Governmentality and Bio-politics:
A Neo-Liberal Approach to Human Security

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Abstract: **Human security with its complexity in the modern world has become a major concern to many scholars and politicians. Several scholarship advocate diverse means of approaching this phenomenon. In order to deal effectively with the situation, some scholars have advocated neo-liberal bio-politics and governmentality as providing a better panacea to this security nexus that confronts the world today. This article therefore explored the existing scholarship on the suitability of neoliberal governmentality and bio-politics to the human security nexus. It particularly focused on the variant arguments presented by the literature and assessed the viability, weaknesses and strengths of such arguments. Based on the analysis, the article concludes that neoliberal governmentality and bio-politics approach to the human (in)security nexus may not be entirely detrimental to human security globally, though, it has its own weaknesses and other implications. It further recommends an all-encompassing globalised mechanism (which includes both state and non-state actors) to help tackle the phenomenon. In particular, it posits that the complexity of the human security phenomenon makes it foggy to conceive just the self-esteem and economic intervention/empowerment of the individual (which is the focus of neoliberal bio-politics and governmentality) as better ameliorating options. Tackling the issue therefore requires coordinated efforts by governments, individuals, local and multinational institutions and society as a whole – it goes beyond self-esteem/freedom and economic wellbeing of a population.**

Keywords: **neoliberalism, bio-politics, governmentality, human security.**

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The September 11 attack on the World Trade Center (WTC), in the US, has brought to the fore new dimensions to the global debates on human security with emphasis on addressing broader deficiencies such as disease, poverty, and environmental disasters (as well as new terrorism). Such deficiencies are deemed indispensable components of the human security approach. The shift in focus from state security to 'human security', has been viewed as the most significant attempt to widen the scope of security nexus and considered as the "sorely needed venue for highlighting the particular vulnerabilities of people who suffer violence from representatives of the state, as well as other forms of violence and injustices" (Stern & Öjendal, 2010:15). Human security is generally considered as the prioritization of the security of people, with special emphasis on 'their welfare and well-being, rather than that of states' (Duffield and Waddell, 2006:1). Thus, the life of the individual should be more important in security matters which should call for an effective global effort aimed at preventing or ending widespread grave violation of fundamental human rights (and property).

In order to deal effectively with the situation, scholars have advocated neo-liberal bio-politics and governmentality as means to guarantee human security in the contemporary global society. Governmentality has come to be accepted by many as a valuable theoretical perspective for a better appreciation of power and rule across miscellaneous fields such as crime, education, housing, local government and public service reform, social welfare and social work (Mckee, 2009).

Foucault uses governmentality to highlight a particular rationality of rule in which the activity of government seems more and more alienated from the preservation instinct of the sovereign and focusing on optimizing the well-being of the

population, by empowering the population to be more 'productive' (Foucault, 2003a, 2003b). Introducing the term 'bio-politics' in his governmentality approach to human security, he also draws attention to a 'mode of power, which operates through the administration of life itself – meaning bodies (both individually and collectively), their health, sanitation, procreation, mental and physical capacities' and so forth (Foucault, 2003c: 202).

However, the accusation has been that bio-politics and governmentality approach to human security fails to recognize the importance of other factors such as equality or workers' rights, role of the state, social difference, resistance and politicking and that it has not been able to adequately address the issue. Therefore, there is the need for a new and a more all-encompassing approach to dealing with the human (in)security nexus. On the account of this critique, the study is intended to assess the viability of the bio-politics and governmentality approach to human security in the wake of incessant global insecurity. Again, of concern to the article are questions such as: Is human security achievable through bio-politics and governmentality in the wake of global terrorism? What are the implications of such approach to securing human security? Are there other necessary compliments? Should there be a new trend/approach to human security?

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Introduction:

The literature suggests that issues of human (in)security are as complex as the approaches adopted over the years to deal with such a phenomenon. While some scholars perceive bio-politics and governmentality as better approach to addressing global (human) (in)security others deem this approach as just theorizing and falling short of encapsulating other vital factors relevant to securing adequate human security. In order to examine the practicability of the application of this approach to human security as well as addressing the questions raised above, human security as a concept (in relation to what the literature presents) shall be discussed first. The article would then turn attention to the application of bio-politics and governmentality approach to human security giving particular consideration to its strengths and weaknesses and analyse and raise pertinent questions of viability.

B. Human Security:

According to Duffield (2006), human security addresses a global society in which issues concerning WWI and WWII as well as the Cold War between Northern states have shifted to a more complex and multiform threat linked with alienation, breakdown and insurgency emanating from developing countries (i.e. Southern ones). Duffield further argues that human security is generally conceived as encapsulating an integration of ideas of development and security (ibid. 3) where the scope of what constitutes security covers as a priority the security of individuals, rather than that of states. Duffield, therefore, posits that issues concerning security go beyond traditional concerns of security in which military capacity and the defence of territories were premium. In effect, security concerns in the today's global society cannot be tackled solely by military interventions.

It has been suggested that human security is 'increasingly providing a conceptual framework for international action; there is growing recognition world-wide that the protection of human security, including human rights and human dignity, must be one of the fundamental objectives of modern international institutions' (ICISS, 2001,6). It is therefore not surprising that Duffield sees human security approaches as covering a broad spectrum of social and developmental subjects which constitute an international security threat and concludes that 'poverty, population displacement, HIV/AIDS [and Ebola], environmental breakdown and social exclusion, for example, all bear directly on human and hence global security' (Duffield, 2006: 2). As admitted by Blair (2001), the complexity of issues of human security in the contemporary society makes international borders and the growing interconnectedness of livelihood systems and economic dependencies across homeland and borderland populations weak. The war on terrorism and in particular the Islamic state, the scourge of Ebola and migration turmoil call for coordinated global efforts to human security which go beyond bio-ploitics and governmentality approaches adopted by states in isolation. It also raises issues of the role of international institutions, especially NGOs and IGOs in securing humans globally.

C. Bio-politics and Human Security:

Bio-politics, as Foucault (2003:246) argues in his lectures creates 'security mechanisms… around the random element in a population of living beings so as to optimize a state of life.' Bio-politics relates to a security mechanism that seeks to insulate a given population against all forms of insecurity. Prior to the invention of biopolitics in Europe around 16th

century, there was no serious attempt by governments to regulate the people who lived in a territory, only piecemeal violent interventions to put down rebellions or levy taxes. (Mark Kelly, 2014) As with discipline, the main precursor to biopolitics can be found in the Church, which is the institution that did maintain records of births and deaths, and did minister to the poor and sick, in the medieval period. In the modern period, the perception grew among governments that interventions in the life of the people would produce beneficial consequences for the state, preventing depopulation, ensuring a stable and growing tax base, and providing a regular supply of manpower for the military. Hence they took an active interest in the lives of the people. (Mark Kelly, 2014)

Bio-politics, in effect, serves as the basis 'from which human security can be approached as a technology that makes it possible both to envisage, and author, a bio-politics of global governance' (Duffield, 2006: 4). However, Mills (2013, cited in Nilsson &Wallenstein, 2013) wonders why in spite of the cardinal claim of modern bio-politics as representing an intimate link between 'the operations of the state and the phenomena of life, such as health, death, reproduction and so on' (72), it has received little prominence. Like Reid (2005), she argues that the literature on bio-politics often fails to recognise the active power of life itself.

If Oskala's (2013, cited in Nilsson & Wallenstein, 2013) claim that neoliberalism has well promoted bio-political values and ends which include 'the right to one's body, to health, to happiness, to the satisfaction of needs' (63) is anything to go by then it stands to reason with her that neoliberalism has potentially contributed to the traditional understanding of sovereign community and the very underpinnings of power of state sovereignty. Oskala admits that neoliberal bio-political governmentality has 'expanded the domain of the economic… and strengthened the rationality of bio-power' (ibid.). And as Larrinaga and Doucet (2008:534) argue, 'in rendering life in bio-political terms,' human security nexus demands 'the operation of a form of sovereign power that claims the globe as its field of operation.' However, Boutros-Ghali (1995, 42–43 cited in Duffield & Waddell, 2006: 43) calls for an integrated approach to human security involving international division of labour that takes into account the role of the state and non-state actors such as UN agencies, NGOs and civil society groups (ibid., 44). He in effect, tasks leaders of contemporary state to appreciate the changing terrain and its demand for a growing interdependent world where 'commerce, communications and environmental matters transcend administrative borders' (Boutros-Ghali, 1992: item 17). Boutros-Ghali's claim here depicts the need for an all-encompassing mechanism to tackling human security which involves both state and non-state actors rather than just the state being solely responsible.

III. GOVERNMENTALITY, BIO-POLITICS AND HUMAN SECURITY – PRACTICABILITY, WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS

Furthering the discussion on the bio-politics and governmentality approach to human security, it is important to briefly touch on the literature on the issues of viability, strengths and weaknesses associated with the neoliberal approach to human security. Contemporary scholars' assessment of Foucault's governmentality illustrates both the art of 'governing ('gouverner') and modes of thought ('mentalité')' (Lemke, 2001:191). This, thus, demonstrates a situation where government provides the enabling environment for finding solutions to problems and provides guidelines for tackling them.

Neo-liberalism, according to Lemke (2001: 202) encourages individuals to commit themselves to a specific entrepreneurial form which calls for greater self-determination and collective responsibility towards finding panaceas to specific phenomena previously under the taxonomy of state agencies given the prerogative to take on such tasks. This participation has a 'price-tag': the individuals themselves have to assume responsibility for these activities and the possible failure thereof' (Donzelot, 1984: 157–77, 1996; Burchell 1993: 275–6 cited in Lemke, 2001:202). They therefore become the core or referent object.

Applying the self-esteem approach in neoliberal governmentality to government programmes in California, Barbara Cruikshank concludes that 'self-esteem' is much to self-assessment than with self-respect, and thus calls for a constant synchronization of the political goals of the state and a personal 'state of esteem' (Cruikshank 1996). Lemke adds that Cruikshank's conclusion and suggestion correlate with Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose's study which demonstrates the importance of 'transposing entrepreneurial forms onto 'private' options by individuals who base the decisions on cost/benefit analyses and the criteria of competition' (Miller and Rose 1990, cited in Lemke, 2001: 202). Miller and Rose caution that the feasibility of the change order in terms of structures of production is contingent on individuals optimizing their 'relation to themselves and to work' (Miller and Rose 1990).

The literature from Lemke (2001: 203) suggests that the 'theoretical strength of the concept of governmentality consists of the fact that it construes neo-liberalism not just as ideological rhetoric or as a political-economic reality, but above all as a political project that endeavours to create a social reality.' Neo-liberalism is therefore viewed as a political rationality that tries to render the social domain economic and to link a reduction in (welfare) state services and security systems to the increasing call for 'personal responsibility' and 'self-care' (ibid). He further states that analysis of governmentality therefore encapsulates the 'integral link between micro- and macro-political levels' (e.g. globalization and personal imperatives (Lemke, 2001). Akin to this, Lemke asserts that governmentality reinforces a close relationship between 'ideological' and 'political-economic' agencies and concludes that Foucault's later work simply means that he took his analysis on power further and made accurate his earlier studies in which he put the individual and other non-state actors at the discretion of the state, making them largely 'docile bodies' that needed to be controlled by the state (ibid.). By this, Lemke seems to corroborate Stern & Ojendal's (2010: 25) conclusion that the term 'development–security nexus' is been used to 'describe a growing realm that is suggestive of how security and development can be fathomed as interconnected for the purposes of appreciating our 'emerging world or … shaping it.' They therefore postulate the significance of variations in futuristic perception, pursuance and production of the human security 'nexus.'

IV.   ANALYSIS

From the discourse above, one may agree with Duffield and Waddell (2006: 20), that the issue of human security as a bio-political technology of governance has been greatly expanded beyond just 'securing Southern populations by bringing together the existing practices, institutions and networks of sustainable development in the 1990s when it began gaining strides'. Clearly, the issue of human security has become so complex and multifaceted that just the self-esteem and economic intervention/liberation limited to the four walls of a state cannot deal with it. Thus, in the words of Duffield and Waddell (2006:20), "it [envisages] a horizontal and coordinated system of cross-border interventions, indeed — a new, multileveled global infrastructure — able to complement, or temporarily replace, the efforts of ineffective states.'

Neo-liberalism seems to place too much importance on the economic interpretation of all human behaviour and Foucault in support of this echoes Gary Becker (Oskala, 2013, cited in Nilsson & Wallenstein, 2013: 69), on his vehement call for economic analysis as a vital prelude to self-freedom and economic liberation. However, comparing Foucault and Becker and Duffield & Waddell (2006: 10), one would share the opinion of Duffield and Waddell that the prevalence of security concerns, even with 'homeland security' encapsulates 'issues of global circulation— of people, weapons, networks, illicit commodities, money, information….' Notably, Duffield & Waddell's (2006: 10) assertion that such circulations usually have their origins from the world's conflict zones, and are able to influence the consolidating bio-political function of development may sound convincing. It also corroborates the views of Larrinaga and Doucet (2008:534) and Boutros-Ghali (1992: item 17) as the war on terrorism seems to have changed the social order making human security an evolving global responsibility. For instance, the famous historian of terrorism, Walter Laqueur, cautioned months before the 9/11attacks that a new wave of 'revolution' in the character of terrorism seemed eminent. Laqueur (1999) envisaged a world faced with the rise of 'new terrorists' who would have no hesitation about using weapons of mass destruction, and other Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles to fusillade the earth and annihilate its inhabitants (ibid.). Though, his speculations have often been considered by some scholars as being overstated, the new wave of terrorism confronting the world somehow vindicates him or validates his 'prophecy.'

Neoliberal governmentality and bio-politics' stress on the relevance of economic intervention which often is reflective of the wealth of the population seems problematic as it tends to downplay the essence of equality or workers' rights and impedes the very self-confidence it seeks to achieve (Mckee, 2009: 483). Following this, one would concur with Mckee that Foucauldian-inspired governmentality disregards 'empirical reality, downplays the role of the state, neglects social difference, inadequately theorizes resistance, and sanitizes politics...' (Mckee, 2009: 483). Therefore, Stern & Ojendal's (2010: 25) call for a critical attention toward futuristic perception, pursuance and production of the human security 'nexus' as well as the crucial role non-state actors (Lemke, 2001), especially international institutions is in the right direction. It suffices to say that the multidimensional and evolving nature of human security[1] today makes it imperative to encapsulate critical security and human security approaches in any theory or debate geared towards addressing the human

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[1] See 'HUMAN SECURITY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE: An Overview of the Human Security Concept and the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security', Human Security Unit, United Nations http://www.un.org/humansecurity/sites/www.un.org. humansecurity/files/human_security_in_theory_and_practice_english.pdf

security nexus. Thus, an amalgamation of a critical human security[2] approach and the neoliberal governmentality and bio-politics to dealing with the faceted global (human) security connexion becomes imperative. In effect, both the state and non-state actors are considered key players in the struggle against human (in)security in a broad based approach.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Indeed, as pointed out by some of the scholars, bio-politics and governmentality approach to the human security nexus which is 'about the governing and regulation of (the development of) life, through for instance, interrelated efforts aimed at 'improving' life, the management of contingency and the exclusion of 'the dangerous' (Buur, Jensen & Stepputat, 2007: 15; Dillon & Lobo-Guerrero, 2008: 266, cited in Oskala (2013: 7) may not be entirely detrimental to human security globally, though, it has its own weaknesses and other implications. This, in effect, calls for an all-encompassing globalised mechanism (which includes both state and non-state actors) to help tackle the phenomenon. The new wave of terrorism across the globe poses a new security challenge, which transcends the traditional state-centred security or even the call for human security with a focus on non-traditional security deficiencies such as diseases, natural disasters and impoverishment – with the individual as the referent object. Non-state actors have indeed become indispensable in the approach to dealing with the human (in)security nexus. Many threats plaguing individual security stem from state weakness and failure or abusive and covetous states. Therefore, envisaging the state as the pivotal 'provider – or potential provider – of individual security' is problematic (Newman, 2010: 94).

Again, a pertinent question that is curious and worth interrogating, is 'whether economic intervention/empowerment can guarantee human security in a polarized global system.'   The complexity of the human security phenomenon makes it murky to conceive just the self-esteem and economic intervention/liberation of the individual (which is the focus of neoliberal bio-politics and governmentality) as better ameliorating options. As argued by Duffield and Waddell (2006: 20), "… a horizontal and coordinated system of cross-border interventions, indeed — a new, multileveled global infrastructure — able to complement, or temporarily replace, the efforts of ineffective states [as well as abusive and predatory states]' is essential to the human security connexion. Moreover, individuals are social animals in various contexts; they live in communities across space and time (i.e. virtual population and community) and not just one particular state. Tackling the issue therefore requires coordinated efforts by governments, individuals, local and multinational institutions and the society as whole.

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