torn and still at war with itself: Afghanistan had already been pummelled back to the Middle Ages during the 1980s.

For Western intervention in both Afghanistan and Iraq, the optimal results would be helpful, functional, biopolitical client states. However, the worst case scenario, a failed state, is still better than an intransigent, functional, biopolitical enemy state. It's an open question whether the Bush administration sincerely believed that a pro-Western, democratic Iraq would result from the invasion. What they clearly did visit on Iraq deliberately was the destruction of its biopolitics. The

rhetoric which justified the invasion included mentions of ‘liberty’ and even ‘prosperity’ for the natives, but never longer life expectancies or clean drinking water, or even the maintenance of the existing conditions of the population.

In Iraq, the invaders clearly succeeded in toppling a hostile regime, and no matter what kind of state emerges in its stead it will not be a more powerful enemy state than Hussein’s, at least in the foreseeable future, precisely because of the destruction not only of its military capacity, but also of its biopolitical capacity, which is necessary to the cohesion of a nation and in turn determines the military it can field. It is possible that in the longer term, and more widely, contemporary U.S. policy here *will* turn out to be a disastrous failure; however, biopolitical warfare involves not only protecting but also *risking* one’s population. The drive to secure American hegemony does not have to be rational to be biopolitical.

The biopolitical devastation of Iraq, like the biopolitical underdevelopment of much of the world, involves a lack of appreciation of the existence of the biopolitical, and of the importance of the state, more broadly. That is, it is bound up with an ideology, neoliberalism, that sees the state as a kind of optional extra to civil society, and in most instances a fetter on it. Thus, smashing the Iraqi state is seen as the liberation of Iraqi society, not, as it in fact was, as a horrific attack on Iraqi society as such, which directly led to the death of large numbers of Iraqis.

Biopolitical anti-imperialism

What can be done to resist biopolitical imperialism? One possibility is for governments to defy the various relationships associated with it: to prevent emigration, to refuse aid, to resist invasion. No government of course completely refuses foreign aid, though plenty have, precisely in the name of anti-imperialism, resisted invasion and curtailed emigration. The desirability of the latter measure is of course questionable: preventing emigration completely means using sovereign power, repression, against would-be emigrants, and thus has negative domestic effects.

The biopolitical results of anti-imperialism are mixed. Cuba, in its long-lived stance of defiance of U.S. imperialism, has become the great contemporary biopolitical anomaly, defying the usual connection between wealth and biopolitical development: it is poor, but cares

for and controls its population to a degree not seen in some First World countries; Cuba's infant mortality rate is lower than any country in the world outside of Europe, except for Singapore and Japan.²³ Immediately after the revolution, Cuba suffered a great loss of medical personnel, other skilled professionals, and capital, all fleeing to the U.S., but despite this its health situation dramatically improved almost immediately (MacDonald, 2005: 203). Since biopolitics is about social control, its excellent biopolitics may be a cause for suspicion as much as celebration, but there can be little doubt that Cuba can achieve its biopolitical indicators in spite of its poverty only because its state runs the economy in an orientation towards the health of the population.

The case of Cuba demonstrates only that biopolitics *can* flourish in the absence of imperialism to a greater degree than it can in its presence, of course, not the converse, that it *must* flourish in its absence. North Korea stands as a starkly different case of anti-imperialism's biopolitics. It is unclear to what extent North Korea is a biopolitical society, given the lack of reliable data about the country, but reports indicate that North Korea has suffered famine, with deaths in the millions in the 1990s, and moreover that those in the agricultural sector are left responsible for feeding themselves and that agricultural workers therefore starved in the case of local crop failures (Noland, Robinson and Wang, 2001: 747). However, paradoxical though this may seem, famine does not necessarily equate with a failure of biopolitics, since North Korea has instituted policies of isolationism, militarism, and micro-self-sufficiency as a matter of national security, and it is perfectly biopolitical to allow millions to die of starvation for the putative corporate good of the population.

According to Foucault, we should neither prescribe public policy nor articulate a utopian vision of the way the world should be, precisely because it leads to unintended emergent strategies of power, quite different from the posited aim of resisting imperialism, for example: the desire for liberation leads via utopianism and planning to North Korea.²⁴ What Foucault does indicate is that we need to develop a biopolitics that can operate without state racism (Foucault, 1997). This in fact is to go further than mere anti-imperialism, since this means the abolition of the use of sovereign power domestically, as well as at the border. The Foucauldian aim in relation to biopolitical imperialism would simply be this: to end it by generalising the protection and encouragement of life to all humanity, that is, to work towards a global biopolitics. Such a biopolitics does not however yet

exist: the obstacle to its production, imperialism, is resilient; indeed, it is the system within which we live, and an element of the politics of our very lives. Against this, we can only demand of power that it stop discriminating between people at the level of life itself.

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Notes

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, London: Penguin, 1961, 87.
2. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 130.
3. Foucault says explicitly that this is what he is doing in *Security, Territory, Population*, 118.
4. See Vivienne Jabri, 'Michel Foucault's Analysis of War', *International Political Sociology*, 1, 2007, 67–81 for a more detailed consideration of Foucault's engagement with the international.
5. See Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, 'Biopower Today', *BioSocieties*, 1:2, 2006, 197.
6. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 243.
7. See Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 60–61; see also Wendy Larner and William Walters, 'Introduction: Global governmentality: governing international spaces', in Wendy Larner and William Walters (eds.), *Global Governmentality*, London: Routledge, 2004, 2–3.
8. Perhaps the clearest example of the former usage is Kiersey, 'Scale, Security, and Political Economy'; an example of the latter is Michael Merlingen, 'Governmentality: Towards a Foucauldian Framework for the Study of NGOs', *Cooperation and Conflict* 38: 4, 2003: 361–384.
9. Foucault's use of this term must be understood in the context of *Society Must Be Defended*, a work in which Foucault does the genealogy of discourses of race in Western political thought. What the discriminatory practice of contemporary biopolitics represents is a political institutionalisation of the discourse of race, of us and them, hence it is state racism. The must be distinguished from what is ordinarily today understood by the term 'racism', which is only one descendent of the historical discourse of race – others include state racism, and Marxism and, indeed, Foucault's own work, which stand in a lineage of thinking class struggle that retains racial overtones.
10. See William Walters' pioneering work on the biopolitical border in William Walters, 'Mapping Schengenland: denaturalizing the border', *Environment and*

- Planning D: Society and Space*, 20, 2002, 561–580. For a general discussion of the literature concerning the border both in international political sociology and in continental philosophy, see Mark B. Salter, ‘The Global Visa Regime and the Political Technologies of the International Self: Borders, Bodies, Biopolitics’, *Alternatives*, 31, 2006, 167–189, 167–177.
11. This change has been noted by Étienne Balibar in his ‘World Borders, Political Borders’, *PMLA*, 117, 2002, 71–78; ‘The Borders of Europe’, in P. Cheah and B. Robbins (eds), *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998; *We the People of Europe: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.
 12. The top five countries of origin of refugees to the U.S. in 2006, between them comprising more than 60 per cent of the total intake, were, in order, Somalia, Russia, Cuba, Vietnam and Iran (Department of Homeland Security statistics). Most notably absent are Iraq and Afghanistan—despite having worse internal conditions than any of these countries (except possibly Somalia), the U.S.A. has no interest in weakening these now-friendly states, where once it welcomed those fleeing them.
 13. Cf. Bernard Poirine, ‘A Theory of Aid as Trade with Special Reference to Small Islands’, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 47:4, 1999, 831–852. Poirine shows that aid correlates very closely to strategic considerations.
 14. OECD Health Data 2008.
 15. USAID, *Budget Justification to the Congress: Fiscal Year 2006*.
 16. For a thorough survey, see Fred Magdoff, ‘The Political Economy and Ecology of Biofuels’, *Monthly Review*, 60:3, 2008. Some have argued we should call these ‘agrofuels’ not ‘biofuels’, but for our purposes the name they have been given is surely particularly apt.
 17. For a full analysis of the food crisis and all its causes, see Fred Magdoff, ‘The World Food Crisis: Sources and Solutions’, *Monthly Review*, 60:1, 2008.
 18. For an overview of various theories of imperialism, see Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey*, London: Routledge, 1990.
 19. It should be noted that a Foucauldian account of imperialism might be taken to be oxymoronic by some, who have taken Foucault’s analysis of power relations to be precisely opposed to talk of ‘imperialism’. See for example Morgan Brigg, ‘Post-development, Foucault and the colonisation metaphor’, *Third World Quarterly*, 23:3, 2002, 421 - 436
 20. Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 135, 137; here, on this question, Foucault cites the 18th century work of Samuel von Pufendorf.
 21. While the majority of the people in the territory of some petro-states are notably guest-workers, these people are excluded from any biopolitics, such that they are not part of the population in our sense.
 22. Gilbert Burnham, Riyadh Lafta, Shannon Doocy, Les Roberts, ‘Mortality after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: a cross-sectional cluster sample survey’, *The Lancet*, 2006, 368: 9545, 1421. The study concludes that the number of people killed in Iraq by coalition forces in 2006 fell as a *proportion* of the total mortality, but of course one must also blame the invasion for the situation in which so many people are being killed by Iraqis.
 23. World Health Organization, *World Health Statistics 2007*, 2007.
 24. See Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 132–133.

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