

FOUCAULT IN A POST-9/11 WORLD:
EXCURSIONS INTO SECURITY, TERRITORY,
POPULATION*

INTRODUCTION

Although not without some criticism, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) has made a tremendous impact on criminology, prompting scholars to reconsider the nature of power within social control institutions. In his later work, Foucault (1991a) went to great lengths to improve his conceptualization of power by elaborating on the notion of governmentality: the governance of others (and one's self). As a vehicle for power, governmentality has greatly influenced the study of criminal justice and its various rationales and technologies (Burchell, Gordon, and Miller 1991; O'Malley 1996; Rose and Miller 1992; Stenson 1993). It is that body of literature which helps us appreciate what has been called the second "Foucault effect" (Feeley and Simon 1992; Garland 1996). From that Foucauldian perspective, criminologists are encouraged to look critically at how crime is problematized and controlled, especially as modern society moves away from its welfarist paradigm and toward neoliberal regimes embodied in market economies and privatization schemes (Garland 1997; Simon 2007).

Against that backdrop, the publication of his lectures at Collège de France should not be underestimated. Whereas Foucauldian scholars and aficionados have been drawn to a vast secondary literature, it is within his lectures that we locate another dimension of Foucault's intellectual work. Ewald and Fontana remind us that Foucault "approached his teaching as a researcher: explorations for a future book as well as the opening up of fields of problemization were formulated as an invitation to possible future researchers" (2007: xiv). Because the lectures do not duplicate his books they retain their own status, becoming unique scholarly sources. Whereas many of the published lectures have been available in French for several years, the recently released English translations serve as important texts for a wider international audience. Already the volumes have been met with

enthusiasm: consider, for instance, the bilingual colloquium “Le Carcéral, Sécurité, and Beyond: Rethinking Michel Foucault’s 1978-1979 Collège de France Lectures” at the University of Chicago Paris Center (6 June, 2008). Among the tasks of the seminar was to prompt critiques of Foucault’s lectures, among them *Security, Territory, Population* (1978, hereafter STP). While recognizing the depth and clarity of his seminars, scholars are encouraged to rethink not only Foucault’s contributions to social inquiry but also their own work. That renewed level of interest might very well constitute a third “Foucault effect.”

The panels at “Le Carcéral, Sécurité, and Beyond”, as this issue demonstrates, offered a range of ideas and formulations— all of which adhere to a Foucauldian tradition of spirited critique. With the benefit of having attended the colloquium and read the papers, this essay sets out to contemplate further the significance of the 1978 lectures in a post-9/11 world. In particular it draws on recent works examining the US war on terror, a complex campaign that has led to the invasion and occupation of Iraq (Welch 2009, 2008, 2006). The analysis moves, however, toward rethinking Foucault’s problematic triangle in which he shifts emphasis from security-territory-population to security-population-government so as to accommodate his project on governmentality. Especially for scholars who rely almost entirely on the English translations of Foucault’s writings, there has existed a gap of knowledge surrounding the full conceptual background for governmentality. Up to now, the leading source has been Foucault’s chapter “Governmentality” featured in *The Foucault Effect* (actually a reprinted transcription of his 1 February 1978 lecture). With the publication of the 1978 lectures in their entirety, researchers finally have an opportunity to see the broader framework from which governmentality developed. Whereas the 1 February lecture has spawned an entire subfield within Foucauldian thought known as governmentality studies, it has done so at the expense of other important concepts discussed in the 1978 lectures. So as to make room for governmentality, Foucault put territory into the back seat. The analysis here resituates territory by giving it another round of serious thought— without, of course, marginalizing the contribution of governmentality. As we shall see, a critique of territory within the 1978 lectures improves our understanding of key political and economic events since the attacks of September 11th, most notably the creation of a neocolonial Iraq.

SECURITY-TERRITORY-POPULATION VERSUS SECURITY-POPULATION-GOVERNMENT

The 1978 lectures demonstrate Foucault's tendency to reconsider the direction of his theorizing—even in midstream. As Valverde notes, Foucault introduced the notion of governmentality while actually delivering his lectures: "And frustratingly for governmentality scholars, he does not explain why he changed terms. He simply walks in one day (February 1, 1978) and declares that if he were able to go back and correct the theme and title of that year's lectures, he would no longer use the advertised title, 'Sécurité, territoire, population,' but rather 'Lectures on Governmentality.' Then he goes on to talk about techniques of governmentality, with security quietly receding into the background" (2008: 29). Valverde offers some speculation for the shift in terms. For instance, Foucault may have sensed that the notions of security had strong statist and authoritarian connotations. Michel Senellart, in a similar vein, places Foucault's growing interest in government within a wider context of the course, especially since the concept goes beyond the traditional sense of public authority and exercise of sovereignty. Senellart reminds us that Foucault echoes physiocratic designs, exploring dynamic maneuvers linked to "economic government," the "art of exercising power in the form of the economy," and economic liberalism (2007: 379).

Senellart suggests that as Foucault gravitated to governmentality he also reconfigured the problematic triangle; hence, security-territory-population is replaced by security-population-government. The rearrangement marks a profound turning point in the lectures as he leans toward a broader theoretical perspective:

Maybe more than any other moment in Foucault's teaching, this illustrates his taste for the labyrinth 'into which I can venture, in which I can move my own discourse, opening up underground passages, forcing it to go far from itself, finding overhangs that reduce and deforms its itinerary. (STP: 380)

Foucault's taste for the labyrinth has inspired other scholars to forge new paths for intellectual pursuit. Consider Harcourt's (2008) project "Supposons que la discipline et la sécurité n'existent pas ~" in which he ponders the virtual absence of discipline and security. Likewise, in this essay let's imagine that the initial problematic triangle remained unaltered. How might Foucault's conceptual scheme actually work had he stayed the course with security-territory-population? The task is here, admittedly, is not as

bold as it may appear. In his summary for the 1978 lectures, Foucault writes:

THE COURSE FOCUSED ON the genesis of a political knowledge that puts the notion of population and the mechanisms for ensuring its regulation at the center of its concerns. A transition from a ‘territorial state’ to a ‘population state’? No, because it did not involve a substitution but rather a shift of emphasis and the appearance of new objectives, and so of new problems and new techniques. (STP: 363)

As illustrated here, a return to the first problematic triangle (*i.e.*, security-territory-population) also marks a swing of focus and not a wholesale substitution. Moving toward a reexamination of territory within a post-9/11 world, the significance of governmentality is not to be ignored. Nonetheless, a critique of neocolonialism—particularly in the new Iraq—benefits from a sharper interpretation of physical space and its authority. Together, both problematic triangles offer an opportunity to distinguish between similar—though contrasting—forms of modern power. In reference to US foreign affairs during the Clinton administration, there is evidence of soft power whereby military adventures were more or less held in check so that political persuasion could be used to advance the “virtues” of neoliberalism (see Ferguson 2005). One might view soft power as emulating Nike’s marketing strategy with Michael Jordan as its spokesman: “Be Like Mike.” Clearly people around the world are not buying Nike footwear because the company is jamming those products down their throats. On the contrary, the vector of soft power invites consumers to identify with influential figures whether it popular athletes, celebrities, or even certain nations and their culture. In that respect, we recognize the art of governance within soft power, notably the management of population (*i.e.*, consumers) toward a neoliberal goal (*i.e.*, the circulation of goods). Of course, the Clinton team also streamlined its style of globalization by buying a lot of friends (foreign aid, etc.) but that, too, is not inconsistent with soft power in the pursuit of advancing American economic and financial interests abroad. Diverging from soft power, the neo-conservatives—in the wake of September 11th—resort to hard power whereby sheer military might is used to expand US and corporate interests, most notably in the Middle East (Armstrong 2002). The shift toward hard power suggests a return to the initial problematic triangle because by its very nature security-territory-population contains a crucial emphasis on territory, notably in a post 9/11 world.

The war on terror as it extends to the US occupation of Iraq warrants further conceptual attention in light of its ongoing problematization—a process by which a putative problem is seen as requiring special attention especially by government (Castel 1994; Rose and Valverde 1998). The problematization of the new Iraq is all the more complicated given its origin of sovereignty. In the 1978 lectures, Foucault refers to his previous work in *Society Must be Defended* (SMBD) in which he distinguishes between sovereignty by institution (e.g., mutual agreements, cooperation) and sovereignty by acquisition (e.g., invasion, conquest). Despite appearances of some democratic governance, the genesis of the current Iraqi sovereignty is acquisition, and that is an important starting point as we venture back into the problematic triad: security-territory-population. Critics of the invasion and occupation Iraq agree that sovereignty by acquisition has all the markings of neocolonialism (Ali 2003a, 2003b; Chomsky 2003; Gregory 2004). While Foucault in his 1976 seminars proposed that war be used as an analyzer of power relations, we similarly turn to neocolonialism as an analyzer of power with respect to the use of hard power by the US in Iraq.

NEOCOLONIAL IRAQ

An exploration of neocolonial Iraq would not be complete without incorporating a few thoughts on the proliferating nature of world conflict. Whereas Carl von Clausewitz (1976) contends that war is the continuation of politics by other means, Foucault (SMBD) proposes the reverse: that is, politics is merely one of the guises of war. From that viewpoint, war does not establish peace but sets the stage for the next clash (see Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Foucault further elaborates on how political power reinscribes that fundamental relationship into social institutions and systems of economic inequality (see Pandolfi 2002). Similarly, Hardt and Negri (2004) consider the reach of contemporary militarism, suggesting that because war is becoming a permanent social relation, it can also be understood as a regime of biopower.

War, in other words, becomes the general matrix for all relations of power and techniques of domination, whether or not bloodshed is involved. War has become a regime of biopower, that is, a form of rule aimed not only at controlling the population but producing and reproducing all aspects of social life. This war brings death but also, paradoxically, must produce life. This does not mean that war has been domesticated or its violence attenuated, but rather that daily

life and the normal functioning of power has been permeated with the threat and violence of warfare.
(p. 13)

The White House launched its war on terror as a campaign that would remain both infinite and indefinite; moreover, that regime of biopower is directed not only at eliminating the dangerous enemy (destructive power) but providing security and protecting the innocent lives (constructive power). In pursuit of such “noble” causes, that dual form of biopower is embraced by advocates of the “lesser evil” approach to counterterrorism, thereby justifying the occupation of Iraq (and Afghanistan), along with torture, extraordinary renditions, and detention without trial (Dershowitz 2002; Ignatieff 2004).

Hardt and Negri make note of the constant and coordinated application of violence and perpetual war which serve to instill discipline and control on a global scale. Drawing further on Foucault, they find that “war must become both a procedural activity and an ordering, regulative activity that creates and maintains social hierarchies, a form of biopower aimed at the promotion and regulation of social life” (2004: 21). The American occupation and reconstruction of Iraq, highlights the productive project of biopower even though it is predicated on the destructive forces of war and regime change. Hardt and Negri continue: “Such nation building resembles less the modern revolutionary birth of nations than it does the process of colonial powers dividing up the globe and drawing the maps of their subject territories” (2004: 23).

PROBLEMS OF SPACE

The use of hard power in the formation of sovereignty by acquisition has indeed created a crisis of governance in Iraq. Returning to Foucault’s 1978 lectures we can further apply neocolonialism as an analyzer of power relations in general and security-territory-population in particular. In the opening seminar (11 January), Foucault outlines the dimensions of his concepts: “sovereignty is exercised with the borders of a territory, discipline is exercised on the bodies of individuals, and security is exercised over the whole population” (STP: 11). As Foucault quickly concedes, the dividing lines for borders, bodies, and population are blurred by the presence of immense complexity, or multiplicity of subjects (and people). Nonetheless, the common denominator for all three constructs is the problem of space.

It goes without saying for sovereignty, since sovereignty is first of all exercised within the territory. But

discipline involves a spatial division, and I think security does too, and the different treatment of space by sovereignty, discipline, and security, is precisely what I want to talk about. (STP: 12)

Condensing those concepts, Foucault offers an example of planned urban space, quintessentially the town. During the 17th century and at the beginning of the 18th century, the town emerged as a spatial territory defined by specific legal and administrative functions. The growth of trade eventually would strain the town's compression and enclosure within its militarized walls. The town needed to open its space so as to accommodate economic imperatives: hence, the town was to be resituated within a space of circulation. Those economic considerations would be coupled with political ambitions in the creation of a capital city serving the state. At the heart of that distinctive urban space is its sovereignty, lending itself to a modern idea of how to manage commercial exchange. Cameralism figures prominently in that period of European history; consequently, the science of finance and administration within the chambers of the prince soon replaced traditional councils (see Small 1909).

Those political and economic rearrangements prompted visible alterations to urban space. Cramped urban dwellings were opened up and streets were widened for several reasons: for instance, to improve ventilation and hygiene. Broad avenues would not only facilitate trade within the town but also connect to surrounding areas so that goods could be transported while still enforcing customs control. To ensure security, new urban streets would also provide mechanisms for surveillance whereby authorities could monitor the comings and goings of the floating population, including beggars, vagrants, delinquents, criminals, thieves, murderers, and so on.

In other words, it was a matter of organizing circulation, eliminating its dangerous elements, making a division between good and bad circulation, and maximizing the good circulation by diminishing the bad. It was therefore also a matter of planning access to the outside, mainly for the town's consumption and for its trade with the outside. (STP: 18)

Because a vital feature of the town-or city-is its circulation, the plan for urban space must take into account opposing types of activities: positive (e.g., trade) and negative (e.g., theft). And, since an expanding town aims toward the future, security measures are put into place to ensure its prosperous well-being.

PROBLEMIZING BAGHDAD

Obviously, all this talk about the town has a great deal to do with understanding the problematization of Baghdad (and other Iraqi cities). Virtually all modern urban spaces grapple with the task of maximizing good circulation while minimizing the bad. Nevertheless, as a neocolonial city, Baghdad faces continued social and economic challenges due to the blocking of circulation by the US military. The urban landscape of Baghdad is fraught with military checkpoints geared at detecting terrorists, insurgents, suicide-bombers, as well as run-of-the-mill criminals, looters, and black marketers (Parenti 2004). While those checkpoints may contribute to security they also choke circulation, making it difficult for goods, workers, and consumers to reach their final destination. Those problems demonstrate the paradox of hard power since sovereignty by acquisition-vis-a-vis sovereignty by institution creates more, not less, obstacles for spatial movement.

Sovereignty by acquisition also has given rise to the Green Zone where key US military and diplomatic officials work-and reside. In his book *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone* (2006) Rajiv Chandrasekaran issues a revealing look at the blast-barrier-encased compound created around Hussein's Baghdad palace where the Coalition Provisional Authority was headquartered. As the chief entity of US governance over Iraq, the CPA—comprised of Bush ideologues—pursued projects to modernize the country and its stock exchange, opening the economy to various forms of privatization and foreign investment. That fortified city-within-a-city resembles what Foucault described as the artificial towns constructed in Europe during the 17th century. Consider Richelieu, a French village built from scratch where there was previously nothing. “How was it built? The famous form of the Roman camp is used, which, along with the military institution, was being reutilized at this time as a fundamental instrument of discipline” (STP: 15). The revival of that model represented an ideal space for “observatories of human multiplicities—the camp is the diagram of a power that acts by means of general visibility” (DP: 170-171). Such militarized territory, according to Foucault, marks the disciplinary treatment of multiplicities in space.

The Green Zone symbolizes a heavy neocolonial—and disciplinary—presence, which of course makes it a prime target for resistance. That city-within-a-city, endures routine attacks, mostly in the form of mortars being fired by insurgents outside the perimeter. That should come as no surprise, just as Foucault recognizes that the town is also a place of revolt (STP: 63). Mindful of dangerous political conflict, authorities strive to secure urban

space without unduly straining circulation. Attacks on the Green Zone and the other US military installations represent various forms of resistance—all of which might be called counter-colonialism aimed at driving out the hegemonic power. Thus far, that resistance is met with even greater determination by American willingness to stay the course and not “give in to the insurgency.” Consider the controversy over the 2008 security agreement that will regulate the relationship between the American military and the Iraqis after the United Nations resolution authorizing the presence of US troops in the country expires at the end of the year. The long-term pact is indeed complicated.

The overarching question is how much control Iraq will have over the activities of the American military on Iraqi soil.

The Americans have said they would allow civilian contractors to be held accountable under Iraqi law and they have also agreed to hand over accused criminals captured by American soldiers to the Iraqis instead of holding them in American detention facilities as they now do. They also will transfer the detainees now held in American detention facilities to the Iraqis.

However, that leaves many practical questions unanswered. There are now roughly 21,000 detainees in American custody, if they are transferred to Iraqi custody, where would they go? The Iraqis do not have facilities for them and it would not be easy for Americans to hand over their detention facilities at Camp Cropper and Camp Bucca to the Iraqis. (Rubin and Al-Salhy 2008: EV2-3)

From a Foucauldian perspective, the security agreement appears to speak to governmentality since it refers to the management of populations. Perhaps. But a closer look at the pact shows that those arrested and detained are actually juridical subjects—a designation that has strong implications to sovereignty. In fact, the practice of US soldiers making civilian arrests has all the markings of a neocolonial power, or sovereignty at a distance. With that idea in mind, the problematic triangle involving security-territory-population is more relevant than its counterpart: security-population-government. As noted previously, the former is indicative of hard power whereas the later suggests soft power. Hard power permeates the security agreement, especially given its focus on territory. Mahmoud Othman, a member of the

Political Council for National Security, said of the negotiations: “The Iraqis appear to have agreed to allow the Americans to continue to control their airspace because the Iraqis lack the extensive flight control expertise and equipment necessary.” Adding: “When Iraqis say they want their ‘sovereignty’ respected, they are talking in part about having the power to set the terms of the relationship between the United States and Iraq. For instance, will American soldiers be able to undertake military operations as they see fit, which is what they can do now” (Rubin and Al-Salhy 2008: EV3).

Ali Allawi, former finance minister of Iraq, writes about the security agreement with a critical eye on history and lessons of colonialism. He notes that in 1930 the Anglo-Iraqi treaty was signed as a prelude to Iraq gaining full independence. After WWI, Britain occupied Iraq after defeating the Turks, thereby claiming a mandate over the country. In exchange for Britain’s promise to end its mandate, the treaty gave Britain military and economic privileges; however, because the treaty was ratified by a docile Iraqi parliament, it was resented by nationalists.

Iraq’s dependency on Britain poisoned Iraqi politics for the next quarter of a century. Riots, civil disturbances, uprisings and coups were all a feature of Iraq’s political landscape, prompted in no small measure by the bitter disputations over the treaty with Britain. This raises huge questions over our independence. (Allawi 2008: EV2)

Now Iraq is in a similar predicament with the US. Technically—and conveniently for the White House—the security agreement is not a treaty since it would then be subject to the approval of the US Senate. That maneuver clearly stems from a new configuration of executive power that has emerged in response to the attacks of 9/11 (Agamben 2005; Ericson 2007; Welch 2007a). Although the draft has been guarded within official circles, “leaks raise serious alarm about its long-term significance for Iraq’s sovereignty and independence. Of course the terms of the alliance for Iraq will be sweetened with promises of military and economic aid, but these are no different in essence from the commitments made in Iraq’s previous disastrous treaty entanglements” (Allawi 2008: EV3; see Gregory 2004).

THE SPACE OF HARD POWER

By exploring the problems of space contained in security-territory-population, we gain further insight into the nature of neocolonialism and the exercise of hard power in foreign affairs. The neo-cons who designed

the invasion and occupation of Iraq have been less concerned with population—a hallmark of governmentality—and focused more on Iraq as a territory not only for its strategic location in the Middle East but also its rich oil reserves (Kramer 2008; *New York Times* 2008). With that knowledge, Paul Wolfowitz (in March 2003) explained to a Senate Committee that Iraq “can really finance its own reconstruction and relatively soon” (Farley and Wright 2003: 36). As a bonanza for privatization and foreign investors, the reconstruction of Iraq is driven more toward increasing the production and export of oil than on providing genuine humanitarian aid for the civilian population (Kramer and Michalowski, 2005; Whyte 2007).

Commentators have weighed into the controversy over collateral damage—the callous military term for civilian casualties. Noam Chomsky suggests that most of those men, women, and children were killed or maimed “not by design but because it did not matter,” demonstrating an even “deeper level of moral depravity” (2002: 150). The focus on territory (and its resources) rather than on population is evident in the absence of US record-keeping of civilian deaths. As baffling as that might be, there must be some estimate for collateral damage since minimizing civilian deaths remains an important concern in modern warfare. Revealingly, then Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld demanded that all air strikes likely to yield more than 30 civilians deaths be submitted for approval. More than 50 plans were reviewed, and all were approved but actual figures of civilian deaths were never released by the Pentagon (Graham and Morgan 2003; Jackson 2003; Sloboda and Dardagan 2003). The enormous volume of collateral damage in Iraq is a consequence of the US not taking seriously its commitment to protect non-combatants. It seems that sovereign power at a distance has created a space of exception in which civilian deaths fail to be officially recognized. Paul Gilroy (2003) similarly points to an imperial topography that distinguishes between the “honorable” deaths of US soldiers designated as “heroes” in American culture and the mundane killing of “terrorists” and “insurgents” along with civilian fatalities. He goes on to note that a general apathy in the US toward collateral damage in Iraq is contoured not only along lines of racism but also a colonial economy that marginalizes local people and neglects their suffering (see Roy 2001).

CONCLUSION

From a Foucauldian standpoint, neocolonial Iraq is currently a site where American hegemonic power is being exercised. As this analysis suggests, a shift of emphasis toward territory, allows us to reexamine the initial problematic triangle (*i.e.*, security-territory-population) by looking closer at

the problems of space. Neocolonial adventures, such as the one in Iraq, exhibit the paradox of hard power since military control over territory also restricts social and economic circulation. Perhaps that is putting it mildly. Derek Gregory in his *The Colonial Present* borrows from a host of intellectuals, among them Foucault, Agamben, and Butler, to stitch together meanings of time and space as they factor into contemporary war. Gregory notes that even the best-run empires are violent enterprises, adding: “I believe that ‘the roots of the global crisis which erupted on September 11 lie in precisely those colonial experiences and the informal quasi-imperial system that succeeded them’” (2004: 10; see Brighenti 2007).

The cycle of mass violence draws attention to the problem—and paradox—of biopower. Ruggiero (2007) recognizes that modern war is actually de-modernizing insofar as the military targets are bombed back to the Stone Age: destroying cities along with their infrastructures, electrical grids, sanitation devices, and related public health services. Food distribution and medical care is disrupted, contributing to hunger and disease; hence, bomb now, die later. Concurrently, war is re-modernizing with lucrative reconstruction contracts awarded by the occupying power to its private partners; in turn, the political economy is revamped so as to accommodate external investment (Klein 2007). “In this way, logical continuity is established between the space of war and the space of peace, between war actors and civilian groups, while inimical countries, now annihilated offer maximum predatory potential to industrial conglomerates” (Ruggiero 2007:212; see Ruggiero and Welch 2009).

At the onset of the essay, we suggested that the publication of Foucault’s lectures at the Collège de France has generated a “third Foucault effect.” Indeed, that side of Foucault’s intellectual activity is being appreciated further by scholars who would otherwise rely primarily on his books and articles. The lectures exhibit a dynamic willingness by Foucault to rethink his ideas, even challenging himself to consider alternative ways to interpret power. A critique of security-territory-population, as proposed in this work, is not meant to be an idle exercise contemplating the meaning of territory in a post-9/11 world. On the contrary, the thrust of the analysis is directed at unveiling deeper elements of power as they shape governmental policy and practice. By doing so, the discussion brings into sharp relief their destructive consequences, most notably war along with torture and indefinite detention (see Welch 2008, 2007b).

Finally, for professors and students alike who might dismiss Foucault as being too abstract, too philosophical, and too historical, one should bear

in mind that his interpretations of power are quite anchored. Even though he begins his 1978 lectures with a rant against polemics (STP: 4), on many other occasions Foucault reveals his continued support for social change. During a rather frank interview about his writings, Foucault noted: “The only important problem is what happens on the ground” (1991a: 83). Likewise, for activists who find his work simply not practical for intervention, Foucault vehemently insists that critique—which is ultimately what he produces—should “be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist, and refuse what is” (1991b: 84; see 1996).

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*EV refers to electronic version of publication.