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ABSTRACT

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Many security technologies have been developed, enhanced, and implemented by the western neoliberal world following the attacks of 9/11. This qualitative case study seeks to identify the purpose guiding these technologies through theoretical lenses shaped by Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault regarding power. This project’s purpose is to argue that the neoliberal world develops and uses security technologies to serve bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power, as Foucault theorized, rather than sovereign power, as Agamben theorized. Specifically, private military corporations and drones are evaluated to speculate about the form of power future security technologies, such as lethal autonomous robots (LARs), will serve. This project finds that if those who share a perspective of power similar to Agamben, which ignores discourses of truth, succeed and prevent the use of future security technologies, such as LARs, the neoliberal world may be unable to defend its way of life.
To my late daughter, Sophia Isabelle Martin

I miss you everyday
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INTRODUCTION

Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity: massacres have become vital. (Foucault, 1990, p. 137)

Following the attacks of 9/11, many security technologies were developed, enhanced, and implemented by the Western neoliberal world. These security technologies, which can range in scope from increased security procedures at airports to unmanned drone strikes conducted by the United States in Asia, appear to sometimes lead to illiberal actions despite them being employed by the neoliberal world. As Foucault (2008) suggests in “The Birth of Biopolitics,” neoliberalism is a logic of governance dedicated to the idea that a society should be administered more or less fully according to the logic of the free-market. The concept of neoliberalism is essential to this project, rather than simply liberalism, because it is an active form of liberalism that prompts preemptive action and/or intervention in order to protect its interests (Foucault, 2008, pp. 131-134). Thus, neoliberalism offers a perspective from which to view the “why” concerning the security technologies embraced by the neoliberal world following 9/11; the neoliberal world is enacting these technologies in order to create/sustain an environment which favors its interests. However, as the neoliberal world turns to these new methods and security technologies in the post-9/11 era, theorists disagree about why these developments are occurring, and why they sometimes lead to illiberal acts. The debate surrounding these security technologies and the corresponding illiberal actions
stems from their underlying purpose: are these security technologies set in place to protect people with the goal of enhancing their lives, or are they set in place to merely reestablish the government’s control and power? A way to examine this question’s tension is through a dispute focused on the evolution of power within the neoliberal world, and more specifically, the form of power which controls the lion’s share of influence throughout the modern neoliberal world.

The dispute concerning the dominant form of power within the neoliberal world lies between Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault and revolves around the way in which they view power to have evolved over time. Thomas Hobbes’ sovereign power is acknowledged by each theorist, and is understood to exist and influence the world (Agamben, 1998; Foucault, 1990). Nevertheless, the disagreement between Foucault and Agamben concerns the importance of the formation of what Foucault (1990) refers to as “bio-politics” within the neoliberal world: the result of bio-politics is “disciplinary power” and “bio-power” (p. 139; p. 140; Tagma, 2009, p. 411). While Foucault (1990) viewed the development of bio-politics as a transition point for the significance of sovereign power, Agamben (1998) does not. Foucault (1990) believed that this transition led to bio-power, with its goal of enhancing life, surpassing sovereign power as the dominant form of power (p. 136; De Larrinaga & Doucet, 2008). According to Miguel De Larrinaga and Marc Doucet (2008), “Foucault saw the possibility of sovereign power remaining despite its being displaced by biopower as the dominant modality of power in modern Western liberal societies” (p. 520). Despite Foucault’s perspective, Agamben
(1998) believes that sovereign power did not change, but rather it became more effective through the development of bio-politics.

The purpose, use, and development of security technologies within the neoliberal world allows the debate between Agamben and Foucault concerning power to be examined. Three security technologies that highlight this debate are Private Military Corporations (PMCs), drones, and Lethal Autonomous Robots (LARs). PMCs are for-profit businesses that provide warfare associated services and whose purpose is to enhance a client’s ability to achieve a desired security objective (Singer, 2001-2002). Drones are “unmanned military aircraft of any size which carries and launches a weapon, or which can use on-board technology to direct such a weapon to a target” (Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University, 2009, p. 16). LARs are “fully autonomous weapons that could select and engage targets without human intervention” (Human Rights Watch (HRW) & the International Human Rights Clinic, (IHRC) 2012). If Agamben’s (1998) understanding of power is correct, an examination of these security technologies will reveal that the development of bio-politics was significant, but only insofar as it enhances sovereign power’s goals. Support for this perspective is established if security technologies are used in a manner which cannot be found to respect neoliberal principles. However, if Foucault’s understanding of power’s evolution is correct, this examination will reveal that sovereign power is indeed subordinate to bio-power and that the development of bio-politics was an important event concerning the prevailing form of power within the neoliberal world. For Foucault’s understanding to be supported, these security technologies must be used in a manner that
respects neoliberal principles, and/or be used on the behalf of objectives motivated by neoliberal principles.

Therefore, my perspective is that neoliberal principles can be understood to not only motivate security technologies as vehicles of neoliberal world foreign/security policy, but that these same principles, when properly incorporated within discourse, can lead to the use of these security technologies as being generally accepted by the neoliberal world’s population. In other words, neoliberal principles, such as an interventionist approach to ensuring access to a free-market, are able to motivate and justify neoliberal world security actions (Foucault, 2008). These principles have this effect because the neoliberal world’s population has been conditioned to believe that these principles, specifically the status of the market, constitute what is right and/or true. As a result of this conditioning, society does not question actions taken on the behalf of these principles. Hence, it can be said that neoliberal principles establish the boundaries in regards to what the “conditions of possibility” are within the neoliberal world concerning acceptable normative behavior and/or thought (Foucault, 2008; Gutting, 2005, pp. 33-36; O’Farrell, 2007, concept: episteme). For example, these principles could be incorporated into discourse properly if a political leader justifies, or seeks to justify, a security action within the boundaries of what the neoliberal world takes for granted as right and/or true such as the defense of a free-market. However, it is significant to note that these unquestioned and accepted boundaries within the neoliberal world are the result of specific historical contexts and their subsequent discourses of truth.
In this project, I view neoliberalism as a logic of governance and, similar to Foucault (2008), as a discourse of truth which influences the neoliberal world’s affairs. More specifically, I view neoliberalism as a discourse of truth which strongly influences the neoliberal world’s governing bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power. This influence enables bio-power to direct the neoliberal world’s behavior, to include its use of security technologies, in accordance with the principles that define a liberal regime of government. Thus, due to neoliberalism’s influence, the free-market serves as the referent object which identifies the form of life that is to be secured. Furthermore, this project understands that the influence of neoliberalism can sometimes lead the neoliberal world to actively intervene, and sometimes preemptively intervene, via security technologies at the international level in order to ensure that the market remains free, and that economic competition remains intact.

In this project, I argue that the neoliberal world uses and develops security technologies in order to serve bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power, rather than serving sovereign power. In addition, the question this paper seeks to answer, by scrutinizing the use and development of security technologies, is whether or not the neoliberal world transitioned from a sovereign power dominated space to a bio-power dominated space. This project’s argument and guiding research questions will be examined by employing Foucault’s concepts of governmentality, structure of actions, and resistance (Hindess, 1996). However, it is also important to note that I rely upon Foucault’s genealogical studies and theoretical concepts, in conjunction with works by David Harvey (2007) and John Rapley (2007), to identify the neoliberal world’s current
historical moment concerning neoliberalism and bio-politics. More specifically, I draw from these theorists and scholars to highlight that a liberal rationality of power/discourse of truth is prevalent within the neoliberal world. In addition to the implementation of Foucault’s theoretical concepts, two assumptions are made in order to support the argument of this paper.

Regarding assumptions, the first is that an essentialized form of liberalism exists within the neoliberal world, and that this liberalism forms the foundation of a shared set of values and principles. Next, I presume that discourse/rhetoric can be accepted at face value, and that patterns of discourse can indicate the presence of engrained cultural norms and/or accepted “truths” (O’Farrell, 2010, concept: interpretation, commentary and hermeneutics). It is also important to note that I employ Foucault’s theories and concepts in a manner that differs from the way in which his work is “conventionally” applied by scholars within the field of International Relations. More specifically, unlike the “standard” uses and views of Foucault’s bio-political theories, I employ these theories in a manner that emphasizes the importance of “the role of political economy in mediating governmentality’s understanding of just what may be said to constitute a secure life” within the neoliberal world at the domestic and international level (Kiersey, 2009, p. 40). These concepts and assumptions enable Agamben’s position to be overcome which regards security technologies as mere instruments of sovereign power: Agamben’s theories form the background from which I argue my hypothesis. More specifically, Agamben’s theories and concepts serve the purpose of setting the theoretical foundation from which this project’s argument is tested against: in regards to the argument of this
project, his views represent the opposite end of the spectrum due to the way in which they can only acknowledge the influence of sovereign power (Tagma, 2009, pp. 409-410). For example, while Agamben would likely view increased security procedures at airports as evidence of sovereign power expanding its reach into the population’s affairs, I would argue that such actions are driven by bio-power to secure the population’s ability to participate within a free-market (Agamben, 2004). By examining the way in which PMCs, drones, and LARs (in the future), interact with neoliberal principles it can be demonstrated that sovereign power has been surpassed by bio-power within the neoliberal world. These interactions with neoliberal principles have the potential to provide evidence for this power transition because liberalism is inherently bio-political (Foucault, 2008, p. 22). While Agamben’s view concerning security, and its technologies, is completely pessimistic, Foucault’s view is more complex. Agamben would view any security technology as a tool reducible to the goals of sovereign power, but Foucault would be able to recognize their potential liberal-life-enhancing capabilities while simultaneously recognizing the potential risks they pose to liberal life.

This thesis project is constructed to examine the debate between Agamben (1998) and Foucault (1990), through an examination of the three security technologies previously mentioned, in order to argue that the neoliberal world is a space dominated by bio-power. This paper adopts a critical approach to security issues because it seeks to move beyond conventional understandings of security which focus on differences between military capabilities amongst states (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2013). This paper offers a critical security studies perspective because it “refute[s] the idea that security has
a constant or definitively settled meaning and content that can be taken for granted” (Peoples & Vaughn-Williams, 2010, p. 2). Chapter two of this paper serves as the theoretical framework and seeks to present the debate between Agamben and Foucault, describe the theoretical lenses that will be applied during analysis, and define the methodology which is used in the determination of evidence throughout this paper. Chapters three and four closely mirror one another in structure and examine the cases of PMCs and drones respectively. These chapters describe their particular technologies, explain aspects of these technologies’ recent histories and relevance to this paper, evaluate some of their associated controversies, and examine historical cases in which these security technologies were used in order to identify support for this paper’s argument. Chapter five is similar in structure to chapters three and four, but because LARs do not yet exist, analysis conducted concerning controversies will include some speculation drawing from events that have occurred involving PMCs and drones (HRW & IHRC, 2012). This paper’s conclusion will briefly summarize this project’s findings, and offer a recommendation on how to conduct future research which supports this paper’s argument. If the argument of this paper is ignored, the development and implementation of future liberal-life-enhancing security technologies could be derailed by pessimistic understandings of power (Anderson & Waxman, 2012 & 2013, p. 39; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 232). This pessimism, if realized, could then theoretically lead to a situation where the neoliberal world does not possess the security technologies necessary to defend its liberal way of life; the fear of sovereign power could prevent such technologies from being developed. On a darker note, if my hypothesis is found to be
incorrect, sovereign power may truly decide who forms the political body and Agamben (2004) may be correct in stating that “[s]ome years ago, I had written that the West’s political paradigm was no longer the city state, but the concentration camp, and that we had passed from Athens to Auschwitz” (para. 12; Tagma, 2009, p. 409).
CHAPTER 1: POWER, THEORETICAL LENSES, AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BIO-POLITICS

Introduction

Following the attacks of 9/11, the neoliberal world implemented, developed, and enhanced many security technologies. In some circumstances these security technologies seemingly led to illiberal actions taking place despite the neoliberal world purposing these technologies. Foucault (1990) and Agamben (1998) offer theories of power from which this paradox, the neoliberal world authorizing illiberal actions, can be examined. Each theorist acknowledges the presence and influence of Hobbes’ concept of sovereign power within the world’s affairs, and agree that the concept of bio-politics is relevant. However, they disagree upon when bio-politics formed, and the significance surrounding its formation (Agamben, 1998; Foucault, 1990; De Larrinaga & Doucet, 2008). The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the debate between Agamben and Foucault in detail as well as present the theoretical perspectives and concepts that will be used throughout this thesis. Following an explanation of the debate, I will review the basic understandings of power delineated by Hobbes, Agamben, and Foucault. In addition, I will briefly describe the concept of neoliberalism to include the historical context in order to highlight its relevance to this project. Hobbes’ perspective of power is important because it serves as a point of common understanding from which Agamben and Foucault develop their theories. In this thesis, I argue that the neoliberal world uses and develops security technologies in order to serve bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power, rather than serving sovereign power. Agamben’s and Foucault’s perspectives
are significant to this thesis because they offer critical assessments of the modern neoliberal world. These perspectives thus serve as the theoretical lenses from which this project’s debate and argument will be examined. The final section of this chapter outlines the methodology and rationale that will be used when applying these theoretical lenses. The perspectives, theoretical concepts, and methodology presented within this chapter concerning power will provide a set of theoretical tools with which to characterize the underlying power guiding security technologies within the neoliberal world.

The Debate

Foucault (1990) and Agamben (1998) acknowledge the development of bio-politics, but do not agree upon this development’s significance or its relationship with sovereign power. For Foucault, bio-politics is “the process by which, at the threshold of the modern era, natural life begins to be included in the mechanisms and calculations of State power, and politics turns into biopolitics;” this formation began to occur in the West in the classical age (Agamben, 1998, p. 3). Prior to this transition, life was ascertained and directed in accordance with religious, and later moral terms (Foucault, 2008, pp. 311-312). During this period, the mechanisms of power were deductive in nature, and thus only functioned by suppressing life (Foucault, 1990, p. 136). However, following the transition into the bio-political era, life is now ascertained as a scientific entity which requires knowledge of the population in order to direct life “without at the same time making [life or people] more difficult to govern” (Foucault, 1990, p. 141). The mechanisms of power in this period have thus become inductive in nature, and consequently function by “generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them,
rather than” suppressing them (Foucault, 1990, p. 136). Therefore, for Foucault (1990) this transformation represented a shift in the purpose of power: “[o]ne might say that the ancient right to take life or let live was replaced by a power to foster or disallow it to the point of death” (p. 138). Specifically, this understanding meant that sovereign power had been replaced by a new form of power. This new form of power consisted of two components: “disciplinary power” and “biopower” (Tagma, 2009, p. 411). Disciplinary power’s focus is the creation of docile individuals, through organizations such as schools amongst many others, who support the goals of bio-power; in turn bio-power directs the activities of disciplinary power in order to control the population as a whole (Foucault, 1990, p. 139; Tagma, 2009, p. 411). Bio-power’s focus, as opposed to disciplinary power’s, is the subjugation of the population with the ultimate goal of enhancing life; to include “its mental and physical well-being, its longevity, its environment, its productivity, its efficiency, etc.” (De Larrinaga & Doucet, 2008, p. 520). This desire to advance life brings with it the constant need to observe the population’s actions via surveillance (Foucault, 1986, p. 239). The goal of stimulating or increasing the population’s life is what differentiates bio-power from sovereign power (De Larrinaga & Doucet, 2008; Foucault, 1990).

Whereas sovereign power must kill to establish power, bio-power promotes life (De Larrinaga & Doucet, 2008; Foucault, 1990). However, bio-power does not just seek to nurture life in general, it seeks to nurture a liberal way of life; according to Foucault, bio-politics could not be defined until the “governmental regime [or rationality] called liberalism” was understood (Foucault, 2008, p. 22). For Foucault, the modern neoliberal
world is currently normalized by bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power (Tagma, 2009, pp. 409-410). In this project, bio-power is said to have an accompanying liberal rationality of power because Foucault viewed liberalism as an approach to the exercise of government which understands “that government must not intervene on effects of the market” (Foucault, 2008, p. 145). However, the “neoliberal world” is identified as such because neoliberalism is the specific type of liberal rationality which guides the neoliberal world. As previously stated, the concept of neoliberalism (rather than simply liberalism) is essential to this project because it is an active form of liberalism that prompts preemptive action and/or intervention in order to protect its interests (Foucault, 2008, pp. 131-134). Thus, the neoliberal world abides by a liberal rationality of power/governmentality that is strongly influenced by neoliberalism’s exemplifying characteristics of “permanent vigilance, activity, and intervention” instead of liberalism’s laissez-faire approach to problem solving (Foucault, 2008, p. 132). Liberalism as the normalizing rationality of power results in the neoliberal world viewing all problems and potential solutions from a perspective shaped by a market-based rationale even when these problems and issues lay outside the realm of economics. For example, Foucault (2008) explains that “American neo-liberalism seeks…to extend the rationality of the market, the schemas of analysis it offers and the decision-making criteria it suggests, to domains which are not exclusively or not primarily economic” (p. 323). Therefore, Foucault (2008) analyzed liberalism as “‘a way of doing things’” rather than as an ideology, theory, or societal identity (p. 318).
Although Foucault viewed liberalism as an approach to the exercise of government, he acknowledged liberalism’s core components such as “individual rights, constitutionalism, democracy and limitations on the powers of the state…[and] a model of economic organization which argues that market capitalism best promotes the welfare of all by most efficiently allocating” the public’s limited assets (Burchill & Linklater, 2013, p. 57). However, he also explained/warned that liberalism’s components and freedoms are nothing more “than an actual relation between governors and governed” meaning freedoms only exist to the extent that people believe them to (Foucault, 2008, p. 63). Furthermore, he explains that in order for liberalism to produce freedoms it must consume them and that this process results in a form of paradox: “[l]iberalism must produce freedom, but this very act entails the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of coercion, and obligations relying on threats, etcetera” (Foucault, 2008, p. 64). In other words, Foucault was fully aware that liberalism’s pursuit of freedoms could result in illiberal practices. Hence, a liberal system, and therefore bio-power\(^1\), must constantly balance freedoms; the state must possess the ability to ensure freedoms, but it must also ensure that the state itself stays out of the way of such freedoms (Foucault, 2008; Hindess, 1996). Although Foucault (1990; 2008) understands bio-power to be in pursuit of freedoms, he also understands the dangers that this pursuit entails.

\(^1\) Another way to conceptualize the goal of bio-power is offered by Peoples and Vaghan-Williams (2010): “[i]nstead of disciplining individual bodies, biopolitics seeks to maximize circulation, flows, and movement of people, in order to control movement by sifting ‘good’ elements of the population from ‘bad’” (p. 67).
This balancing act between the pursuit of freedom and the potential dangers of this pursuit thus leads to the phenomenon of security (Foucault, 2008). Although no universally accepted definition of security exists, in this case its function in “the liberal art of government” is the management of individual and collective interests which entails holding the flexible line between the two (Buzan, 1991; Foucault, 2008, p. 65). The line is flexible because interests of the collective can impede the interests of the individual and vice versa (Foucault, 2008). Foucault (2008) suggests that the free-market is the referent object and measuring stick for the success of security management, and therefore freedoms as well. In his lectures, while discussing freedom and security, he states that “the freedom of economic processes must not be a danger, either for enterprises or for workers. [and] The freedom of the workers must not become a danger for the enterprise and production” (Foucault, 2008, p. 65). Thus, liberalism’s primary function is to mitigate threats which challenge either the individual or the collective by creating an environment with “the least exposure to danger” (Foucault, 2008, p. 66). From this perspective, the development of bio-politics and the purpose of its bio-power is clear; bio-power acts to protect its population by ensuring that the values which define the neoliberal world’s way of life are maintained.

Bio-power’s primary objective is thus to ensure the survival of the neoliberal world’s way of life (Foucault, 1990). This objective results in a constant struggle between freedoms and security measures which can be operationalized through security technologies: “[t]he game of freedom and security is at the very heart of this new governmental reason” (Foucault, 2008, p. 65). This game, as described by Foucault
(2008), appears to best describe the tensions concerning the security technologies enhanced, employed, and developed in the post-9/11 world. From a perspective designed by Foucault’s (2008) critique of liberalism, it can be argued that security technologies have been set in motion across the globe by the neoliberal world in order to preserve its way of life. As previously discussed, liberalism’s pursuit of its required freedoms can result in seemingly illiberal acts such as the use of security technologies to achieve the neoliberal world’s interests sometimes to the detriment of other populations. In these situations, bio-politics’/liberalism’s normalizing mechanisms can be understood as insufficient in achieving the desired level of control which results in bio-power informing the use of sovereign power to physically impose the desired compliance (Tagma, 2009, p. 413). In short, bio-power’s goal of ensuring the neoliberal world’s way of life can in exceptional circumstances result in the neoliberal world sacrificing its liberal principles to maintain liberalism as a whole (Kiersey, 2009, p. 33; Tagma, 2009, p. 413).

As previously mentioned, a bio-political/liberal regime of government looks to the market in order to determine how secure its collective and individual freedoms are. It looks to the market because an environment guided by a liberal rationality achieves its ideal form when access to, and competition within the market is free of obstructions and guided solely by the market’s processes (Foucault, 2008). The liberal rationality of power currently guiding the neoliberal world is thus heavily influenced by neoliberal ideology: neoliberalism is an ideology which requires governmental intervention on the behalf of the market to ensure competition (Foucault, 2008, p. 132, 147). In support of this notion,
Foucault (2008) explains that neoliberalism should be identified with “permanent vigilance, activity, and intervention” instead of laissez-faire (p. 132). Hence, the neoliberal world’s actions are driven by the goal of achieving a fully functional free-market because obstacles to the functioning of a free-market serve as obstacles to freedom. For example, if someone is unable to access the market because of their race, an obstacle to freedom exists because access to the market is impeded. Another example is the development of a monopoly (Foucault, 2008, p. 64). A monopoly is a threat to freedom from this perspective because it eliminates competition and could allow the business controlling the monopoly to decide who may access the market rather than the market’s natural processes. In each of these examples, a response or intervention by the government may be required to restore or enhance freedoms: the “principle of calculation” that determines this response “is what is called security” (Foucault, 2008, p. 65). Therefore freedom is achieved by the liberal art of government when a free-market is enabled to determine “the natural or…good price” through competition and is why a liberal governmental regime looks to the market to determine the status of its freedoms (Foucault, 2008, p. 53).

2 It is important to note that in this project I work primarily with Foucault’s understanding of neoliberalism. I acknowledge that there are different theoretical understandings of neoliberalism, such as David Harvey’s (2007). However, I work with Foucault’s understanding because he views neoliberalism as a discourse of truth/rationality of power (Foucault, 2008). Also of note, it is highly probable that Foucault would not agree with Harvey’s perspective of neoliberalism due to Harvey being a Marxist (Harvey, 2007; Twickel, 2013, Spiegel Online Comment 11). As a Marxist, Harvey views the development of neoliberal influence as an unavoidable step in a predetermined history, rather than viewing neoliberalism as a discourse of truth/rationality of power which is subject to change via the production of new knowledge (Peoples & Vaughn-Williams, 2010, p. 65; SparkNotes Editors, 2002, p. 9; The Curious Classroom, 2013).
A liberal governmental regime’s goal of a free-market results in a liberal regime of government constantly seeking to gain access to the largest market possible (Foucault, 2008, p. 55). This constant seeking of access to a larger market is driven by the belief that “the opening up of a world market allows one to continue the economic game and consequently to avoid the conflicts which derive from a finite market” (Foucault, 2008, p. 55). Security technologies can therefore be employed on the behalf of defending the market which in a liberal governmental regime is linked to the determination of freedoms. Summarizing Immanuel Kant’s works concerning the achievement of a perpetual peace, Foucault (2008) provides a statement which can be understood as a liberal regime achieving its apex:

Perpetual peace is guaranteed by nature and this guarantee is manifested in the population of the entire world and in the commercial relationships stretching across the whole world. The guarantee of perpetual peace is therefore actually commercial globalization. (p. 58)

This statement encapsulates why security technologies such as PMCs, drones, and future LARs are utilized by the neoliberal world across the globe. If the neoliberal world perceives actions at the international level as threats to the market and therefore its liberal values, its neoliberal interests can cause the neoliberal world to seek out and prevent those threats from becoming realized (Foucault, 1990). This is the way in which bio-power authorizes the use of force. If bio-power’s liberal-life-enhancing processes are threatened, these threats can then justify their own eradication (Foucault, 1990).
However, Agamben (1998) does not believe that the formation of bio-politics represented a change or deviation from sovereign power. For Agamben, (1998) “the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power…. [, and] biopolitics is at least as old as the sovereign exception” (p. 6). Thus for Agamben (1998), the formation of bio-politics enhanced sovereign power’s hold over life and essentially enabled it to become more efficient. For Agamben, the neoliberal world is not normalized by a rationality of power such as liberalism, but rather it is normalized by “sovereign power, that which has the violent monopoly to produce and exclude bodies,” and its ability to implement violence in pursuit of its goals (Tagma, 2009, p. 409). Agamben (1998) is not optimistic concerning humanity’s ability to move beyond sovereign power:

> Nevertheless, until a completely new politics – that is, a politics no longer founded on the exceptio [sic] of bare life – is at hand, every theory and every praxis will remain imprisoned and immobile, and the “beautiful day” of life will be given citizenship only either through blood and death or in the perfect senselessness to which the society of the spectacle condemns it. (p. 11)

Unlike Foucault, Agamben associates no significance to the formation of bio-politics as a transition point between bio-power and sovereign power, and actually understands bio-politics to be a creation of sovereign power.

The debate between Foucault (1990) and Agamben (1998) is therefore clear; one views the development of bio-politics as a transformation within the neoliberal world concerning the dominant form of power while the other does not. For Foucault, the neoliberal world can/could partake in illiberal actions in order to support the overarching
liberal rationality of power, whereas Agamben believes that illiberal acts are conducted by the neoliberal world because sovereign power ultimately remains as the dominant normalizing force within society. The following sections provide the theoretical lenses of power and methodology that will be applied throughout this project to decipher this debate.

Hobbes: Sovereign Power

Hobbes offers the central logic to realist theory: it is that ever-present fear in the state of nature forces power struggles and violence that can only be overcome by a Leviathan, which then must also only look out for itself against other Leviathans (Hindess, 1996, pp. 37-38; Richmond, 2008, pp. 2, 40-42). First, Hobbes’ (1651) definition of power is as follows: “[t]he power of a man, to take it universally, is his present means to obtain some future apparent good, and is either original or instrumental” (p. 53). The two categories within this definition represent one’s natural power (personal attributes: strength, nobility, amongst others) and the instruments of power that they gain with the former such as wealth or personal contacts (Hobbes, 1651). The goal of power as described by Hobbes is to utilize the attributes one has at their disposal to pursue their desires (Hindess, 1996, p. 23). However, all people possessing some form of power leads to a problem for Hobbes concerning the nature of mankind (Hindess, 1996, p. 36). The problem is that mankind possesses “a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death” (Hobbes, 1651, p. 61). This desire is not driven by greed, but rather it is driven by the logic that one can only enhance their quality of life by acquiring more power (Hindess, 1996, pp. 36-37). The solution to this problem of a potential “war
of all against all is for people to erect a common power greater than any of them” in order to achieve stability concerning their security (Hindess, 1996, p. 37). In other words, people relinquish some of their individual power in order to allow them to be consolidated in exchange for protection from others (Hindess, 1996, pp. 24-25; 36-37). Hobbes (1651) explains that the “greatest of human powers is that which is compounded of the powers of most men, united by consent, in one person, natural or civil, that has the use of all their powers depending on his will; such as is the power of Commonwealth” (p. 53). This consolidation of power and consent to the commonwealth thus leads Hobbes to the concept of the Leviathan, or the consolidation of all power into one entity or government; and “the government is the sovereign, and the activity of government is the exercise of sovereign power” (Hindess, 1996, p. 39). People grant their consent to this single entity because of fear of others (Hindess, 1996, p. 37). This consent then leads to the Leviathan which is then granted sovereign power (Hindess, 1996). Hindess (1996) citing Hobbes, explains the logic behind the Leviathan; “[t]hrough the Covenant the sovereign is authorized to use such power as he thinks best, in order to ensure the ‘Peace and Common Defence’ of his subjects” (p. 37). The way in which consent is attained is not relevant; it can be agreed upon or gathered through force, but in either case fear is the core motivation for consent (Hindess, 1996, p. 37; Hobbes, 1651, p. 122). This fear creates a situation in which the sovereign becomes responsible to protect its citizens (Debrix & Barder, 2009, p. 4).

Leviathan, qua sovereign power, is thus a government or form of government which is responsible for its people (Hindess, 1996, p. 37). This form of government acts
as it sees fit because it is built upon the consent of its subjects (Hindess, 1996, p. 37). This arrangement leads to three assumptions: the sovereign is the “most important power operating in society;” governmental decisions are “regarded as its most significant activity;” and that “the subjects who jointly constitute the sovereign power are regarded as having been formed as personalities independently of the activities of government” (Hindess, 1996, p. 39). From these assumptions it is clear that the government/Leviathan is the most important player within this perspective of power, and as the most important player its interests are above those of its people. Through Hobbes’ vision, peace in a world constituted of sovereigns only results in the absence of war/violence and thus makes this peace a negative peace (Richmond, 2008, pp. 40-42; Allan & Keller, 2006, p.60). Within the boundaries of the sovereign “a ‘minimally liberal’ peace in which liberty is ensured by a Leviathan, but only when individuals submit to the rules and contracts of the commonwealth” (Richmond, 2008, p. 42).

From this theoretical perspective a type of government is formed that cannot be challenged (Hindess, 1996, p. 48). According to Foucault (1990), sovereign power’s “symbol, after all, was the sword,” and “[t]he sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing; he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring” (p. 136). In summary and according to Hobbes, if the government/sovereign takes an action, it must be correct and in the interest of maintaining its survival. From this perspective, the government’s survival is critical to its people because they consented to this government as their provider of security (Hindess, 1996, pp. 36-37; Hobbes, 1651, p. 106). Security technologies from a
Hobbesian perspective can be understood to represent nothing more than tools that enable the sovereign to defend its interests from internal or external threats (Hobbes, 1651, p. 106).

Agamben: A Pessimistic Perspective

Agamben only acknowledges the presence of one prevailing form of power: sovereign power. A fundamental element of sovereign power, according to Agamben (1998), is the ability to decide when a state of exception to the law is necessary. For Agamben (2005), “[t]he state of exception is not a special kind of law (like the law of war); rather, insofar as it is a suspension of the juridical order itself, it defines law’s threshold or limit concept” (p. 4). Sovereignty, or the sovereign, is thus understood as being inside and outside of the law because it can decide who the law applies to, and who it does not (De Larrinaga & Doucet, 2008, p. 522). This distinction thus creates a state of exception through the suspension of laws; this state “is a situation in which normal law does not apply, but where the force that law is meant to provide and sanction remains” (De Larrinaga & Doucet, 2008, p. 522). In other words, the sovereign can suspend the laws meant to protect someone’s rights and allow for those rights to be violated without the violators being held accountable despite such an event being deemed illegal by the letter of the law. The state of exception leads to the creation of what Agamben calls homo sacer (sacred man) (Agamben, 1998).

To Agamben “homo sacer embodies a life that can be killed without this act of killing constituting either a homicide or a sacrifice following socially recognized rituals or ceremonies” (De Larrinaga & Doucet, 2008, p. 521). Homo sacer is thus “included in
the juridical [or legal] order...solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed)” (Agamben, 1998, p. 8). According to Agamben, the death camp represents sovereign power at its greatest; it is a place in which homo sacer’s bare life is exemplified (Agamben, 1998, pp. 168-172; De Larrinaga & Doucet, 2008, p. 521). Bare life, and therefore homo sacer, is achieved when a person’s “political standing” is completely removed resulting in a person who can be killed without notice such as those in a death camp (De Larrinaga & Doucet, 2008, p. 521). A real-world example of death camps are the concentration camps operated by Nazi Germany during World War II (Agamben, 1998). Concentration camps represent death camps because the prisoner’s lives within the camps were reduced to a biological existence with no political dimension, and as a result created a space where no act against them could be interpreted as criminal (Agamben, 1998, p. 171). The existence of such camps is problematic for Agamben because “[t]he camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule” and where the state of exception “is now given a permanent spatial arrangement, which as such nevertheless remains outside the normal order” (Agamben, 1998, p. 169). Sovereign power can create situations such as the death camp by suspending the laws that it is responsible to protect, and this ability to work in exception to the law influences Agamben’s (2002) pessimism regarding the pursuit of security.

Agamben (2002) believes security has become “the basic principle of state activity” within the neoliberal world and views this as a dangerous development (para. 3). He explains that “[a] state which has security as its only task and source of legitimacy is a fragile organism; it can always be provoked by terrorism to turn itself terroristic”
(Agamben, 2002, p. 1). From this logic, it is clear that security technologies as controlled by the state or sovereign are thus expected to become physical manifestations of sovereign power. It seems that Agamben would expect the development of security technologies to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, where these technologies are always used to achieve an ever-expanding security agenda empowered by sovereign power (Agamben, 2002).

Agamben’s pessimism concerning the pursuit of security revolves around the suspicion that security technologies may be used to help the sovereign transform the entire world into a form of death camp (Agamben, 2005, pp. 86-87; Vaughn-Williams, 2007, pp. 190-191). However, in this particular death camp, state boundaries would serve as the camp’s walls. Agamben (1998) believes that the world, if it has not yet transformed already, is heading towards a permanent state of exception: “[p]olitical organization is not regressing toward outdated forms; rather, premonitory events are, like bloody masses, announcing the new nomos of the earth, which (if its grounding principle is not called into question) will soon extend itself over the entire planet” (p. 38). From this perspective, security technologies must be approached with extreme caution because they will serve as the tools which enable sovereign power to enhance its will through the creation of states of exception.

Foucault: Fluid Power

The Foucauldian perspective of power does not view power as an entity that can be contained or centralized (Debrix & Barder, 2009, p. 404). Foucault (1990) explains that “[p]ower is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes
from everywhere” (p. 93). Power may be used to achieve any goal and can thus be examined through an infinite number of cases or relationships (Hindess, 1996, p. 100). The method employed by Foucault to study power was called “genealogy” (Gutting, 2005, pp. 46-47). This method analyzes history to determine the causes which define the “present rules, practices or institutions that claim an authority over us” (Gutting, 2005, p. 50). Thus, from this perspective, power can be understood “as a structure of actions” (Hindess, 1996, p. 100). Hindess (1996) explains that “[p]ower, in this sense, [as a structure of actions] is manifested in the instruments, techniques and procedures that may be brought to bear on the actions of others” (p. 100). Power influences people’s actions through discourses of truth, which are created by a structure of actions (Foucault, 1986, p. 229; Hindess, 1996). An example of a structure of actions is brought to light by Foucault’s studies of “madness” (Peoples & Vaughn-Williams, 2010, p. 65). He did not study the phenomenon by seeking to ultimately define it, but rather by analyzing the ways in which social institutions, such as hospitals and schools, created a regime of truth, or accepted discourse, surrounding madness. Once established, this regime of truth could then explain how these factors culminated to create the phenomenon of madness (Peoples & Vaughn-Williams, 2010, p. 65). The result of this structure of actions was the production of facts concerning madness and who could be categorized as such. This example demonstrates a structure of actions because “in Foucauldian terms, discourse is understood as a series of practices, representations, and interpretations through which different regimes of truth, for example the boundary between sanity and insanity, are (re)produced” (Peoples & Vaughn-Williams, 2010, p. 65). It is important to note that a
structure of actions can occur and create a discourse of truth about any topic, “but it will vary according to social, economic, and historical context” (Peoples & Vaughn-Williams, 2010, p. 65). Therefore, power does not emanate from any specific location and exists everywhere within society (Hindess, 1996). Power within this perspective is thus the way in which the structure of actions impacts the behaviors of free people (those not physically constrained); with the goal of influencing the decision making of those that are free (Hindess, 1996).

This perspective only acknowledges power where power can be resisted: resistance must exist or there is no power relationship (Hindess, 1996, p. 101). Resistance, similar to power, can manifest itself anywhere within society for it knows no limits (Pickett, 1996, p. 447). Because power is everywhere and is able to be resisted, power and resistance may cause one another to modify or refine their techniques and forms (Hindess, 1996, p. 101). Resistance can manifest itself in any number of ways: it can range from subtle body language to the picking up of arms in support of a revolution (Pickett, 1996, p. 458). Resistance grants the ability to modify what is deemed as “‘intolerables’” (Pickett, 1996, p. 462). Power and resistance are enemies: “[r]esistance is what threatens power, hence it stands against power as an adversary” (Pickett, 1996, p. 458). These adversaries do not in themselves represent a negative or positive position; for resistance can “also be productive, affirmative, and even use the techniques of power” in its pursuits (Pickett, 1996, p. 459). Therefore, power and resistance in some circumstances can be interchanged depending upon which side of the conflict one stands.
Three power relationships are represented within the Foucauldian perspective: “strategic games between liberties, domination, and government” (Hindess, 1996, p. 99). Strategic games between liberties and domination lie on opposite ends of the spectrum in regards to guiding the conduct of others. Governmental technologies are situated between strategic games and domination (Hindess, 1996, p. 99). Strategic games can be defined as the friction between free people who are trying to influence the actions of one another (Hindess, 1996, p. 101). This friction leads to Foucault’s view that “relationships of power will often be unstable, ambiguous and reversible” (Hindess, 1996, p. 101). Domination is the way in which power is normally defined; it is described as “those asymmetrical relationships of power in which the subordinated persons have little room for maneuver” due to a lack of access to freedoms (Hindess, 1996, p. 102). For Foucault, power can exist in many forms, but as long as one has the ability to commit suicide, they have the ability to prevent total domination (Hindess, 1996, p. 103). Government is the third power relationship and is defined in a broad manner which encompasses many different relationships (Hindess, 1996, p. 105).

Citing Foucault, Hindess (1996) explains that government or governmentality exists within any relationship that seeks to manage the conduct of another. Therefore, government can exist between: teacher and student, parent and child, preacher and congregation, coach and team, amongst an infinite number of combinations: it is not simply referring to the relationship between a federal government and its citizenry (Hindess, 1996, p. 105). Despite the term government being applied to many different relationships which pursue their own unique goals, Foucault supported the view that
“there is a certain continuity between the government of oneself, the government of a household and the government of a state or community” (Hindess, 1996, p. 105). In addition, Foucault maintained that the connection between these different governments indicates that political action is closely related to personal conduct (Hindess, 1996). This connection between power relationships suggests that a hierarchy exists concerning power relationships, and that “lower ranking” relationships reinforce a dominant discourse of truth or rationality of power. For example, Foucault (2008) believed that the neoliberal world transitioned to be a space dominated by a liberal rationality of power with the advent of bio-politics. Thus from the Foucauldian perspective, government or governmentality includes any relationship that seeks to influence the conduct of another, and, despite their unique goals, these relationships can be loosely united by a dominant discourse of truth/rationality of power.

In summary, unlike Hobbes’ sovereign power, the Foucauldian perspective understands that power cannot be centralized. Instead, the Foucauldian perspective views power as a flexible entity that can transform in accordance with accepted discourses of truth which define present understandings of behavior in regards to specific topics/issues. Therefore, it can be concluded that this perspective would not automatically assume security technologies to represent any specific type of power. Rather, this perspective would examine the context which contributed to the existence of specific security technologies and the factors which motivate their use in order to determine the type or rationality of power that they support.
A Very Brief Description and History of Neoliberalism

Due to neoliberalism’s significance to this project, it is important to briefly discuss its history and general meaning in order to demonstrate its current relevance as a logic of governance/discourse of truth. Although Foucault (2008) discussed neoliberalism in “The Birth of Biopolitics,” this discussion was ahead of its time because neoliberalism had not yet become a dominant discourse of truth within the now neoliberal world (Harvey, 2007, p. 22). At its most basic, neoliberalism can be understood as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey, 2007, p. 2). This theoretical concept/logic of governance calls only for the state to intervene in order to maintain the characteristics which define neoliberalism, but this concept also requires that these interventions remain as minimal as possible (Harvey, 2007, p. 2). From the neoliberal perspective, the state cannot question the market because the state will never be able to acquire the information necessary to effectively question “market signals;” thus the market is viewed as a producer of truth when left to its own devices (Foucault, 2008; Harvey, 2007, p. 2). Neoliberalism, as a logic of governance, therefore requires the state, by all means necessary to include the use of force, to ensure “the proper functioning of markets” (Harvey, 2007, p. 2). From this perspective, the functioning of markets is essential because it views “human dignity and individual freedom as fundamental” and makes the assumption “that individual freedoms are guaranteed by freedom of the market and of trade” (Harvey, 2007, p. 5, 7). However, the
concept of neoliberalism did not come to prominence as a “hegemonic mode of discourse” within the world’s affairs until the late 1970s (Harvey, 2007, p. 3).

Only in the past several decades has neoliberalism achieved prominence as a dominant discourse of truth at the international level (Harvey, 2007; Rapley, 2007). More specifically, the acceptance of this theoretical concept resulted from a specific historical context which observed several other leading concepts to be deemed as failures (Harvey, 2007; Rapley, 2007). Prior to World War II, the dominant accepted discourses of truth were capitalism and communism, and each of these concepts were understood as failures following the war (Harvey, 2007, p. 10). After the war’s conclusion, “a new world order was constructed through the Bretton Woods agreements” by Allied leaders (leaders from the Soviet Union were absent) with the goal of stabilizing international relations (Harvey, 2007, p. 10; Rapley, 2007, p. 13). The states which participated in this system adopted policies which are “usually dubbed ‘Keynesian,’” meaning essentially that the state should intervene directly within the economy in order to prevent problems, such as unemployment, from spiraling out of control (Harvey, 2007, p. 10; Rapley, 2007, pp. 16-17). David Harvey (2007) explains that the states which accepted this new order shared the common view that they “should focus on full employment, economic growth, and the welfare of its citizens, and that state power should be freely deployed, alongside of or, if necessary, intervening in or even substituting for market processes to achieve these ends” (p. 10). This new form of capitalism, labeled either “embedded capitalism” or “managed capitalism,” prospered within “the advanced capitalist countries” until the 1960s (Harvey, 2007, p. 11-12; Rapley, 2007, p. 17). However, in the 1970s embedded capitalism began
to fail and this failure manifested itself in the form of “unemployment and inflation” leading to “‘stagflation,’” and this stagflation affected the entire international level: “Keynesian policies were no longer working” (Harvey, 2007, p. 12). The failure of embedded capitalism opened the door for new approaches to economics to gain influence thus allowing President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to implement a “neoliberal revolution” (Harvey, 2007, p. 39).

The acceptance of neoliberalism within the capitalist world as a solution to the problems caused by embedded capitalism was not a smooth or deliberate process. Rather neoliberalism was deemed the solution following “a series of gyrations and chaotic experiments” which developed into a consensus in the 1990s (Harvey, 2007, p. 13). However, despite this uncertain path toward consensus regarding neoliberalization, a common feature which contributed to the acceptance of neoliberalism was the stagflation that influenced everyone during the 1970s (Harvey, 2007, p. 14). Neoliberalism as a movement gained some momentum during the 1970s due to the economic issues previously mentioned, but it did not become the “new economic orthodoxy regulating public policy at the state level in the advanced capitalist world” until 1979 (Harvey, 2007, p. 22). In 1979 and 1980 respectively, Margaret Thatcher was elected the Prime Minister of Britain and Ronald Reagan was elected President of the US, and each supported and implemented neoliberal doctrine in order to revitalize their respective economies (Harvey, 2007, p. 1). Political/military leaders throughout the 1990s and 2000s continued to implement policies which strongly reflect neoliberalism’s influence such as Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld. Neoliberalism as a discourse of truth which strongly
influences the logic of governance enacted by the neoliberal world remains salient to this day (Harvey, 2007; Kinsey, 2010, p. 13). Although not exhaustive, this section highlights the historical context which has contributed to neoliberalism becoming a prevalent discourse of truth within the neoliberal world.

The Application of Foucault’s Theories and Concepts

Before proceeding with the remainder of this project, I must address the way in which Foucault would likely view this project’s argument and the way in which I intend to employ his theoretical concepts. Foucault would most likely agree with Agamben that the development of new and advanced security technologies must be approached with extreme caution due to the way in which they could inhibit freedom. However, unlike Agamben, Foucault does not view sovereign power as the sole and dominant rationality of power; rather he views sovereign power as one rationality amongst many others (Hindess, 1996, p. 145). For Foucault, power is immanent, and as such, people have the ability to create new governing rationalities of power/discourses of truth (Hindess, 1996, pp. 100-101). In other words, Foucault would not support the view that “we” are all doomed to be under the heel of an ever-expanding sovereign power (as Agamben theorizes) simply due to the development of security technologies. According to Gary Gutting (2005), Foucault stated in an interview that “[m]y point is not that everything is bad but that everything is dangerous” (p. 20, 114). While Foucault would agree with my position that sovereign power is no longer the dominant form of power within the neoliberal world, additionally, he would not support my argument that the neoliberal
world should pursue security technologies. Foucault was a critic rather than an advocate, and apparently took pride in being “difficult to classify politically” (Gutting, 2005, p. 20).

Concerning the employment of Foucault’s theories, it is important to note that he was not concerned with identifying “the legitimacy of governmental power,” but rather he was concerned with identifying the methods by which it produced effects (Hindess, 1996, pp. 97-98). Foucault was interested in the ways in which governmental power produced effects, rather than its legitimacy, due to his genealogically informed perspective which views phenomena, to include power, as having no universal meaning or origin; from this perspective, phenomena or truths are always viewed as being relative to a specific historical context (Foucault, 2008, p. 3; Peoples & Vaughn-Williams, 2010, p. 65; SparkNotes Editors, 2002, p. 18). As previously mentioned, power for Foucault was the result of a structure of actions which results in the creation of a discourse of truth (Foucault, 1986, p. 229; Hindess, 1996). A culmination of discourses of truths which become engrained within society can thus lead to the creation of what can be understood as the “conditions of possibility,” or the boundaries which constrain thought within a specific era or historical context (Gutting, 2005, pp. 33-36; O’Farrell, 2007, concept: episteme). It is important to note that these boundaries constitute one’s unconscious understanding of what is right and/or true (Gutting, 2005, pp. 33-36; O’Farrell, 2007, concept: episteme). By studying the methods which allow governmental power to produce effects, Foucault was identifying the mechanisms of this power which shape the perspectives of people and consequently the way in which they view the world (Gutting, 2005, pp. 33-36). Mechanisms such as these enable this project to accept
discourse/rhetoric at face value, and for this discourse/rhetoric to be interpreted as evidence in support of this project’s argument. Furthermore, these mechanisms, which allow discourse/rhetoric to be accepted without any second thought, indicate the presence of underlying bio-political mechanisms which have conditioned the population not to question such discourse/rhetoric (Gutting, 2005, pp. 33-36). This is why comments made by political leaders and scholars amongst others, that do not prompt outrage amongst the population at large, can be accepted as support for this project’s argument. For example, in chapter 3 of this project, comments made by President Obama regarding a drone strike which killed an American citizen will be used as evidence for my argument. Although some may question the use of a drone strike against an American citizen, the fact that the President can make such comments in a public setting is indicative of the bio-political mechanisms operating within the neoliberal world. It is my perspective that the ability to make such comments is indicative of the influence of neoliberal principles upon the neoliberal world’s governing liberal rationality of power. Therefore, it can be concluded that Foucault was not concerned with ultimately locating the legitimacy of liberalism’s governmental power: rather he was concerned with identifying the deeply engrained bio-political mechanisms which reside within a liberal society that condition people to willingly subject themselves to a liberal rationality of government/power (Hindess, 1996).

Foucault was not an advocate of liberalism and therefore he would not support this project’s goal of arguing that the neoliberal world should pursue increasingly advanced security technologies in order to protect its interests. Instead he would likely
ask “why do we want the neoliberal world to defend itself.” I deviate from Foucault’s theoretical approach by not asking such questions. Rather, as Foucault theorized, I accept that the neoliberal world is governed by bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power to highlight that Agamben’s theoretical understandings and those similar are limited. Bio-power, as a power relation, seeks to direct the neoliberal world’s behavior in accordance with its accompanying liberal rationality of power that is strongly influenced by neoliberalism (Foucault, 2008, p. 145; Peoples & Vaughn-Williams, 2010, p. 67). As previously discussed, bio-power influences behavior on the individual level, and on the level of the population as a whole (Foucault, 1990, pp. 139-141; Tagma, 2009, p. 411). However, this form of power is effective within the neoliberal world because it shapes the desires of the population (SparkNotes Editors, 2002, p. 21). Whereas sovereign power focuses on what people should not do, bio-power emphasizes what people should do or rather “how their freedom ought to manifest itself” (SparkNotes Editors, 2002, p. 31). In regards to the individual level, elementary schools serve as one way in which bio-power can be understood to reinforce liberalism as the primary rationality of power. For example, in US school systems where the Pledge of Allegiance is required to be stated on a daily basis, this routine can be understood as reinforcing liberal values, a liberal discourse of truth, and the way in which one should conduct himself/herself. At the level of the population as a whole, bio-power relies upon statistics, such as birth rates, “in order to calculate and forecast random or probable events that are expected to happen in a given population” (Foucault, 1990, p. 140; Tagma, 2009, p. 411). Bio-power therefore operates through the discourses of truth created by the
information/knowledge gained from the statistics concerning the population (Foucault, 1990, p. 141). In a liberal regime, these discourses of truth lead the population to believe that the governmental system rests “on their consent” (Hindess, 1996, p. 131; Tagma, 2009, pp. 411-412). Barry Hindess (1996) explains that “attempts at indirect regulation” should be expected within a liberal regime in the form of individual education, which enables self-regulation, “and through the design of public buildings and spaces so as to ensure…that the behavior of individuals is regulated by the normative gaze of their fellows” (Hindess, 1996, p. 130). It is important to point out that due to a liberal regime’s tactics of indirect regulation and conditioning, Foucault rejected the idea that the governmental system rested on the population’s consent (Hindess, 1996, p. 145).

Although the examples mentioned above are not exhaustive, the neoliberal world’s governmental rationality “governs by giving the impression that it is not governing,” while indirectly regulating the population’s behavior and desires (Cotoi, 2011, p. 114; Hindess, 1996, p. 130; SparkNotes Editors, 2002, p. 21).

As previously alluded to, I view Agamben’s perspective of power, and those similar, as limited because they do not appreciate the influence of discourses of truth as a guide or form of restraint on the actions taken by the neoliberal world (Tagma, 2009). Thus, I intend to support Foucault’s view that the neoliberal world is dominated by bio-power/liberalism, but deviate from what his likely theoretical approach would have been due to his focus on critique. I diverge because I am not offering a critique or genealogical analysis of the neoliberal world’s dominant rationality of power, but instead I am trying to point out that the neoliberal world’s influential (politicians, religious leaders, large
corporations, etc.) should acknowledge the influence of discourses of truth. In addition, and due to this influence, the influential should not fear that the development and implementation of security technologies will automatically coincide with an increase of indiscriminate sovereign violence.

Despite my deviation from Foucault’s theoretical goals of critiquing rationalities of power, I am still employing his theories in a manner that he intended. Gutting (2005) supports this claim by citing Foucault from a 1974 interview discussing his upcoming book “Discipline and Punish” (p. 112). According to Gutting (2005) Foucault stated that “I want my books to be a sort of toolbox that people can rummage through to find a tool they can use however they want in their own domain….I don’t write for an audience, I write for users, not readers” (pp. 112-113). In short, I will employ Foucault’s theoretical concepts/tools, such as the importance of discourses of truth, while at the same time deviating from the way in which he would have likely employed these concepts.

Furthermore, within this project, it is significant to note that Foucault’s theories concerning bio-politics are employed in a manner that differs from the way in which they are “typically” employed within the field of International Relations (IR) by scholars ranging from Foucauldian scholarship to Marxist scholarship. More specifically, Foucault’s use within this project differs due to the way in which it seeks to understand neoliberal world security practices through a lens shaped by Foucault’s theories which emphasized the importance of discourses of political economy: this project takes the position that “[p]olitical econmy is the language of liberal security” (Kiersey, 2009, p. 42). Thus, “conventional” Foucauldian scholarship understands that Foucault’s theories
are valuable for explaining and understanding the international level to include the GWoT, but these scholars overlook the importance Foucault attributed to the influence of discourses of economy in regards to motivating security responses or actions at the international level (Kiersey, 2009, p. 27, 29). For example, Julien Reid, amongst others, appear to view the GWoT as being executed in the pursuit of a specific political form of life, rather than a life that is constituted in “economic terms” (Kiersey, 2009, p. 32, 45). According to Nicholas J. Kiersey, the result of “standard” Foucauldian-scholarship discourse therefore seems “to reinforce the two central theses of critical scholarship on global biopolitics” (Kiersey, 2009, p. 33).

Kiersey (2009) explains that “typical” Foucauldian-scholarship discourse leads to the reinforcement of two dominant hypotheses concerning bio-politics at the international level (p. 33). The first central thesis understands bio-politics to have led to neoliberal world security measures and practices becoming indiscriminate in terms of identifying their threats (Kiersey, 2009, p. 33). For example, Michael Dillon’s and Julien Reid’s works highlight the idea that bio-political regimes have adopted the idea that threats may reside within not only “outside” populations but within their domestic populations as well (Kiersey, 2009, p. 32). In support of this notion, Dillon and Reid (2001) state that “the character of biopower and biopolitics” is changing in accordance with the evolution of scientific methods which define the form of “life” that is to be secured (p. 56). This changing character of bio-politics, fueled by evolving scientific methods, causes Dillon and Reid (2001) to speculate that security is becoming increasingly “hyperbolic, since any assemblage, organization or population, however differentiated and specified,
become acerbic” (p. 57). In other words, scholars that support this thesis understand that the neoliberal world actively seeks to secure its way of life, but at the same time these scholars are not specific in regards to defining the form of life that is to be defended.

The second central thesis reinforced by “typical” bio-political scholarship views bio-politics to have “achieved the status of a global regime of power/knowledge” which ignores state boundaries in regards to determining which “population” it secures (Kiersey, 2009, p. 33). This non-acknowledgement of state boundaries leads to a bio-political regime which resembles a “liberal empire” that views the entire world’s population as the “‘humanity’ that must be defended” as opposed to the population held within its traditional state boundaries (Kiersey, 2009, p. 33). However, the liberal empire within this perspective pursues security objectives at the international level in order to spread a generally defined political form of life that is viewed as best for all and therefore universal (Kiersey, 2009, p. 33). An example that encompasses this position is represented by Michael Ignatieff’s (2003) view that the US, a member of the neoliberal world, is a form of empire which views its liberal values, such as “free markets and liberal democracy,” as universal, and that it is the US’ responsibility to spread these values throughout the world in order to secure it (para. 7). This central thesis is similar to the argument of this project. However, it differs somewhat because although it views liberal values, such as the free-market and democratic principles, as the referent objects which identify the form of life that is to be defended, it does not view the market as the primary referent object which identifies the life that needs to be secured. Thus, proponents of this thesis would likely support this project’s argument even though it
differs slightly. Despite their differences, a common thread which runs through these central theses is the idea that bio-political regimes seek to secure a specific political way of life, but unlike this project, they do not view political economy or rather the free-market as the referent object which motivates neoliberal world security actions. Rather, these more “orthodox” uses of Foucault view values or bio-political mechanisms themselves as the forces which prompt bio-political regimes to pursue security objectives at the international level.

Another account of Foucault’s theories, which also highlight how Foucault’s theories are employed differently within this project, are those held by Marxist scholars. Unlike the previously discussed Foucauldian scholars, Marxist scholarship assumes the position that Foucault’s theories cannot be applied in a manner that explains actions at the international level such as the GWoT (Kiersey, 2009, p. 28). For example, Jan Selby (2007) argues that applying Foucault’s theories to the international level is limited (p. 331). He believes that applying Foucault’s theories in this manner is limited because this usage deviates greatly from the way in which Foucault practiced his theories (Selby, 2007, p. 331). Selby (2007) explains that Foucault focused his theories upon politics and their corresponding power relationships at a “‘micro’” political level (p. 331). In addition, Selby (2007) also explicitly states that although Foucault’s theories can highlight how liberal warfare is transforming in response to new surveillance practices, his theories “cannot tell us why the US state re-invaded Iraq in 2003, or why the British state participated in that invasion but the French state did not” (p. 337). In short and at a basic
level, Marxist scholars criticize attempts to employ Foucault’s theoretical concepts at the international level because they view them as being stretched beyond their original intent.

Although not exhaustive, the previous review of IR scholarship highlights how this project employs Foucault’s theories differently than “conventional” IR scholarship. First, this project views Foucault’s theories as tools which can explain not only the “how,” but the “why” of neoliberal world security actions executed at the international level. And second, this project pays special attention to Foucault’s 1978 and 1979 lectures regarding the importance of a market-based rationale in regards to the neoliberal world’s behavior. The theoretical concepts expressed in these lectures thus inform this project’s position that “the security sought by biopolitics is mediated fundamentally by an economistic horizon of thought” (Kiersey, 2009, p. 29). In short, this project differs from more “traditional” applications and views surrounding Foucault’s theories in two ways: this project understands the market to serve as the referent object which determines when a neoliberal world security action is required, and that Foucault’s theories can be applied to explain the “why” of international level affairs.

Power and Violence: The Methodology

To a victim of a drone strike, it may appear to be a rather academic distinction to suggest that sovereign power and bio-power employ violence for different reasons. Yet, for victims and perpetrators alike, there are serious stakes in this distinction. If sovereign power motivates the strike, the strike’s purpose is nothing more than an act of discipline or suppression aimed at reasserting the striker’s power for the sake of power. Victims then become an example to others who may be thinking about violating the sovereign’s
wishes. However, if bio-power motivates the strike, the strike’s purpose is intended to defend the liberal way of life meaning that the strikers are protectors and that victims are an unfortunate sacrifice for the greater good. In order to determine which form of power is prevalent, two factors must be evaluated.

First, an examination of the discourse surrounding security technologies must be synthesized in order to determine whether or not these technologies respect neoliberal principles. Respect for these principles can be determined if the surrounding discourse justifies their use or existence in terms of an argument developed from a market-based perspective. If identified, respect for these principles would indicate support for Foucault’s position that bio-power has surpassed sovereign power within the neoliberal world by demonstrating the extent to which the liberal rationality of power is engrained as a discourse of truth. However, if the discourse surrounding these security technologies does not respect neoliberal principles, or if it is framed in terms of discipline or suppression, this could be deemed as evidence in support of Agamben’s views because sovereign power establishes itself through violence (Foucault, 1990, p. 136; Tagma, 2009, pp. 409-410).

Second, an examination of the purposes guiding security technologies must be evaluated in some situations especially if discourse surrounding a specific event involving a security technology is limited. A review of the circumstances surrounding the use of a security technology can shed light on whether or not these technologies were used to support or defend the neoliberal world’s values. Evidence in support of these
factors may be located in combination, but either discovered in unison may also be used to distinguish between the underlying forms of power.

Furthermore, in order to support the argument of this project, I make two assumptions which accompany the factors listed above. The first is that states/members of the neoliberal world, despite the free-market serving as the referent object which defines a secure “life,” share a set of values and principles which are liberal in nature. Specifically, I assume that these shared liberal values are in line with what Michael C. Doyle (1986) identifies as “liberal;” he explains that “[w]hat we tend to call liberal resembles a family portrait of principles and institutions, recognizable by certain characteristics—for example, individual freedom, political participation, private property, and equality of opportunity” (p. 1152). Additionally, I presume that these shared values and principles heavily influence, and to a certain degree dictate, the neoliberal world’s behavior at the domestic and international level.

The second assumption pertains to the way in which I analyze discourse/rhetoric: throughout this project, comments made by government officials, scholars, and others are accepted at face value. This assumption is acknowledged because this method of analyzing discourse will likely lead to questions concerning the authenticity of the comments referenced, and as a consequence the validity of this project’s evidence. However, as previously discussed, I assume that one’s choice of words reflects the influence of an underlying norm, discourse of truth, and/or rationality of power which permeates throughout society. For example, if a governmental leader employs liberal rhetoric to justify a military action, such as justifying the action in terms of spreading
democracy or individual rights, I assume that this choice of words reflects the influence of a liberal rationality of power or discourse of truth. This form of assumption is not without precedent. Foucault was apparently uninterested in analyzing texts for deep or hidden meanings; “rather than looking for 'hidden depths,' [he advocated] the treatment of texts as flat surfaces across which one can discern patterns of order” (O’Farrell, 2010, concept: interpretation, commentary and hermeneutics). Therefore, this project accepts rhetoric/discourse at face value, and believes that patterns of discourse are not simply coincidental or merely the result of insincere speakers.

It is important to note that the argument of this project is not that sovereign power no longer exists. In fact, Foucault understood that sovereign power could still remain despite it being surpassed by bio-power (De Larrinaga & Doucet, 2008, p. 520). Due to this understanding, the location of states of exception should be expected, even to occur within the neoliberal world. But because bio-power has surpassed sovereign power, it should also be expected that states of exception will only develop in order to pursue objectives perceived as being beneficial to the neoliberal world’s interests especially when bio-power\liberalism is unable to normalize a population without coercion (Tagma, 2009, p. 413).

Acts of violence can easily appear to support sovereign power in any given situation. But it is important to examine their stated justifications, in order to assess the deep cultural support these policies might draw upon in their legitimation. Sovereign power needs to kill in order to prove its “power over life” while bio-power sanctions killing in order to defend and advance its liberal way of life (Foucault, 1990, p. 136).
is why the moral claims which motivate acts that can kill are critical to this study, and why security technologies prove a worthy case study to examine this debate. Security technologies produce acts of violence and acts of violence can obviously lead to injury, trauma, and death, but the moral claims behind those acts expose the commanding form of power. Therefore, acts of violence and the potential of death caused by security technologies lead to the creation of a rhetorical template that can be used to analyze this debate. Although violence can be justified by either form of power, only bio-power guided entities would draw on liberal rhetoric and pursue objectives that promote and protect the neoliberal world’s way of life. Bio-power can therefore be identified by its purpose to promote the liberal way of life which, because of its centralization upon access to the market, is fundamentally at odds with sovereign power’s deductive nature: for “[t]here is no sovereign in economics” (Foucault, 1990; Foucault, 2008, p. 283).

The consequences of this debate are significant. If leaders or citizens within the neoliberal world adopt a perspective of power similar to that of Agamben’s, the neoliberal world’s way of life could potentially be in danger. The adoption of this perspective, or one that is similar, could be dangerous because it could prevent future security technologies from being developed, such as lethal autonomous robots (LARs), and could result in a neoliberal world that is unable to defend its way of life (Anderson & Waxman, 2012 & 2013, p. 39; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 232). Wholeheartedly adopting Agamben’s views, or those similar, would be dangerous because they would lead to paranoia and fear concerning the development of future security technologies. More specifically, these views would cause such security technologies to be viewed as
validation for sovereign power, and its violence, increasingly encompassing all aspects of life. This fear of sovereign power could cause those with influence to actively seek out the demobilization of security frameworks and their corresponding technologies in an effort to prevent sovereign power’s influence from expanding. These efforts could thus remove a security technology from the neoliberal world’s arsenal hypothetically limiting its future ability to combat threats. Although it is impossible to predict that the neoliberal world would be able to prevent some future threat due to the development of a specific security technology, allowing it to pursue new and advanced security technologies will at the very least theoretically increase its overall capabilities to respond to an unforeseen threat.

In the remainder of this project, I will highlight how existing security technologies, such as PMCs and drones, support bio-power and its liberal rationality of power to highlight that future security technologies will do the same. This emphasis will demonstrate why the people of the neoliberal world should not fear the development of future security technologies such as LARs. The neoliberal world should not fear the development of future security technologies, such as LARs, in the same manner as Agamben: bio-power and its liberal rationality of power “informs and shapes the violence of sovereign power” thus restraining it from completely unleashing indiscriminate sovereign violence on the neoliberal world or its interests (Tagma, 2009, p. 410). If Agamben’s views, and those that are similar, are indeed flawed, and nonetheless adopted, the development and implementation of future liberal-life-enhancing security technologies could be derailed by pessimistic understandings of power (Anderson &
Waxman, 2012 & 2013, p. 39; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 232). Specifically, there is currently a movement to ban LARs, and it appears that the advocates of this movement view power in a manner similar to that of Agamben by seemingly ignoring the influence of discourses of truth (Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, 2015; International Committee for Robot Arms Control, 2015). I am not arguing that these technologies should be developed without caution, but rather that their development will to a certain extent be controlled by bio-power and its accompanying and dominant liberal rationality of power in a manner that Agamben cannot explain.
CHAPTER 2: PRIVATE MILITARY CORPORATIONS

Introduction

Private Military Corporations (PMCs) are for-profit businesses providing warfare associated services in order to enhance a client’s ability to achieve a desired security objective (Singer, 2001-2002, p. 186). They can offer a range of military related services which include “tactical combat operations, strategic planning, intelligence gathering and analysis, operational support, troop training, and military technical assistance” (Singer, 2001-2002, p. 186). Their services can be purchased by countries and various other organizations (Singer, 2001-2002). However, they are also a controversial form of security technology at a theoretical level because they possess the ability to serve the goals of either sovereign power or bio-power. As such, they represent an excellent case from which to analyze the debate between Agamben and Foucault, and to argue that security technologies employed by the neoliberal world serve bio-power. PMCs represent a necessary case for this project because, unlike the other security technologies discussed within this project, they existed and were employed well before the dominant form of power guiding the neoliberal world transitioned from sovereign power to bio-power. This longevity is an important factor because it indicates that PMCs have served sovereign power at some point in time, and therefore a deviation from goals inspired by sovereign power could indicate support for bio-power’s influence. In addition and more importantly, PMCs are a significant case because money is a primary determinant as to whether one receives their services rather than access to a nation’s resources (Singer, 2001-2002, p. 209).
PMCs can provide their services to governments, individuals, or non-state actors thus enhancing these clients’ abilities to pursue their goals, even if those goals are motivated by sovereign power. Concerning governments, PMCs provide politicians with an outlet to pursue their goals using a security technology regardless of whether or not other options are available. In democratic countries, this can be especially problematic because political leaders may elect to employ PMCs as a solution in order to bypass the public scrutiny that typically coincides with decisions to use force (Scahill, 2008, p. 433). Their use in such a manner by liberal governments, could be an indicator that a sovereign logic is influencing PMC employment. PMCs can also be hired by individuals or non-state actors in the pursuit of goals led by a sovereign logic. PMCs hired in this manner could potentially allow a non-state entity the ability to achieve military strength and “new paths to power not imagined until very recently” (Singer, 2001-2002, p. 212). For example, if a powerful PMC were to be hired by a wealthy group or individual in a third world country, it is conceivable that this group or individual could challenge the state government for control of the state itself. PMCs, therefore, are an essential case for this study because their existence potentially allows for the purchasing of military power that can allow sovereign power to impose its will, whether or not those goals are set by a department of government. For this reason, the power PMCs provide via purchase informs the logic of this chapter; if PMCs respect bio-power and its accompanying liberal principles within the neoliberal world, there is no reason to believe that any other security technology would not be held to the same standard.
This chapter will discuss the liberal factors that have contributed to the current state of PMC use by the neoliberal world, examine controversies surrounding PMCs, and analyze historical cases involving the use of PMCs. These controversies and cases will be scrutinized to highlight bio-power’s influence over PMCs in order to support the argument that security technologies within the neoliberal world are used and developed to serve bio-power. Evidence in support of this argument will be identified if the discourse surrounding PMCs can be determined to respect neoliberal principles, and/or if PMC employment is purposed by goals motivated by neoliberal principles. If this chapter’s argument is ignored, and perspectives similar in nature to that of Agamben’s are adopted by those with influence, the development of future security technologies may be prevented and potentially result in the neoliberal world being unable to defend itself (Anderson & Waxman, 2012 & 2013, p. 39; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 232).

PMCs and the Influence of Neoliberal Factors

Agamben understands only one form of power to guide the neoliberal world’s actions: sovereign power. From his perspective, PMC use would indicate sovereign power’s presence, especially when they are used in an illiberal manner, because sovereign power employs violence to justify itself, and to normalize its population (Foucault, 1990, p. 136; Tagma, 2009, pp. 409-410). However, Foucault theorized that the neoliberal world transitioned to a space dominated by bio-power meaning that PMC violence and illiberal actions would indicate that bio-power’s non-coercive liberal mechanisms were not functioning and thus leading bio-power to employ sovereign violence to restore order (Foucault, 1990, p. 136; Tagma, 2009, p. 413). The purpose of
this section is to provide evidence for Foucault’s stance by briefly highlighting the
historical relationship between PMCs and neoliberal ideology within the neoliberal
world. This brief historical overview demonstrates how the military sector within the US
was reformed by neoliberal ideology, and how this reformation resulted in the vast usage
of PMCs following the attacks of 9/11. The role of neoliberal ideology is an important
component of this argument because trust in liberal principles, such as the free-market,
requires power to be diffused in a manner that is not consistent with sovereign power’s
need for total control. In support of this notion, Foucault (2008) explained that, “[t]here is
no economic sovereign” because the sovereign cannot control all aspects of economics
(p. 283). Therefore, evidence of neoliberalism’s influence upon the use of PMCs can be
interpreted as support for the argument that PMCs serve bio-power despite Agamben’s
expectations.

In order to understand the increased use of PMCs following the attacks of 9/11, it
is important to understand the role played by neoliberal ideology before the attacks took
place in regards to the philosophy applied to military management. During the 200 years
prior to the end of the Cold War, the dominant belief guiding the management of
militaries was self-sufficiency, or a centralized approach that did not rely upon civilian
provided warfare services to the greatest extent possible (Kinsey, 2010, pp. 1-2). This
perspective concerning privatization began to change dramatically in the 1980s and
1990s due to the influence of political leaders who believed in the benefits of the free-
The transition from self-sufficiency began during the 1980s and was led by President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who looked to the private sector to improve efficiency across their respective military apparatuses (Kinsey, 2010, p. 13). The ideological shift that took place regarding military structure was influenced by “the ascendancy of neo-liberal ideology among policy elites,” and represented a change in the perceived role of government concerning the issuance of services (Alexandra, 2012, p. 164). A primary component of this ideology revolves around the belief that the market, combined with the private sector, results in the most efficient practices/services, and that the government should manage the availability of those practices/services rather than provide them itself (Alexandra, 2012, p. 164). According to Andrew Alexandra (2012), “[n]eo-liberal ideology thus renders the provision of military services by private, rather than public, providers at least prima facie desirable” (p. 164). President Reagan’s and Prime Minister Thatcher’s beliefs in the private sector remained salient into the 1990s and 2000s in their respective countries (Kinsey, 2010, p. 13).

Following the Cold War, neoliberal ideology concerning the free-market continued to influence the management of armed forces in the neoliberal world. With the fall of the Soviet Union an environment emerged within the US which was friendly to the use of PMCs (Ellington, 2011). A reduction in military spending was demanded by experts and politicians so that the US could benefit from the “‘peace dividend’” caused by the war’s end (Ellington, 2011, p. 137). The potential funds a peace dividend could theoretically offer appears to have prompted a debate over how those potential funds
could best be spent (Greenhouse, 1992). From a Foucauldian-shaped neoliberal perspective, this debate appears to have been concerned about ensuring that the funds were spent in a manner that allowed “the [economic] game [to be] as active as possible and consequently to the advantage of the greatest possible number of people” thus placing the peace dividend within a neoliberal frame of discussion (Foucault, 2008, p. 201). Nevertheless, this political pressure resulted in the reduction of the defense budget, which included troop numbers amongst other forms of downsizing (Ellington, 2011, p. 137). However, the Secretary of Defense (SoD) Dick Cheney, felt that military capabilities needed to be maintained despite the cuts and “that any shortfalls resulting from the military drawdown could be easily and efficiently offset by the use of contractors” (Ellington, 2011, p. 138). Prior to Cheney exiting his position as SoD, he initiated a study involving the use of logistical support contractors (Ellington, 2011, p. 138). After the study, the company Brown & Root (now KBR) received a contract to support the US military and performed well; its performance led to privatization becoming an established practice “by the end of the Clinton administration” setting the groundwork for privatization to expand in the future (Ellington, 2011, p. 139).

Neoliberal ideology maintained its influence into the turn of the century when Donald Rumsfeld, the SoD during George W. Bush’s administration, pushed privatization of the military sector further. Rumsfeld believed that the public sector was better equipped to accomplish tasks than the federal government, and that the federal government should only be called upon once all other options were exhausted (Ellington, 2011, p. 139). Once in the position of SoD, “Rumsfeld immediately began putting into
effect [his] ideas of privatization” (Ellington, 2011, p. 140). His goal was “to increase the Pentagon’s reliance on modern technology and high-tech weaponry on the battlefield, so that the fighting forces could win wars in newer and more efficient ways” (Ellington, 2011, p. 140). An important component for achieving this efficiency was considered the privatization of all occupations that were not solely focused on combat (Ellington, 2011, p. 140). Rumsfeld ultimately viewed the Pentagon’s bureaucracy as a threat to its own efficiency, so he invoked policies with the aim of liberating it (Scahill, 2008, p. 50). Reagan’s, Thatcher’s, Cheney’s, and Rumsfeld’s influence guided by beliefs in a free-market, a key element of neoliberalism, created a situation where PMCs became a necessary component of the Global War on Terrorism (GWoT).

The attacks of 9/11 occurred within a year of George W. Bush’s election to president. The attacks influenced the US’ eventual invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as part of the GWoT. The Iraqi war began as a war against conventional forces and transitioned to a war against insurgency forces resulting in the need for more soldiers (Ellington, 2011, p. 142). A contributing factor to the shortage of troops was the post-Cold War troop reductions (Ellington, 2011, p. 142). With other options being unacceptable, the Bush administration chose to use PMCs to meet this demand, and future demands, resulting in a dramatic increase of PMCs being deployed on the behalf of the neoliberal world (Ellington, 2011, p. 142). In summary, the role of neoliberal values clearly aided in the development of an environment favorable to the use of PMCs following the attacks of 9/11. This finding provides evidence to the claim that the neoliberal world’s security technologies serve bio-power.
PMC Controversies

To say the least, PMCs are a controversial form of security technology for many reasons. The controversies examined in this section, from perspectives shaped by Agamben and Foucault, include securitization, the use of the term “mercenary,” and accountability. The purpose of this section is to highlight that bio-power trumps sovereign power in a manner that Agamben would not expect if his theories were correct regarding the neoliberal world. First, since sovereign power establishes itself through its ability to kill, the influence of securitization could be an indicator of sovereign power expanding its grip over issues that it did not previously control. Next, the term “mercenary” is relevant because its use demonstrates the level to which a liberal rationality of power or liberal discourse of truth is engrained within the neoliberal world. The last controversy discusses the gray area that PMCs operate within in regards to legal and governmental accountability (Avant, 2004, p. 24; Benicsak, 2012, p. 320; Scahill, 2008, p. 35). Accountability is the most important controversy examined within this chapter because a lack of accountability, either in legal or governmental terms, could be an indication of sovereign power’s influence via the creation of states of exception. In this section, I will describe each controversy, explain how they lend evidence towards Agamben’s theoretical understandings of power, and then provide evidence of how PMCs are abiding by neoliberal principles in a manner that Agamben could not easily explain.
Controversy 1: Securitization

A form of controversy concerning PMCs is their impact upon the securitization of political issues (Leander, 2005, p. 804; Leander, 2005b, p. 612). Securitization occurs when an issue is shifted “out of the realm of ‘normal’ political debate into the realm of emergency politics by presenting it as an existential threat” (Peoples & Vaughn-Williams, 2010, p. 76). PMCs possess the potential to shape security discourse within the neoliberal world; it is potentially problematic because it may be shifting “the location of this power from the public/state to the private/market and, even more significantly, from the civil to the military sphere” (Leander, 2005, p. 803). In other words, securitization is problematic because those charged with ensuring the security of the public, the democratically elected government, could potentially become dependent upon PMCs to decide what constitutes a threat. This shift then is problematic because it could result in decisions being made in the best interest of the PMC rather than the public.

This influence on decision making is growing, and one way in which this influence manifests itself is through lobbying, and this influential power can be attributed to the PMC industry’s ability to offer money (Leander, 2005). In 2007, the private security sector was valued at approximately $165 billion with the expectation that it would continue to grow (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2009, p. 1). In 2001 alone, over $30 million was spent by the top ten PMCs on lobbying in the US with an additional $12 million being donated to political campaigns (Mathieu & Dearden, 2007, p. 751). Lobbying by PMCs is aimed at managing lawmakers’ perspectives regarding various political issues. When managed properly PMCs ensure that they receive their paychecks.
Although PMCs are arguably just another security technology, they appear to have the capacity to become more than simply tools by influencing political decisions regarding security issues. This influence could result in scenarios where security methods are chosen to solve a problem that diplomacy may have been able to correct.

An example of PMC power in regards to influencing a security agenda is illustrated by MPRI and a contract involving Equatorial Guinea (EG). MPRI impacted the US government’s foreign policy by lobbying successfully for it to allow the PMC to accept a contract offered by EG “within the frame of the US’s ‘National Security Enhancement Plan’” (Leander, 2005, p. 816). Prior to the acceptance of this contract, the US government did not support EG’s military (Leander, 2005). However, MPRI’s argument was achieved because they made the case that if they were not granted the contract a corporation outside the US would have been (Leander, 2005, p. 816). MPRI essentially changed US governmental policy by influencing it to allow MPRI to receive the contract and develop EG’s coastal defense force (Leander, 2005, p. 816). This example highlights the power PMCs can possess in regards to shaping matters of foreign policy.

PMCs also indirectly exert influence over the securitization of issues. First, PMCs indirectly influence securitization through the forming of relationships with powerful political figures (Leander, 2005, p. 808). Anna Leander (2005) explains that “PMCs often have highly placed members of the political establishment on their boards as epitomized by Dick Cheney’s close ties to Halliburton. These boardmembers [sic] have loyalties to their firms and lobby their case” (p. 808). PMCs also ensure strong relationships with
political institutions by hiring former high-ranking personnel: in 2005 Blackwater hired Cofer Black as their vice chairman whose resume included a three-year stint as the head of the CIA’s Counter-Terrorism Center (Scahill, 2008, p. 329). Leander (2005) suggests that PMCs may informally influence governmental decisions by utilizing their close connections to those in power.

Second, PMCs influence securitization by controlling knowledge via epistemic power (Leander, 2005, p. 811). This form of power “works through and by affecting the knowledge of actors” (Leander, 2005, p. 811). An example of how PMCs affect knowledge can be observed by the way in which they produce “legitimate knowledge” (Leander, 2005, p. 812). Many PMCs conduct non-combat tasks such as cooking and construction tasks, but PMCs also collect intelligence (Leander, 2005, p. 812). In addition, Leander (2005) explains that, according to a former CIA director, approximately “95 percent of all intelligence comes from open sources and much of this is from private firms” (p. 813). In some circumstances, PMCs not only collect intelligence, but analyze it as well (Leander, 2005). This enables these companies to decide what information is passed on to decision makers thus enabling them to create a security discourse (Leander, 2005). When PMCs become the sole providers of the information that informs decision making, it grants PMCs power through knowledge. A real world example of this took place in 2001 when a civilian plane carrying an infant was shot down by a Peruvian military aircraft (Leander, 2005, pp. 814-815). The Peru military received information from a CIA aircraft operated by private contractors who
mistakenly reported that the civilian aircraft was transporting drug traffickers (Leander, 2005, pp. 814-815).

However, there are those that do not view PMCs as significant players concerning governmental decision-making (Leander, 2005). This position essentially views PMCs as just another tool of the state (Leander, 2005, p. 806). This position emphasizes the government’s role in allowing PMCs to grow to their current form through the use of contracts, and questions whether PMCs are truly private: “[s]uch analyses also emphasize that these firms are so linked to the state and the armed forces that it is doubtful whether or not they are private at all” (Leander, 2005, p. 807). PMCs provide support for this position; for example, in an interview on the television program 60 Minutes, Blackwater’s founder Erik Prince stated “I’m an American working for America. Anything we do is in support of US Policy” (60 Minutes, 2007, minutes 0:52-1:00). If sentiments such as these are true, PMCs could easily be nothing more than mere tools of the state who depend on the state to determine what consists of a security threat. This reliance and perceived loyalty to the state thus renders PMCs into “secondary international actors” which causes them to be insignificant in terms of influencing security agendas (Leander, 2005, p. 807).

The “securitization controversy” provides Agamben’s perspective of power within the neoliberal world with support by highlighting how security solutions, or the ability to kill as a solution, are/is becoming increasingly influential. Thus the fact that PMCs, an entity solely focused on security for its survival, can lobby political leaders to securitize more issues would be considered problematic and an indicator that sovereign
power remains the top form of power. Agamben (2002) believes that a problem with the neoliberal world is the “gradual neutralization of politics” which is the result of states becoming increasingly dependent upon security as their legitimizing function (para. 3). Therefore, PMCs and their ability to shift or create security discourse serves as evidence for Agamben’s theories because sovereign power can be understood as increasing its scope concerning the decisions over what and what cannot be protected by the law. Therefore, the PMC industry’s ability to securitize issues is support for Agamben’s theories at a macro level because it contributes to his belief that security is increasingly becoming the legitimizing function of governments which ultimately leads to the “depolitization of society” (Agamben, 2002, para. 5).

Despite this evidence in support of Agamben’s views, respect for neoliberal principles can be identified by reviewing the discourse and arguments employed by PMCs themselves as well as others on their behalf. This discourse functions as evidence because it is informed by a market-based logic, and in some cases it includes moral claims which are consistent with liberal rhetoric. First, a closer look at the case of MPRI and EG, the case discussed above, reveals that in addition to the argument that if the PMC did not get the contract someone else would, MPRI officials “argued that the [US] should be engaging [EG], both to improve its record on human rights and to ensure access to its oil reserves” (Yeoman, 2003, para. 22). Mark Yeoman (2003) suggests that MPRI’s argument that they would incorporate human rights training (liberal rhetoric) into their work agenda with EG heavily influenced the State Department’s decision to allow the PMC to accept the contract (para. 23). In addition to human rights concerns, it is
important to note that MPRI’s officials pointed out the importance of the country’s oil reserves (market-based logic). The case of EG demonstrates respect for neoliberal principles due to the way in which MPRI employed the market as a reason why it should have been allowed to accept the contract and because of the way in which it employed moral claims concerning the human rights condition.

A second example which demonstrates support for the claim that PMCs employed by the neoliberal world serve bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power is the question of whether or not PMCs should be sent to Darfur. Max Boot in 2006 wrote an article titled “Darfur Solution: Send in the Mercenaries” which, as the title implies, proposes that PMCs should be sent to the Sudan in order to prevent genocide (para. 10). In this piece, he suggests that the neoliberal world is not interested in aiding the situation in Darfur, and explains that UN forces are ineffective while highlighting their previous failures (Boot, 2006, para. 6, 8). In addition to pointing out the UN’s ineffectiveness, Boot (2006) also employs a market-based perspective to support his proposition (para. 11). After acknowledging criticisms regarding previous PMC operations, which point out how PMCs have only been a short-term solution, he states that “[p]resumably longer-term contracts could create longer-term security, and at a fraction of the cost of a U.N. mission” (Boot, 2006, para. 11). Boot’s argument in favor of PMC use in Darfur highlights the influence of bio-power/liberalism within the neoliberal world in two ways. He points out bio-power’s presence by claiming that PMCs could prevent genocide (moral claim), and that they could do it in a more efficient and cost effective manner than a large bureaucratic organization such as the UN (market claim).
In 2006, Blackwater echoed Boot’s sentiment regarding Darfur and the use of PMCs in similar situations. Following a military conference in Jordan where a high-ranking Blackwater official suggested that the firm could “deploy a private brigade-sized force” to turbulent areas such as Darfur, the firm’s vice president issued statements as to why the firm was a better solution than other international organizations (Scahill, 2008, pp. 414-415). The Blackwater VP emphasized that his firm could respond more quickly and cost effectively than organizations, such as the UN or NATO, and that it would be a waste of money for the UN to send a large force into the region. Jeremy Scahill (2008) also suggests that Blackwater’s arguments for PMC use in the Darfur region included an angle for such “operations as being born of moralistic outrage over human suffering” (p. 415). Similar to the former example, Blackwater sought to justify their use in the Darfur region by employing market-based arguments in combination with moral claims.

In summary, a review of the “securitization controversy” suggests that although PMCs can be tools of security or creators of security discourse, they are ultimately subservient to bio-power/liberalism. This controversy undoubtedly provides a perspective of power shaped by Agamben with some evidence, but a closer look reveals the level to which neoliberal principles are engrained in discussions surrounding the use of security technologies within the neoliberal world. The location of evidence in support of this project’s argument demonstrates that PMCs and their clients do not simply securitize issues for security’s sake as Agamben’s theories imply, but rather they securitize issues in support of what is perceived as best for the market in combination with what is best for liberally informed moral claims. The “securitization controversy” suggests that bio-power
has indeed bypassed sovereign power as the dominant form of power within the neoliberal world.

Controversy 2: Mercenaries?

The use of the term “mercenary” appears to serve as a dividing line between critics and supporters of PMCs. Those that view the use of PMCs as problematic, such as Jeremy Scahill amongst others, often refer to them as mercenaries because the term possesses a negative connotation. The term is associated with individuals who are only interested in personal gain, coming together to form an undisciplined organization of hired guns (Singer, 2001-2002, p. 191). The term is also condemned at the international level because the mercenary “trade is technically banned by international law” (Singer, 2001-2002, p. 191). In addition, “mercenary activities” have been defined by the UN’s special reporter responsible for monitoring mercenaries as a form of violence which has taken place over the past 40 years that threatens self-determination and human rights (Zabci, 2007, p. 5). For example, “[i]n the 20th century mercenaries were regularly involved in conflicts, especially across Africa, propping up illegitimate regimes, denying self determination to indigenous peoples and actively participating in human rights abuses” (Mathieu & Dearden, 2007, p. 746). The negative perception surrounding the term mercenary has also caused experts working to understand and influence the private security sector to insist on using “the label ‘private military company’ not only to avoid the tainted label” but to highlight how PMCs are different than traditional mercenaries (Leander, 2005, pp. 807-808).
Critics of PMCs also highlight when the term is not applied. For example, following the deaths of four Blackwater employees in Iraq, media reports were published concerning the event and rarely used the term “mercenary” (Scahill, 2008). According to Scahill (2008), the term was not neglected by accident; he explains that it was “part of a very sophisticated rebranding campaign organized by the mercenary industry itself and increasingly embraced by policy-makers, bureaucrats, and other powerful decision makers in Washington and other Western capitals” (p. 62). Scahill’s (2008) comment suggests that the term is avoided because of the negative publicity it would attract from the neoliberal world’s population. If suspicions such as this are true, the term mercenary then carries a negative connotation that employers and PMCs actively seek to avoid.

The “mercenary” label is unquestionably disputed by PMCs and proponents of the PMC industry. Whereas “mercenary” carries a negative implication, terms such as “private contractor” or “civilian contractor” seem to be less negative in nature (Scahill, 2008, p. 62). According to Leander (2005b), “[t]he term ‘private military companies’ was launched” by Tim Spicer, former head of Sandline International and member of Aegis Defense Services, in order to avoid association with traditional definitions of mercenaries (p. 608). In 2001, the International Peace Operations Association (which is now the International Stability Operations Association (ISOA)) was founded by Doug Brooks, an advocate for PMC use, following time spent in Sierra Leone (Brooks, 2000; ISOA, 2014, Our History Tab). Brooks, influenced by personal experiences in Sierra Leone, began to develop a code of conduct aimed at outlining the way in which the private sector should conduct itself (ISOA, 2014, Our History Tab). After consulting with actors who had a
vested interest in the PMC industry, his code of conduct became the founding document of the organization; the ISOA Code of Conduct (CC). The organization’s stated mission is as follows:

ISOA fosters a global network of private sector, government, and nongovernmental organizations dedicated to long term stability around the world. To that end, ISOA works every day to build, serve and represent a network of professional organizations providing critical services that benefit vulnerable populations and lay the foundation for long term economic growth worldwide.

(ISOA, 2014, Our Mission Tab)

Scahill (2008) explains that in 2005, Blackwater amongst other PMCs sought to join the organization in order to combat their reputations as mercenaries. Although the ISOA CC is not a document which possesses legal implications, membership with ISOA has been cited as a potential form of certification or quality check for PMCs (Scahill, 2008, p. 426). The ISOA CC states that those who fail to uphold the code may have their membership terminated. A review of the ISOA website displays no signs of supporting the image commonly associated with the term “mercenary” suggesting that the organization would reject such a label. On an anecdotal level, Erik Prince stated that he viewed the work of Blackwater in Iraq as falling “far from the definition of a mercenary” (The New York Times, 2007). Moreover, Blackwater seems to have sought more distance from the term in 2005 by “requiring all company employees and contractors to swear the same oath of loyalty to the U.S. Constitution as Blackwater’s ‘National
Security related clients’” (Scahill, 2008, pp. 58-59). PMCs and those that support PMCs appear to defend the industry from the label whenever confronted with the term.

For the “mercenary controversy” to contribute to the argument of this paper, it must be approached from a structure of actions/discourse of truth perspective. This perspective is important because the structure of actions concerning the term mercenary has obviously led to the term being held in low esteem. This controversy then contributes to the argument of this project by indirectly highlighting the influence of the liberal rationality of power which accompanies bio-power. The controversy highlights this influence because the foundation for using the term is built upon a liberal understanding of what is “good” or “bad.” The traditional understanding of “mercenaries” as hired guns who simply work for the highest bidder, and the definition of “mercenary activities” offered by the UN representative clearly run counter to neoliberal principles from a market and morality-based standpoint. From a market-based perspective, if PMCs are nothing more than mercenaries/criminals who use violence to achieve their own interests, this form of organization could threaten the stability of the market. From a morality-based perspective, if PMCs violate human rights or actively seek to prevent self-determination, their very existence then constitutes a threat to basic liberal principles. Therefore, when critics label PMCs “mercenaries,” it is negative because it associates PMCs with a culture that stands as a form of resistance to the neoliberal world’s dominating liberal rationality of power.

Another way in which this controversy highlights the influence of the liberal rationality of power’s existence are the actions taken by proponents of PMCs. Tim Spicer
and Erik Prince, both powerful actors within the PMC industry at one time, each have taken actions, as previously discussed, to distance the industry from the term. Furthermore, the ISOA seems to respect neoliberal values that do not coincide with the term “mercenary” due to the way in which their mission statement claims that the organization’s goals are worldwide stability and worldwide economic growth. The actions taken to distance PMCs from the label of “mercenary” suggest respect for neoliberal principles and thus bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power.

Although not earth shattering, the “mercenary controversy” appears to support the argument that PMCs serve bio-power because of the way in which critics and proponents of PMCs interact with the term. They interact with the term from perspectives shaped by neoliberal principles which were theorized by Foucault to have accompanied bio-power’s rise. Critics employ the term in an effort to damage the PMC industry by highlighting how PMCs have the potential to violate liberal principles, whereas proponents seem to take actions that not only remove PMCs from the term, but also which try to move the industry in a direction which makes them acceptable to the neoliberal world. In summary, this controversy supports the argument that PMCs are developed and employed by the neoliberal world to serve bio-power because it points out the extent to which liberal principles are engrained as a discourse of truth within the neoliberal world.

Controversy 3: Accountability

Accountability is by far the most controversial aspect of PMCs and ranges from legal accountability to governmental accountability. For example, in regards to legal
accountability, although thousands of contractors worked in Iraq on the behalf of the GWoT beginning in 2003, as of 2008, no contractor had faced any legal consequences for crimes against Iraqis (Scahill, 2008, p. 9). Thus, a critic of PMCs can easily argue that PMCs exist within a legal gray area (Avant, 2004, p. 24; Benicsak, 2012, p. 320; Scahill, 2008, p. 35). First, a legal gray area can exist because it is not always clear which laws apply to PMCs: “[s]ometimes they are subject to the laws of the territory in which they operate and other times to those of their home territory, but too often the distinction is unclear” (Avant, 2004, p. 24). Next, international law can also be deemed inadequate because it is either designed to punish states, or because it lacks adequate enforcement mechanisms (Avant, 2004, p. 24; Shah, 2014, p. 2573). However, notwithstanding the clearly problematic nature of PMCs in regards to legal accountability, in order to advance the argument of this paper I would like to focus upon governmental accountability, or rather the use of contractors to bypass it (Avant, 2004, pp. 22, 24; Scahill, 2008, p. 433).

Governmental accountability can be understood as the systems a government has in place to create checks and balances which prevent one branch of government from gaining too much power.

Another problematic aspect of PMC accountability is their ability to be used in order to avoid governmental accountability. Use in this manner is especially problematic in the neoliberal world because it can be viewed as a way of bypassing the public scrutiny which typically accompanies governmental decision-making (Singer, 2001-2002, p. 217). In the United Kingdom (UK) and the US, PMCs can be hired in a manner that allows the hiring to detour around parliamentary or congressional approval, thus allowing these
decisions to bypass the governmental bodies which are meant to represent the people (Avant, 2004, p. 22; Mathieu & Dearden, 2007, p. 749). The benefit of employing PMCs in this manner is that they can offer an employing government political advantage by enabling it to avoid political costs (Avant, 2004, p. 24; Singer, 2001-2002, pp. 217-218).

For example, when the Bush administration chose PMCs to fill the demand for more troops in Iraq, it had other options available such as the “National Guard and Reserves,” but using them “would have prompted massive outcry amongst the public…, exactly the last thing leaders in the Executive branch or Congress wanted as they headed into what was a tight 2004 campaign” (Singer, 2007, p. 3). However, despite the political advantages, a bypassing of public debate is problematic because PMCs could potentially escalate a conflict to the extent that the client state is required to become involved “in direct fighting without the requisite public debate” (Singer, 2001-2002, pp. 218-219).

PMCs are thus problematic because they can be purposely hired in the neoliberal world in a manner that circumvents inherent liberal governmental accountability processes.

Additionally, critics of PMCs also suspect that the western/neoliberal world does not resolve accountability issues because it prefers a broken system. For example, Filiz Zabci (2007) contends that western/neoliberal states will not take the steps required to repair the PMC accountability system because of their “colonialist aims” (p. 8). Another example of the purposeful maintenance of an inadequate system is offered by Jeremy Scahill. Scahill (2008), strongly suggests that the US government neglected to enforce accountability measures against the firm Blackwater, following the infamous Nisour Square shootings, because of the firm’s effectiveness and the US government’s
dependency upon the firm (pp. 13-18). He also suggests that a contributing factor to this non-enforcement of accountability was the fact that Blackwater often protected high-ranking politicians when they visited Iraq; the same politicians who would be required to take action to hold the firm accountable (Scahill, 2008, p. 13, 16). Another example of the purposeful maintenance of a legal gray area for PMC conduct is Order 17 (Scahill, 2008). Order 17 was issued by Paul Bremer, the top official of the Coalition Provisional Authority, in the summer of 2004 prior to his leaving of Iraq (Frederick, 2010, p. 12; Scahill, 2008). Scahill (2008) states that “[t]his directive granted sweeping immunity to private contractors working for the [US] in Iraq, effectively barring the Iraqi government from prosecuting contractor crimes in domestic courts” (p. 15). Singer (2007) explains that this order led to PMCs viewing themselves “as above the law,” and that no contractor “in Iraq was prosecuted or convicted for any crime involving an Iraqi victim” in the three years following its issuance (p. 11). In this regard, evidence is available for critics who claim that the neoliberal world does not want to hold PMCs accountable.

The “accountability controversy” provides significant evidence for not only Agamben’s understandings of power within the neoliberal world, but it also provides evidence for claims that the neoliberal world’s security technologies do indeed serve sovereign power. This controversy highlights how basic liberal principles such as human rights, respect for the rule of law, and democracy can be violated by the use of PMCs. First, Agamben’s perspective of power in the neoliberal world, is supported by the lack of an effective accountability system for PMCs. This ineffective accountability system violates the rule of law to the extent that it does not truly exist. Next, the claim that
neoliberal states use PMCs to bypass governmental accountability also serves as a point of validation for Agamben’s theories. The use of PMCs to bypass democratic procedures clearly violates liberal values by evading one of its core components: public consent. If liberal governments can make decisions without input from the people, what then differentiates them from a government that abides by sovereign power’s logic? Lastly, evidence for Agamben’s theoretical understandings are provided by the actions and inactions taken by the neoliberal world. Concerning actions, Order 17 directly coincides with Agamben’s concept of the state of exception which potentially allows violations of human rights and the rule of law. Order 17’s protection of PMCs appears to be a direct action taken by the US to place PMCs outside of the law therefore allowing them to become an exception to the law. When Order 17 is combined with claims that Washington DC officials did not want to challenge Blackwater’s actions, the claim that PMCs are exempt from normal politics or laws is logically strengthened (Scahill, 2008). The logic surrounding this evidence is straightforward; if PMCs are unable to be punished for crimes, they are outside the law. This inability to be punished then renders those who PMCs commit crimes against into homo sacer by virtue of PMCs being the entity committing the crime. The “accountability controversy” provides Agamben’s perspective concerning power, and the argument that the neoliberal world’s security technologies do not support bio-power with strong support by highlighting how neoliberal principles are disrespected.

There is no way to deny that a lack of accountability plagues the employment of PMCs, nor that this lack of accountability forms an obstacle to the argument that the
neoliberal world uses and develops security technologies to serve bio-power through a liberal rationality of power. However, a closer examination of the way in which PMCs perceive accountability to function, coupled with an interpretation of what the implementation of regulations means when implemented by the neoliberal world, reveals respect for neoliberal market-based principles. First, it is important to note that PMCs view the market as an accountability mechanism in itself. When asked about accountability, Aegis’ one time top official Tim Spicer offered a response that suggests PMCs are accountable, but that they are accountable to company guidelines and the contracting government (Hedahl, 2012, pp. 176-177). This stance also appears to have been shared by Blackwater’s founder when he stated that his firm was accountable to the US (Scahill, 2008, p. 57). Although Scahill (2008) is skeptical of Blackwater’s claim, it is not difficult to link Blackwater’s income to the US government. The logic behind this form of accountability is straightforward; if PMCs do not abide by their contractual arrangements, they risk losing business in the future. Deborah Avant (2004), in describing how the belief that PMCs are free of all forms of accountability is an exaggeration, explains how a Sierra Leone dictator fired a UK based firm for refusing to provide a requested service. It is important to note that the firm refused the request because it felt that its fulfillment “would give the company a mercenary reputation that might endanger future contracts” with countries such as Great Britain (Avant, 2004, p. 22). The UK-based firm clearly made a decision in response to market forces.

Steps taken by the US to tighten PMC accountability, when analyzed from a neoliberal perspective, also demonstrate support for the claim that PMCs serve bio-power
because these steps can be understood as a form of intervention spurred by neoliberalism (Ettinger, 2011). Aaron Ettinger (2011) suggests that increased accountability measures implemented to restrain and expose PMCs to more scrutiny represent a form of market intervention. He explains that Rumsfeld’s neoliberal beliefs were implemented (including capitalizing upon the private sector as previously discussed) and suggests that these measures created an overly unregulated or “free” PMC market whose flaws were revealed by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2001 to 2010 (Ettinger, 2011, pp. 756-757). Once exposed, these flaws such as billing abuses and the Nisour Square shootings led to the government reexamining the ways in which it integrated PMCs “into US war efforts” (Ettinger, 2011, p. 758). In 2010, the US government released its Quadrennial Defense Review and “unlike the unqualified calls for outsourcing and privatization of the previous reviews, the Pentagon now took a much more interventionist and managerial view of wartime contractors and contracting” (Ettinger, 2011, p. 758). While acknowledging the challenges associated with implementing the form of oversight identified by the Review, Ettinger (2011) explains that some strides have been made prior to its issuance. He explains that in 2006 “the US congress amended the uniform code of military justice to bring civilian contractors under its jurisdiction” to include situations where war was not officially declared (Ettinger, 2011, p. 761). Although it is not explicitly stated, Ettinger implies that the PMC market was too “free” in the early 2000s and that this freedom has led to problems which have prompted governmental intervention aimed at improving/restoring competition within the PMC market. Thus, accountability measures implemented by the neoliberal world in regards to PMCs can be
understood as a form of market intervention rather than an accountability measure for accountability’s sake. Regulations understood as market interventions point out that the neoliberal world not only uses security technologies to serve bio-power, but it highlights that a liberal rationality is deeply seated as the dominant discourse of truth in a manner that Foucault would expect.

Despite this controversy’s support for Agamben’s perspective concerning power, a closer examination reveals support for the argument that the neoliberal world uses and develops security technologies to serve bio-power. More specifically, this controversy demonstrates that bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power dominate the way in which the neoliberal world perceives the world by highlighting how it applies a market-based rationale to domains that are not economic in nature. For example, accountability does not appear to be viewed as a moral or ethical phenomenon to PMCs or the US government. Rather it appears that a lack of accountability is perceived as the result of market conditions not being established in a manner that yields the desired outcome. In summary, the “accountability controversy” lends support to the argument of this project by highlighting the level to which neoliberal principles are respected by the neoliberal world even when it is addressing issues outside the realm of economics.

The controversies presented within this section add support to the claim that the neoliberal world uses and develops security technologies through a liberal rationality of power. Each of the three controversies highlight the extent to which bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power have permeated all aspects of the neoliberal world’s approach to problem solving albeit from different angles. The “securitization
controversy” points out that arguments to securitize issues are framed in terms of a market-based argument, and that these arguments can lead to the government deciding to change its mind in regards to foreign policy when implemented properly. Next, the “mercenary controversy” shows the level to which liberalism is engrained as a discourse of truth because PMCs actively seek to dissociate themselves from the label. Lastly, the “accountability controversy” not only sheds light on problematic aspects of PMCs in regards to bio-power/liberalism, but it also highlights the drastic extent to which a market-based rationale is employed by the neoliberal world. For example, PMC misbehavior appears to spur regulation not due to moral or ethical concerns, but from the standpoint that adjusting their market conditions will result in achieving the most desired outcome. The controversies presented above indicate that PMCs are heavily impacted by bio-power within the neoliberal world in a manner consistent with Foucault’s theoretical understandings.

PMC Cases

Historical cases are important contributions to this chapter’s argument because they allow for an analysis, drawn from real-world events, of how the underlying forms of power influence PMCs. In this section, I will analyze PMCs and the power influencing them on a micro and macro level: the Nisour Square shootings of 2007 (micro) and the former Yugoslavia (macro). The Nisour Square case demonstrates that bio-power/liberalism ultimately guides PMC use and PMC thinking despite committing seemingly illiberal acts, and the former Yugoslavia case highlights how PMCs can be employed to aid bio-power in achieving normalization without coercion. Although the
Yugoslavia case took place prior to the attacks of 9/11, it remains valuable because it fits into the period disputed by Agamben and Foucault. The primary goal of this section is to highlight that bio-power/liberalism influences PMC actions even when those actions appear to violate liberalism itself.

Before proceeding, the greater context from which I will be analyzing the following case, and cases in the following chapter, must be addressed. The following case took place following the attacks of 9/11 and thus took place in support of the GWoT. From my analytical perspective, the GWoT was launched in pursuit of defending the neoliberal world’s way of life and therefore its occurrence was in service to bio-power/liberalism. Statements made by the former president of the US support this claim. For example, on September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush explained that the attacks of 9/11 were meant not only to kill within the US, “but to disrupt and end a way of life….They stand against us because we stand in their way” (Bush, 2001). This statement indicates that the president viewed two rationalities of power as being in conflict with one another. The president also foreshadowed what the US’ response to the attacks would be: “[o]ur war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated” (Bush, 2001). These statements combined with the former indicate that he viewed the neoliberal world’s way of life to be under attack, and that this attack warranted a response. His statements fit within the logic of bio-politics and bio-power because these concepts justify violence when threats pose “a kind of biological danger to others,” and in this case the threat was against the liberal way of life (Foucault, 1990, p.
Furthermore, Nicholas J. Kiersey (2009) also points out that the GWoT was likely motivated by a desire to secure an “economic mode” or liberal way of life (p. 29). Additionally, Ronnie D. Lipschutz (2002) argues that the US may eventually wage war on Islam, but the driving force behind this conflict would not be “religion, ideology, or culture” but rather “inherent contradictions within the American-dominated system of neo-liberal governmentality” (p. 215). In short, the remainder of this project views the initiation of the GWoT as an action initiated to defend the neoliberal world’s way of life, thus causing actions initiated in the name of the GWoT to be viewed as actions supportive to bio-power/liberalism.

**Nisour Square 2007**

On 16 September 2007, during the second Iraq war and under the GWoT umbrella, an event known as Bloody Sunday took place in Iraq at Nisour Square within Baghdad (Hedahl, 2012, p. 187; Scahill, 2008, p. 3). The event began when a Blackwater armed convoy entered the heavily trafficked square on what appeared to be a routine mission (Scahill, 2008, p. 3). Shortly after entering the circle, the convoy and one of the four gunners began firing his weapon which abruptly led to all gunners firing on the civilian vehicles stopped at the intersection (Scahill, 2008, pp. 4-5). The targets of the shooters included men, women, and children, including those that tried to flee the scene by leaving their vehicles according to an Iraqi policeman (Scahill, 2008, p. 7). The results of the shooting “left seventeen Iraqis dead and more than twenty wounded” (Scahill, 2008, p. 6). It is important to note that Blackwater’s position following this event was that its contractors were attacked, and that its personnel acted in the proper manner.
Despite these claims being disputed (Scahill, 2008, pp. 8-9). The event quickly led to Blackwater becoming a “household name the world over,” while simultaneously angering the pro-US Iraqi government and spurring subsequent media coverage and investigations (Scahill, 2008, p. 8).

Although not without turmoil, the incident ultimately led to a lawsuit, filed by and on the behalf of those impacted by the shootings, which resulted in four former Blackwater employees being convicted by a federal jury (Associated Press, 2014; Scahill, 2008, p. 37; Yost, 2014). Despite this legal justice, a review of the events immediately following the shootings furthers the argument of this project. First, within a day of the shootings the Iraqi government demanded that Blackwater be expelled from the country (Scahill, 2008, p. 9). However, this demand did not come to fruition; Blackwater was approved to stay indefinitely in less than a week’s time (Hedahl, 2012, p. 187). Next, investigations conducted by a US Army battalion and the FBI, which resulted in findings that a criminal event most likely took place, seemed to have been overlooked by the US government (Scahill, 2008, pp. 33-34). Without a more comprehensive look, it would appear that these events support Agamben’s theoretical expectations of power within the neoliberal world.

Bio-power and respect for neoliberal principles can be observed when discourse in this case is analyzed in support of Blackwater along with the greater context, the GWoT, purposing and requiring Blackwater’s presence. In response to the allegations, Erik Prince appears to have sought to appeal to the liberal rationality of power by accusing the lawsuit’s lawyers of being the defenders of criminals who kill law
enforcement agents and participate in terrorist acts (Scahill, 2008, p. 40). According to Scahill (2008) and shortly after Prince’s comments, J. Michael Waller an apparent supporter of Prince’s political views reiterated Prince’s assertions by claiming that the lawsuit’s lawyers specialized “in defending the enemies of American society” thus framing the suit as an attack on the neoliberal world itself (Waller, 2007, para. 4). This discourse therefore recognized bio-power’s influence by using it to defend Blackwater’s seemingly illiberal activities.

In addition to this discourse, an evaluation from a neoliberal perspective as to why the US could not immediately part ways with Blackwater following the shootings also indicates the influence of bio-power. First, it is important to note that prior to the end of 2006, “the ratio of active-duty [US] soldiers to private contractors in Iraq had almost reached one to one” (Scahill, 2008, p. 409). This ratio suggests that PMCs were an important element in regards to US goals, and this assessment is reinforced by high-ranking officials who essentially stated that without Blackwater the war in Iraq could not continue (Scahill, 2008, p. 18). However, Blackwater’s importance alone is not indicative of bio-power, to achieve this end their importance must be combined with the overarching logic guiding the US’ involvement in Iraq. When the US’ mission in Iraq is viewed from the perspective that the GWoT was launched in support of defending the neoliberal world’s way of life, the US’ decision not to eject Blackwater from Iraq supports bio-power. David Harvey (2007) strongly implies that the US viewed the improvement of world security as being inextricably linked to the neoliberalization of Iraq, and that the implementation of this neoliberalization was a responsibility of the US
(pp. 5-6). He infers this by highlighting comments made by President Bush which claim that the spreading of freedom is the US’ obligation, and by pointing out that the US sought to achieve this freedom by implementing neoliberal principles such as the privatization of nearly all aspects of the Iraqi economy (Harvey, 2007, p. 7). In this case, it appears that Blackwater was allowed to remain in Iraq, despite their apparent illiberal actions, due to their necessity for enhancing the US’ goal of spreading freedom via neoliberalization. Thus, Blackwater was allowed to remain in Iraq not to maintain a sovereign power’s strength, but rather to aid the US’ higher purpose of normalizing Iraq through bio-power and its liberal rationality of power. An Iraq normalized by bio-power/liberalism would likely expand the markets of the existing neoliberal world thus enabling competition (a key element of neoliberalism) within the market to expand. A review of the Nisour Square case, although grim, lends support to the claim that security technologies are employed by the neoliberal world to serve bio-power and its liberal rationality of power, even when those technologies commit illiberal acts.

The Former Yugoslavia

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia faced an uncertain future (Weitsman, 2008, p. 568). The country began to face problems in 1991 when regions of the country began to declare independence leading to civil war (Weitsman, 2008). In 1992 a fragile peace was formed, but it was short lived: independence was declared by Bosnia shortly after peace was declared leading to civil war once again (Weitsman, 2008). During this conflict “[i]nnumerable atrocities occurred” which contributed to more than 90,000 losing their lives and millions losing their homes (Weitsman, 2008, p.
This situation surprised the international community and caused the UN Security Council to declare that “international peace and security” were at risk (Popovski, 2002, p. 41, 44).

Following the Pentagon’s advice in 1994, and after MPRI received approval from the US State Department, the Croatian government signed a contract with the US based PMC (Isenberg, 2010; Mandel, 2001, p. 142). The purpose of this contract was to enhance Croatian military force capabilities (Zabci, 2007, p. 6). The investment in MPRI appeared to yield results quickly, Croatian forces during Operation Storm cleared the Krajina region of Serbians within seven months of receiving training (Isenberg, 2010, para. 7; Mandel, 2001, p. 142). Croatia’s success led to MPRI gaining future contracts within the region (Mandel, 2001, p. 142).

In 2010, a lawsuit was filed against MPRI and its parent company “by the Genocide Victims of Krajina in Chicago Federal Court” (Isenberg, 2010, para. 1). The lawsuit accuses MPRI of training and arming the Croatian military as well as planning Operation Storm for them, while simultaneously knowing that the Croatians intended to conduct genocide against Serbians due to historical grievances (Isenberg, 2010). However, a review of MPRI’s purpose in Croatia reveals that the firm was not working to enable violence, but rather to promote how the military should function within a democracy.

An interview conducted by David Isenberg (2010) with “[Lieutenant General]. Ed [Shoyster] (USA-[Retired].), an MPRI Vice President and former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency,” explains MPRI’s purpose within the country prior to Operation
Storm (para. 9). Concerning Operation Storm, the former general disputes the claim that any instructional agency can transform an army into such an effective force in such a short period of time, and that MPRI’s focus within Croatia was not the teaching of battlefield skills (Isenberg, 2010). Shoyster explicitly states that they did not teach strategy of any sort because they were not licensed to do so, and also because the Croatians did not ask for this form of instruction (Isenberg, 2010, GSIS). Also, in response to claims that fifteen generals were sent by MPRI, the former general explains that only fifteen people were sent, including only a single general, and that this group completed one class prior to Operation Storm with approximately forty graduates (Isenberg, 2010). Additionally, he points out that MPRI’s mission within Croatia was to teach a “Croatian democracy transition assistance program;” a goal of the program was to teach officers basic leadership skills, but another goal was to provide them with “an understanding of where they fit into a democratic society” (Isenberg, 2010, GSIS). A review of MPRI’s purpose reveals that the firm’s use respected neoliberal principles because it was hired to support the development of a liberal governmental regime. Due to this purpose, it is not difficult to view MPRI’s presence as a form of neoliberal intervention aimed at potentially broadening the neoliberal world’s access to markets. Furthermore, the US allowing and promoting Croatia to hire MPRI can also be understood as an attempt to normalize Croatia in a non-coercive manner consistent with bio-power’s goals. If sovereign power was the force seeking change in the country, violence would have likely been chosen as the first response to enforce democratization rather than classes taught by a small contingent of private contractors. With some
speculation, a review of MPRI’s purpose in Croatia reveals that bio-power and its liberal rationality of power motivated the PMC’s use in the country.

Conclusion

Although PMCs are undoubtedly problematic for bio-power/liberalism on many levels, the controversies and cases discussed above indicate that sovereign power is no longer the dominant power as Foucault theorized (Foucault, 1990; 2008). These controversies and cases indicate that sovereign power has been replaced because PMCs, and their neoliberal world clients respect neoliberal principles through their discourse and dealings with PMCs. That being said, Foucault’s and Agamben’s perspectives in tandem remain valuable to the neoliberal world because they point out where liberalism is failing to live up to its own principles. However, it is important to remember that Agamben believes the neoliberal world to be illiberal because sovereign power is the dominant form of power, whereas Foucault understood that bio-power could approve illiberal actions in the name of defending its accompanying liberal rationality of power. Thus for Foucault, the neoliberal world sacrifices liberal principles in times of stress in order to preserve liberalism itself (Kiersey, 2009, p. 33; Tagma, 2009, p. 413). This is why I caution a wholesale adoption of Agamben’s perspective or similar perspectives by those with influence within the neoliberal world. Bio-power/liberalism shapes and informs sovereign power/violence, and this order of causality suggests that security technologies will be restrained from completely turning against the neoliberal world’s principles or way of life as Agamben’s theories would expect (Tagma, 2009, p. 428). Perspectives such as Agamben’s or those similar could thus be dangerous because their adoption could
prevent future security technologies from being developed which the neoliberal world may need to defend itself against unforeseen threats (Anderson & Waxman, 2012 & 2013, p. 39; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 232). As this chapter has shown, if PMCs can be kept in control by bio-power/liberalism, there is no reason to believe that future security technologies will not be held to the same standard. Therefore, this chapter supports the argument of this project by highlighting how an extremely problematic security technology is ultimately motivated by liberalism and neoliberal principles.
CHAPTER 3: DRONES

Introduction

Although not new in concept or practice, drone use and production increased exponentially following the attacks of 9/11, while simultaneously becoming an equally controversial topic of debate (Keane & Carr, 2013). Drones are “unmanned military aircraft of any size which carries and launches a weapon, or which can use on-board technology to direct such a weapon to a target” (Program on Humanitarian Policy, 2009, p. 16). For example, drones, such as the US’ Predator and Reaper, can carry missiles meant to destroy tanks, observe targets effectively in nearly all weather conditions, fly remotely from anywhere in the world, and be managed in a manner that allows continuous drone coverage (McDonnell, 2012, pp. 251-254). Drones are an excellent case to examine the debate between Agamben and Foucault concerning power, and the argument that the neoliberal world uses and develops security technologies to serve bio-power. Whether controlled by an individual or federal government, drones, similar to PMCs, can easily be wielded as tools of sovereign power because they enhance their controller’s ability to select who lives and who dies. However, they can also be purposed to kill on the behalf of bio-power/liberalism. If the argument of this project is accurate, a review of drones employed by the neoliberal world should indicate that bio-power and its liberal rationality of power are motivating drone use. Yet, drones remain a valuable case for this project because their use, no matter the commanding form of power, can often appear illiberal in nature.
Drones possess technical and physical characteristics which lead to several dangers regardless of the commanding form of power; even if used by the ideal liberal state, drones could become tools of sovereign power. First, in the neoliberal world, drones are potentially dangerous to liberal values because they remove people from conflict (Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 373). It is theorized that within a liberal society conflict will become less likely because its citizens will vote against conflict/war in most situations since it will draw upon their lives and resources in order to see it accomplished (Doyle, 1986, p. 1151; Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 366). Drones violate this logic because they remove people from harm’s way and arguably cost less than other security technologies (Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 370). Therefore, drones could potentially allow politicians to pursue goals motivated by a sovereign logic since the citizenry is left largely unaffected and disinterested by decisions that involve the use of force (Singer, 2011, p. 346). Next, drones potentially make it easier to kill due to the suspected “video-game” mentality that they induce upon their pilots (Gregory, 2011, p. 191). Viewing targets/people through a computer monitor may lead to real people being viewed as nothing more than dehumanized specs on a screen (Whetham, 2013, p. 24). Remote flight may be allowing sovereign power to select who may live and die more easily by making drone targets less than “human” for their pilots. Although this list of dangers is not exhaustive, it highlights how drones could easily become servants of a sovereign logic regardless of whether or not the employer is a member of the neoliberal world. These potential dangers cause drones to become a necessary case for this study. The logic of this chapter, which is similar to the former, is simple and as follows; if drones can be held
accountable to bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power, there is no reason to doubt that future security technologies used or developed by the neoliberal world will deviate from this standard.

This chapter examines this logic by analyzing drones through theoretical lenses shaped by the theories of Agamben and Foucault. The first section discusses liberal factors which have contributed to the current state of drone warfare and highlights the appeal of unmanned systems to the neoliberal world. The next section examines controversies surrounding drones in order to point out how anxieties directed towards drones do not support Agamben’s theories because bio-power and its liberal rationality of power are engrained as a discourse of truth in a manner that leads to sovereign power’s subordination. The remaining section provides real-world cases which demonstrate that drones are used by the neoliberal world in support of goals motivated by bio-power and neoliberal principles. The purpose of this chapter is to argue that drones, when used and developed by the neoliberal world, serve bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power rather than sovereign power. If this chapter’s argument is ignored, and Agamben’s perspective of power, or one similar is adopted by those with influence, future security technologies such as lethal autonomous robots (LARs) may be prevented from reaching production resulting in a neoliberal world that is less able to defend its way of life (Anderson & Waxman, 2012 & 2013, p. 39; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 232).

Liberal Appeal and Neoliberal Influence

Within the neoliberal world, drones clearly possess the potential to serve sovereign power in a manner consistent with Agamben’s expectations. A perspective
shaped by his theories would easily understand drone development as sovereign power enhancing its ability to decide who may constitute the political body through violence. Nevertheless, Agamben’s theories concerning the neoliberal world are opposed by Foucault’s. Foucault theorized that sovereign power was surpassed by bio-power/liberalism meaning that security technologies could/would be motivated by purposes which enhance the neoliberal world’s way of life despite these events sometimes being illiberal (Foucault, 1990, p. 136; Foucault, 2008). For Agamben illiberal actions occur because sovereign power remains the dominant form of power, whereas for Foucault, illiberal actions occur when bio-power’s non-coercive liberal mechanisms breakdown or fail to achieve the desired level of normalization (Tagma, 2009, pp. 409-410, 413). The goal of this section is to highlight drone technology’s liberal appeal along with neoliberal ideology’s influence upon the increased demand, development, and use of drones following 9/11. Liberal values and neoliberal principles as influence upon drones serve as evidence for this project’s argument because, when truly recognized, liberal values and neoliberal principles are incompatible with sovereign power (Foucault, 2008, p. 283).

Drone demand following the attacks of 9/11 undoubtedly increased: “[o]n 9/11, the [US] had 167 drones in its arsenal….As of December 2013, the Pentagon and CIA [had] an estimated 11,000 drones, roughly 350 to 400 of which are armed-capable” (Zenko, 2014, para. 2). This increased inventory and accompanying demand appears to have been influenced by the appeal of unmanned technology to the neoliberal world which coincides with the way in which the neoliberal world prefers to employ force.
Liberal states, who inherently value democratic processes, are thought to be hesitant to wage war or employ force. According to Michael W. Doyle (1986), “[w]hen the citizens who bear the burdens of war elect their governments, wars become impossible” because peace is more profitable in regards to trade and its benefits (p. 1151). Furthermore, states which are influenced by liberalism, such as democracies, are also thought to be risk averse “because they distinctively value the life of human individuals” (Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 368). However, despite these reasons for hesitancy, liberal states do partake in the act of war when the costs are deemed acceptable in relation to the benefits (Doyle, 1986, p. 1152; Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, pp. 367-368).

Three reasons highlight why drones are attractive security technologies for the risk averse, but simultaneously warlike neoliberal world. First, unmanned systems are believed to be cheaper than manned systems (Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 370). This reason reduces the burden on the citizenry by reducing the cost related to military expenditures via the removal of life-support technologies and the implementation of cheaper training programs (Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 370). Next, unmanned systems reduce risk by removing soldiers from potential harm while still allowing security technologies to be chosen as a solution (Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 370). For example, although risk averse, the American public still expects its government to be able to “project force anywhere around the world, under virtually any conditions” (Marchant et al., 2011, p. 288). Drones appear to be the perfect solution to this paradox/dilemma because they allow the US to apply force where necessary without the risk of losing a life. Thus political incentives, or ramifications, for politicians within the US heavily
contribute to the demand and use of drones. Moreover, the reduction of risk associated with drones is also believed to benefit those amongst the targeted population (Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 370). This line of reasoning is that since the drone employer faces less risk, the use of unmanned systems then allows for more deliberation before force is used. This ability to reduce risk supports the notion that liberalism places value on individual lives (Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 368).

Lastly, unmanned systems are believed to “allow for heeding the norms and laws of war” due to the precision of their weapon systems, access to intelligence, and surveillance capabilities (Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 370). This reason, similar to the former, also supports the idea that life is valued within the neoliberal world by virtue of honoring the laws designed to protect life. Unmanned systems are therefore “even more than the weapon of choice: they seemingly provide a ‘silver bullet’ for democratic decisionmakers [sic]” (Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 370). This claim, that unmanned technologies are viewed as a “silver bullet,” is easily supported when analyzed from a drone perspective. In 2011, 34 countries were believed to possess “either medium-or heavy-sized [drones]” and “two-thirds of these countries [were] democratic states” (Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 364). The use of drones clearly supports the way in which the neoliberal world prefers to engage in uses of force; they reduce risk, potentially reduce cost, and seemingly allow for the rule of law to be followed in a more efficient manner.

In addition to drone technology’s liberal appeal, it is also important to note that drones were likely impacted by the military ideology/philosophy implemented by Donald Rumsfeld which also influenced the post-9/11 use of PMCs. As discussed in the previous
chapter, Rumsfeld’s vision for the US as the Secretary of Defense (SoD) was influenced by neoliberal ideology. Once appointed as the SoD for the Bush administration, Rumsfeld immediately began implementing what is known as the “Rumsfeld Doctrine” (Ellington, 2011, p. 140; Stover, 2004, pp. 10-11). This doctrine calls for a military force that is small, fast, light, and equipped with technologically advanced equipment and weaponry (Stover, 2004, pp. 10-11). The goal of employing a force within these parameters is to win wars in an efficient manner (Ellington, 2011, p. 140). Drones fit into this doctrine because they are a form of high-tech weapon that is not only cost effective but precise (Singer, 2011, pp. 336-337). The US military’s transition to a force which seeks to maximize the benefits of technology and privatization clearly aided the post-9/11 state of drone use by the neoliberal world.

Although drones can unquestionably become tools of sovereign power, a closer look at the factors which may influence their desirability within the neoliberal world suggests the presence of bio-power/liberalism. Each of the three reasons listed above appeal to the neoliberal world and can easily be placed within a market-based argument (drones are cheap), or be understood as drawing upon moral claims and liberal rhetoric (they abide by the laws and make combat safer for drone employers and the targeted populations) to justify their use. When these reasons for appeal are coupled with Donald Rumsfeld’s beliefs and actions as the SoD, it becomes increasingly difficult to argue that drones merely support the goals of sovereign power due to the undeniable influence of a liberal discourse of truth. Thus neoliberal ideology and the liberal appeal of drones appear to have heavily influence the post-9/11 state of drone warfare while
simultaneously lending support to the argument that the neoliberal world employs drones in support of bio-power/liberalism.

**Drone Controversies**

The controversies surrounding drones range in scope from their impact upon a pilot’s mentality to the costs associated with their use by democratic societies. This section will synthesize the “no soldier, less democracy” and the “video-game” controversy from perspectives shaped by the theories of Agamben and Foucault. This section’s goal is to further the argument of this project by highlighting how bio-power/liberalism has exceeded sovereign power in the neoliberal world.

The first controversy involves the concern that drones lower the threshold for violence by undermining democracy. If such occurrences are taking place, and no discourse or actions can be deemed to respect neoliberal principles in these situations, such occurrences may be indicative of sovereign power’s dominance due to their illiberal nature and resulting state of exception. Next, the “video-game” controversy raises concerns over whether or not drone operations, combined with long distance killing cause the act of killing to become “too casual” thus making acts of war/violence synonymous with video-game violence (Gregory, 2011, p. 191). From Agamben’s perspective, or one similar, a drone’s ability to allow pilots in Nevada to kill people in Asia, while still allowing them to make it home for dinner, would be indicative of sovereign power enhancing its ability to violently decide who may or may not constitute the political body (Gregory, 2011, pp. 191-192; Sharkey, 2011, p. 229). This section will outline each controversy, describe how it factors into Agamben’s understandings of power, and then
lastly highlight how bio-power’s/liberalism’s influence is present in a manner consistent with Foucault’s theories.

_Controversy 1: No Soldiers, Less Democracy?_

The potential for drones to increase the likelihood of war by undermining democracy serves as a primary issue concerning the use of drones (Beauchamp & Savulescu, 2013, p. 122; Singer, 2011, p. 351). Using this security technology may make the decision of going to war easier by removing not only soldiers/people from harm’s way, but also any sacrifice that may have been associated with participating in conflict. P. W. Singer (2011) explains that “[w]ithout public debate and support and without risking troops, the decision to go to war becomes the act of a nation that doesn’t give a damn” (p. 351). Without the risk of losing soldiers/people in conflict, political leaders may become more likely to view the use of force as an acceptable solution to political issues.

An example that demonstrates this concern, is the US’ involvement in the United Nations (UN) approved and NATO led 2011 intervention in Libya. This example supports the argument that drones may lower the threshold of violence via undermining democracy because the US participated in the intervention despite requirements set by the War Powers Resolution (WPR) which “limits the ability of a president to wage war without Congressional approval” (Sharkey, 2011, p. 232). The WPR became a topic of debate in the US between the president and Congress because some members of Congress felt that the president committed forces into an area of conflict without reporting to Congress, which are required by Section 4 of the WPR (Crook, 2012, pp. 163-164). However, the Obama administration claimed that a report was not necessary
because of “the limited scope of the mission, the limited exposure of U.S. armed forces, the limited risk of escalation, and the limited military means involved” (Crook, 2012, p. 164). The US supported the intervention by providing logistical support, intelligence support, and by conducting drone strikes (Sharkey, 2011, p. 232). According to Noel Sharkey (2011), in order for the Obama administration’s argument to hold, “[t]he argument here would have to be that use of drone strikes in Libya did not constitute the introduction of US armed forces into hostilities or into foreign airspace” (p. 232). This example epitomizes concerns that drones may undermine democracy, because, in this case, the Obama administration decided that it was not required to inform Congress (the institutional body which represents the people) that the US was conducting actions which included drones strikes in a foreign country.

Prior to the advent of high-tech weapons, such as cruise missiles or drones, the use of force was typically viewed as an option only to be used when all other avenues were exhausted (Singer, 2011, p. 350). However, drones and other robotic weapons now provide leaders with an option that may turn quick results without influencing the public: “[t]he result is a dangerous mixture: leaders unchecked by a public veto now gone missing, combined with technologies that seem to offer spectacular results with few lives lost. It’s a brew that could prove very seductive to decision makers” (Singer, 2011, p. 350). If leaders are confronted by the people for such decisions, leaders may be able to successfully argue that they achieved a quick solution with few casualties and without losing time through measures of diplomacy (Singer, 2011, p. 350). Since drones remove
the people from war by not requiring them to physically be in harm’s way, the obstacle of requiring the public’s support for action may be removed as well.

Not all agree that drones will automatically make war more likely by undermining democracy, or that more war is necessarily a negative occurrence. Kenneth Anderson (2013) acknowledges that drones may make the decision to use force somewhat easier, but also states that whether or not they make the decision “‘too easy’ depends entirely on whether one sees any particular use of force as just or unjust” (p. 22). He also points out that if using force is always a difficult decision, actions such as humanitarian interventions may not take place (Anderson, 2013, p. 22). In addition to this line of thought, Zach Beauchamp and Julien Savulescu (2013) argue that if drones make war easier, they may actually increase the likelihood of positive actions such as humanitarian interventions (p. 106). They explain that one reason advanced democracies are often hesitant to involve themselves in humanitarian interventions is the risk to their soldiers. By drones removing soldiers from risk, drones offer a pathway for these democracies to intervene in foreign countries and save lives (Beauchamp & Savulescu, 2013).

Similar to the former argument, Beauchamp and Savulescu also employ the Libya intervention example to support their position. They point out that drones successfully aided in the Libyan humanitarian intervention by providing a capability that was non-existent in earlier interventions such as Kosovo (Beauchamp & Savulescu, 2013, pp. 119-120). Humanitarian interventions can suffer from a risk averse approach that drones can mitigate. This zero casualty doctrine can lead to tactics that are not necessarily in the best interest of the people the intervention is meant to protect (Beauchamp & Savulescu,
This doctrine was enacted in Kosovo and had consequences for the civilian population. Specifically, in order to protect NATO pilots, a 15,000 feet minimum altitude was established, and this altitude affected the pilots’ abilities to accurately identify targets and thus led to civilian casualties (Beauchamp & Savulescu, 2013, p. 113). In Libya, one way in which Muammar al-Qaddafi’s forces reacted to the presence of NATO airpower was switching from tanks to trucks (Beauchamp & Savulescu, 2013, p. 119). This tactic makes it more difficult for pilots to identify enemies and thus requires them to fly within air-defense-artillery range in order to achieve identification (Beauchamp & Savulescu, 2013, p. 119). A risk averse approach would consequently hamper a human pilot’s ability to positively identify enemy forces. Drones solve this issue in a risk averse environment because they can fly low without the risk of a pilot being injured or killed (Beauchamp & Savulescu, 2013, p. 119). Drones were used in Libya sparingly, but due to their precision, they were used to destroy targets in urban areas along with targets that were near civilians (Beauchamp & Savulescu, 2013, p. 120). Drones appear to have aided in the Libya intervention being deemed a success (Daalder & Stavridis, 2012).

It is also important to note that Beauchamp and Savulescu respond directly to claims that drones undermine democracy. In response to Singer, they state that his claims (in other literature not cited here addressing the same topic) are exaggerated and that he appears to want a standard for the approval of war that is a “broader public deliberative standard” and more stringent than existing international and domestic legal instruments (p. 123). They state that “the problem is public participation in democratic deliberation, not drones” (Beauchamp and Savulescu, 2013, p. 124). The counter-position to the
argument that drones increase war by undermining democracy points out that the purpose guiding drone usage must be evaluated, that drones may enhance the likelihood for more positive uses of force, and suggests that drones are not necessarily the reason why democracy is failing if that is the case.

This controversy provides evidence for Agamben’s theories concerning sovereign power’s role in the neoliberal world by highlighting how drones enable political leaders to bypass legally imposed checks and balances. This sidestepping of checks and balances then results in the formation of a state of exception that allows violence to be employed outside of the law. For example, the Obama administration’s decision not to inform Congress of participation in Libya in accordance with the WPR could easily be interpreted as the executive branch exempting itself from the law in a manner consistent with a sovereign logic. If actions such as this become routine by security technologies, it could be argued from Agamben’s perspective that the neoliberal world remains guided by sovereign power. However, even if drones enable liberal values such as democracy to be bypassed, these actions cannot automatically be deemed as support for Agamben’s theories. The purpose motivating the action must be evaluated in detail to locate the commanding form of power. Remaining with the Libya example, a more in-depth look reveals that even if the US’ participation in Libya violated democratic values on some level, the intervention can be understood as defending bio-power/liberalism from two different angles.

The first angle from which the US’ participation in Libya can be understood as to provide evidence for bio-power’s/liberalism’s influence is observable by a review of the
purpose guiding the intervention: the protection of individual lives. The UN resolution justifying the intervention stated that the action was “consistent with ‘the responsibility to protect,’ the norm that calls on the international community to intervene when governments fail to safeguard their own civilians” (Daalder & Stravridis, 2012, para. 5). In 2011, the people of Libya rose up against Qaddafi their longtime dictator and instead of the non-violent protests leading to change, they led to “Qaddaffi [launching] a brutal crackdown” (Daalder & Stavridis, 2012, para. 3). This crackdown threatened hundreds of thousands of people, and the successful intervention “saved tens of thousands of lives from almost certain destruction” (Daalder & Stavridis, 2012, para. 9).

An intervention conducted on the grounds of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine can be understood as evidence for bio-power’s/liberalism’s influence in two ways. First, the R2P doctrine is related to the concept of human security which is concerned with the security of individual people from multiple sources of harm to include political violence (United Nations Development, 1994, pp. 30-31; Peoples & Vaughn-Williams, 2010, p. 127). Since the Libya intervention was approved by the UN with the purpose of protecting civilians, this intervention can be understood as an action taken in the defense of a core element of liberalism: individual rights (Prashad, 2012, pp. 166-167; Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 368). In support of this claim, President Obama, while discussing the intervention, stated that “[w]e have intervened to stop a massacre, and we will work with our allies and partners to maintain the safety of civilians” (Harris, 2011, minutes 1:54-2:03). Next, R2P doctrine is also related to neoliberal principles due to its interventionist nature (Foucault, 2008, p. 132; Peoples & Vaughn-Williams, 2010, p. 127).
The doctrine calls for military intervention by the international community in situations where nation-states fail to protect their populations in a manner consistent with the concept of human security (Bellamy, 2010, p. 143; Peoples & Vaughn-Williams, 2010, p. 127). Thus, the Libya intervention can be understood as support for bio-power/liberalism due to the way in which it justifies itself via liberal rhetoric (i.e. preventing massacre), and because interventions are similar to neoliberalism’s active nature. However, if this angle of evidence for bio-power’s/liberalism’s influence is disputed, a more in-depth look at the intervention also suffices as evidence for bio-power’s/liberalism’s influence.

Bio-power’s/liberalism’s influence concerning the Libya intervention can also be observed from a second angle which does not believe that the purpose of intervention was to save lives. Vijay Prashad (2012) argues that the intervention’s true purpose was not to protect lives, but rather to enhance the neoliberal world’s interests. His argument claims that the neoliberal world’s, especially the US’, motivation for intervention was concerns about regional stability and access to oil, and that the protection of civilians was a façade which enabled military intervention (Prashad, 2012, pp. 160-161). The turmoil caused by the Arab Spring was perceived as a threat to the neoliberal world because it possessed the potential to change traditional alliances in a manner that did not favor the neoliberal world’s interests. The “traditional order of things in the Arab world,” or established power relationships in the region favored the neoliberal world’s interests such as access to oil (Prashad, 2012, p. 161). According to Prashad (2012), this access is a primary factor contributing to US hegemony, and thus the threat of the Arab Spring prompted
action to ensure that the neoliberal world’s access to the region remained intact (p. 161). The neoliberal world is addicted to oil which makes oil an important factor contributing to intervention; for example, “the [US] is the world’s largest consumer” (Prashad, 2012, p. 46). The US does not physically require oil from the Middle East, but it needs the Middle East to produce in order “to maintain low oil prices” thus ensuring that industrial society and multinational-oil-corporation activities are not drastically disrupted and able to proceed (Prashad, 2012, p. 46). Prashad (2012) points out that the neoliberal world’s decision to intervene in “Libya and not Bahrain or Yemen, and certainly not in Syria, tells us something,” and suggests that Libya’s oil and geographical location were the guiding factors rather than human rights or individual lives (p. 8). Furthermore, Prashad suggests that the military force employed by Qaddafi against the rebels gave the neoliberal world its excuse to intervene militarily and promote a counter-revolution (Prashad, 2012, pp. 90, 161). Prashad (2012) thus suggests that the neoliberal world essentially used the conflict, including the claims of genocide, as an excuse to intervene and establish conditions which favored its agenda (p. 150).

Prashad’s argument, although not exhaustively outlined here, demonstrates support for bio-power’s/liberalism’s influence upon the neoliberal world’s actions due to the mentioned goals. First, intervention on the behalf of stability is logical because a change in stability could have potentially harmed the neoliberal world’s market by lessening the competition for oil. Thus, the intervention can be understood as a neoliberal market-based interventionist step taken to ensure that the existing global market did not shrink. Bio-power’s liberal rationality of power deems the market as the referent object
for determining the status of freedoms, and a smaller market thus hinders the level of freedom that can be achieved (Foucault, 2008). Therefore, if the intervention was prompted due to uncertainty caused by the Arab Spring, the action can be understood as respect for neoliberal principles; the action was taken to defend the neoliberal world’s way of life. Bio-power justifies the use of violence when the form of life it seeks to enhance is threatened, and in this case, it seems that the Arab Spring prompted action because it was viewed as a threat to the neoliberal world’s interests and way of life (Foucault, 1990, pp. 137-138).

The case of Libya demonstrates that even if security technologies such as drones permit the neoliberal world to bypass liberal principles such as democracy, this development cannot immediately be understood as evidence for sovereign power’s dominance. The first angle of evidence for bio-power views the actions in Libya as in pursuit of saving human lives. This angle supports bio-power because only bio-power would allow for the use of liberal rhetoric to justify violence. The second angle of evidence viewed the actions to be in pursuit of defending the neoliberal world’s interests rather than saving lives. This view may be correct, but when this angle is examined in depth it also demonstrates evidence for the claim that the neoliberal world’s security technologies are purposed by bio-power. In this case, drones were employed to ensure that the neoliberal world’s way of life was not impacted in a negative manner by a drastic change in power relationships or market forces. Despite the bypassing of democratic principles being problematic for bio-power/liberalism, the “no soldier, less democracy” controversy highlights that even when liberal values such as democracy are bypassed due
to the capabilities of a security technology, the neoliberal world violates these principles on the behalf of defending bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power. If drones are inhibited from violating democracy in the pursuit of goals motivated by sovereign power, there is no reason to expect that future security technologies will violate democracy in the pursuit of such goals.

Controversy 2: Video-Game Mentality

An argument employed in objection to the use of drones is that their use creates a video-game mentality which causes killing to become a casual affair (Gregory, 2011, p. 191). The concern of a video-game mentality stems from the pilot’s conditions, which resemble a personal computer setup to play flight simulator video-games, and the way in which geography places the pilot within an environment free from risk (Gregory, 2011, p. 192). A pilot must only enter a small trailer in North America to contribute to a war effort in Afghanistan. The primary worry is that the drone pilot’s conditions will enable the pilot to dehumanize his/her target to such an extent that the violence is not considered reality, rather an action that takes place in a video-game (Whetham, 2013, p. 24). This anxiety is not superfluous, evidence exists which demonstrates that the distance to a target may alter a shooter’s perception of the target (Whetham, 2013, p. 24). Referencing interviews with pilots, David Whetham (2013) finds that the killing of combatants from the air dampens the emotion associated with killing (p. 24). To further this point, Whetham (2013) explains that Royal Air Force pilots during World War II could, and knowingly did, kill civilians and enemies from 20,000 feet in the air (p. 24). Yet, he also explains that the same crew would likely be unable to kill if it were given a knife and told
to stab “the family in the room next door” (Whetham, 2013, p. 24). This side of the argument views the use of drones as problematic due to the way in which they potentially cause killing to become too casual an affair thus making it easier or “too easy” for someone to use violence.

However, there are two counterpoints to the “video-game” controversy. First, soldiers do not necessarily lose emotion by being separated from the killing, and second, drone pilots may actually be more emotionally close to their targets than others located within a warzone. Distance between a target and the shooter does not always remove emotion from the action. Whetham (2013) states that “[j]ust because the target is viewed through a screen rather than a rifle or bombsight does not mean that taking life has no effect on the person pulling the trigger” (p. 4). Derek Gregory presents anecdotal evidence which suggests that drone pilots are not detached from the reality being viewed within their monitors. He explains that one pilot witnessed two children enter his target area seconds after firing his weapon system: the pilot recounted that the impact of death was not dulled by the condition of viewing the engagement through a screen (Gregory, 2011, p. 198). Beyond anecdotal evidence, Gregory (2011) explains that drone pilots can suffer from post-traumatic stress and that this stress may be “induced by constant exposure to high-resolution images of real-time killing and the after-action inventory of body parts” (p. 198). In support of this claim, some drone pilots have had post-traumatic stress disorder although they have never physically been in an operational theater (Whetham, 2013, p. 24). The counter points discussed above suggest that the physical or
digital distance from a target does not necessarily create a mentality that enables violence to become “too easy.”

Although this controversy does not directly support Agamben’s views concerning power, several aspects of the “video-game” mentality would likely standout due to the way in which they parallel some of his theoretical concepts and expectations. First, the development of a technology which allows a person to kill another person on the other side of the planet would undoubtedly be perceived as sovereign power enhancing its ability to violently select the political body. This development would support Agamben’s (2002) view that security is ever-expanding as the legitimizing function of neoliberal world governments since, in this case, the technologies of killing are becoming more efficient in terms of scope and ability to select individuals (para. 3). Next, technological developments which allow nations to survey an individual for hours on end in order to decide whether or not that individual should live would also likely be perceived as evidence that the world is increasingly trending towards a permanent state of exception (Agamben, 1998, p. 38). These technological developments would likely be viewed as such because they essentially allow anyone at any location to become subject to sovereign power’s violent mechanisms of normalization.

Furthermore, the next glaring aspect of this controversy, from Agamben’s perspective, is the illiberal outcome of a technology which has the potential to dehumanize people to the extent that they are viewed as objects in a video-game. Dehumanization to this extent seems to allow anyone observed through a drone camera to be rendered into a version of homo sacer. If the remote-control technologies inherent to
drone piloting reduces people to less than human, or to a digital-fictional existence, it is
not difficult to fathom this development as illiberal when compared to the supposed value
liberalism places on individual lives. For Agamben, such illiberal violence resulting from
a technological development would be deemed as support for his theories because he
understands illiberal violence to occur because sovereign power’s only functioning
mechanism of normalization is violence (Tagma, 2009, p. 409).

Discourse surrounding drones suggests support for claims that drones lead to
dehumanization; for example, the term “‘bug splat’” is apparently used by drone
operators when referring to groups of people observed through their view-screens
(Feinberg, 2014, para. 1). In another example, Prince Harry of Wales, a political
representative of the neoliberal world who served as an attack helicopter co-pilot in
Afghanistan “told the BBC that taking the lives of insurgents was no different than
kicking back on the couch and playing video games” (Rolley, 2013, para. 3; Whetham,
2013, p. 24). Although the Prince was not piloting a drone, his statement can be
understood as one which supports the notion that technology leads to pilots viewing other
people as less than such. For Agamben, the drone pilot’s conditions which enable the
pilot to illiberally strip people of their “humanness” would likely on some level be
indicative of sovereign power because sovereign power manifests itself by violently
excluding people from the political body after rendering them into homo sacer. The
“video-game” controversy does not directly support Agamben’s views concerning power,
but aspects of this controversy appear to parallel some of his theoretical concepts and
expectations.
Despite the indirect evidence which appears to favor Agamben’s perspective, a closer examination of the “video-game” controversy suggests not that drones directly serve bio-power, but at the very least support some other discourse of truth other than sovereign power. Therefore, this more in-depth examination reveals discourse which suggests indirect support for drones serving bio-power in two ways. First, this discourse points out that the technological capabilities which make the “video-game” controversy a reality are simply the result of a culmination of the factors which make drones appealing to the neoliberal world (as previously discussed). Furthermore, this discourse which is produced by high-ranking government officials also indicates that drones do not serve sovereign power because drones are not employed simply due to their ability to make the use of violence “easier.” Rather, this discourse strongly suggests that drones are/were employed as a specific solution to a specific problem which can be understood as a threat to the neoliberal world’s way of life. Leon Panetta, the former Director of the CIA provides anecdotal evidence which suggests that drones were/are merely an instrumental solution to a specific threat (Feenberg, 2002, p. 5; Sharkey, 2011, p. 233). Viewed instrumentally, drones become nothing more than “‘tools’ standing ready to serve the purpose of their users” as opposed to them possessing a quality which causes/forges their users to employ them3 (Feenberg, 2002, p. 5). During a question and answer session

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3 This oppositional view to instrumentalism is known as a “substantive” perspective, and this perspective relates to Agamben’s understanding of power due to the way in which he only understands the development of drones as evidence of sovereign power expanding its influence (Feenberg, 2002, pp. 6-8). A substantive perspective thus views technology as a force which will inevitably shape “the whole of social life” just as Agamben views the development of any security technology as inevitably progressing the advance of sovereign power’s control within the neoliberal world (Feenberg, 2002, p. 7).
following remarks issued by Panetta, he was asked about drone use in Pakistan in regards to issues such as collateral damage (Panetta, 2009). Panetta (2009) responded by stating that “it [drone use] is very precise and it is very limited in terms of collateral damage and, very frankly, it’s the only game in town in terms of confronting and trying to disrupt the al-Qaeda leadership” (First MR. PANETTA bold heading). This comment suggests that drones are employed because they were/are a specific tool which possesses the ability to combat a specific threat (al-Qaeda), or rather a specific threat to the neoliberal world’s way of life. Furthermore, this quote indirectly supports the argument of this project by connecting back to one of the reasons why drones appeal to the neoliberal world; they are precise, and precision is viewed as a necessity for respecting individual life. Thus, Panetta’s comments strongly suggest that drones are not used because they make violence “easier,” but rather because they are a tool which compliments a specific problem that simultaneously complies with the reasons drones are attractive technologies to the neoliberal world.

In addition to Panetta’s comment, which has gained much attention, President Obama (2013) has also issued statements which not only suggest that drones are employed as a specific solution to a specific threat, but that also highlight the role played by the factors which make drones appealing to the neoliberal world such as precision and risk aversion. While discussing counterterrorism strategy at Fort McNair, President Obama implied that drones were used as a response to methods adopted by terrorist groups who purposely train in regions of the world that are difficult to reach and/or where governments either cannot, or chose not to pursue them (Obama, 2013, para. 23). The
president explains that although the US’ preference is to capture or detain terrorists, he also explains that the cost of conducting such operations is not always acceptable. For example, he explains that even if it were possible to deploy a Special Forces team to capture all terrorists, this method would not always be desirable:

…there are places where it would pose profound risks to our troops and local civilians — where a terrorist compound cannot be breached without triggering a firefight with surrounding tribal communities, for example, that pose no threat to us; times when putting U.S. boots on the ground may trigger a major international crisis. (Obama, 2013, para. 24)

This statement suggests that drones are not only a solution to a specific problem, but that they are employed because they reduce risk for the US and those amongst the targeted population. In addition, the president also explains that drones are an optimal tool for combatting terrorist groups because alternative weapons or methods amplify risks. For example, he explains that conventional air or missile strikes lack the precision of drones and that such weapons could lead to “more civilian casualties and more local outrage” (Obama, 2013, para. 36). Along this same line of thought, the president also explains that large ground force contingents are not desirable when compared to drone strikes because they “lead us to be viewed as occupying armies, unleash a torrent of unintended consequences, are difficult to contain, result in large numbers of civilian casualties and ultimately empower those who thrive on violent conflict” (Obama, 2013, para. 36). Thus, a drone’s ability to conduct precise strikes appears to be a primary influence as to why the US employs them. President Obama supports this claim by stating that “by narrowly
targeting our action against those who want to kill us and not the people they hide among, we are choosing the course of action least likely to result in the loss of innocent life” (Obama, 2013, para. 38). The president’s comments, similar to Panetta’s, suggest that drones are employed not because they make violence “easier” but because they are a solution which combats a specific threat to the neoliberal world which also abides by the reasons which make drone technology attractive to the neoliberal world and its political leadership.

A review of comments issued by Panetta and President Obama indirectly supports the argument that drone use by the neoliberal world is in service to bio-power/liberalism. Despite Agamben’s likely standpoint that the “video-game” controversy indicates sovereign power’s expansion on some level, Panetta’s and President Obama’s comments discredit Agamben’s theoretical expectations. The comments made by these neoliberal world leaders demonstrate that a critic’s concern that the “video-game” controversy will make killing “easier” does not factor into the calculations of neoliberal world leadership in the slightest. Rather, drones, with their inherent technological systems that enable the “video-game” mentality to exist, appear to be employed because they currently represent a tool which matches a specific threat’s tendencies while simultaneously supporting the factors which cause drone technology to appeal to the neoliberal world. This discourse is thus revealing because it highlights that a drone’s potential to make acts of violence “easier” is nothing more than a side-effect of a technology which enables the neoliberal world to defend itself against specific threats. This discourse discredits Agamben’s likely view, and similar views, which would likely assume that drones are simply a
development that indicates sovereign power’s expansion; drones are clearly not being employed or developed merely for their ability to inflict violence for violence’s sake. Therefore, although this controversy does not neatly fit into the discussion concerning the power perspectives of Agamben and Foucault, when examined closely, indirect support for this project’s argument can be identified by the way in which the surrounding discourse discredits Agamben’s likely expectations.

Drone Cases

The following cases further this chapter’s argument by highlighting how drones have been employed directly by the neoliberal world in support of bio-power/liberalism. In this section, I will present two cases involving drone strikes against individuals, Baitullah Mehsud and Anwar al-Awlaki, who were perceived by the neoliberal world as resistance to its dominating liberal rationality of power and way of life. I will first outline the circumstances surrounding each individual, and then explain how their strikes can be interpreted as supporting bio-power/liberalism due to their neoliberal interventionist qualities. It is important to note that each of these strikes were conducted following the attacks of 9/11 and therefore took place in support of the GWoT. This section thus analyzes the drone strikes against Mehsud and al-Awlaki from the viewpoint that they were initiated in support of the GWoT, and that the GWoT was an action initiated in defense of the neoliberal world’s way of life.

_Baitullah Mehsud_

Baitullah Mehsud was the head of the Pakistani Taliban and was killed in 2009 by a CIA drone strike (Williams, 2010, p. 878). Mehsud, as a warlord, commanded 20,000
militants and was responsible for suicide bombings within Pakistani cities as well as the killing of Pakistan’s former Prime Minister: Benazir Bhutto (McDonnell, 2012, p. 300; Williams, 2010, p. 878; Mayer, 2009, para. 3). One of the bombings which Mehsud was deemed responsible for by the Pakistani government killed over fifty people at a hotel (Mayer, 2009, para. 3). It is also believed that Mehsud assisted with attacks against Americans within Afghanistan during operations in support of the GWoT (Mayer, 2009, para. 3). The strike which killed Mehsud also killed “his wife, his father-in-law, his mother-in-law, a lieutenant, and seven bodyguards” (Mayer, 2009, para. 2). However, before successfully killing Mehsud, sixteen other strikes had taken place resulting in the deaths of between approximately 200-300 people (Mayer, 2009). According to Mayer (2009), some of those killed were believed to be associated with al-Qaeda or the Taliban, but at least one Pakistani reporting agency stated that at least 10 killed within a single strike were children. Mehsud’s terrorist actions and position as a warlord clearly caused the neoliberal world to view him as a threat which required an intervention.

Bio-power’s influence upon Mehsud’s case can be identified in several ways. First, the strike was initiated after the attacks of 9/11 under the umbrella of the GWoT. Mehsud apparently commanded forces which opposed the US’ goals and military operations in Afghanistan launched in support of the GWoT (Mayer, 2009, para. 3). In addition, discourse surrounding the strike suggests that Mehsud was not only viewed as a threat to the neoliberal world’s interest, but that bio-power informed the use of sovereign violence to create a state of exception in this case. First, Mehsud could be understood as a threat to the neoliberal world due to his affiliation with the Taliban. According to Craig
Whitlock (2010), the US SoD Robert Gates, referred to the Taliban as a cancer which needed to be abolished (para. 2). A term such as “cancer” implies the existence of a body or system, and it seems that the system in this case was the neoliberal world’s way of life and its methods for enhancing life. In regards to the formation of a state of exception, it was apparently known by the CIA that when Mehsud was killed, his wife was with him (Sullivan, 2013, para. 6). Thus, from an Agamben shaped perspective, her death would likely be understood as a form of exception since she was not the primary target.

Furthermore, Panetta explained that a rule the CIA abided by was “that if there were any women or children that were involved we would not take the shot” (Panetta, 2013, Panetta comment 12). Despite this comment, Panetta approved the strike which killed not only Mehsud but his wife as well. However, according to NPR, a US representative stated that the “no women and children” rule was followed except in “‘exceptional circumstances against very high-level terrorists’” (Panetta, 2013, Martin comment 15). In this case and despite the normal rule of “no women and children,” it seems that Mehsud’s wife was an unfortunate sacrifice made on the behalf of defending the neoliberal world’s way of life rather than as an example which serves to demonstrate a sovereign’s power.

Although a state of exception may have been created by this strike, it is clear that the strike was purposed by bio-power/liberalism thus supporting the argument that bio-power has surpassed sovereign power within the neoliberal world. Mehsud’s terrorist actions, military influence in Afghanistan, and the discourse provided by US governmental representatives provides support to the claim that Mehsud was struck because he was perceived as a threat to the neoliberal world’s interests.
Anwar al-Awlaki

Anwar al-Awlaki was a citizen of the US and Yemen who has been associated with terrorist actions such as the Fort Hood shooting in 2009, as well as a plan to detonate an aircraft above Detroit in 2009 on Christmas (Anderson, 2013, p. 15; Chesney, 2010, pp. 3, 9). In 2010, he was designated as a global terrorist by the US government, and in 2011 he was sentenced to a term of 10 years in absentia by the Yemeni judiciary system “for charges of inciting to kill foreigners” (CNN Library, 2013, within Timeline). However, despite these actions, it seems that his association with the group known as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) ultimately led to his death (Chesney, 2010, p. 9; Lewis, 2012).

Al-Awlaki was allegedly an important member of AQAP; the US government believed that he had “taken on an operational leadership role in connection with specific attacks” (Chesney, 2010, p. 9; Lewis, 2012, p. 308). It is important to recall that al-Qaeda was identified directly as an adversary of the US during the speech in which President Bush initiated the GWoT (Bush, 2001). Approached from this angle, it seems highly probable that the US government would interpret any hostile action influenced by al-Awlaki as an attack on the neoliberal world’s way of life due to his affiliation with al-Qaeda. Furthermore, some even viewed al-Awlaki as a possible replacement to Osama bin Laden (Ramsden, 2011, p. 386). However, it is clear that the US government viewed al-Awlaki as a functioning member of AQAP rather than simply just a propagandist (Chesney, 2010, p. 9). Citing government documents presented by the US government; Robert Chesney (2010) explains that the government believed al-Awlaki contributed to
recruitment efforts, aided in the development of terror focused training centers, and assisted in directing AQAP’s focus towards attacking US oriented objectives (p. 9). In support of this claim, it is important to note that President Obama has labeled al-Awlaki as “the chief of external operations for AQAP” (Obama, 2013, para. 41). In 2010 al-Awlaki publicly sanctioned “the use of violence not just against American military targets but also against American civilians” (Chesney, 2010, p. 10). In September of 2011 al-Awlaki was killed by a CIA drone strike in Yemen (CNN Library, 2013).

Since the strike was executed under the banner of the GWoT, as previously mentioned, it can be reasonably concluded that al-Awlaki was viewed as an obstruction to the neoliberal world’s way of life. Al-Awlaki’s involvement with terrorist actions, comments made endorsing the killing of American civilians, and his role within AQAP clearly demonstrate how he could be understood as not only an advocate of resistance against the neoliberal world but as an active form of resistance. However, support for the claim that al-Awlaki was perceived as a threat by the neoliberal world is furthered by comments made by US government officials.

The view that al-Awlaki was viewed/perceived as a threat to the neoliberal world is strengthened by statements made by US government officials. First, President Obama stated that al-Awlaki was someone who “was continuously trying to kill people” (Obama, 2013, para. 44). In support of this notion, the president then explained that al-Awlaki was involved in terrorist plots to include the Detroit Christmas Day bombing and a separate plot to blow up at least three other aircraft (Obama, 2013, para. 44). Evidence in support of these claims exists. For example, the individual who attempted to detonate the
underwear bomb above Detroit in 2009, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, apparently told the FBI that al-Awlaki influenced his failed attempt. More specifically, Abdulmutallab made statements to the effect that “Awlaki his online hero, the cleric had discussed 'martyrdom and jihad’ with him, approved him for a suicide mission, helped him prepare a martyrdom video and directed him to detonate his bomb over [US] territory, according to court documents” (Mazzetti, Savage, & Shane, 2013, para. 17). Additionally, in a court report filed following the dismissal of a civil action against the US government regarding al-Awlaki, a letter written by the US Attorney General Eric Holder was discussed and cited (Al-Aulaqi v. Panetta, 2014, p. 10). Holder’s letter asserts that the strike against al-Awlaki was executed because the executive branch believed that he represented an “imminent threat to the [US] when he was killed and that it had not been feasible to capture him” (Al-Aulaqi v. Panetta, 2014, p. 10). It appears that al-Awlaki was targeted and ultimately killed by the US not as a punishment for acts of defiance aimed at a sovereign power. His affiliation with al-Qaeda, and multiple terrorist attacks appears to have caused him to be viewed as a threat to the neoliberal world’s way of life.

Agamben would undoubtedly view this strike as proof of the sovereign exception since the US government appears to have executed one of its citizens despite his constitutional protections. Despite Agamben’s likely position, discourse demonstrates that even if a state of exception was created, it was informed by bio-power/liberalism rather than sovereign power; al-Awlaki was perceived as a threat due to his affiliation with al-Qaeda, and al-Qaeda was viewed as an adversary to the neoliberal world’s way of life (Bush, 2001). In support of this notion and while discussing al-Awlaki’s case,
President Obama explained that he does not believe “it would be constitutional for the government to target and kill any U.S. citizen — with a drone, or with a shotgun — without due process” (Obama, 2013, para. 42). Yet, the president also states that a US citizen’s status as such cannot protect them in all circumstances especially when they present a threat; his comments suggest that an individual’s actions can cause a state of exception to be implemented in extreme circumstances:

But when a U.S. citizen goes abroad to wage war against America and is actively plotting to kill U.S. citizens, and when neither the United States, nor our partners are in a position to capture him before he carries out a plot, his citizenship should no more serve as a shield than a sniper shooting down on an innocent crowd should be protected from a SWAT team. (Obama, 2013, para. 43)

The president’s comments strongly suggest that if the neoliberal world employs drones in a manner that appears to cause a state of exception to occur, it is created in support of defending the neoliberal world’s way of life. An examination of al-Awlaki’s case implies that the neoliberal world purposes drones in support of bio-power/liberalism via the actions that al-Awlaki participated in, and the discourse offered by US government representatives.

A review of the circumstances and discourse surrounding the drone strikes which killed Mehsud and al-Awlaki demonstrate that they were perceived as threats to the neoliberal world’s way of life, and due to this perception, led to bio-power/liberalism informing the strikes rather than merely sovereign power. Each of the men were clearly viewed as threats, and as such motivated the neoliberal world to intervene in a manner
consistent with the logic of neoliberalism (Foucault, 2008). A comment made by President Obama (2013) best sums up the strikes against Mehsud and al-Awlaki:

“America does not take strikes to punish individuals; we act against terrorists who pose a continuing and imminent threat to the American people, and when there are no other governments capable of effectively addressing the threat” (para. 34).

Conclusion

A review of drone use by the neoliberal world, similar to that of PMCs, demonstrates that drones do not serve the goals of sovereign power despite undoubtedly having the potential to do so. Due to their problematic potential, it is logical to expect that if sovereign power were in sole command of the neoliberal world, as Agamben has theorized, drones would be the security technology which would validate such claims. However, when examined through theoretical lenses shaped by Foucault, it becomes clear that bio-power/liberalism guides the actions of these security technologies even when they have seemingly conducted illiberal acts of sovereign violence. Foucault’s theories highlight that illiberal acts of sovereign violence can be executed when bio-power’s non-coercive mechanisms fail to achieve normalization, whereas Agamben only views illiberal acts of sovereign violence to be proof of sovereign power’s dominance (Tagma, 2009, pp. 409-410, 413). Nevertheless, this chapter has shown that despite drones committing seemingly illiberal acts in some circumstances, they are purposed by bio-power/liberalism when the neoliberal world believes its interests to be threatened. It seems clear that the neoliberal world should not fear the development of future security technologies as Agamben does; these technologies will be restrained by bio-power and its
accompanying liberal rationality of power. If Agamben’s perspective, or one similar, is adopted by the influential which ignores the impact of discourses of truth, the development of future security technologies, such as LARs, could be prevented and result in a neoliberal world that is less prepared to defend its way of life from unforeseen threats (Anderson & Waxman, 2012 & 2013, p. 39; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 232).
CHAPTER 4: LETHAL AUTONOMOUS ROBOTS

Introduction

In the post-9/11 era, the neoliberal world has employed, developed, and implemented many security technologies in the name of defending its interests and way of life. Although they do not currently exist, Lethal Autonomous Robots (LARs) appear to be a fast-approaching step in the evolution of security technologies that will contribute to neoliberal world security (Gubrud, 2013; Human Rights Watch (HRW) & the International Human Rights Clinic (IHRC), 2012, p. 3; Sharkey, 2010, p. 376). LARs are “fully autonomous weapons that could select and engage targets without human intervention” (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 1). Despite their speculative nature, the debate concerning LARs is well under way amongst scholars, non-governmental organizations, governments, and academics alike, even though “[s]ome military and robotics experts have predicted that ‘killer robots’” will not be developed for at least two more decades (Campaign to Stop Killer Robots (CSKR), 2015; HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 1; International Committee for Robot Arms Control (ICRAC), 2015). This debate has implications for the neoliberal world because there is currently a movement seeking to preemptively ban LARs, and this movement appears to be gaining momentum (CSKR, 2015; ICRAC, 2015).

The purpose of this project is to argue that the neoliberal world uses and develops security technologies in order to serve bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power, rather than serving sovereign power. LARs are a necessary case for this project because they would undoubtedly be desired due to their potential by entities commanded
by either sovereign power or bio-power. However, no matter the commanding form of power, when this security technology’s potential to influence conflict/war is combined with its potential to transform conflict/war, benefits and dangers associated with their usage become apparent. First, LARs could change the character of war by vastly increasing the speed with which it is fought (Anderson & Waxman, 2012-2013, p. 37; Gubrud, 2014, p. 38; Sharkey, 2011, p. 235). Carl von Clausewitz (1984) explained that inaction often occurs in war because people naturally overestimate enemy strength (pp. 84-85). This estimate then results in inaction which allows opposing sides to recover and become more balanced in terms of combat strength thus derailing the prospects of conflict reaching “theoretical extremes” (Clausewitz, 1984, pp. 84-85). However, LARs, with the ability to think on their own and operate without the fear of death, could potentially lead to wars without inaction once ordered to conduct combat operations (Arkin, 2010, p. 133). This could theoretically allow the employing side to achieve objectives with force much faster than previously possible.

Next, LARs may also enhance the enmity (a key element of conflict from Clausewitz’ perspective) a group feels towards another group by simply isolating them from having any interaction with their enemy (Clausewitz, 1984, p. 89; Gray, 1959, p. 135). According to J. Glenn Gray (1959), people who are removed from war hate their enemies much more than those on the front-lines (p. 135). LARs could theoretically isolate people from their enemies altogether thus enabling enmity to remain potent indefinitely, and states of war to persist unchecked. A final aspect of LARs which could change the future of war/conflict is the autonomy they will potentially provide neoliberal
world political leaders in dealing with their constituencies (Singer, 2011, p. 351).
Specifically, LARs will potentially allow political leaders the ability to pursue military
objectives which support their interests without any negative feedback from the citizenry
since the citizenry, or the citizenry’s relatives in the military, would not be required to
fight on the behalf of these ventures (Singer, 2011, p. 351). This list of potential dangers
associated with the use of LARs is not exhaustive, but it clearly highlights the potential
benefits (increased speed), and risks (indefinite enmity and evasion of democratic
principles) which may accompany their actualization.

In addition to their seemingly inherent dangers, LARs are a necessary case
because the employment of security technologies often leads to the impression that
illiberal actions are taking place as a result. Seemingly illiberal acts of violence are useful
for this project because Agamben’s theoretical perspective evaluates such acts as
evidence of sovereign power; this perspective believes violence to be the sole method of
normalization (Tagma, 2009, pp. 409-410). However, as highlighted in the previous
chapters, when the neoliberal world employs security technologies, and illiberal acts of
violence occur, these occurrences cannot automatically be deemed as support for
Agamben’s theoretical perspective. The discourse and/or purpose surrounding these
actions are often indicative of bio-power’s/liberalism’s influence; they are often
employed in a manner that respects neoliberal principles. Foucault’s theoretical
perspectives explain that illiberal acts of violence can occur within the neoliberal world
when bio-power’s non-forcible methods of normalization become insufficient (Tagma,
2009, p. 413). As stated throughout this project, if this project’s argument is ignored, and
the neoliberal world’s influential adopt perspectives similar to Agamben’s, the development of future security technologies such as LARs may be halted and potentially result in a more vulnerable neoliberal world (Anderson & Waxman, 2012 & 2013, p. 39; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 232).

The logic of this chapter is built upon the findings of the previous chapters: if the actions of PMCs and drones can be controlled by bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power, there is no reason to expect that LARs will deviate from this standard. This chapter will focus on LARs because the neoliberal world currently appears to have an advantage concerning the development of this form of security technology (HRW & IHRC, 2012; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 232; Sharkey, 2011, p. 235). Despite this advantage, others who could potentially challenge the neoliberal world’s global influence via the implementation of security technologies, such as China and Russia, are working to close this gap if one even exists (Garcia, 2014, para 3). Denise Garcia (2014) explains that “[i]n the race to build such fully autonomous unmanned systems, China is moving faster than anyone” (Garcia, 2014, para. 3). However, the neoliberal world’s advantage or at least competitive status could be lost altogether if those seeking a preemptive ban, such as the non-governmental organizations “Campaign to Stop Killer Robots (CSKR)” and the “International Committee for Robot Arms Control (ICRAC),” successfully achieve their goal (CSKR, 2015, about us link; ICRAC, 2015, the scientists’ call link).

The CSKR and ICRAC appear to share an understanding of power similar to that of Agamben’s, and believe that the advent of LARs will result in security measures, or
rather violence, being used in an unpredictable manner consistent with the goals of
sovereign power (CSKR, 2015, about us link; HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 1; ICRAC, 2015,
the scientists’ call link). Thus, my concern is that those seeking a ban are overlooking the
influence of discourses of truth that Foucault theorized could non-coercively normalize
behavior such as the neoliberal world’s dominant liberal rationality of power (Tagma,
2009, pp. 409-410). This project’s primary goal is then to lessen the anxieties
surrounding beliefs that violence will increase in an indiscriminate manner as a result of
LARs because bio-power/liberalism dominate the neoliberal world’s actions. Sovereign
violence, or illiberal acts of violence, are only employed by the neoliberal world when
bio-power’s/liberalism’s non-coercive mechanism’s fail at achieving normalization or the
neoliberal world’s way of life is threatened: “[s]overeign power is informed and shaped
by biopower” (Tagma, 2009, p. 428). Therefore, opposition to the development of LARs
should not fear that their development by the neoliberal world will lead to indiscriminate
violence, because bio-power/liberalism will only inform the use of LARs when the
neoliberal world’s way of life is threatened.

In order to support the claim that LARs will be protectors of the neoliberal world
rather than detractors from its way of life, this chapter will discuss several aspects
involving LARs. First, this chapter briefly discusses the liberal appeal, neoliberal
influence, and operational capabilities which cause LARs to be attractive security
technologies to the neoliberal world. In the following section, controversies surrounding
the development of LARs will be synthesized from lenses shaped by Agamben and
Foucault, while simultaneously drawing upon previous findings to point out why these
controversies are not as controversial as they seem. In this chapter, I argue that the neoliberal world will use and develop LARs in order to serve bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power, rather than serving sovereign power. If existing discourse or historical trends can be interpreted to logically suggest that LARs will respect neoliberal principles, evidence for this argument can be identified. If this chapter’s argument is ignored, the neoliberal world may damage its ability to defend its way of life from unanticipated threats by removing security technologies such as LARs from the possible solutions available (Anderson & Waxman, 2012 & 2013, p. 39; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 232).

Liberal Appeal, Neoliberalism’s Influence, and Raw Military Advantages

If realized to their full potential, LARs will undoubtedly have the ability to serve either sovereign power or bio-power. These robotic systems are in demand not simply because of recent robotic-weapon-system success in military campaigns, but because of their perceived ability to enhance military goals while simultaneously reducing risk (Marchant et al., 2011, p. 275; Sauer & Schörnig, 2012; Sharkey, 2010, p. 370; Sparrow, 2007, p. 63; Sparrow, 2009, pp. 169-170). However, due to their speculative nature, it is necessary to review some of the likely factors contributing to their demand. In this section, I will briefly highlight why future LARs appeal to the neoliberal world: they support liberal values, they support military philosophy/doctrine influenced by neoliberal ideology, and they potentially enhance military strength to levels unmatched by human controlled security technologies.
In regards to liberal appeal and their ability to fit within a military framework shaped by neoliberal ideology, LARs are essentially the same as drones (see the previous chapter). LARs, similar to drones, will potentially allow the hesitant yet war-like neoliberal world to use security technologies/force in the manner that it prefers (Doyle, 1986, p. 1151; Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 368). LARs are also attractive options to the neoliberal world because they appear to comply with the three reasons that make drones appealing. LARs will likely be cheaper than other options, they may enhance the safety of the employer’s population along with the targeted country’s population, and they may have the potential to allow the laws of war to be followed in a more stringent manner than human forces are capable of (Anderson & Waxman, 2012-2013, p. 37; Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 370). Thus, future LARs if/once realized appear to possess the capabilities that will also make them “a ‘silver bullet’ for democratic decisionmakers [sic]” (Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 370).

LARs also, similar to drones, appear to fit neatly within the military ideology/philosophy implemented by Donald Rumsfeld known as the “Rumsfeld Doctrine.” If/once realized, LARs will undoubtedly represent a security technology that will enable the neoliberal world to achieve its goals with increased speed by turning to advanced weaponry and equipment (Ellington, 2011, p. 140; Stover, 2004, p. 10-11). This technology will also theoretically contribute to the implementation of Rumsfeld’s vision by enabling wars to be fought and won in a more efficient manner (Ellington, 2011, p. 140). Despite their liberal appeal and ability to contribute to doctrine influenced
by neoliberal thought, LARs also appear to be a desired security technology by the neoliberal world due to the potential military benefits they provide.

Future LARs clearly possess characteristics which enhance their appeal to the neoliberal world and fit within its military doctrine which is influenced by neoliberalism, but their potential to increase military strength also makes them a logical asset that the neoliberal world would covet. From a strictly operational standpoint, LARs seem to be an attractive option for not only the neoliberal world, but any country whether governed by sovereign or bio-power. First, LARs may become a force multiplier because they reduce the number of soldiers required to perform a task (Marchant et al., 2011, p. 275). Next, they will theoretically enable operations “to be conducted over larger areas than previously possible” (Marchant et al., 2011, p. 275). Furthermore, the depth with which an individual soldier can observe, strike, and/or act within a battle-space will potentially be enhanced due to the development of LARs (Marchant et al., 2011, p. 275). Another benefit this security technology will possibly provide is the non-requirement of a vast communications infrastructure to operate in the manner that current drone technology does (Sparrow, 2007, p. 68). This reliance upon a communications network is currently viewed as a weakness of existing robotic weapon systems because these lines of communication are susceptible to activities such as enemy hacking, weather, and environmental features (Anderson & Waxman, 2012-2013, p. 38; Sparrow, 2007, p. 68). Lastly, as previously discussed, LARs may enable an employer to achieve their goals faster than their opposition because LARs may cause combat to become too fast for humans to effectively participate (Anderson & Waxman, 2012-2013, p. 37; Sparrow,
This list of operational benefits is not exhaustive, but it clearly paints a picture as to why LARs would be an attractive security technology for not only the neoliberal world but any country.

LARs if/once realized will unquestionably possess the ability to serve sovereign power in a manner consistent with Agamben’s expectations. However, a look at the factors which may be motivating the neoliberal world to pursue LARs suggests the presence of bio-power’s/liberalism’s influence. LARs’ development and eventual use, similar to drones, can be justified in terms of a market-based argument or in terms of moral claims articulated through liberal rhetoric. Moreover, LARs also seem to be a security technology which meets the requirements and goals set forth by Donald Rumsfeld’s military ideology/philosophy. Thus, when the pursuit of LARs is examined from a theoretical lens shaped by Foucault’s understandings of power within the neoliberal world, it seems unlikely that sovereign power is motivating the pursuit of such security technologies. If LARs become actualized, this realization will have likely been influenced heavily by the neoliberal world’s respect for neoliberal principles thus demonstrating the influence of bio-power/liberalism.

LARs Controversies

LARs, similar to PMCs and drones, are controversial, and as such, serve as an excellent case from which to examine the debate between Agamben and Foucault, and the argument of this project. The current status of LARs allows for speculation in regards to the form of power they will serve if realized. LARs are an interesting case because they do not currently exist, and the controversies surrounding them appear to represent
one of two sides. For the most part, the sides in these debates can be split down the middle into groups that either favor a preemptive ban, or groups that do not favor a preemptive ban. LARs raise concerns similar to those raised by PMCs and drones such as accountability and whether or not their presence will increase the likelihood of war, but a LAR’s autonomous nature causes some existing controversies to be approached from new angles. This section will examine three controversies; the first is “proportionality and distinction,” the second is “emotion,” and the third is “accountability.” The first controversy consists of an analysis of the potential impact LARs will have upon the pillars of international humanitarian law (IHL), the next discusses the impact of removing emotion from uses of force, and the third consists of a discussion concerning who will be punished if LARs commit crimes.

The goal of this section is to present several controversies surrounding the development of LARs, and to demonstrate that these controversies are overblown because critics of LARs are overlooking the importance of discourses of truth in regards to the way in which the neoliberal world employs security technologies. I will briefly outline each controversy, highlight aspects which parallel or relate to Agamben’s understandings of power, and then Lastly, by drawing upon findings from previous chapters, demonstrate that the neoliberal world’s LARs will most likely serve bio-power/liberalism in a manner consistent with the expectations of Foucault’s theories.

Controversy 1: Proportionality & Distinction

A primary argument employed by those who oppose LARs claim that their development is illegal because they will be unable to abide by key aspects of IHL (Asaro,
According to the “Losing Humanity” report, LARs “would be incapable of meeting [IHL] standards. The rules of distinction, proportionality, and military necessity are especially important tools for protecting civilians from the effects of war, and fully autonomous weapons would not be able to abide by those rules” (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 3). Distinction is the ability to discriminate between combatants and non-combatants, and proportionality is determining whether or not the use of force in proportion to the harm it will cause civilians is acceptable in relation to the military advantage to be gained (HRW & IHRC, 2012, pp. 24-25). These components of IHL lead to more specific legal arguments by those who oppose the development of LARs.

The distinction and proportionality guidelines of IHL serve as points of emphasis for those who are against the development of LARs and hinge upon the belief that LARs will not possess the required intuition, common sense, or ability to understand human constructed context (Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 266; Sharkey, 2010, pp. 379-380). Noel Sharkey (2010) highlights the difficulty of distinguishing between combatants and civilians by pointing out how difficult “‘civilianess’” is to define (p. 379). He explains that the written definition of “civilian” as specified by the Geneva Convention is not straightforward and requires the use of “common sense” (Sharkey, 2010, p. 379). Concerning proportionality, this component of IHL is viewed by some to be a more difficult endeavor than the achievement of distinction (Gubrud, 2014, p. 35). Proportionality’s calculation deals with “excessiveness,” and excessiveness has no established meaning: “[r]ather, it is the product of a case-by-case assessment that is
evaluated in terms of its reasonableness given the attendant circumstances” (Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 254). This perspective is not naïve to the extent that it believes people always make proper decisions because it points out that; “[h]umans do make error and can behave unethically but they can be held accountable” (Sharkey, 2010, p. 380). This accountability aspect is thus viewed as a counterweight to reckless human behavior (this controversy will be discussed later in more detail). This argument relies heavily upon the belief that LARs will be unable to abide by the key components of IHL, and therefore leads to the conclusion that LARs should be banned.

Those that do not immediately reject the development of LARs on legal grounds find support for their position with two claims. The first claim is that this security technology cannot be banned due to key elements of IHL because LARs can be used in a manner that does not violate these pillars (Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 246). First, the element of distinction is not sufficient to ban LARs because they could be employed in environments that do not possess civilians (Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 246). For example, LARs could be used to attack warships in areas of the ocean that are in isolation from civilian shipping lanes (Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 246). From this perspective, the element of distinction alone cannot be employed to ban LARs because distinction is context based, and it seems that environments or situations that do not require a great deal of distinction are conceivable.

Proportionality, is also viewed as an unsatisfactory argument in regards to achieving a ban of LARs. A primary issue for the development of LARs is not whether they will be able to make proportionality calculations, but whether or not they will be
able to sufficiently determine military advantage within a specific context (Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, pp. 253-257). This side of the argument acknowledges that this will likely be an extremely difficult prospect to achieve, but it does not support the idea that this difficulty serves as a reason to automatically ban LARs (Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 257). Proponents emphasize that since LARs with the ability to make proportionality decisions in a manner similar to humans will likely not occur in the near future, other measures can be implemented to ensure that the systems abide by the applicable principles (Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 257). Specifically, advocates explain that humans will be responsible for the determination of proportionality by the way in which they decide to employ LARs (Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 257). This implies that decisions concerning proportionality will have to be made prior to a LAR’s mission, and the necessary programming parameters must be implemented beforehand. Thus LARs can conceivably be wielded in a manner that does not violate the principles of proportionality and distinction even if their intelligence is less than “human.”

A second claim employed by proponents of LARs is that “[u]ntil they are better understood, it would be naively premature to draw definitive legal, moral, and operational conclusions as to the use of autonomous weapon systems” (Schmitt and Thurnher, 2013, p. 281). This position is supported by those who believe that LARs may actually be able to “perform more ethically than human soldiers” (Anderson & Waxman, 2012-2013, p. 42; Arkin, 2010, p. 334). For example, Ronald C. Arkin (2010) provides six reasons why LARs may eventually outperform humans “despite the current state of the art” (p. 333). One reason Arkin provides which stands out is that LARs will be
afforded the benefit of making decisions in a deliberate manner because they will not fear for their lives (Arkin, 2010, p. 333). This line of reason is as follows: since LARs will not become anxious to defend themselves, they can be much more methodical before executing an act of force which theoretically allows them to ensure that they are in compliance with laws governing uses of force (Arkin, 2010, p. 333). It is important to note that advocates of LARs also acknowledge that the technology may never actually achieve the acceptable results, but nonetheless view it as an effort worth pursuing (Anderson & Waxman, 2012-2013, p. 42; Arkin, 2010, p. 339). Proponents do not automatically view the components of IHL as adequate grounds to ban LARs, and believe that LARs should be pursued because their capabilities cannot truly be known until they exist.

Several aspects of this controversy seem to parallel some of Agamben’s theoretical expectations. The critics’ side of this controversy is concerned that if LARs are realized, violence will be initiated that does not respect the laws which protect civilians. If these illegal acts are committed by the neoliberal world’s LARs, these actions would definitely be perceived as illiberal in nature. Such acts would thus support Agamben’s theoretical views in two ways. First, such illegal and illiberal acts of violence could easily be interpreted as evidence for sovereign power’s presence due to the creation of homo sacer. Second, from Agamben’s perspective, such acts of violence committed by LARs would also be indicative of sovereign power enhancing its ability to violently select who may form the political body as the neoliberal world’s governments increasingly become dependent upon security to legitimize their purpose (Agamben,
2002, para. 3; Tagma, 2009, p. 409). The critics’ perspective thus shares similarities to Agamben’s theoretical expectations by overlooking the influence of rationalities of power or discourses of truth in regards to normalizing behavior and purposing acts of violence (Tagma, 2009, p. 409-410). Agamben believes that violence is the sole mechanism of normalization and this belief therefore enables any measure of security to be interpreted as evidence of sovereign power’s command within the neoliberal world’s affairs (Tagma, 2009, p. 409). Thus, although this controversy cannot be directly linked to Agamben’s theoretical understandings, its concerns parallel some of his theories and concepts.

Despite the “proportionality & distinction” controversy’s parallels with, and potential support for Agamben’s perspective of power, speculation drawn from the discourse surrounding drone operations and the principles purposing their use strongly suggest that LARs will serve bio-power/liberalism. First, acts of violence that can be understood as illiberal cannot automatically be deemed as support for Agamben’s theoretical understandings of power. Seemingly illiberal acts can be motivated by bio-power/liberalism when bio-power’s/liberalism’s non-coercive mechanisms fail to achieve the desired level of control, or when threats to the neoliberal world’s way of life are identified (Foucault, 1990, pp. 137-138; Tagma, 2009, pp. 413). For example, as discussed in the previous chapter, the drone strike which killed Baitullah Mehsud, and his wife, would likely be understood by Agamben as an indication of sovereign power’s influence over the strike (Williams, 2010, p. 878). On the grounds of proportionality, it is conceivable that one could argue that Mehsud’s wife’s death should have been prevented. However, when this strike is analyzed from a theoretical lens shaped by Foucault’s
theories, it becomes clear that Mehsud’s death along with his wife’s were deemed necessary due to the threat Mehsud represented to the neoliberal world’s way of life. Thus if a state of exception is determined to have occurred as a result of this strike, this occurrence cannot automatically be understood as evidence of sovereign power. Bio-power/liberalism can validate states of exception when necessary (Tagma, 2009, p. 413). This claim is supported by the US government representative’s comment to NPR which stated that exceptions to the “no women and children” rule could be made in exceptional circumstances (Panetta, 2013, Martin comment 15).

Furthermore, the Libya intervention example from the previous chapter also supports the claim that LARs will serve bio-power/liberalism. The Libya example demonstrates that when the neoliberal world is perceived to violate laws, such as the War Powers Resolution in the Libya case, it does so on the behalf of defending the neoliberal world’s way of life to include its neoliberal principles (Crook, 2012, pp. 163-164). President Obama’s comments regarding the US’ role in the intervention clearly point out that the intervention was justified using liberal rhetoric (Harris, 2011, minutes 1:54-2:03). In addition, a closer look at the intervention as discussed by Vijay Prashad strongly implies that the neoliberal world intervened after conducting a market-based analysis of the factors involved (Prashad, 2012). The employment of a market-based rationale supports Foucault’s theoretical expectations for the neoliberal world by highlighting the level to which liberalism is engrained as a discourse of truth (Foucault, 2008, p. 132). Therefore, the Libya case involving drones implies that even when the neoliberal world is
perceived as violating its own laws, it does so in the pursuit of defending its values and way of life.

When the “proportionality & distinction” controversy is examined from a perspective shaped by the neoliberal world’s drone use, support for the argument that LARs will serve bio-power/liberalism is logically strengthened. If sovereign power dominated the neoliberal world, drones would likely be the security technology which reveals such an outcome. However, when the cases of Mehsud and Libya are examined in-depth, the neoliberal world’s respect for neoliberal principles (such as an interventionist approach to problem solving) becomes apparent. The neoliberal world’s use of drones strongly suggests that critics of LARs are overlooking the importance of liberalism as a discourse of truth which guides the neoliberal world’s actions. If violence is to be amplified and civilians are unfortunately caught in the crossfire, this result will not be due to sovereign power’s expanding dominance, but rather because the neoliberal world’s way of life has been threatened in a manner that requires coercion. Civilians in such a case would undoubtedly be viewed as unfortunate but necessary sacrifices made on the behalf of defending the neoliberal world’s way of life. In short, this controversy loses its potency when discourses of truth are factored into the equation as a force which dictates the implementation of security technologies.

Controversy 2: Emotion

Opposition to the development of LARs also employs an argument centered on emotion and the way in which it impacts uses of force (Gubrud, 2014, p. 36; HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 38; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 249). Specifically, in this instance,
employing LARs is viewed as a negative because they will remove emotion from battlefield/use of force situations. The “Losing Humanity” report claims that “robots would not be restrained by human emotions and the capacity for compassion, which can provide an important check on the killing of civilians” (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 4). This concern is clearly not arbitrary. As previously mentioned, people removed from the “enemy” can and do foster a greater hate for their perceived enemy than those on the frontlines (Gray, 1959, p. 135). LARs could allow for this logic to run to the extreme; hate may never be lessened by those with fighting experience on the front lines via the sharing of their stories/perspectives if LARs replace soldiers in battle (Gray, 1959). Another example, offered by the “Losing Humanity” report, demonstrates how LARs could be used negatively and involves autocrats (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 38). By employing LARs, the opportunity for acts of compassion becomes eradicated (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 38). This eradication of compassion could then allow for a dictator, or possibly a regime, to be as ruthless as desired without fear of its own troops rebelling due to its inhumane orders (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 38). In short, this position views the impact of emotion as a positive in regards to acts of violence due to its ability to act as a counterweight to extreme uses of force.

Another standpoint which agrees that emotion should lead to the banning of LARs views the role of emotions in a negative manner. This position believes that LARs cannot actually be severed from the emotional state of people (Tonkens, 2012, p. 157). The reasoning behind this line of thought is straightforward: “[a]lthough the robots themselves may be inclined to behave morally, their human users and commanders would
all along be at risk of misusing them; the human element that leads to inhumane behavior may not have been removed enough” (Tonkens, 2012, p. 157). Though this position does not specifically argue that emotions should remain on the battlefield, it does serve as a form of argument against the use of LARs on the grounds of emotions. In summary, this position holds human emotion as a reason to ban the use of LARs because human emotion can either serve as a check on violence, or because LARs can never be completely removed from the emotions of “ethically fallible” humans (Tonkens, 2012, p. 157).

Conversely, those that support the development of LARs view the impact of emotions from another angle. This standpoint highlights that emotions can, in addition to serving as a check for violent acts, serve as a catalyst for violence (Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 249). Michael N. Schmitt and Jeffrey S. Thurnher (2013) point out that emotions can enhance violence clearly: “[a]lthough emotions can restrain humans, it is equally true that they can unleash the basest of instincts. From Rwanda and the Balkans to Darfur and Afghanistan, history is replete with tragic examples of unchecked emotions leading to horrendous suffering” (p. 249). In the case of Rwanda alone, approximately 800 thousand people were killed in just over three months (Weitsman, 2008, p. 572). This genocide was exacerbated by “[t]he Hutu government [which] campaigned day and night for violence against Tutsi men, women and children” (Weitsman, 2008, p. 572). Such messages were focused on inspiring and increasing hate felt towards the Tutsi people by the Hutu people (Weitsman, 2008, p. 572). Thus, this side of the argument’s point is that emotion does not
always influence acts of violence in a positive manner, but rather emotion can intensify acts of violence and potentially lead to events such as genocides.

To take this position one step further, some support the notion that LARs should be developed because they remove the influence of emotions from war/uses of force. Arkin includes the removal of emotion as one of his six reasons as to why LARs may outperform humans in the future. He explains that “[u]nmanned robotic systems can be designed without emotions that cloud their judgment or result in anger and frustration with ongoing battlefield events” (Arkin, 2010, p. 333). In order to demonstrate support for this logic, Arkin (2010) presents statistics from a report comprised of information gathered about soldiers who participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The information obtained from the report suggests that a soldier’s actions are impacted by emotions associated with ongoing events. One point in particular states that “[c]ombat experience, particularly losing a team member, was related to an increase in ethical violations” (Arkin, 2010, p. 335). Information such as this leads Arkin (2010) to the conclusion that LARs are necessary because “it seems unrealistic to expect normal human beings by their very nature to adhere to the Laws of Warfare when confronted with the horror of the battlefield, even when trained” (p. 338). Hence, Schmitt and Thurnher (2013) summarize this side of the argument’s perspective best; “[a]n autonomous weapon system’s lack of emotions serves as little justification for an outright ban” (p. 249).

Evidence for Agamben’s perspective of power is gathered from this controversy in a manner similar to chapter 3’s “video-game” controversy because LARs raise similar concerns which are analogous to his theoretical understandings. First, from Agamben’s
standpoint, LARs would unquestionably be indicative of sovereign power enhancing its ability to efficiently and violently select the political body (Tagma, 2009, pp. 409-410). The realization of fully functioning LARs would allow for this claim because it appears that they would enable the sovereign to employ force without the fear of internal rebellion (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 38). Agamben (1998) believes that bio-politics and sovereign power emerged together, and this belief implies that the enhancement of security technologies can be understood as sovereign power becoming more efficient and involved in the political body (p. 6). Next, it is also important to note that the “Losing Humanity” report refers to the drone “video-game” controversy and points out that LARs raise similar concerns over dehumanization in a comparable manner (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 40). As previously mentioned, dehumanization is at odds with liberalism because liberalism inherently places value on all individual lives (Sauer & Schörnig, 2012, p. 368). If LARs dehumanize via the removal of emotion, their violence can thus be understood as creating a form of homo sacer while simultaneously committing acts of violence in an illiberal manner. This logic would provide Agamben with evidence of sovereign power’s presence because, from his perspective, illiberal actions occur when sovereign power is the world’s dominant commanding form of power. Therefore, the “emotion” controversy provides Agamben with support in an indirect manner similar to that of chapter 3’s “video-game” controversy –LARs raise concerns which parallel some of his theoretical concepts and expectations.

Despite the “emotion” controversy’s parallels with some of Agamben’s theoretical understandings, aspects of the previously discussed drone and PMC case
studies support the claim that the neoliberal world’s LARs will respect neoliberal principles and serve bio-power/liberalism. The previous cases indirectly suggest that LARs will serve bio-power/liberalism because the discourse surrounding drones discredits Agamben’s likely view that drones are employed due to their ability to make violence “easier.” First, discourse surrounding drones suggests that the neoliberal world possesses no desire to “dehumanize” its enemies because drones are simply perceived as an effective tool which matches up well against the tendencies of a specific type of enemy. President Obama and Leon Panetta each issued comments which support this claim (Obama, 2013, paras. 23, 36; Panetta, 2009, First MR. PANETTA bold heading). For example, according to Panetta drones are “the only game in town in terms of confronting and trying to disrupt the al-Qaeda leadership” (Panetta, 2009, First MR. PANETTA bold heading). Furthermore, the president’s and Panetta’s comments also strongly suggested that drones are employed because they are the physical result of what occurs when the reasons which make drones appeal to the neoliberal world, such as risk aversion and precision targeting, are molded into a real-world security technology. For example, the president justified the use of drone strikes in terms of their precision by explaining that drones are essentially the best solution in regards to mitigating “the loss of innocent life;” this explanation can be understood as respect for the value liberalism places on human life, which contradicts the idea that drones are used to “dehumanize” or to make violence “easier” (Obama, 2013, para. 38). Although Agamben would likely view any “loss of innocent life” as evidence of sovereign power, it is important to remember that bio-power/liberalism can create states of exception if required to defend
the neoliberal world’s way of life (Obama, 2013, para. 38; Tagma, 2009, pp. 413-414). When the discourse surrounding drones is applied to the concerns presented by the critics of LARs, it becomes clear that these concerns are overblown due to the impact that discourses of truth have upon the implementation of security technologies. Additionally, this discourse discredits claims that drones are servants of sovereign power and can be understood to indirectly support the argument that drones are purposed by bio-power/liberalism. This outcome thus indicates that LARs will most likely be purposed by bio-power/liberalism in order to defend the neoliberal world’s way of life, not because they allow acts of violence to be committed more “easily” as Agamben would expect.

Additionally, it is worth noting that if the concern of a dictatorial regime receiving LARs becomes a reality, it seems likely that the neoliberal world’s liberal rationality of power would incite action to prevent mass atrocities, especially if LARs were at their disposal (Gubrud, 2014, p. 36). In addition to their argument that drones could enable more humanitarian actions by allowing the neoliberal world to overcome its risk-averse hesitancy, Zach Beauchamp and Julian Savulescu (2013) make the argument that ground drones, a role LARs could potentially fill in the future, could enhance the effectiveness of future humanitarian interventions (pp. 121-122). They explain that ground drones could enable neoliberal world leaders to overcome the limitations of risk-averse strategies which would in turn enable them to be more aggressive at terminating belligerents (Beauchamp & Savulescu, 2013, p. 121). In addition, discourse suggests that the neoliberal world would act to save lives. For example, regarding the Libya intervention, President Obama explained that the neoliberal world intervened in order to prevent a
massacre and to keep civilians safe (Harris, 2011, minutes 1:54-2:03). Intervention on the behalf of defending individual lives is consistent with the value liberalism places on life, and the proactive logic of neoliberalism; it seems logical that LARs could enable the neoliberal world to act on the behalf of preventing future genocides.

Furthermore, bio-power/liberalism appears to be recognized by academics and the PMC industry as the dominant rationality of power within the neoliberal world. For example, the academic Max Boot advocates for PMCs being deployed to Darfur in order to halt genocide (Boot, 2006, para. 10). His argument respects neoliberal principles because it employs a market-based rationale revolving around the cost of an operation, implies that large governmental organizations such as the UN are ineffective, and employs liberal rhetoric concerning the saving of lives (Boot, 2006, paras. 6, 8, 10, 11). Boot’s argument thus demonstrates that people within the neoliberal world recognize the dominance of bio-power/liberalism. Concerning the PMC industry, it is also important to point out that MPRI apparently did not convince the US government to approve its contract with Equatorial Guinea until the PMC claimed that it would offer training focused on improving human rights practices (Yeoman, 2003, para. 23). The discourse surrounding intervention in Libya combined with Boot’s argument and MPRI’s contract situation imply that if the neoliberal world possessed LARs, it would not allow dictatorial regimes to commit atrocities against their populations.

When the “emotion” controversy is analyzed from a perspective shaped by existing security technologies, the argument that LARs will become servants of sovereign power becomes increasingly difficult to make. The trend established by these existing
security technologies strongly supports the claim that LARs will be used in a manner consistent with neoliberal principles on behalf of the neoliberal world’s interests and way of life. Even the most pressing concerns, such as oppressive regimes employing LARs against their populations, lose their luster when discourse combined with historical events are evaluated. Discourse and historical events suggest that the neoliberal world would likely intervene to stop the use of LARs by oppressive regimes especially if they are used to commit genocide. The “emotion” controversy, once examined from a perspective shaped by existing security technologies, cannot easily be understood as proof that LARs will serve sovereign power in a manner that contradicts bio-power/liberalism when/if employed by the neoliberal world.

Controversy 3: Who is Accountable for Lethal Mistakes?

The matter of who is to be held accountable for a LAR’s lethal mistake is another argument employed by those who favor a preemptive ban on the security technology (Anderson & Waxman, 2012-2013, p. 43; HRW & IHRC, 2012, pp. 42-45; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 277). A key aspect of this argument is the question of who could actually and fairly be punished for an illegal act committed by a robot (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 42; Sparrow, 2007). Three options are presented in response to this question; either the programmer, the commanding officer, or the machine itself, but all three are deemed inadequate because of a LAR’s autonomous nature (HRW & IHRC, 2012, pp. 42-45; Sparrow, 2007, pp. 69-73). The programmer/manufacturer is found not to be an adequate choice because the programmer/manufacturer would likely acknowledge the limitations of the machine, and since a machine is designed to be autonomous, it should
be expected to act in an unpredictable manner to a certain degree (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 44; Sparrow, 2007, pp. 69-70). Concerning the commanding officer in charge of the robot, this side of the argument finds that since LARs would be autonomous beings, commanders cannot be held specifically liable for their actions (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 42; Sparrow, 2007, pp. 70-71). An example which encompasses this viewpoint is the relationship between commanders and human soldiers; “commanders are not held legally responsible for the actions of their subordinates except in very particular circumstances” (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 42). Lastly, punishment for the machine is also found to be less than sufficient, but reasons for this finding represent two ends of a spectrum in regards to how intelligent LARs will be.

The view that robots cannot be punished encompasses robots that are considered too “dumb” as well as those that may someday possess actual self-awareness (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 45; Sharkey, 2010, p. 380; Sparrow, 2007, pp. 71-73). For example, in response to “dumb” robots, Sharkey (2010) points out that “[w]e could threaten to switch it off but that would be like telling your washing machine that if it does not remove stains properly you will break its door off” (p. 380). On the other hand, in response to highly advanced autonomous robots, the “Losing Humanity” report states that LARs could be punished via software changes or destruction, but it also states that “[m]erely altering a robot’s software…is unlikely to satisfy victims seeking retribution” (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 45). Destruction also appears to be viewed from this position as insufficient because it could allow robots “to be a convenient scapegoat” in the event that an atrocity occurred leading to a situation where no one could actually be punished (Gubrud, 2014,
The “Losing Humanity” report sums up this side of the argument’s stance in regards to accountability as a deterrent to LARs:

[t]aking human beings out of the loop of robotic decision making would remove the possibility for real accountability for unlawful harm to civilians, making it all the more important that fully autonomous weapons are never developed or used.

(HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 45)

The logic guiding this argument is significantly linked to the belief that if no one can be held fairly accountable for a LAR’s crimes, then LARs should not be developed or used.

The use of accountability for crimes committed by LARs as a deterrent for the development of the security technology is not agreed upon by all. Schmitt and Thurnher (2013) respond directly to the “Losing Humanity” report’s claim that LARs would undermine civilian protections because legal responsibility cannot be fairly assigned:

“[t]he problem with this conclusion is that it is based on a false premise” (p. 277). It is based upon a false premise, from this standpoint, because a human would remain responsible for the use of the machine (Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, pp. 277-278).

Specifically, a human would be in charge of overseeing how the robot was programmed as well as which situation the machine was being sent into (Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 278). Thus, if the machine was sent into a situation that it could not legally navigate, the commander or manager that sent the machine would be responsible for the crimes committed (Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 278). Schmitt and Thurnher (2013) highlight that this is the stance the US government assumes concerning LARs. Specifically, the
Department of Defense (DoD) directive applicable to autonomous weapon systems (which applies to military commanders) states that:

> persons who authorize the use of, direct the use of, or operate autonomous and semi-autonomous weapon systems must do so with appropriate care and in accordance with the law of war, applicable treaties, weapon system safety rules, and applicable rules of engagement (ROE). (DoD Directive, 2012, p. 3)

This statement demonstrates that the US government disagrees with the “Losing Humanity” report’s finding that accountability cannot be assigned by virtue of the US government clearly assigning a line of responsibility for a LAR’s actions. This position in regards to the accountability argument obviously believes that the issue of legal accountability is not adequate to support a preemptive ban on LARs.

Accountability from Agamben’s perspective is a primary indicator of sovereign power’s dominance within the neoliberal world. For Agamben, sovereign power is the entity which decides when the law applies and when it can be suspended (Agamben, 1998, p. 15, Agamben, 2005, p. 4). From this perspective, states of exception are implemented by the sovereign in order to allow violence to be issued against those that the sovereign decides to exempt from the political body (Tagma, 2009, pp. 409-410). The development of a security technology that can confuse accountability, or bypass it altogether in the form of a scapegoat, would likely be problematic for Agamben (Gubrud, 2014, p. 36). Unstable accountability procedures would be problematic because this occurrence would likely be interpreted as the sovereign expanding deeper into the affairs of the world’s political bodies indicating that the world has become a space subject to a
permanent state of exception (Agamben, 1998, p. 38; Agamben, 2005, pp. 86-87). In summary, the accountability issues that arise with the development of LARs would likely support Agamben’s expectations that sovereign power is becoming more efficient at normalizing behavior through violence.

Despite the “accountability” controversy providing evidence for Agamben’s theories by highlighting how LARs may enable states of exception to be realized, previous chapter findings demonstrate that states of exception cannot be understood solely as evidence of sovereign power. Bio-power/liberalism can motivate states of exception, and therefore approve seemingly illiberal acts, when its non-coercive mechanisms of normalization fail (Tagma, 2009, p. 413). First, the “Nisour Square” case demonstrates support for this claim by suggesting that the US did not pursue accountability measures against Blackwater because the firm’s value to the overarching mission, which supported the neoliberal world’s interests via the neoliberalization of Iraq, outweighed immediate justice. The neoliberal world thus conceivably allowed a form of state of exception to exist because the large scale goal of spreading neoliberalism to Iraq was viewed as a priority over punishing the PMC. In more abstract terms, the case of Nisour Square reveals that the neoliberal world’s actions can be understood as the neoliberal world essentially sacrificing some of its liberal values in order to enhance liberalism as a whole (Kiersey, 2009, p. 33; Tagma, 2009, p. 413). The Nisour Square case suggests that even when the neoliberal world is perceived as acting in an illiberal manner, these actions cannot automatically be understood as support for sovereign power’s command without a review of influencing discourses of truth.
Furthermore, viewed from a particular angle, the US’ intervention within Libya can also be understood as a state of exception enacted in order to defend the neoliberal world’s way of life. If one assumes the position that the president violated the War Powers Resolution in order to intervene, this action can be interpreted as a state of exception. However, this case demonstrated that the intervention was guided by bio-power/liberalism on multiple levels ranging from the purpose of defending civilian lives to the purpose of ensuring that stability within the region and the neoliberal world’s access to oil were maintained. The Libya case provides support for the claim that even when the neoliberal world violates accountability measures and creates states of exception, it does so on the behalf of bio-power/liberalism in order to defend the neoliberal world’s way of life.

A review of the “accountability” controversy as it applies to LARs, similar to the previous two controversies, suggests that those who oppose LARs are overlooking the influence of discourses of truth in a manner similar to Agamben. If LARs enable the neoliberal world to avoid accountability for crimes, a review of existing security technologies does not suggest that this will occur because sovereign power is motivating the use of LARs. Rather, if such acts occur they are more than likely being motivated in the defense of the neoliberal world’s way of life on some level. Therefore, when the LARs “accountability” controversy is examined through a theoretical lens shaped by the events surrounding existing security technologies, it becomes apparent that LARs will most likely be servants of bio-power/liberalism even when they are involved in events that can be viewed as states of exception.
Conclusion

If realized, LARs would absolutely possess the potential to be servants of sovereign power in a manner consistent with Agamben’s expectations. However, when the controversies surrounding LARs are approached from a perspective which takes into account the way in which the neoliberal world employs contemporary security technologies, the argument that drones will be servants of sovereign power loses momentum. This argument loses momentum because the logic guiding this chapter appears to have been confirmed. Since PMCs and drones, two problematic security technologies in their own right, can be demonstrated as being controlled by bio-power due to the surrounding discourse and their suspected purposes, it seems highly unlikely that LARs will deviate from this finding. My position is that the PMC and drone case studies provide a “history of the present” which allows for one to speculate which form of power will command LARs if/once employed by the neoliberal world; this chapter’s findings strongly suggest that LARs will serve bio-power/liberalism rather than sovereign power (Foucault, 1995, p. 31).

Critics of LARs are clearly and nobly concerned that LARs will exacerbate the shifting of “the burden of war…from combatants to civilians caught in the crossfire” (HRW & IHRC, 2012, p. 42). However, it appears that critics of LARs share an understanding of power similar to that of Agamben by not recognizing that the neoliberal world and its security technologies are normalized and guided by bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power. As this project has demonstrated, overlooking discourses of truth is a flaw in the critics’ argument especially if they are concerned about
civilian lives. This is a flaw because the neoliberal world respects liberal principles which value life and as such would only use force when the neoliberal world’s way of life is threatened. Furthermore, this chapter suggests that a preemptive ban on LARs could potentially result in future losses of civilian life by removing a tool that could theoretically enhance the likelihood of the neoliberal world intervening on behalf of saving civilian lives. If critics ignore this chapter’s argument they could be possibly enabling the future massacres they fear will occur by seeking to prevent the development of LARs.

Additionally, graver circumstances for the neoliberal world may be at stake if the views of critics are able to shape the perspectives of the neoliberal world’s influential thus preventing LARs from becoming a reality. Although the future of LARs is not definite by any means (even proponents point out that they may never reach their full potential) it seems that if a preemptive ban is achieved, the neoliberal world may lose its ability to defend its way of life against any number of unforeseen threats (Anderson & Waxman, 2012 & 2013, p. 39; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 232). Countries outside the neoliberal world are actively seeking this technology, and this could eventually lessen the neoliberal world’s ability to influence the world’s affairs consistent with its values which are inherent to bio-power’s normalizing and dominant liberal rationality of power. In summary, and in a manner consistent with Foucault’s theories, this chapter supports the argument that, if realized, the use of LARs would be shaped by the goals of bio-power/liberalism, to also include their acts of sovereign violence when and if such acts were required. Critics must recognize the influence of discourses of truth in order to see
that their efforts at achieving a preemptive ban are misplaced; LARs will not indiscriminately endanger civilian lives, but rather and more than likely they will become a form of protector for civilians along with the neoliberal world’s way of life.
CONCLUSION

There has been a parallel shift in the right of death, or at least a tendency to align itself with the exigencies of a life-administering power and to define itself accordingly. This death that was based on the right of the sovereign is now manifested as simply the reverse of the right of the social body to ensure, maintain, or develop its life. (Foucault, 1990, p. 136)

Project Summary

The purpose of this project was twofold. First, it sought to explore the reasons why the post-9/11 neoliberal world employs security technologies, and why this employment can sometimes be perceived as illiberal. Additionally, by examining the use and development of security technologies, this project sought to determine whether or not the neoliberal world transitioned from a sovereign power-dominated space to a bio-power-dominated space. While exploring these guiding research questions, I argued that the neoliberal world uses and develops security technologies in order to serve bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power, rather than serving sovereign power. Thus, my position regarding the research questions is that the neoliberal world transitioned to become a space dominated by bio-power, employing security technologies to enhance its way of life. More specifically, the neoliberal world employs these technologies to enhance its liberal way of life in a manner consistent with Foucault’s theories rather than to simply gain power in a manner consistent with the logic of sovereign power as Agamben would expect. Throughout this study, it became increasingly apparent that Agamben’s theoretical perspective of power is limited because
it fails to recognize the importance of discourses of truth as they pertain to normalizing behavior and/or guiding the implementation of security technologies. Therefore, the significance of this project is the implication it identifies in regards to the neoliberal world’s ability to secure its way of life. Specifically, the implication identified is that if those with influence adopt Agamben’s theoretical perspective, or one similar which also ignores discourses of truth, this acceptance could lead to a neoliberal world that is limited in its capacity to defend its way of life against unforeseen threats.

Security Technologies and Methodology

This project’s argument was pursued by examining Private Military Corporations (PMCs) and drones (existing security technologies) in order to speculate about the form of power which will purpose future security technologies (specifically Lethal Autonomous Robots (LARs)) and the risks associated with preventing the development of such future technologies. To successfully argue that LARs would not be servants of sovereign power as Agamben would expect, I demonstrated that existing security technologies employed by the neoliberal world serve bio-power/liberalism. To determine that existing security technologies serve bio-power, discourse surrounding PMCs and drones was examined to point out that these security technologies respect neoliberal principles. These principles were deemed as respected if the technologies’ purposes were justified in terms of arguments developed from a market-based perspective or if liberal rhetoric was employed to justify their use. Additionally, where discourse was limited, the purposes guiding the technologies were examined. If these purposes could rationally be demonstrated as efforts to support or defend the neoliberal world’s way of life, these
actions were also deemed to respect neoliberal principles. These two sources of evidence sufficed when identified in combination, or in unison.

Research Findings

Several findings resulted from this thesis project concerning the neoliberal world’s post-9/11 use of security technologies. A review of the discourse and/or purposes surrounding the neoliberal world’s use of PMCs and drones supports the argument that these security technologies serve bio-power/liberalism. When observed from a perspective shaped by Foucault’s understandings of power, two findings become apparent. First, an examination of PMCs and drones reveals that bio-power/liberalism shapes and guides these technologies’ actions to include actions which are manifestations of sovereign violence, or that simply resemble sovereign violence. This finding enables the research questions guiding this project, “why does the neoliberal world employ security technologies?” and “has the neoliberal world transitioned from a sovereign power dominated space to a bio-power dominated space?” to be answered. Specifically, the answer to these questions is that the neoliberal world has indeed transitioned and that it develops, enhances, and implements security technologies in order to protect people. However, the neoliberal world protects people in a manner that respects the values and principles which define the neoliberal world’s way of life. These technologies are not developed, enhanced, or implemented in order to merely reestablish governmental control or power in a manner consistent with the logic of sovereign power.

The previously mentioned findings allow for the identification of two primary findings. First, since PMCs and drones serve bio-power/liberalism, it can be logically
concluded that LARs will also serve bio-power/liberalism once/if realized. Due to this rationally constructed hypothesis, this project’s primary concern appears to have been validated: if those with influence adopt Agamben’s perspective of power, or a perspective similar which also ignores the influence of discourses of truth, the development of LARs may be prevented resulting in a neoliberal world that cannot defend its way of life against any number of unforeseen threats (Anderson & Waxman, 2012 & 2013, p. 39; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 232). In short, this project has determined that the neoliberal world has transitioned to become a space dominated by bio-power, that it employs security technologies to serve bio-power/liberalism, that its future security technologies will also serve bio-power/liberalism, and that a wholehearted adoption of Agamben’s perspective of power, or one similar, by the influential could result in a neoliberal world which is incapable of defending its way of life.

Future Research Recommendation

To further the argument that the neoliberal world should continue to develop and advance security technologies in order to defend its way of life, a research project should be constructed which focuses on identifying factors which contribute to discourses of truth concerning LARs. More specifically, a study could focus on the most popular science fiction media to determine what oppositional messages this media is contributing to the discourses of truth surrounding LARs. Reviewing this media from perspectives of power shaped by Foucault and Agamben could reveal which aspects of these messages may require the direct attention of either proponents of LARs or the LARs industry itself if the movement against LARs continues to gain momentum.
Closing Thoughts

Although a movement currently exists seeking to prevent the development of LARs, those who favor this movement should take a step back and review the argument of this project. When observed from an angle that values the importance of discourses of truth, it becomes clear that security technologies are directed by bio-power and its accompanying liberal rationality of power. That being said, critics of the development and use of LARs should consider the predicament the neoliberal world may find itself within if such security technologies are prevented from reaching reality. LARs will not be used in an unpredictable manner that coincides with the logic of sovereign power, rather they will be used to promote and defend the neoliberal world’s way of life, which includes its liberal values and the value of individual life. If the movement opposing LARs, which does not appear to value discourses of truth, continues gaining momentum, the neoliberal world may be at risk in the future; perspectives which fear sovereign power may prevent the realization of a security technology that could theoretically enhance the neoliberal world’s ability to defend its way of life against unforeseen threats (Anderson & Waxman, 2012 & 2013, p. 39; Schmitt & Thurnher, 2013, p. 232). Although it is impossible to predict what these threats could be, LARs fully realized have the potential to enhance the neoliberal world’s ability to combat threats ranging in scope from hostile nations to small extremist groups.
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