

Critical abstract of International Biopolitics: Foucault, Globalisation and Imperialism:

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In this article Kelly applies Foucauldian analysis to international politics drawing upon Foucault's notion of 'biopower' in an effort to ultimately show that the modern global scene is characterized by the 'parasitic imperialism' of richer Western nations against poorer third-world nations under the aegis of 'biopolitics'. Kelly begins by discussing different interpretations of Foucault's notions of 'biopower', 'biopolitics' and 'governmentality', concluding that the first two are equivalent and refer to techniques of power that regulate and control populations which are understood as a political entity; 'governmentality' is then taken to be a series of practices and overriding rational for a form of political power exercised over populations. Kelly then moves onto the question of whether it is meaningful to talk about global governmentality and biopower exercised on a global scale, he breaks this discussion down into four areas: borders; aid; imperialism and anti-biopolitical imperialism.

Under this first topic he describes how borders can be used to control populations and exercise biopower e.g. by allowing the movement of skilled labour into your population or containing health epidemics within other nations, but denies that borders constitute the objects of

biopower which instead concerns populations rather than nation-states. Borders are used to exclude people from the biopolitical care of the state which is itself a technique of power.

Kelly's discussion of aid draws out how neoliberal practices have been employed to specifically control populations in third world countries in order to manage Western nations own populations back home.

The final two sections concern imperialism which assumes a specific meaning here in line with the Marxist view that imperialism is the way in which some nations benefit at the expense of others, even though this may appear to be the status quo or non-predatory. Kelly shows how biopolitical techniques have been used by Western nations to undermine and control non-Western nations in pursuit of maintaining control of their own populations.

This is an extremely clear and interesting analysis of Foucault's thought that applies his ideas of power exercised nationally to the modern global world. Kelly takes care to elaborate difficult concepts and combines a scholarly accuracy with a rallying call to action. Highly recommended!