

“Biopower and Immigration”: A Biopolitical Perspective on Anti-Migration Policies

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Abstract

While several competing theoretical frameworks contribute significantly to the epistemology and debate on anti-migration policies, there are still missing theories in this area. This paper uses Foucault's concept of biopower to analyze anti-migration strategies. The paper argues that from the logic of biopolitics, anti-migration policies are deployed to protect the biological existence and well-being of populations (legal citizens). This analysis is particularly important considering the unceasing migration from low and middle-income countries to developed nations due to acute socio-economic, political and environmental conditions. The paper will serve as evidence to inform policy decision-making on immigration procedures.

Keywords: Immigrants, anti-migration, biopower, biopolitics, government, migration

1. Introduction

For many years, the orthodox conception of power was “the right of the sovereign to decide life and death” (Foucault, 1980, p. 153). Power was exercised by the sovereign king who had the right to decide the life or death of his or her subjects. For instance, if there was any rebellion by an enemy against the sovereign, the sovereign had the authority to wage war demanding his subjects to rise to the defence of the state (Foucault, 1980). As such, without necessarily condemning the subjects to death, their lives were at risk. Similarly, the sovereign had the power to kill anyone who consciously or unconsciously violates his (her) laws or involves in any acrimonious act that posed a considerable threat to the security and welfare of the state (Ibid). In this instance, the sovereign exercised “[both direct and] indirect power over them [subjects] of life and death” (Foucault, 1980, p. 135). As a result, Foucault notes that power was organized as a “mechanism of deduction” with the motive of making it “essentially a right of seizure of things, time, bodies and ultimately life itself; it culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it” (Foucault, 1978, p. 136). Thus, the conventional model of power was “deductive” and the relation between the sovereign king and his (her) subjects was characterised by subjugation and seizure (Ibid). This archaic model of power intrinsically was a subtraction where the most visible manifestation of power resided in the sovereign's ability to seize whatever possessions belonged to his (her) subjects including their very lives (Foucault, 1978).

Foucault, however, indicates that power is organized in multiple “corridors” in society and not only at the level of political rulers and subjects (Foucault, 1980). Power also functions in all relations of life including those between lovers, spouses, parents and children etc (Ibid). Instead of power being centered on the sovereign king or ruler, “power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body” (Foucault, 1980, pp. 142–143). As such, “power is exercised through networks, and individuals do not simply circulate in those networks; they are in a position to both submit to and exercise this power. They are never the inert or consenting targets of power; they are always its relays. In other words, power passes through individuals. It is not applied to them” (Foucault, 1976, p. 29). Foucault, therefore, suggests that the main function of power currently is for the “subjugation of bodies and . . . control of populations” (Foucault 1979, p. 93).

Taking this assessment of power as a starting point, the present paper uses Foucault's concept of biopower to analyze anti-migration strategies in the contemporary world. The discussion begins with an explanation of biopower and how it was developed. The second section of the paper delves into discussing biopolitics and anti-migration policies, and points out the need to analyze these policies from a biopolitical perspective. The third part of the paper discusses anti-migration policies as a biopolitical strategy drawing on cases mainly from the US context. The fourth part of the paper ends with a conclusion on anti-migration policies and biopower.

2. The Concept of Biopower

According to Foucault, the 18th century marked a new beginning in history in which the traditional sovereign power shifted to a new modality of power (Foucault, 1980). In this modern technology of power, the repressive, intermittent and despotic model of power is “no longer the major form of power but merely one element among others” (Foucault, 1980, p.179). This new model of power emerges with specific techniques, entirely new apparatuses and a complete set of different equipment (Ibid). The task of this mechanism of power is to incite, refine and distribute effective tactics or forces for controlling and managing all spheres of life (Foucault, 1980).

Foucault, for instance, notes that the key function of this power is “to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize and organize the forces under it: a power bent on generating forces, making them grow and ordering them rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit or destroying them” (Foucault, 1980, p. 179). This new power for governing life is what Foucault describes as “*biopower*” (Foucault, 1980)

Biopower, Foucault indicates is organized around two main intersecting poles. The first pole known as “*anatomo-politics of human body*” developed in the 17th century and operated at the micro level (Foucault, 1980, p. 188). This pole occurs in a variety of disciplinary mechanisms and institutions including the military, pedagogy, medicine and labour (Foucault, 1979). The human body is conceived as a machine (man-the-machine) embedded with functions and utilities, inputs and outputs, predictabilities and precision (Foucault, 1979). In *Discipline and Punishment* (1975), Foucault argues that disciplinary power guarantees the body “its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls” (Foucault, 1979, p. 172). The emergence of this disciplinary power corresponded with the proliferation of the human science which formed the basis for discussing this model of power (Foucault, 1979). Foucault notes that the human sciences are “extraordinarily inventive when it comes to creating apparatuses to shape knowledge and expertise, and they do support a discourse but it is a discourse that cannot be the discourse of right or a juridical discourse ... a discourse about a natural rule or in other words a norm. Discipline will define not a code of law but a code of normalization and they will necessarily refer to a theoretical horizon that is not the edifice of law but the field of human sciences” (Foucault, 1980, p.34). Thus, under the anatomic politics of the human body, the role of law is to control, regulate and discipline (Ibid). In short, the disciplinary power treats the body as a machine and strives to establish a disciplined, effective and manageable population. Therefore, the essential characteristic of the penal power is to discipline bodies to become more productive and economically valuable.

The second pole around which biopower is established emerged in “the second half of the 18th century; [it] is a new technology of power but its task is not disciplinary” (Foucault, 1978, p. 242). This power combines the elements of disciplinary power and applies them in a different way to manage life (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). Foucault argues that the birth of this power brought the emergence of an array of networks and apparatuses of knowledge responsible for calculating, interpreting and predicting the health and well-being of society (Foucault, 1980). The management and control of birth rates, morbidity and mortality as well as the factors that contribute to the manifestation of these characteristics are not directly targeted at the individual body but rather the species-body or body politic (Foucault, 1980). This modality of power focuses on controlling and regulating populations. Foucault refers to this pole as the “*biopolitics of the population*” (Ibid).

The two dichotomous poles of power including the disciplinary power mechanism of the body and the regulatory mechanisms of population according to Foucault together form the modern innovation of power relations described as “*biopower*” (Foucault, 1980). This technology of power (biopower) is evident in the survival of population as an object of study and government. The population is not merely a collection of individual subjects but represents a social body that always requires security and management. As Foucault indicates, our interest is no more directed to individual bodies but rather the social body or body politic “with its specific phenomena and its peculiar variables [including:] birth and death rates, life expectancy, fertility, state of health, frequency of illness, patterns of diet and habitation” (Foucault, 1980, p.25). The emergence of biopower Foucault argues led to the growth of capitalism in which the government of life became a principal attribute in the history and politics of man (Foucault, 1980). The development of capitalism coupled with modern politics necessitates techniques of power that could make use of the forces and abilities of the economy and population. How human beings live and conduct their daily activities became the attention of power. The activities of man constitute bodies of knowledge and power that require understanding, regulation and control. The central characteristic of power now is not deduction and subjugation of life as it was in the days of the arbitrary sovereign king but rather focuses more attention to regulating and improving the conditions of human life and making them sustainable. The most important task in the exercise of this power now is to make life better by promoting the political and civil rights, and moral obligations of the human populace rather than limiting them (Foucault, 2012). Following this claim, Foucault indicates that governing populations is currently the source of legitimacy among contemporary types of government:

It's the body of society which becomes the new principle [of political organization] in the nineteenth century. It is this social body which needs to be protected, in a quasi-medical sense. In place of the rituals that served to restore the corporeal integrity of the monarch, remedies and therapeutic devices are employed such as the segregation of the sick, the monitoring of contagions, the exclusion of delinquents. (“Body/Power”, p. 55)

The main concern of governments is to enforce laws to protect and improve the general health of the composite body. In this regard, Foucault posits that “biological existence is now reflected in political existence” (Foucault, 1980, p. 142). This assertion means that the protection of population and its essential characteristics at the present age has transcended the traditional archaic power to take life or let live which was solely decided

upon by the de facto sovereign ruler. This idea, however, does not completely mean that the power over death has disappeared but transitioned into “a tendency to align itself with the exigencies of a life-administering power and to define itself accordingly” (Foucault, 1980, p. 136). Giorgio Agamben supports this view by indicating that “the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power” (Agamben, 1998, p. 6). This claim means that the sovereign still exists and contributes significantly to the use of power although in a different manner which in this instance is to govern the security of the composite body. Foucault, for example, explains that the ancient outmoded power over life or death is now cautiously exercised to govern bodies and control life (Foucault, 1980). As a result, Foucault indicates that we are currently living in the age of biopower (Foucault, 1980).

The orthodox power over death “now presents itself as the counterpart of a power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavours to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations” (Foucault 1980, p.137). For example, wars are no longer waged in the interest of the sovereign but in the defence of the body-politic (population). Thus, it is “as managers of life and survival . . . that so many regimes have been able to wage so many wars, causing so many men to be killed” (Ibid). Mass killing from the logic of biopower is exercised for biological reasons in the contemporary era. That is, for the well-being of the population and not to the benefit of the sovereign. For instance, Foucault indicates “if genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, [it] is not because of a recent return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population” (Foucault, 1980, p. 137). In this regard, Foucault argues that as population is now the main object of study and governance, sexuality (sexual conduct) has become an important object of control and regulation. He indicates that “sexuality exists at the point where body and population meet” (Foucault, 1976, pp. 251-2). For example, sexuality at the individual level is a private issue that regulates his (her) discipline and action. However, in the case of population, sexuality affects the entire process of reproduction. As a result, it is imperative that governments manage and intervene in the production and reproduction of individuals since this could affect the general health, future growth and security of the population. Thus, biopower is concerned with “the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc” (Lemke, 2015, p. 100). It is this characteristic of biopower that distinguishes it from other modalities of power particularly sovereign power.

The concept of biopower was introduced by Foucault (1990, 2003) to show how disciplinary mechanisms were supplanted in contemporary era by biopolitics. The security of population is ensured by establishing policies to thoroughly study and influence the events that are inimical to its existence and well-being. Governments act defensively to safeguard the biological-wellbeing of populations. That is, to defend populations, the ‘other’ must be killed as noted by Foucault “if you want to live, the other must die” (Foucault, 2003, p. 255). In the language of security, killing is no more considered a crime or murder but then it is necessary in the name of safety. The politics surrounding security that is “the dispositif of security” as Foucault refers to biopower (Foucault, 1980, p.242) creates a dichotomous classification between “us” and “them”, or “legitimate” (e.g., legal citizens) and the “illegitimate” (e.g., undocumented migrants, refugees or asylum seekers). The legitimate deserve the right to live whereas the illegitimate are expendable because they are perceived as a threat to the security and welfare of the legitimate (see Foucault, 2003).

3. Biopower in Contemporary Context

According to Greenhalgh (1994, p. 10) “high fertility [in China] in the 1950s and 1960s produced rapid population growth, and, in turn, intensifying pressure on ecological and economic resources. It is these pressures policymakers sought to ease when they fashioned the one-child policy in the late 1970s”. This one-child policy has continued unabated among present governments as a remedy to this menace of fast growing population. Using biomedical practices to enforce the one child policy can be considered a biopolitical strategy to manage and protect the social body (population). That is, to lessen pressure on ecological and economic resources and protect the available resources for the present population and ensure the sustainability of these scarce resources. The adoption of biopolitical strategies cuts across countries globally particularly in the global north to guarantee the security of their populations. For instance, Foucault (1991a) indicates that biopower to some extent exists in all contemporary nation-states. In this light, Foucault’s concept of biopower/biopolitics is an important invention that holds a significant degree of application in the political landscapes of the modern world. While scholars such as Giorgio Agamben have taken advantage of the analytical power of biopower/biopolitics to examining many disparate events such as global health, we will like to explore the rationality of biopower/biopolitics in the discourse of anti- migration policies. To achieve this objective, the following research question will be addressed: *“How can anti-migration policies be understood from the perspective of biopolitics?”*

3.1 Why the Focus on Biopower and Anti-Migration Policies?

Although states engage in multilateral and bilateral relations as well as ratifying common conventions and

treaties, the implementation of these agreements have often remained painfully slow and lop-sided across countries. For instance, all over the world, particularly among western countries, there have been a growing number of technologies of power adopted by governments to govern immigrant populations including undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and refugees (Nyers, 2003). These technologies of power take the form of deportations, detention centers, and limited access to job opportunities, health care, housing and education (Tyler, 2006) to eliminate immigrants. Likewise, humanitarian actions although apolitical virtually reduce human life to bare life, a life that can easily be killed in foreign territories. This bare life is more associated with vulnerable immigrants living on international frontiers than any group of people (see Ticktin, 2006; Agamben, 1998). Similarly, there have been increasing xenophobic attacks on immigrants as well as incessant calls for governments to tighten their borders to exclude unwanted immigrants. An example is the increasing mob justice and lynching of immigrants in South Africa for allegedly confiscating jobs belonging to citizens. Immigrants, particularly, undocumented ones are often excluded from the sphere of human existence including the abrogation of all political and civic rights (Papastergiadis, 2006; Tyler, 2006). In the context of these actions, Agamben indicates that “it would be more honest and, above all, more useful to carefully investigate...[the] deployments of power by which human beings could be so completely deprived of their rights...that no act committed against them could appear any longer a crime” (Agamben, 1998, p.171). Following this proposition, examining anti-migration policies from the perspective of biopolitics would shed light on the current concerns about the exclusion of undocumented immigrant population.

Migration is increasing in nature, impact and complexity. While there are no concrete statistics regarding the world immigrant population, the United Nations Population Fund indicates that approximately 3.3% of the world’s population is living in foreign countries including undocumented migrants (UNFPA, 2016). Perhaps, this growth has warranted the increasing response of governments through different measures to control and eliminate the growing numbers of the immigrant population. It, therefore, becomes imperative that researchers should examine anti-migration policies to understand the relations of power in modern politics. Agamben whose works have largely been influenced by Foucault’s idea of biopolitics indicates that man’s biological existence is the focus of modern politics (Agamben, 1998). Thus, modern politics has politicized what he refers to as bare life, which is man’s mere biological existence since birth (Agamben, 1998). The politicization of life implies that bare life is encompassed in the strategies of the state and becomes the target of its policies. Agamben argues that it is only through a biopolitical approach that we can better understand and address the “enigmas” of modern politics (Agamben, 2010, pp.15-16). If the rationality of biopolitics is a common element among countries then applying this framework can be an important pathway to understanding anti-migration policies in today’s world.

The undocumented immigrant population is an exceptional topic for analysis mainly to create a more nuanced picture and understanding of modern sovereignty and state’s biopower, given the fact that she by “breaking the continuity between man and citizen” reveals the “distance between birth and nation” which in that moment reveals the bare life that is otherwise a presumed secret in modern politics” (Agamben, 2010, pp. 142-143). Thus, while several competing perspectives contribute significantly to the ongoing debate and epistemologies on anti-migration policies, analyzing these strategies through a biopolitical lens will help improve our understanding of governments’ anti-migration policies. A biopolitical analysis of anti-migration procedures may not only be for academic purpose but also for policy formulation and implementation. This analysis is particularly timely considering the unceasing migration from developing countries to developed nations due to acute socio-economic, political and environmental conditions.

4. Anti-Migration Policies from the Perspective of Biopolitics

Modern governments in their efforts to protect the socio-economic welfare of populations, have developed measures to exterminate any potential threat to the biological existence and prosperity of their nations. One of such measures is the deployment of anti-migration policies, and other forms of border controls and surveillance to check the rapidly growing number of immigrant population. The cry for these technologies of power in the context of migration is often associated with the notion that foreigners both legal and illegal allegedly tend to seize employment opportunities and other benefits that rightfully belong to citizens (see Buonfino, 2004). For example, governments often decry of issues such as rising unemployment, crimes, deterioration of schools and deficiencies in social services often linked to immigrants. The probabilities and statistics of these effects have caused governments to frequently deploy measures to govern the influx of migrants into their political landscapes (see Tyler, 2006). Foucault refers to these measures as the technologies of government or technologies of power (Foucault, 1980).

The simple rationale behind these technologies of power by governments is not merely to expunge the immigrant population but instead to fortify and sustain the socio-economic and political welfare of the composite body (citizens). In this instance, the only effective and favoured mechanism to achieving this objective is by controlling and regulating the influx of migrants into their countries. The exclusion and control of immigrants are adjudged as necessary measures to ensure the safety and survival of the social body. For example,

deportation helps to eliminate illegal immigrants (Gibney & Hansen, 2003), and serves as a deterrent to other potential asylum seekers and undocumented migrants (Ibid). This mechanism reaffirms the constitutional rights of citizenship such as access to jobs and social services. These practices including but not limited to deportation and denial of visas are better identified in the words of Foucault as “biopower” (Foucault, 1980). Biopower is interested in the “welfare of the population, the improvement of its conditions, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc.” (Lemke, 2015, p.100). It is a regulatory power whose task is to systematically and exhaustively invest in life to promote a healthier and more productive population. As Foucault notes, the foundation of biopower is that “entire populations [can be] mobilized for the purpose of whole sale slaughter in the name of life necessity” (Foucault, 1980, p.137). Biopower does not simply invest in life; it frequently does away with it to sustain it. Thus, in the language of biopower, protecting life can result in a genocide (Foucault, 1980).

Given the objective of biopower, governments strive to exclude those influences deemed harmful to the biological growth of their nations. The body of the immigrant population becomes the essential target by government as well as the general population who presumably think that the exclusion of it will be a noble pursuit to ensure the survival of the composite body. Thus, they (governments) constantly involve in the policing, control of borders, denial of access to health care and visas either to cut back the number of immigrants flow or to act as a disincentive to other potential migrants from encroaching their borders. The body of the migrant becomes a vital terrain of governmental tussle predominantly as it relates to his or her entry and reproduction in foreign lands particularly in the global north. Attempts to control and regulate the immigrant body including his or her activities from the body politic means that the life of the immigrant can easily be dispensable. That is, the lives of immigrants and their children are unworthy of living. They become vulnerable to the unconditional threat of death on the fringes of foreign lands. From a biopolitical perspective, efforts to eliminate the immigrant body are supposedly to govern a proper form of species reproduction. In short, the simplest biopolitical logic is that if immigrants pose a threat to the collective and social good, their exclusion is necessary to safeguard the welfare of the nation. The repudiation of the immigrant is thus justified in the name of protecting the welfare of the social body.

A typical example of biopolitical rationality concerning anti-migration policies can be situated in in the United States. In the 1990s, governmental bodies put across a concern indicating that immigrants from the southern hemisphere posed a potential threat to the cultural unity and harmony of the nation (see Motomura & Brimelow, 1996). The concern was that the masses of foreigners with their many languages and cultural practices could overshadow the prevailing culture of the nation. Also, some members of the general population blamed the immigrant population primarily undocumented migrants for the nation’ socio-economic misfortunes (Ibid). The dominant assumption by then was that immigrants threatened the social security and existence of the nation. They were being alarmed by the tendency of migrants to take over the country with their contradictions thereby bound to cause an extinction of the dominant culture. The culture of the immigrant population was incongruence with and posed a danger to the existence of the social body. In this regard, the cultural values of the immigrant population were considered as a potential threat to the culture and unity of the nation. Consequently, all efforts were directed towards defusing this difference (Inda, 2002).

In this same period, Californians voted on a proposition to deny illegal immigrants access to welfare, education and health care services. The underlying concern of this proposal was that unwelcome migrants and their children were causing California huge sums (i.e. millions) of dollars in a year in public services (Inda, 2002). This adversely affected the state’s limited financial resources thereby causing a general degeneration in the health of the state (Ibid). As noted by citizens for legal immigration “the people of California have suffered for too long from the impact of illegal immigration, specifically in the areas of crime and from the costs of health, education and welfare for illegal aliens. The time has come to stop rewarding illegal aliens for breaking our laws. With California’s budget deficits spiralling out of control, the taxpayers of this state must conserve their scarce financial resources for the benefit of citizens and legal immigrants”¹. The motivation behind this action was that denying unwanted migrants public services would decrease, if not absolutely abrogate the flow of unwanted immigrants. In addition, such a decisive plan was perceived as a mechanism to force existing illegal immigrants in the state to vacate the country: “many of the hundreds of thousands of illegals who arrive every year will be discouraged from coming. Many of the more than two million illegals already here will be encouraged to leave”². In this context, illegal immigrants were considered both internal and external nemeses who posed a significant threat to the security and welfare of the state. Thus, the only surest way of protecting the dominant culture and the general health, and well-being of the composite body is to remove the immigrant body from the body politic. A more contemporary illustration of biopolitical logic of anti-migration policies can be shown in the 2016 US presidential elections. For instance, one of the major promises of Donald Trump to American Citizens during his

¹ Citizens for Legal Immigration: n.p

² Ibid

campaign trail was to build a 30 feet wall along the US-Mexico border to prevent illegal immigrants from entering the country. The decision to build this barrier Trump decries is that:

“When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best... They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists...; Mexico is ripping off the US more than almost any other nation. Mexico continues to make billions on not only our bad trade deals but also relies heavily on the billions of dollars in remittances sent from illegal immigrants in the United States; I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words; under my administration, anyone who illegally crosses the border will be detained until they are removed out of our country and back to the country from which they came.”¹

This quotation highlights the frustration and trouble that immigrants pose to countries of reception particularly developed ones. The only means of solving this problem is to eliminate the immigrant body as depicted in the words of the US President, Donald Trump. Similarly, within a couple of months after being sworn into office, Trump signed an executive order entitled “*Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States*,” which barred people from “*countries of particular concern*,” including Syria, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen². However, this order “provoked an outcry from human rights and humanitarian groups coupled with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration and Amnesty International condemning the ban.”³ This reproach subsequently resulted in the prohibition being contested in the court which led to the revocation of the order. Although these actions in the eyes of the world may be considered as racial profiling but, they are biopolitical strategies to protect the interest of the American citizens. For instance, following Trump’s slogan “*Make America Great Again*”⁴ has several implications. However, one of the major deductions from this expression is that the security of the nation is threatened. In this instance, an important measure to make America great again is to eliminate some immigrants who are often associated with terrorist attacks and other social problems.

The only remedy to achieving the objective of making America great is to exclude or prevent illegal immigrants from entering the country. These barriers such as building walls and banning the entry of foreigners are justified in the language of security. The country (US) needs to be protected and governed from terrorists, drug barons, and suicide bombers operating within and outside the country. The external focus of these barriers is for security and socio-economic reasons. The motivation to construct a 664-mile wall along the US-Mexico border and to deny the Muslim sect visas are adjudged an effective response to drug associated crime and terrorists’ activities that will create a perilous environment for the US citizens. The biopolitics involved here is to build a wall to intercept illegal immigrants and to deny certain people mainly Muslims from entering the country who are inimical to the American dream of being great.

In quintessence, immigrants including undocumented migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are constructed as bodies that will bring disorder and insecurity to the nation. In this instance, the only solution to ensuring the safety of the nation is to expunge the immigrant body. In the exercise of anti-migration policies such as border patrols, governments are creating a binary between normal and abnormal, distinguishing between those who are fit and unfit to live in the society. The biopolitical inference of these strategies means that; undocumented immigrants are not only pathological bodies that must be stopped from entering the state but it also inherently suggests that they are easily expendable; their lives are not worth any protection. The contemporary policing and border surveillance compels desperate undocumented immigrants to use perilous entry routes such as high seas, deserts which predispose them to death. This death sentence although a known fact among governments yet these measures have continued undiminished. This indifferent attitude demonstrates that the death of these immigrants is virtually satisfactory to governments as a remedy to fortifying their borders. The death of these immigrants does not mean that governments are interested in seeing these people being killed but the simple logic is that to defend their populations, governments are willing to expose the lives of immigrants to death. The biopolitical logic is that “the state is making a decision on the value and nonvalue of life, distinguishing between those lives that deserve to be lived and those that can be disallowed to the point of death” (Inda, 2002, p. 149). Here, those who merit living are the citizens who constitute most of the population while those who deserve to die are the undocumented immigrants who are desperately risking their lives trying to cross illegally to unwelcoming frontiers. Thus, governing populations becomes evident in the fight against the enemy which is depicted unfavourable to the composite body; a threat that can be addressed through biopolitical techniques. This mechanism reflects nothing less than the logic of biopower or biopolitics. Governments are

¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/mexico-border-wall-donald-trump-planning-much-will-cost-will/>

² <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/donald-trump-us-president-immigration-ban-airports-refusing-visa-holders-entry-muslim-executive-a7550691.html>

³ <https://dornsife.usc.edu/news/stories/2521/under-the-microscope-trumps-controversial-travel-ban/>

⁴ <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/>

supposed to eradicate potential enemies to protect the safety, health and the existence of their populations. As Jennifer Terry indicates “under the guise of health and welfare, the administrative state turns politics into biopolitics, where decisions and choices are constructed in terms of preserving life and determining benevolent destruction” (Terry, 1989, pp.13-43). Thus, anti-migration policies are best characterized as one of the calculated tactics and innovations of modern governments to safeguard the general welfare of their populations.

5. Conclusion

The present paper focuses on exploring the biopolitical perspective on anti-migration policies. The paper discussed the concept of biopower and showed how it is different from other technologies of power such as sovereign power. It further outlined biopower in the contemporary context and established why it is important to look at anti-migration policies through a biopolitical lens. The last section of the paper discussed anti-migration policies from the standpoint of biopolitics using examples mainly from the US context to demonstrate the operation of biopower in an emerging global society.

It can be argued that it is the dichotomy between the normal and pathological that anti-migration policies are established to eliminate illegal immigrants, bogus asylum seekers, and refugees in the current epoch. The rationality behind anti-migration policies is to safeguard the biological existence and well-being of populations. The rejection of the immigrants including his or her daily activities is necessary to guarantee the existence and survival of the social body. Since this is the purpose of anti-migration policies, then one is speaking the language of biopower/biopolitics. This is a machinery of power whose whole task is to govern populations. As Terry points out that “under the guise of health and welfare, the administrative state turns politics into biopolitics where decisions and choices are constructed in terms of preserving life and determining benevolent destruction” (Terry, 1989, pp.13-43). This proposition suggests that under the realm of biopower, everything is possible including authorizing a genocide or massacre to protect life. The logic of biopower is to ensure the continual existence of population which means an entire population can be exposed to the unconditional threat of death to protect life. This rationale is precisely the language of anti-migration policies which is to ensure the security of legal citizens by exterminating the life of the dilapidated immigrant. Although the rejection of the immigrant population in foreign countries and elsewhere may not be synonymous with human carnage, the underlying principle is that to protect life, immigrants must be barred to the point of death. Immigrants’ life must be disallowed through anti-migration policies to protect life. Thus, the development of anti-migration policies from a biopolitical perspective is that; immigrants are defined as fearful bodies, and they are a significant threat to the national unity and security of nations predominantly among western countries. In fact, they are considered pathological bodies from which society must be defended against. The only justifiable way to preserve the national unity and safety of nations is to eliminate immigrants particularly undocumented ones through anti-migration policies. Therefore, from the logic of biopolitics, it is important that governments regulate the flow of immigrants to avoid the health and security of their populations from being jeopardized.

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