



Biopower and the Militarization of the Police Function

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Abstract

In *Multitude*, Hardt and Negri explain imperialism, in the context of Empire, as part of the globalization of war as biopower. They note that the police function and the war function are increasingly indistinguishable in the context of Empire, and then proceed to analyze the biopoliticization of the war function. This review examines instead the transnational militarization of the police function through the U.S. war on drugs in the Americas, arguing that the widespread consent to this U.S.-catalyzed process may shed more light on the globalization of war as biopower, and possibilities for its resistance.

Introduction: War as a regime of biopower in *Multitude*

Multitude has two intersecting yet distinct tasks. One is to follow up Hardt and Negri's theory of Empire by more fully theorizing its subject of resistance, the Multitude. The other task is to explain how the emergence of sovereign power, in the form of U.S. imperialism, fits into, rather than changes, the hegemony of biopower that characterizes Empire. It is with this latter task, which occupies the first third of the book, that this engagement concerns itself.



Hardt and Negri's central claim with respect to this task is that "war has become a regime of biopower, a form of rule aimed not only at controlling the population but producing and reproducing all aspects of social life" (2004, 13). It is well beyond the scope of this review to examine Foucault's theorization of biopower,² but it is important to point out that Hardt and Negri's inclusion of "controlling the population" in their definition is consistent with an often-overlooked aspect of governmentality, the mode of governance in which strategies of sovereign power are subsumed by biopower. This aspect is the inclusion of sovereign power, rather than its total eclipse, in strategies associated with liberal governmentality (see Foucault in Burchell et al, 1991, 102). In this article, I use the term "sovereign power" to denote the use of state-sanctioned force (what Foucault calls negative or repressive power) to control domestic and/or foreign territories. And "biopower," though it is articulated with strategies of sovereign power, positively produces subjects of governance through techniques of normalization. Biopolitical strategies of governance secure the reproduction of hegemonic³ social orders (capitalist, patriarchal, masculinist, sexist, racist and so forth). For Foucault, both strategies are articulated and dispersed through the territorial state, to address the problem of governing a national population. The state, with its attendant sovereign functions, is an effect of hegemonic orders, while at the same time a necessary nexus for the dispersal of hegemony-friendly, mostly biopolitical but also sovereign, strategies of governance.

Sovereign power, in the last instance, takes life or lets live (Foucault, 1984, 261). Biopower, on the other hand, which functions through the proliferation of acceptable freedoms, fosters life or disallows it to the point of death. It fosters life through the production of knowledge about the (legitimate) self, especially in relation to a given population. This is what is meant by *normalization*, which refers to the construction of what behavior, and therefore *who*, is "normal" in the population. While Foucault's work examines the relationship between the liberal, European nation-state and its subjects, Hardt and Negri's *Empire* theorizes a (sort of) global governmentality that produces the neoliberal, capitalist world subject whose national citizenship is increasingly secondary to global economic citizenship. If *Empire*'s biopower is truly hegemonic, then the exercise of sovereign power should be articulated with and disciplined by the biopolitical practices of what Hardt and Negri refer to as the global aristocracy: transnational corporations (TNCs), the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and so forth. *Empire*'s imperialism should reproduce the neoliberal order, in the long run, rather than disrupt or de-legitimize it.

² In this paper, I use "biopolitical" as an adjective for "biopower," and "biopolitics" in the Hardt and Negri sense to refer to strategies of resistance to biopower.

³ I use "hegemonic" here in both *Empire* and *Multitude*'s broader sense: to indicate a privileged nexus of power through which leadership is exerted. This meaning is used instead of its Gramscian formulation: leadership through a combination of coercion and consent.

It is for this reason that they refer to Empire's imperialism as part of a global civil war. And it is for this reason they make the important observation that, empirically, the war function and the police function are increasingly indistinguishable in the age of globalization (Hardt and Negri, 2004, 14). After making this observation, however, they concentrate on showing how the discourses, technologies, and targets of war have become biopoliticized. This is an interesting analysis that provides many openings for constructive critique or, in this instance, avenues of further exploration. Hardt and Negri's focus on the normalization of the war function leaves unattended an analysis of the uneven globalization of sovereign power through the militarization of the police function, and the necessary role played by the U.S state in this process.

The police function: from the welfare state to the crimefare state

The police/military distinction in the age of modernity relied upon and reproduced the sovereignty of the liberal nation-state. The military function acted upon disorderly subjects outside of, and the police functioned to engage disorderly subjects within, the borders of the nation-state. The main difference between the two had to do with the use of coercive state power against subjects who were considered part of a social contract with the state, defined through regimes of national citizenship, and those who were not.

The liberal regime of biopower, with respect to policing, is concerned above all with making and protecting law-abiding subjects rather than destroying the lives of lawbreakers. In the historical context of the U.S. and U.K. welfare states, this meant an emphasis on rehabilitation and retribution (in the sense of restorative sanctions, not vengeance) as well as an expansion of the rights of the accused (see Beckett, 1997, and Garland, 2000). The liberal police function should be understood as concerned with the rights and responsibilities of the liberal subject as s/he is part of society, rather than its enemy. The enemies against which society is to be defended are deviant, scientifically correctable behaviors, rather than incorrigible subjects. Hence the medicalization of the criminal as a subject exposed to "root causes" such as poverty, and in need of restorative care more than harshly punitive sanctions.

This brief conceptualization of the liberal police function as biopolitical has some significant shortcomings. It is profoundly silent with respect to spatial difference. It attempts to describe the police function of the welfare state, which took quite a different form in the U.S., for example, as compared to the Netherlands. And to put it mildly, the global South did not have a comparable experience with the welfare state. But it does beg the question of how the age of neoliberalization has seen the return of a much more coercive and militant police function where the welfarist model was once ascendant. This last critique bears special relevance to the question of how war has become a regime of biopower, and

for coming to better understanding of what that might mean for the unevenness of sovereign power in Empire's biopolitical order.

The welfare state's domestic territorialization of the criminal justice subject included the criminal in regimes of national citizenship: one who has citizenship rights and, good or bad, deserves some forms of state protection. On the other hand, the foreign territorialization of the war subject helped constitute what it meant not to be a citizen: one who is not party to the social contract, and therefore is subject to coercive violence in defense of the national population. The war/military function has historically been based on principles of state sovereignty, which create a clearly defined outside against which to operate—the spatial order of classical geopolitics. The soldier is unconcerned with the liberal rights of his targets, operating in the state of emergency that is war, intent upon killing the enemy in order to secure domestic territory.

As Hardt and Negri point out, this model of warfare identifies its adversaries as foreign citizens and territorializes its battlegrounds as bordered places (2004, 37). It ends when soldiers surrender and territories are occupied. The biopoliticization of the military function happens when its transnational subjects are no longer specific people and places but abstract categories of dangerous abnormality. War as a global regime of biopower is war against categories of risk to society that could be produced by anyone, anywhere. "Terror" and "drugs," to take the paradigmatic examples, are vectors of transnational danger to law-abiding, freedom-loving citizens of the global economy, rather than territorialized enemies of states and national populations.

It is to the question of the war on drugs in the Americas that I would like to turn in order to examine the militarization, or thickening, of the biopolitical police function. I examine this question in order to take up and extend Hardt and Negri's point about the increasing indistinguishability between the war function and the police function, since they focus theoretically and empirically on the war function. It is primarily through the post-Cold War U.S. war on drugs that the transnational militarization of the police function, with the consent and cooperation of Empire's aristocracy. The spaces of this militarization of the police function are radically uneven, occurring most drastically in the U.S. and Latin America. And it has been primarily leveraged by political economic processes of neoliberal governance through development aid (Corva, 2008).

Re-scaling the drug war subject

Scholars who focus on the intersection of poverty and penalty often assert, though rarely explore, the claim that the war on drugs has become a primary justification for the militarization of the police function within the U.S. (see Wacquant, 2003, for example). By "militarization" I refer to the expansion of the criminal justice apparatus to intensify unprecedentedly harsh punitive sanctions and

coercive practices, with attendant collateral damage, especially in urban centers and against socioeconomically excluded populations. This has been the expansionary sector of the federal budget during a time when welfare expenditures have been restructured along neoliberal lines (Peck 2001), especially since 1986 when the first omnibus Anti-Drug Abuse Act was passed. Gilmore (2002) calls it the warfare-welfare state, Peck (2003) calls it the penal state, Wacquant (2001) calls it the carceral state/prison society, and Andreas (1998) calls it the crimefare state. Whatever one calls it, this form of state restructuring has expanded police power (and firepower), prosecutorial discretion, mass incarceration, welfare conditionalities, employment qualification, and the erosion of civil liberties while downsizing citizenship rights and universal participation in public space. The war on drugs fundamentally alters the rights and responsibilities of the most vulnerable sectors of the U.S. population by normalizing what it means to be an economically productive body in society. This biopolitical discourse, in turn, has underwritten the highly repressive practices of the national penal state.

However, the language of the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act frames the production and consumption of illicit drugs as a transnational danger, and uses international legal frameworks⁴ to justify the extension and exportation of the police state to the postcolonial world. By partitioning global space into spaces of production and distribution (as well as identifying the U.S. as the main space of consumption), the stage was set to transnationalize the militarization of the police function. It also meant re-scaling the domestic territorialization of biopower to produce a transnational regime of accountability. In this discourse, global society must be defended through the responsabilization of governments of countries identified by the U.S. as major drug-producing or drug-transit zones. Those states include in principle every signatory to the UN prohibition treaties.⁵ However, as we shall see, the states to be held accountable are accountable to the U.S. government (including its domestic police forces), for reproducing as closely as possible the exceptionally punitive approach to their criminal justice subjects that characterizes the penal state.

The transnationalization of the war on drugs

The UN Single Convention of 1961, supplemented and revised by the 1971 and 1988 conventions, establishes the current system of global drug prohibition. Reinerman (2003, 168-9) notes that while “there is no doubt that governments throughout the world have accepted drug prohibition because of enormous pressure from the U.S. government and a few powerful allies...U.S. power alone cannot

⁴ David Bewley-Taylor's *The United States and International Drug Control 1909-1997* provides an excellent critical history of the necessary role the U.S. state played in the construction of the 1961, 1971, and 1988 United Nations treaties, which criminalize the production, distribution and consumption of marijuana, cocaine, opium-heroin, and assorted other psychostimulants.

⁵ These signatories include, in turn, virtually every member state of the United Nations.

explain the global acceptance of drug prohibition.” He explains the “global acceptance”⁶ of drug prohibition in geopolitical terms of its usefulness for consolidating and increasing police and military power within state borders—potentially increasing the coercive power of the state, in other words, rather than weakening it *a la* the biopolitics of Empire. The argument here is that the normalization of the thickened police function, legitimated by universal drug prohibition, articulates a specific regime of biopower with sovereign power on the global scale.

However, global drug prohibition only sets the stage for nationally specific juridical regimes of regulating illicit drug production and use. It does not, in itself, produce a thickening of the police function, nor its transnationalization. Reinerman describes a national regulatory continuum for prohibition law, with the Netherlands’ decriminalized, harm-reduction approach falling on one (more biopolitical) end and U.S. policies of extremely punitive criminalization falling on the other (characterized by militarist strategies of sovereign power). While most Western nations have, since the 1990s, shifted farther from the criminalized end of the spectrum toward national models based on harm reduction, the U.S. has not only increased its rates of incarceration and police power, but has also exported punitive criminalization to a select number of postcolonial nation-states through the annual Majors certification process, embedded in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (FAA-1961) via the 1986 and 1988 Anti-Drug Abuse Acts.

The certification process required the U.S. president to annually determine which nation-states constitute major drug producing and/or transit countries (“the Majors list”). The next step subjects the states on the Majors list to a process of certification. Either they are certified as “fully cooperating” with U.S. counternarcotics efforts or they are to be decertified. The minimum consequences for being decertified are explicit: all bilateral aid (except for humanitarian and military aid) is to be immediately suspended, and all U.S. trade representatives to multilateral development institutions (the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and so forth) are instructed to vote no on all multilateral aid and development practices. Decertified countries are also subject to other sanctions at the discretion of the U.S. president.⁷ In the 1990s, the threat of decertification was employed especially by the Clinton administration to facilitate manual and aerial crop eradication, build new U.S. military bases, train and mobilize thousands of security forces, and harmonize domestic criminal penalties under a harshly punitive, U.S.-style regime of mandatory minimums.

⁶ “Global acceptance” itself is an example of geopolitical discourse, as the subjects who have presumably accepted global prohibition are governments.

⁷ Congress may also overturn a presidential designation of certification, as it did with Panama shortly before it was invaded 1989.

U.S. drug war programs have historically been located in Southeast Asia, Southwest Asia, and Latin America. However, the crack hysteria of the 1980s, coinciding with the worst of the Latin American debt crisis, meant that the geographies of cocaine's commodity chain have focused U.S. leverage in the western hemisphere. Since 1986, only three times has presidential decertification without the national interest waiver occurred: Panama in 1989; and Colombia in 1995 and 1996. The former decertification was followed by a military invasion, and the arrest of Manuel Noriega on charges of drug trafficking. The latter immediately preceded the fall of the recalcitrant Samper administration. The Pastrana administration is credited with coming up with the idea for Plan Colombia, which in its original formulation involved European development assistance and concentrated on facilitating the peace process. The European Union backed out of the plan when the U.S. insisted that its assistance be conditioned on and complemented with the "stick" of militarization (Schönrock-Martinez, 2006). Today, Plan Colombia is primarily a package of military aid designed to more fully arm Colombia's army and police (Isaacson, 2005). A historical geography of the Majors certification process demonstrates at least two significant things about how the militarization of the police function has been transnationalized through the war on drugs.

First, it has been exported via transnational economic governance through consent leveraged by a carrot-and-stick technique. Certainly, the "stick" includes the expansion of the penal state and the militarization of drug war policing. But also, the "carrot" of development aid is produced through the "stick" of poverty and Southern vulnerability reproduced by the neoliberal development and globalization characteristics of Empire. Given the threat of a U.S. veto on multilateral development bank loans, alongside suspension of bilateral aid, Majors certification should be considered a structural adjustment conditionality alongside those laid out in the Washington Consensus, and as such part-and-parcel of neoliberal governmentality. The overt politicization of transnational aid through national legislation has been acquiesced by Empire's institutions of neoliberal governance. To a large degree, European governments have consented to the leveraged exportation of the warfare/carceral model to the South by the U.S., while retaining for themselves more welfarist approaches to the question of transnational prohibition—and more recently, outright decriminalization.⁸

Second, the militarization of police forces in Latin America, the presence of U.S. Department of Justice personnel on foreign territory, the normalization of ecocide through forced aerial eradication, and the rise of mass incarceration all

⁸ Italy (1990), Spain (1992), Portugal (2001), Luxembourg (2001), Belgium (2001) and Austria (1998), and within the United States, punitive enforcement at the state level varies widely by state (Miron, 2005). The level of enforcement also varies by county and municipality within states, although federal enforcement in all localities remains punitive.

signal a thickening of the police function against underprivileged racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. Many of these have responded to debt crisis-induced austerity by growing “dangerous harvests” (Steinberg et al, 2004) or becoming disposable, risk-taking labor for narco-capitalism (Sudbury, 2006). The enemies of drug war policies are embodied as gendered, racialized, ethnic and poor people, but for the thickened police function they are first and foremost symptoms of transnational disorder: the “scourges” of drugs, illicit economic trade, and unproductive labor.

This thickening of the police function against vulnerable subjects has wider consequences than those directly related to militarization. It also produces certain subjects through the creation of a not-insignificant illicit economy. The U.N. estimates the value of the global drug market at approximately \$450 billion, which is much closer to the size of the global oil economy than it is to that of agricultural staples (Thoumi, 2003). This illicit economy is fed by the militarization of the police function: high risk means high profit and increased use of violence to produce and maintain that profit. The same offshore banks that serve as corporate and private tax shelters for the rich serve as sites of money laundering for the profits of narco-capital. This makes transnational corporations and transnational organized crime allies in their strategies to avoid accountability to the state and any efforts to democratize transnational financial governance. These spaces of invisibility also make drug trafficking a growth industry of choice for mafias, insurgents, clandestine government operations, diversifying oligarchs and corrupt government officials at all levels (including the police) all over the world (see Nordstrom, 2000). Of course, it also provides economic opportunities for underemployed labor and people with nothing to lose but their lives. Labor exploitation takes on a whole new dimension when one’s job requirements include the willingness to risk death and/or incarceration, but some entry-level jobs do allow one to travel the world (drug mules, for example).

Uneven geographies of dissent to war as a regime of biopower

Hardt and Negri are not insensitive to the biopolitical aspects of the war on drugs, using it as a paradigmatic example of how the war function and the police function are increasingly indistinguishable in the context of Empire. They do seem to consider the emergence of the war on drugs as a significant process for making war, in general, a global regime of biopower. And I recognize that *Multitude* addresses some of the shortcomings in *Empire*’s much-critiqued aspatial modes of analysis (see Sparke, 2005, for example), especially with respect to the uneven geographies of state power. I argue that Hardt and Negri’s focus on the war on

terror⁹ opens up at least three important points about how the militarization of the biopolitical police function has been articulated in geographically uneven ways with neoliberal globalization. These processes have been designed and catalyzed by the U.S. state, they have *normalized* “war” as a liberal discourse of transnational intervention (think Panama’s regime change in 1989), and as normalized practices of militarization they may play a functional role in the current uneasy articulation of the war on terror and neoliberal globalization. It is not much of a stretch to say that the form of biopolitical imperialism that catalyzed and prefigured the U.S. war on terror is the U.S. war on drugs: the latest U.S. ambassadors to Afghanistan and Pakistan were both previously ambassadors to Colombia.¹⁰

This points towards a more insidious aspect of war as a regime of biopower in the age of globalization: the militarization of the police function has gone virtually uncontested, not only by Empire’s aristocracy but by Northern intellectuals who have recently begun to recognize the expansion of state coercive power that has accompanied processes of neoliberal state restructuring (Peck, 2003). Southern voices on the left such as those of Eduardo Galeano and Evo Morales must be surprised when they find that the most prominent Northern critiques of the drug war have been raised for a decade or more by the neoliberal likes of Milton Friedman, Gary Becker, the Rand Corporation, the Cato Institute, and *The Economist*.

Resistance to the normalization of the militarized police function?

In *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault inverts Clausewitz’ axiom by asking the question: what if we understand politics—*national* politics—as the extension of war by other means? The extent to which the war on drugs has militarized the police function renders this inversion facile, but the transnationalization of this process requires that we understand how, where and why the politics of militarized policing have been consolidated: through the state, but leveraged and dispersed by the U.S. state, catalyzed by a national acceptance of the militarized policing “drugs” as a legitimate function of the state. The scope of this function is, further, transnational. The point here is that the U.S. government has been a necessary, not contingent, nexus for consolidating and transnationalizing the normalization of war as biopower—through the police function.

Critiques of drug war militarization (neoliberal and otherwise) provoke some interesting points of departure for Hardt and Negri’s conceptualization of Empire.

⁹ This is not to accuse the authors of geopolitical naiveté, but it must be pointed out that the hopefulness of *Empire*’s introductory chapters is infused with a sense that the globality of capitalist relations, and the dominance of neoliberal ideology, signaled the end for state militarism as a hegemonic strategy.

¹⁰ CNN even has a new “COPS”-style reality show about DEA training new Afghani special narcotics units, called “Narco State.” The DEA is not alone in this endeavor: they are accompanied by Colombian field operatives and trainers.

First, during the ascendance of Empire (post-Cold War), “it” has been disciplined regularly by sovereign power via the militarized and transnationalized police function. For example, the drug war slows down, rather than speeds up, the movement of capital—not just labor (Andreas, 2003)—by instituting financial regulation and checking various technologies of commodity shipping by land, air and sea. Moreover, the expansion and globalization of the militarist penal state has in some places been necessary for, not just contingent with, the application of neoliberal austerity measures. The informal narco-economy that owes its existence and profitability to punitive prohibition has played a vital role, for example, in mitigating the worst effects of structural adjustment throughout Latin America (Thoumi, 2003). Finally, with respect to terms of resistance, the thickening of the police function is increasingly critiqued by Empire’s exceptional discipline, economics, as a waste of taxpayer dollars and a barrier to economic globalization. Harvard economist Jeffrey Miron’s (2005) report on the beneficial economic impacts of decriminalizing marijuana was endorsed publicly by Friedman, two other Nobel economics laureates (George Akerloff and Vernon Smith), and more than 500 North American economists.

The neoliberal critique provides an interesting possibility for convergence as radically different neoliberal and anti-neoliberal logics are put to work on the same goal: ending drug war-induced militarization. This is, potentially, a classically Gramscian war of position, should anti-militarist neoliberals in the North and anti-militarist anti-neoliberals in the South network effectively. The alternative to drug war militarization, for Andean peasants and for neoliberal economists, is to facilitate the incorporation of globally illicit commodities into the circuits of transnational capital. A creative biopolitics of anti-capitalist resistance, *a la* the Multitude, may not be nearly as effective against the normalized effects of sovereign power’s deployment: escalating incarceration, aerial spraying of poisonous herbicides, increased licit and illicit arms trade, and so forth.

War as a regime of biopower not only has an uneven geography, it is reproduced as a liberal strategy through the militarization of the state’s police function. The uneven geography of state power has, in turn, facilitated the transnationalization of the militarized police function, to places where its biopolitical liberalism has been, and continues to be, widely contested. The biopower of the drug war rests on two principles. First, that “drugs” are a global security threat to normal, healthy bodies and economies. Second, that this threat is so massive that narcotics-related police functions should more closely resemble warfare: against enemies, not citizens, and transnational in scope. These principles can be contested, in turn, many different ways by many different actors. But the necessary nexus for the consolidation of these principles has been, and continues to be, the U.S. state at the federal level—not a decentered, hegemonic network of biopower.

As Foucault states, “[p]ower as a pure limit set on freedom is, at least in our society, the general form of its acceptability” (Foucault, 1978, 86). *Where* this acceptability is located, however, has mattered a great deal for the transnationalization and militarization of the police function. The widespread cultural stigmatization of “drugs” in the U.S. has catalyzed to a significant degree the thickening of the police function, particularly throughout the U.S. and Latin America. As long as “drugs” are embedded in the U.S. biopolitical economy of transnational *fear*, the U.S. narco-industrial complex will augment the militarization of liberal democratic state-society relationships through the police function throughout the world (albeit in an uneven and contingent fashion).

The normalization of repressive sovereign power within a regime of biopower is facilitated when the latter produces credible ways of understanding threats to the social body as emanating from individuals that can be treated as enemies, rather than social transformations. Drug war discourses produce locally acceptable truths connecting real social disorder to fetishized, illicit commodities rather than to local and global political and economic inequalities. This normalization has legitimated the expansion of the coercive capacity of states *and* illicit economic actors. Many of the trends in state militarization that are now used in the war on terror were developed in the spaces of the war on drugs. Dyncorp and other military contractors were active in the privatization of the military function¹¹ in the Andes long before they were in Iraq (see Azzelini and Kanzleiter, 2005; and Borger and Hodgeson, 2001). The discursive association of illicit immigration with dangerous individuals, justifying the militarization of border police, was predominantly drug-related before 9/11 (see Andreas and Nadelman, 2006, 165-8). And the practice of detaining suspects without due process, with years before trial, was happening in Cochabamba, Bolivia, long before Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (see Farthing, 1997, 259).

It is fairly easy to imagine that as the body count¹² grows in Iraq, troops will eventually be withdrawn and the new imperialism will have utterly transformed the U.S., and nation-states with whom it has the most economic leverage, into states of hypersecurity (Dillon, 2004) verging on fascism. The fear of drugs, like the fear of terror, amplifies the precariousness of living in a highly unstable, crisis-prone world. Drug addiction can be a complex, terrible health problem. It is not a condition that can be fixed through transnational warfare and punitive policing. Perhaps worse, though, is the way in which far more dangerous conditions of poverty, hopelessness and desperation are consistently blamed on “drugs” rather than endemic structural violence. This has led to a situation in which, for example, universal health care for U.S. children is rejected as a legitimate function of

¹¹ Primarily in Colombia, as aerial eradication pilots, support and maintenance, search-and-rescue security, and aerial surveillance.

¹² I refer here of course to the only bodies that are actually being counted, those of U.S. troops.

government, while arming Colombian state and para-security forces with terrible human rights records in a country with one of the largest internally displaced population in the world continues *ad infinitum*. Counterhegemonic subjects must indeed engage in creative forms of biopolitics to resist this tendency; ending the drug war-induced moral panic in the U.S. would have transnational effects.

A good place to start would be to unpack how the category of “illicit drugs,” which functions biopolitically as the promotion of physical health and productivity, underpins transnational militarization of the police function—and where this happens—for historically contingent reasons. This articulation of sovereign and bio-power is continuous with, rather than a break from, the pre-9/11 world order—as Hardt and Negri are well aware. The transnationalization of resistance to war as a regime of biopower is crucial for a biopolitics of resistance, whether we call it the Multitude or not. But the wars on terror and drugs both demonstrate, especially as expressions of biopower, the uneven geographies of acceptability that underwrite the transnational thickening of the police function. This expansion of sovereign power, therefore, places spatial limits on the effectiveness of biopolitical dissent. The arguments here suggest that while a successful challenge to the demonization of illicit drugs in the U.S. may not lead directly to demilitarization of the police function in the Americas, it would remove a necessary obstacle to the conditions for its possibility.

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