

UN reform, biopolitics, and global governmentality

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Commentary on the United Nations (UN) reform efforts of 2004–05 has broadly followed two different trajectories. International lawyers and political theorists have focused on the implications of reform for sovereignty as a fundamental principle of international law and international relations. International Relations (IR) scholars have discussed reform focusing on state power and the UN's institutional authority. Against the background of these debates and drawing on Foucault's political theory and related IR scholarship, this article argues that UN reform discourse indicates a biopolitical 'reprogramming' of contemporary sovereignty and global governance. The analysis 'displaces' the concerns with sovereignty, state power, and institutional authority by demonstrating that UN reform (also) constitutes the UN as a project of managing and regulating the global population through a variety of securitizing, economizing, and normalizing rationalities and techniques. The article illustrates this by pointing to the biopolitical rationales of reform conceptions of human security and collective security, and to (neo)liberal governmentalities of risk and responsibility, contractualism, benchmarking, and networks. It thereby challenges the conceptual and normative priority accorded to juridical sovereignty in international law, and to state- and institution-centric accounts in IR theorizations of UN-related global governance.

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The history of United Nations (UN) reform efforts is almost as long as the history of the organization itself (see Müller, 1997; Luck, 2003). However, since the mid-1990s, the UN reform drive has been particularly intense. Two rounds of reforms in 1997 and 2002 concerned issues of management and coordination within the UN system. However, the US invasion of Iraq and the oil-for-food scandal in 2003 prompted calls for a more ambitious overhaul of the organization. The High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (HLP) appointed by former UN

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Secretary-General Kofi Annan issued its report *A More Secure World* to this effect (United Nations, 2004). In his own report, 'In Larger Freedom', Annan anticipated 'the most far-reaching reforms in the history of the United Nations' (United Nations, 2005a: 3). Despite certain innovations, including the commitment to the 'responsibility to protect' and the creation of the Human Rights Council, the 2005 World Summit and its aftermath have fallen short of this ambitious goal. Nevertheless, the recent UN reform efforts can provide a revealing window for theorizing certain contours and mechanisms of contemporary global politics and governance.

Analyses of the recent UN reform endeavor have broadly followed two different trajectories. On the one hand, international lawyers and political theorists have focused on the implications of reform initiatives for sovereignty as a fundamental principle of international law and international relations.¹ Neoliberal interventionists suggest (and welcome) that UN reform entails a shift in emphasis from state security to human security, and with this, a transition from Westphalian to conditional sovereignty (Slaughter, 2005, 2006a, b; see also Buchanan, 2003; Tesón, 2003). By contrast, Charter liberals maintain that, human security discourse notwithstanding, current UN reform efforts reaffirm (or ought to reaffirm) the principle of equal sovereignty (Cohen, 2004, 2006; see also Byers and Chesterman, 2003).² Of course, this is not a merely academic debate, but a division running through the UN policy community since the humanitarian interventions of the 1990s (see Traub, 2006: 93–100). International Relations (IR) scholars and policy analysts, on the other hand, have largely focused on issues of state power and the UN's institutional authority, especially in connection with reform of the UN Security Council. Realist-oriented scholars see UN reform as a function of the balance of power in international politics (Luck, 2003, 2005a, b; Glennon, 2005; Stedman, 2007). Liberal observers typically see UN reform as a matter of striking a different kind of balance, namely one between the efficiency and the legitimacy of the organization (Weiss, 2003; Imber, 2006; Müller, 2006: 3–95). Once again, this debate is not purely academic. Media commentary on UN reform has often followed similar lines.

While the international law and IR debates yield some important insights, they miss other significant dimensions of the UN reform project. The international law debate assumes (rather than problematizing) that

¹ Where debate has not centered on this issue as such, discussions concerning collective security, the Security Council, the use of force, etc. have been largely derivative of it. See, for example, the contributions by Franck *et al.* (2006).

² The distinction between the two liberalisms in international law is made by Simpson (2001).

the political significance of UN reform is exhausted by (changing) meanings of juridical sovereignty. The IR contributions rely on rather narrow conceptions of power (in terms of resources or influence of states) and institutional authority (as inherently derivative of legitimacy or performance). Gramscians and constructivists might present a richer analysis of power and institutions in the UN context, pointing to a continuation of western hegemony (Cox, 1983: 172, 173; Puchala, 2005) or a bureaucratization of world politics (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). However, such theorizations would subsume UN reform within an all-engulfing power structure or process of rationalization, giving scant attention to the varied (and sometimes conflicting) modes of governance envisioned in the reform debate.

Drawing on the late Foucault and related scholarship, this article highlights biopolitics and governmentality as important but overlooked dimensions of recent UN reform efforts. Foucault's notion of biopolitics indicates a significant change of the subject matter, instruments, and goals of modern politics. Namely, primary political concern shifts from law and legislation to the classification, regulation, and management of biological existence; from the juridical preoccupation with sovereignty to the security and welfare of populations. Foucault's attention to this biopolitical turn involves a broader reconsideration of the meaning of government. In this context, the notion of governmentality highlights that government not only refers to the structure and activities of political institutions. More fundamentally, it also implies historically variable ways of imagining and directing conduct with the help of specific, often technical, knowledges (or rationalities) and methods. By implicating biopolitics and governmentality, UN reform constitutes the UN as a project of managing and regulating the global population through a variety of governmental rationalities and techniques.

UN reform is continuous with other efforts of governing national and transnational spaces through police-minded and (neo)liberal rationalities and practices (see Larner and Walters, 2004; Dubber and Valverde, 2006), and involving international organizations (see Merlingen, 2003; Rojas, 2004; Lui, 2004; Reid, 2005; Walters and Haahr, 2005; Zanotti, 2005; Dean, 2006).³ In conjunction with this globalization of biopolitics and governmentality, Hardt and Negri's (2000) image of Empire is suggestive. As a (although in a different sense) biopolitical, decentralized, and network-like structure of global governmentality, 'Empire' is an apt characterization of

³ However, the cited analyses have not specifically engaged with the standard (legalistic, state-, or institution-centric) accounts of the UN.

the condition that UN reform both reflects and aspires to realize. However, rather than postulating a new structure of global sovereignty, my analysis of recent UN reform efforts makes two more limited propositions about contemporary sovereignty and global governance, and the role of the UN in this context.

First, addressing the international law debate over the regime of state sovereignty, I argue that beneath and beyond the latter's transformation or continuity, recent UN reform efforts indicate a biopolitical 'reprogramming' of sovereignty and global governance whose political finality is the vitality, security, and productivity of the global population. Contemporary sovereignty and global governance theoretically and substantively implicate non-legal (biological, security, economic, etc.) logics within legal frameworks. This argument challenges the conceptual and normative priority, as well as the practical efficacy, accorded to legal authority, regulation, accountability, etc. in liberal international law discourse. Biopolitical global governance warrants our attention because its ubiquitous and often mundane mechanics bring into political play the lives of those it seeks to direct in less (formally and legally) evident but more enveloping ways than formal sovereign or legal powers alone ever could. My analysis neither endorses nor summarily dismisses the UN's biopolitical program, but problematizes the power mechanisms and subjectivities it implies. Rather than constituting mere negative dialectics, as critics might argue (e.g. Chandler, 2009), the biopolitical analytic is an admonition toward greater reflexivity, and receptivity for complex implications of global governance, for those (scholars, activists, and decision-makers) who would either celebrate the latter's 'progressive' accomplishments or denounce (or despair over) its pitfalls and failures.

Second, addressing the mainstream IR conceptions of power and institutions, I argue that an adequate understanding of the role of the UN in global governance requires a 'displacement' (Foucault, 2007: 116–120) of the UN as an institution and object of analysis. Rather than assuming that we already know the UN, for instance, as a vector for state power (realism) or principal-agent dynamics (neoliberal institutionalism), my analysis attends to discursive practices and technical procedures by which the UN is imagined and constituted in the first place. This approach not only critiques the state- or institution-centric perspectives on the UN in mainstream IR scholarship. It also challenges approaches which, despite their attention to complex, hybrid, decentralized, and networked processes and mechanisms, conceive world order and global governance in terms of some structural (hegemonic, institutional, legal, or normative) arrangement (e.g. Murphy, 1994; Rosenau, 1997; Slaughter, 2004; Hurrell, 2007). By contrast, the 'poststructural' alternative presented here conceives

global governance as an ordering (classifying, managing, etc.) of populations and governing (molding, directing, etc.) of conduct that takes more practical and technical, indeed more governmental, forms. The resulting understanding of the UN as (an effect of) a biopolitical regime of plural governmentality does not imply that the UN (let alone UN reform) is the origin or most important site of global governance. Rather, the UN is, and has been for some time, a sort of ‘crossroads’ or nexus for global biopolitics and governmentalities, and the UN reform debate provides a window on some of the trends and dynamics of the traffic pattern.

Following an outline of Foucault’s (1990, 2003, 2007, 2008) account of biopolitics and governmentality in the first section,⁴ the backdrop for my analysis in the second section is the dispute between neoliberalism and Charter liberalism in international law. Apart from whatever else UN reform may mean for sovereignty as the legal framework of global governance, I argue that it also (re)constitutes the UN as a biopolitical project that comes to inhabit the latter. I illustrate this with reference to notions of human security, collective security, and risk in UN reform discourse. Against the background of the mainstream IR debate on the recent UN reform, the third section discusses the mechanisms of power operating at some remove from, and thereby displacing, the concerns with state power and UN authority, which have preoccupied realists and liberal institutionalists. I specifically highlight technologies of agency (contractualism), performance (benchmarking), and networks in current UN reform efforts.

Biopolitics and governmentality

Foucault identifies a significant shift in political theory and practice in the passage to western modernity. Traditionally, political power had revolved around juridical sovereignty. From the seventeenth century onwards, it begins to center on the biological existence of the population. Political power no longer has its primary manifestation in seizing, suppressing, and taking life, but rather in administering, monitoring, and optimizing it.

⁴ Alternative accounts of biopolitics are those by Agamben (1998) and the Italian School (e.g. Hardt and Negri, 2000; Virno, 2004). Agamben subsumes biopolitics under a quasi-ontological notion of sovereignty; the Italian School sees biopolitics as an outgrowth of capitalism. While Foucault also discusses biopolitics in relation to sovereignty (see below) and capitalism (Foucault, 1990: 140, 141; 2008 *passim*), he identifies a number of irreducible concerns and power mechanisms of biopolitics. Since my analysis takes issue with interpretations that reduce the significance of UN reform to questions over sovereignty or material (or institutional) power, Foucault’s theorization of biopolitics is the most suitable for my purposes. For discussions of different conceptions of biopolitics, see Ojakangas (2005), Rabinow and Rose (2006), and Patton (2007).

Juridical sovereignty and the power over death do not disappear, but the power to expose whole populations to death now has, as its counterpart and rationale, a power that seeks to multiply and regulate life. This new power over life, or biopower, takes two different forms: one concerned with the disciplinary training of the human body in institutions such as prisons, schools, and armies (emerging since the late seventeenth century), the other with the biopolitical regulation of the population at the level of the state (emerging in the second half of the eighteenth and especially the nineteenth century; Foucault, 1990: 135–140, 142, 143; 2003: 240–243).

Foucault thus differentiates biopolitics from both sovereignty and discipline as alternative (but coexisting) mechanisms of power. While sovereignty addresses individuals as legal subjects and discipline targets them as bodies, biopolitical regulation treats individuals as species beings, as members of a population. It takes an interest in problems of reproduction, longevity, welfare, public health, migration, etc. Both as objects of knowledge and fields of intervention, these problems are matters of security (Foucault, 2003: 242–244, 246, 247, 249; 2007: 5). Security here does not signify ‘the old military notion ... [of] the occupation of a territory’, but rather refers to a more pervasive form of regulation ‘which enfolds in itself the lives of each and all’ (Defert, 1991: 232).

Biopolitical security has several related dimensions. First, rather than controlling territory or correcting individual bodies, it aims at regulating ‘circulation’ (e.g. movements of people or goods) (Foucault, 2007: 18–21, 29, 44–48, 65). Second, security mechanisms consider the hitherto ‘aleatory’ phenomena of population (e.g. births and deaths) as serial and statistical facts. By ‘operationalizing’ (counting and thereby creating an account of) life, statistical techniques produce the very reality of the population that is subject to regulatory interventions, and whose security depends on statistical probabilities or averages (Foucault, 2003: 246, 247; 2007: 6, 11, 19, 20). Third, problems of security appear in the framework of an economy of power. Economy involves calculations of efficiency or utility and operates as a regulating principle for the management of life and populations (Foucault, 2007: 6, 10, 11, 66–70, 73, 74). Fourth, security involves social differentiations and hierarchizations, especially between the normal and the abnormal, within populations (Foucault, 1990: 141). Modern racism is a salient example.⁵ Finally, security relies on techniques of ‘normalization’ rather than, or indeed as the basis of,

⁵ Racism structures the field of life that biopower controls. By stipulating that the elimination or containment of the ‘inferior race’ makes life in general ‘healthier’, it allows the (sovereign) power of death to operate concomitantly with the (biopolitical) power over life (Foucault, 2003: 255, 256).

law. Law responds to phenomena such as delinquency or pandemics with prohibitions based on preexisting legal norms. Techniques of normalization, by contrast, use quantification and a calculus of probabilities; they constitute, and subsequently allow for managing, the said phenomena as ‘risks’. Law does not disappear, but legal norms are deduced from the (statistically) normal (Foucault, 2007: 57–63), and operate within a continuum of security apparatuses (e.g. medical institutions) with regulatory (rather than judicial) functions (Foucault, 1990: 144). Law becomes an appendage to biopolitical norms rather than constituting a manifestation of sovereignty.

Despite a secular shift to biopolitical forms of state power, sovereignty has not vanished. Rather, it has been reactivated in the service of biopolitical regulation and security (Foucault, 2007: 8–10). We might call this a biopolitical ‘reprogramming’ of sovereignty. While Foucault discusses this at the level of European towns and territorial states, a similar reprogramming has arguably occurred in the global politics of sovereignty in the UN context. According to Foucault (2003: 249), biopolitical reprogramming occurred because ‘too many things were escaping ... the power of sovereignty, both at the top and at the bottom, ... at the level of detail and at the mass level’. The shibboleth that the sovereign nation-state has become ‘too small for the big problems, and too big for the small problems of life [sic]’ (Bell, 1987: 13, 14) may indicate a similar rationale for biopolitical reprogramming in world politics. Using the UN reform debate as a lens, the second section of this article will show a movement away from, as well as a reprogramming of, the politics of sovereignty at the UN by forms of management and regulation that revolve around life, the population, security, and economy.

Foucault traces the biopolitical reprogramming of sovereignty since the late eighteenth century to an earlier (sixteenth century) literature on ‘arts of government’. This literature assimilates the government of a state to other (e.g. paternal or pedagogical) forms of governing conduct and identifies the application of economy as their central characteristic (Foucault, 2007: 88–95). However, these arts of government could only begin to manifest themselves in practice, when the problem of population emerged in the eighteenth century. The health, wealth, and preservation of the population (rather than sovereignty) became the finality of government. Foucault thus effectively resituates the birth of biopolitics in a history of governmentality (especially liberal governmentality; Foucault, 2007: 104–108; 2008: 20, 21, 317). Governmentality refers to ‘the ensemble’ of

institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this ... power that has the population as

its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security [especially statistics] as its essential technical instrument (Foucault, 2007: 108).

More broadly, governmentality refers to any constellation of political rationalities and techniques for the direction and reform of conduct (see Gordon, 1991; Rose and Miller, 1992; Dean, 1999: Ch. 1).

Governmentality implies a triple ‘displacement’ of the state in the study of power relations: first, a shift from an institution-centric approach to the perspective of a technology of power, ‘which reconstructs a whole network of alliances, communications, and points of support’ constituting what is called the state; second, a shift of focus from state functions to the insertion of the state into ‘a general economy of power’; and third, a shift from an already given object of analysis (the state) to the epistemic context in which the object is constituted (Foucault, 2007: 116–120; see also 247, 248, 276, 277, 358; 2008: 5, 6, 75–77). Overall, Foucault characterizes these shifts in terms of a ‘governmentalization of the state’ (Foucault, 2007: 109); the state becomes ‘the effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities’ (Foucault, 2008: 77) produced in a wider network of power relations that includes (in the standard parlance) governmental and non-governmental agencies and knowledges. The third section of this article will show a similar displacement or governmentalization of the UN in contemporary global governance.

Foucault (2007, 2008) traces the genealogy of governmentality to the pastoral tradition of the Christian church, the invention of *raison d’Etat* and corresponding military–diplomatic and police apparatuses since the sixteenth century, and the rise of liberalism and neoliberalism in the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Initially emerging outside the direct purview of the state, these governmentalities were only subsequently integrated into the exercise of sovereignty. Despite some elements of pastoral and police power, we will see that variants of liberal and neoliberal governmentality are most prevalent in contemporary global governance, as conceived in recent UN reform projects.

Rather than as a theory or ideology, Foucault understands liberalism as a set of principles and methods of government that originated as a critique (and refinement) of *raison d’Etat*. Police had aimed at maximizing the forces of the state and preserving internal order through detailed regulations (pertaining to markets, public health, and morals as well as crime; Foucault, 2007: 319–341). On the basis of political economy, liberalism insisted that ‘natural’ processes of self-regulation in civil society were superior to police regulations in managing the population. Police worried that government was insufficient; liberalism feared that it

was excessive. Liberalism, therefore, promoted the market and the calculation of utility, as well as rights and the rule of law, as principles of limitation for governmental practice (Foucault, 2008: 13–19, 28–32, 37–42, 318, 319).

Contrary to standard assumptions about liberalism's inherent (moral) association with rights and the rule of law, Foucault sees these as connected to utility. The juridical form of law and rights, including the participation of the governed, are more economical than authoritarian regulation in managing the population. Law, rights, and freedom proliferate as elements of liberalism's rationalization of governmental practice, and as correlates of security (Foucault, 2008: 42–44, 61, 62, 317, 318, 321). To facilitate processes of societal self-regulation (e.g. in the sense of Adam Smith's 'invisible hand'), liberalism assumes (or consumes) and must therefore also organize (or produce) freedom (the 'natural' pursuit of individual interests); 'the principle of calculation for this cost of manufacturing freedom ... is called security'. The 'economy of power peculiar to liberalism' then is constituted by the 'interplay of freedom and security' (Foucault, 2008: 65; see also 63, 64, 66, 67; 2007: 44–48, 353, 354).

Neoliberalism emerges in reaction to the welfarist (especially Keynesian) liberalism of the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. It considers the latter's interventions in the market excessive and seeks to rectify this by recasting the liberal model, extending the principle of the market (which it sees in competition rather than exchange) to all societal domains, including governmental activity itself. In an explicit reversal of liberalism's assumption of 'natural liberty', neoliberalism also reimagines *homo oeconomicus* as someone whose free choices require management through external stimuli. Contrary to common understandings of neoliberalism, this involves active (but careful) governmental direction to encourage entrepreneurial conduct, so that competition can play a regulatory role (Foucault, 2008: 67–69, 117–121, 131, 145–147, 161–164, 173, 201, 202, 225, 226, 245–247, 270, 271).

Neoliberal governmentality deploys a variety of legal and technical means, as well as forms of expertise, to promote freedom (in the sense of exercising choice) and to elicit competitive and responsible conduct. These include technologies of risk, agency (e.g. contracts), performance (e.g. benchmarks), and visibility (e.g. graphs; see Rose, 1996; Dean, 1999: Chs 8 and 9). For instance, where welfarist liberalism had governed (dangers to) the population by associating risk with social insurance, neoliberalism governs by associating risk with individual responsibility (see Defert, 1991; Ewald, 1991; O'Malley, 1996).

Rather than representing a succession of historical stages, pastoral, police, and (neo)liberal governmentalities appear in varying configurations in different sites of modern and contemporary politics, including global governance. The relevance of police and (neo)liberal governmentalities to global governance does not rest on a mere domestic analogy in international politics. These types of governmentality inherently transcend the divide between the domestic and the international. Historically, police conditioned and was conditioned by the military–diplomatic apparatus and its objective of maintaining the balance of Europe (Foucault, 2007: 313–315). Likewise, liberalism’s goal of collective enrichment through market mechanisms presupposed what Foucault (2008: 55) presciently called a ‘globalization of the market’. Arguably, contemporary police and (neo)liberal governmentalities are similarly bound up with concerns for ‘collective security’ (rather than ‘balance of power’) and globalization, although I will not defend this claim systematically here.

Using biopolitics and governmentality as sensitizing concepts, the following analysis investigates the two aforementioned UN reform reports, the HLP’s *A More Secure World* (United Nations, 2004) and Annan’s ‘In Larger Freedom’ (United Nations, 2005a), the 2005 World Summit Outcome (United Nations, 2005b), as well as other cognate materials, such as reports to the UN by the Commission on Human Security and the Millennium Project.⁶ As previously indicated, it also uses the academic debate on the most recent UN reform in international law and IR as a point of contrast (and, occasionally, support). While biopolitics and governmentality could be studied in the practices of UN agencies ‘on the ground’ (e.g. in peace operations or development projects), my focus here is the programmatic dimension of UN global governance activity. This comports with Foucault’s position that, with governmentality, he does ‘not want to study the development of real governmental practice’, but rather ‘grasp the level of reflection in ... and on the practice of government. In a sense, ... government’s consciousness of itself’ (Foucault, 2008: 2; see also Senellart, 2007: 387; Dean, 1999: 33, 34). Similarly to the technical and academic treatises (e.g. on *Polizeiwissenschaft* or ordoliberalism) that Foucault investigates, the above-mentioned UN documents and academic literature lend themselves to this approach.

While the Summit Outcome Document is the definitive statement of the current UN reform efforts, it was informed by the two earlier reports, even as it omitted or disputed some of their elements. Nevertheless, the

⁶ A consideration of UN management reform proposals (United Nations, 2006a b) is beyond the scope of this article. From a governmentality perspective, they could be analyzed in terms of ‘reflexive government’ (Dean, 1999: 193–197).

HLP's and the Secretary-General's reports capture significant aspects of contemporary global governance as a reflected practice. While they may not be immediately implemented, the governmental thought that informed them will not simply be unthought, and the knowledge networks that produced them will likely reroute them in new, and perhaps unforeseen, directions (as I will indicate below).

'Reprogramming': biopolitics in sovereignty and global governance

This section addresses the debate between Charter liberalism and neoliberalism among international lawyers and political theorists⁷ in relation to the recent UN reform. I will argue that the focus of this debate on implications of UN reform for state sovereignty obscures a deeper shift toward biopolitics and associated governmentalities in contemporary global governance.

Three issues divide the neoliberal and Charter-liberal perspectives on the recent UN reform: the priority of human security or collective security; the basis of human rights in cosmopolitan solidarity or popular sovereignty; and the qualification or continuation of equal sovereignty. From a neoliberal perspective, Anne-Marie Slaughter (2005: 623, 624; 2006a: 2963, 2964) argues, first, that UN reform implies a shift from state security to human security as an equal or even primary UN responsibility. Second, this entails a new cosmopolitan solidarity (reminiscent of Kant's cosmopolitan right) according to which threats to human security anywhere should be considered as such everywhere (Slaughter, 2005: 619, 624–627; cf. 2006b: 179–182). Third, based on the new conceptions of security and solidarity, Slaughter contends that UN reform requires a redefinition of sovereignty as conditional. Departing from the traditional conception of sovereignty as jurisdictional autonomy and territorial control, 'conditional sovereignty' implies a state's responsibilities to 'protect the welfare of its own peoples [sic]' and to 'meet its obligations to the wider international community' (Slaughter, 2005: 628; cf. 2006a: 2964; United Nations, 2004: 17). Accordingly, the UN would be authorized to judge, assist and, if necessary, enforce states' responsible exercise of their internal and external sovereignty: 'sovereignty misused ... could become sovereignty denied' (Slaughter, 2005: 628; cf. 620, 624, 629, 631).

⁷ See Simpson (2001). Charter liberalism posits the ontological priority of the state and avers legal equality among states irrespective of their internal characteristics. Neoliberalism posits the ontological priority of the individual and differentiates among states based on their adherence to individual rights and international norms. The debate has parallels with the pluralist–solidarist divide in English School IR theory (e.g. Buzan, 2004: 45–62). While neoliberalism in international law differs from neoliberalism as governmentality, my argument implies that the former blends into the latter.

Jean Cohen cautions against the neoliberal vision of UN reform, finding it ‘normatively flawed and politically dangerous’. She favors a ‘dualist model’ of international law and UN reform (Cohen, 2006: 486, 487, 497, 498; cf. 2004: 13): in a Charter-liberal vein, she avers the principle of equal sovereignty (and its corollary of non-intervention), thereby rejecting the neoliberal attempt to qualify the latter by differentiating compliant and outlaw (‘rogue’, ‘failed’) states (Cohen, 2006: 486, 491, 492, 495, 496; 2004: 19–24);⁸ in a republican popular-sovereignty vein, she insists on the legal definition of human rights through domestic political processes, thereby rejecting the moralization of individual rights in the name of cosmopolitan solidarity. Collective security (rather than human security) supplements the sovereign-equality and popular-sovereignty pillars of Cohen’s dualist model (Cohen, 2006: 491, 492, 494; 2004: 12). Cohen sees neoliberalism’s advocacy of human security and conditional sovereignty as inadvertently abetting US-, and potentially, UN-sponsored imperial projects under the banners of ‘freedom’ and ‘regime change’ (Cohen, 2006: 487, 488, 491–497; 2004: 3, 10, 11, 14, 18; see also 2008).

Focusing on the notions of human security and collective security in recent UN reform efforts, I will show that despite the apparent disagreement over the status of sovereignty in neoliberal and Charter-liberal arguments, these are unified by underlying biopolitical themes that transcend the legalistic idea of sovereignty assumed by both. While both human and collective security are biopolitical, they mobilize different elements of (neo)liberal governmentality. Human security is to be governed through freedom and empowerment, collective security through risk and responsibility, and both additionally through police. Let us consider these in turn.

Human security

While ‘the human’ is not necessarily coterminous with life in the biopolitical sense (Dillon, 2007: 11), the notion of human security – prominent in humanitarian, development, and security discourses since the 1990s, and central to both the HLP’s and Annan’s reform proposals⁹ – encapsulates

⁸ Despite initial reservations about a possible erosion of the principle of equal sovereignty in the HLP report, Cohen (2006: 490, 498–501) eventually endorses the report as a suitable embodiment of her model.

⁹ While the HLP and Annan only occasionally invoke human security explicitly, the notion provides a crucial rationale for their reform projects. The framing of Annan’s report in terms of Roosevelt’s ‘freedom from want’ and ‘freedom from fear’ parallels UNDP’s (United Nations Development Programme, 1994: 24) original conception of human security. Although the World Summit Outcome sees a need for further discussion and definition of human security by the General Assembly (United Nations, 2005b: 31), a Human Security Unit has existed in the UN Secretariat since 2004.

biopolitical governance in an almost paradigmatic fashion. Since the main reform texts considered here do not explicitly define human security (largely taking the notion for granted), we will examine *Human Security Now*, the report of the Commission on Human Security (CHS) of 2003, which provided the basis for the institutionalization of human security at the UN, to illustrate this.

Developed as a critique of the traditional prioritization of state security, human security, as defined by the CHS (2003: 4), aims at the protection and enhancement of ‘the vital core of all human lives’. The CHS adds that ‘[w]hat people consider to be “vital” ... varies across individuals and societies’, but later states that ‘the very heart of [human] security is protecting human lives’, and that ‘[h]ealth security is at the vital core of human security’ (CHS, 2003: 4, 96). A diagram further suggests that the ‘vital core’ of human security is defined by a triangle of ‘survival’, ‘livelihood’, and ‘dignity’ (CHS, 2003: 97). Cultural variability and Kantian dignity notwithstanding, the ‘human’ in human security seems to center on biological existence.

The CHS’s (2003: Chs 2–7) report shows that human security has become a key dimension for biopolitical programs ranging from humanitarian assistance in civil wars and refugee crises to post-conflict peacebuilding, development, global health, and education initiatives. Statistical representation of mortality, morbidity, and illiteracy rates, etc. (CHS, 2003: 95, 99, 114; cf. UNDP, 1994: Ch. 2) is a key technology making human security amenable to regulatory intervention. The statistical representation of demographic and developmental trends makes life governable at the level of the world population.¹⁰

The ‘security’ in human security has two aspects, a police concern with ‘protection’ and a liberal concern with ‘empowerment’: *Protection strategies* respond to individually or locally uncontrollable threats, such as financial crises, terrorist attacks, or water shortages. They involve a network of states, international agencies, NGOs, and the private sector to establish norms, processes, and institutions to ‘shield people from menaces’ (CHS, 2003: 10, 11). The commitment to the responsibility to protect populations from genocide and other mass atrocities (United Nations, 2005b: 30) provides an additional rationale for the protective dimension of human security. *Empowerment strategies*, especially information and education, aim at enabling people ‘to act on their own behalf’, ‘develop their resilience’, or ‘scrutinize social arrangements and take collective action’. In one case, (human) security is assumed to result from ‘comprehensive’ and ‘systematic’

¹⁰ This kind of statistical representation is, of course, a pervasive feature of the UN activity and reform. For examples, see <http://www.un.org/summit2005/documents.html>.

intervention by ('police') experts, whereas in the other, it results from the local initiative and self-regulation of civil society (CHS, 2003: 10, 11).

When applied to specific issues, police and liberal aspects of human security are said to complement each other. For instance, concerning public health, it is noted from a police-minded perspective that '[s]udden outbreaks of a contagious disease ... can destabilize an entire society', and that therefore, 'visible and demonstrable capacity for effective health action is essential to calm public fears'. Conversely, from a liberal perspective, 'good health ... enables people to exercise choice, pursue social opportunities and plan for their future', that is, to become agents and entrepreneurs for their own well-being (CHS, 2003: 96, 97).

Police and liberal rationalities also intersect in the responsibility to protect. On the one hand, the latter assumes that, individually and collectively, states may not be governing enough to ensure the safety of populations and rein in threats to societal well-being. States therefore ought to prevent 'such crimes ... through appropriate and necessary means', and the 'international community' may intervene through prevention, mediation, enforcement, or post-conflict reconstruction (United Nations, 2005b: 30). On the other hand, the new norm articulates a (freely undertaken) 'responsibility' (rather than, say, a duty or legal obligation) of states and the UN to protect vulnerable populations. The responsibility to protect thus addresses governments and international organizations both as 'policemen' and as free agents with a capacity for moral choice.

As a biopolitical modality of governance, human security employs but decenters law, specifically human rights. Amartya Sen, a member of the CHS, explains that '[h]uman rights may or may not be legalized', and that 'the concept of human rights leaves open the question of which particular freedoms are crucial enough to count as human rights'. However, he adds, '[t]his is where human security can provide standards of "basic insecurities"' (CHS, 2003: 9). This curious argument shows the characteristic biopolitical slippage from law to norm(alization): while human rights appear as preexisting legal norms governing life, human security (normalized in terms of 'basic insecurities') effectively becomes the principle of calculation for determining the legal status of human rights. Human security provides the account of life that allows life to be governed by human rights. If human security provides criteria for identifying human rights, the latter become imbricated in economic, medical, military, pedagogical, etc. apparatuses deployed to further human security.¹¹ While

¹¹ And, of course, this is not a mere side effect of a human securitization of human rights, but indeed the explicit agenda of 'mainstreaming' human rights into all UN activities (United Nations, 2005a: 37).

human security entails a biopoliticization of human rights, it may simultaneously operate in conjunction with sovereign power (and perhaps stimulate its globalization; see De Larrinaga and Doucet, 2008). This ambivalence is reflected by the fact that human security is defined in opposition to state security, while ostensibly complementing it at the same time (CHS, 2003: 2, 4).

Collective security

To address human insecurity, Slaughter (2005: 627) calls for a new cosmopolitan solidarity, both as a substantive ‘value’ (underpinning UN action against threats to human security) and a procedural ‘constraint’ (mandating multilateral assessment of any such action). However, cosmopolitan solidarity not only responds to human insecurity; it is also connected to ‘collective security’. Collective security is the organizing theme of the HLP report and also taken up in ‘In Larger Freedom’. If the 1990s called for ‘human security’, the HLP report sees the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 as necessitating a renewal of ‘collective security’ (United Nations, 2004: 13). Collective security is, of course, the idea favored by Cohen as a bulwark against imperial instrumentalizations of human security. *Pace* Cohen and Slaughter, we can see that collective security itself has taken on a biopolitical cast, and that in this connection, cosmopolitan solidarity figures as a technology of risk and insurance rather than a substantive or procedural norm.

In UN reform discourse, collective security has assumed a new and broader meaning, which includes biopolitical as well as state security: ‘Any event or process that leads to large-scale death or lessening of life chances and undermines States as the basic unit of the international system is a threat to international security’ (United Nations, 2004: 23; 2005a: 24, 25). Apart from its traditional connotations, collective security now has the typical markers of biopolitical security: the concerns with the life (health, wealth, habitat, etc.) of the population, circulation (rather than territory), statistical series, economy, social differentiation, and normalization. These characteristics, in turn, are articulated within a logic of risk and insurance.

Security threats now not only stem from inter- or intra-state violence, terrorism, and transnational crime, but also from infectious diseases, poverty, and environmental degradation.¹² ‘Collective security’ no longer implies the mere containment of particular threats against territorial

¹² It is curious how 11 September 2001 ‘revealed’ (United Nations, 2004: 13) this particular spectrum of security threats. Incidentally, collective security also encompasses ‘biological security’, which includes public health, biotechnology, and bioterrorism policies (United Nations, 2004: viii).

integrity. Instead, it must respond to the biopolitical condition whereby individual threats appear interconnected rather than representing aleatory events, and circulate across territories rather than being territorially based or bound. The supposed interdependence of all threats – economic and social, internal and international, conventional and non-conventional, terrorist and criminal – and of all those affected by them, constitutes the fundamental rationale of contemporary collective security:

Today, ... threats are interrelated and a threat to one is a threat to all. The mutual vulnerability of weak and strong has never been clearer. Global economic integration means that a major terrorist attack anywhere in the developed world would have devastating consequences for the well-being of millions of people in the developing world. ... Similarly, the security of the most affluent State can be held hostage to the ability of the poorest State to contain an emerging disease. ... *Every threat to international security today enlarges the risk of other threats.* ... Poverty, infectious disease, environmental degradation and war feed one another in a deadly cycle (United Nations, 2004: 14, 15, my emphasis; cf. also vii, xi, 119; 2005a: 5, 6, 25).

The new collective security regime envisioned in UN reform efforts not only problematizes threats in terms of the contingency, circulation, and connectivity marking the biopolitics of 'global liberal life' (Dillon, 2007: 20); it also seeks to govern them through risk and insurance.

By objectifying interdependent threats as risks, collective security can operate as an insurance regime; it can invert the meaning of threats, transforming them from obstacles into opportunities for regulation. Conceptualizing threats as risks means that threats no longer constitute discrete, absolute, and existential dangers emanating from an external enemy; rather, they represent serial, graduated, and calculated hazards stemming from the interconnected collective security 'system' itself. Unlike the traditional notion of the collective security that hinged on the determination of juridical responsibility (i.e. the identification of an aggressor state), collective security as an insurance regime is linked to a calculus of probabilities (cf. Ewald, 1991: 200). In presenting 'the case for comprehensive collective security', the HLP uses a diagram that shows the positive correlation between lower levels of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita with higher levels of the 'predicted probability of civil war onset' (United Nations, 2004: 15). Leaving aside the supposed interdependence of all threats for the moment, this implies that collective security is no longer primarily governed by direct diplomatic and military techniques (sanctions, collective defense, etc.), but rather by promoting a GDP per capita ratio that will allow the problem of civil (and perhaps international) war to regulate itself.

Traditional collective security identified victims and aggressors in a territorial inter-state space. Actuarial collective security, by contrast, individualizes its participants in a biopolitical global space, states within the ‘population’ of states and individuals within the world population. Moreover, while traditional collective security presupposed equal (legal) sovereignty, actuarial collective security differentiates ‘weak’ and ‘strong’, ‘affluent’ and ‘poor’ states. However, in a biopolitical global space no one can evade risk. Each state and each person may harbor risk factors and is potentially exposed to risk (though not necessarily to the same degree). No one’s conduct, however innocent, is beyond the suspicion of risk (cf. Ewald, 1991: 203). ‘Because international flight times are shorter than the incubation periods for many infectious diseases’, the HLP report warns, ‘any one of 700 million international airline passengers every year can be an unwitting global disease-carrier’ (United Nations, 2004: 14).¹³ Conversely, according to an HLP researcher, transnational threats from infectious disease mean that ‘[i]n biodefense terms, every state and population is vulnerable as long as any one remains under-defended’ (Jones, 2006: 225).

How is collective security governed through risk and insurance? According to Ewald (1991: 203), ‘[i]nsurance’s characteristic operation is the constitution of mutualities’. Slaughter captures this in the notion of cosmopolitan solidarity.¹⁴ However, in her rendering, this implies a largely neoliberal, individualizing and responsabilizing, constitution of mutualities (cf. O’Malley, 1996). Despite the designation of collective security as ‘our shared responsibility’ in the subtitle of the HLP report, the new collective security regime does not collectivize risks under the auspices of the UN but delegates the main responsibility for risk management to states ‘who are still the frontline responders to today’s threats’ (United Nations, 2004: 17, 18; cf. 2005a: 6). However, due to the biopolitical interdependence and circulation of threats the ‘front line’ is everywhere, and not all states appear equally suited to the task. Slaughter, therefore, differentiates more qualified and more at-risk states, and assigns distinct responsibilities to each category. ‘[D]eveloped states’ – somewhat pastorally – assume ‘the responsibility ... to look to the conditions threatening the security of the majority of the world’s citizens’. Conversely, at-risk states not only assume the ‘responsibility’ of sparing their citizens harm, but also ‘to accept aid and expertise from their fellow members of the

¹³ Of course, this logic of risk extends beyond international air travelers. If poverty, for instance, is defined as a ‘threat to collective security’, any ‘poor’ person is both a potential risk bearer and member of an at-risk group.

¹⁴ Gordon (1991: 40) notes that ‘[t]he concept of social risk makes it possible for insurance technologies to be ... presented as creative ... of ... social solidarity’.

international community and to use it wisely and well' (Slaughter, 2005: 625). Cosmopolitan solidarity, Slaughter (2005: 619) says, cannot guarantee 'prosperity', but 'at least the health and education necessary to strive for it'; it cannot guarantee 'long lives', but at least governments' abstention from and prevention of the taking of lives. Aid and expertise notwithstanding, cosmopolitan solidarity is not a program of guaranteed welfare. Rather, the recipients of assistance must household 'wisely and well' to produce their own security. Like a doctor, the 'international community' can 'look to the condition' of the patient, but ultimately, the responsible patient must minimize her risk factors by changing her lifestyle.

Complementing the responsabilizing mutuality of the new collective security regime is a preventative (or prudential) ethos of risk (rather than the traditionally restitutive ethos of insurance; cf. O'Malley, 1996: 199–202; Dean, 1999: 189). For each threat to collective security (terrorism, poverty, etc.), the HLP first explains the nature of the threat and then recommends preventative measures for states and the 'international community' (United Nations, 2004: 24, 55; cf. 2005a: 24–33). Specific measures aside, development is identified as 'the indispensable foundation for a collective security system that takes prevention seriously': development alleviates conditions 'that kill millions and threaten human security', helps 'prevent or reverse the erosion of State capacity', and facilitates 'preventing' civil war, terrorism, and organized crime (United Nations, 2004: 23; cf. Slaughter 2006b: 182–185). The deployment of development toward collective security constitutes an attempt to use 'reality' to check itself, which, as Foucault (2007: 47, 48) explains, is profoundly linked to liberalism's governing through 'natural' processes. However, this approach may involve paradoxes.

As part of a strategy of globalizing markets, development may entail some of the very risks it seeks to contain in the first place. If globalization means that a terrorist attack 'in the developed world' could have devastating economic consequences 'in the developing world' (United Nations, 2004: 14), the very attempt to interrupt the biopolitical circulation of threats to collective security through preventative development may instead fuel it. As a technology of risk, collective security may not actually provide insurance coverage. Rather than addressing threats to collective security then, the political efficacy of cosmopolitan solidarity may consist in fostering certain subjectivities and mutualities (especially between 'developed' and 'developing' countries) while discouraging others (e.g. within the group of 77 or the non-aligned movement; see South Centre, 2005: 128).¹⁵ As a managerial

¹⁵ Even the World Summit's greater emphasis on South–South cooperation confirms this, because the latter is said to 'complement' North–South cooperation (United Nations, 2005b: 10).

principle, insurance mutualizes and demutualizes at the same time (Defert, 1991: 213, 227–232). It may ultimately promote a self-validation of the ‘international community’ and ‘global governance’ while seeking to insure against ‘revolution’ (cf. Ewald, 1991: 209) in the international system.

Apart from its (neo)liberal aspects of risk and responsibility, collective security also has a more police-oriented dimension, indicated by Slaughter’s view that the new regime implies conditional sovereignty.¹⁶ The notion of conditional sovereignty is a diagnostic device that allows for differentiating states that ‘fulfill’ from those that ‘fail’ in their responsibilities, ‘good citizens in the international system’ from states that have lost their ‘good standing’ (Slaughter, 2005: 629, 631). This could result in normalizing interventions by the UN Security Council, whose authority would however be continuous with an array of concerned sovereignty watchers including coalitions of states (e.g. NATO), transgovernmental networks, UN agencies, NGOs, and ‘global public opinion’ (cf. Slaughter, 2006a: 2966–2969; 2006b: 176, 177, 184–187; 2005: 631).

Despite its legalistic appearance, conditional sovereignty has a biopolitical rationale, involving differentiations that allow normalization and, if necessary, corresponding police interventions. The differentiation implicit in understanding poverty, infectious diseases, terrorism, environmental degradation, and non-conventional weapons proliferation *as threats to collective security* was not lost on some observers. South Centre notes that this ‘definition ... principally targets the South’ as ‘the presumed home of such security threats’, whereas it ‘is silent on the multitude of direct and indirect threats’ to ‘developing countries and their populations’, or ‘put[ing] world peace at risk’, which ‘emanate from the North’.¹⁷ ‘Collective security’, as conceived by UN reformers, appears geared to ‘transform the whole of the South into a potential theatre for legitimized interventionism by those with global reach, using ... containment, sanctions, policing and military action’ (South Centre, 2005: 54, 55, cf. 124, 125, 137, 138, 143–145).

Similarly to Cohen, South Centre (2005: 117, 118, 128, 140, 141, 156) recommends a renewed commitment to the UN Charter and equal sovereignty as the appropriate response to the specter of biopolitical interventionism. The idea of ‘sovereignty as critical theory/practice’ is attractive, but two caveats are in order. First, while Cohen’s insistence on equal sovereignty seeks to avoid discrimination of ‘outlaw’ states, her endorsement of collective security potentially reintroduces the latter in a

¹⁶ Recent UN discourse has shifted (back) to the related notion of ‘responsible sovereignty’. See, for example, Ban (2008).

¹⁷ Note that even this critique affirms the population and risk rationales of collective security.

biopolitical form. Overlooking the radical biopolitical reformulation of collective security, Cohen (2006: 501) approvingly refers to the HLP's standards of legitimacy for the use of force in collective security interventions as 'the usual just war criteria'. However, at least two of these criteria, 'proportional means'¹⁸ and 'balance of consequences'¹⁹ (United Nations, 2004: 67), follow a biopolitical logic of economy and utility rather than a legal (let alone sovereign) logic. More importantly, pertaining to those Security Council decisions 'with large-scale life-and-death impact' (United Nations, 2004: 66), the criteria can be understood as part of a biopolitical reconfiguration of the power over death that corresponds to the promotion of life. Given the interdependence of all threats, interventions against threats to life in the name of collective security would make life in general 'healthier' and more secure. Similarly to Slaughter's notion of conditional sovereignty then, the 'just war criteria' for collective security interventions make it possible to sort 'responsible' and 'irresponsible' ways of (political) life, and if necessary, to sanction the latter by lethal force.

A second caveat concerns the republican aspect of Cohen's argument, that is, her insistence on popular sovereignty as the internal complement of sovereign equality among states. After all, it was the *ur*-advocate of popular sovereignty who brought the biopolitical concern with the population into the canon of modern political philosophy. 'What is the aim of the political association?' asks Rousseau (1988: 137) in *On Social Contract* and answers:

It is the preservation and prosperity of its members. And what is the surest sign that they are safe and prosperous? It is their number and their population. ... All things being equal in other respects, the government under which the citizens increase and multiply the most ... is unquestionably the best; the one under which a people diminishes and dies out is the worst. Statisticians, it is now up to you; count, measure, compare.

Following Montesquieu, Rousseau advises founders of states to attend to such biopolitical concerns as the ratio between population and territorial size, healthy population growth, female fertility, appropriate levels of labor and consumption, and other 'attributes of the country ... more or less favorable to population' (Rousseau, 1988: 114; cf. 116, 117, 133, 134). The republican tradition thus mixes political self-determination and legally warranted freedom and equality with biopolitical elements.

¹⁸ 'Are the scale, duration, and intensity of the proposed military action the minimum necessary to meet the threat in question?'

¹⁹ 'Is there a reasonable chance of the military action being successful in meeting the threat in question, with the consequences of action not likely to be worse than the consequences of inaction?'

To maintain sovereign authority, Rousseau (1988: 142) recommends to ‘[p]opulate the territory evenly, extend the same rights everywhere, bring forth abundance and life in every location’, and thereby make the state ‘at once the strongest and best governed possible’.

This section has illustrated that both neoliberal and Charter-liberal discourses of international law are not merely concerned with juridical sovereignty. They are also implicated in the latter’s biopolitical reprogramming, which lies at the heart of the reconceptualization of security as ‘human’ and ‘collective’ in recent UN reform efforts. While this is more apparent in neoliberalism’s emphases on human security, cosmopolitan solidarity, and conditional sovereignty, even Charter liberalism does not escape biopolitics. Given that the HLP’s conception of collective security was not adopted by the 2005 World Summit, some might dismiss it as a mere governmental fantasy. However, this would be a legalistic mistake. The biopolitical notion of collective security has continued to propagate, for instance, in UN initiatives on peace education (see Migiro, 2007; United Nations Cyberschoolbus, 2007), the WHO’s promotion of ‘international health security’ (Chan, 2007), and even the security doctrine of the new US administration (Jones, 2009).

‘Displacement’: from state power and institutional authority to (neo)liberal global governmentality

This section engages mainstream IR views on UN reform. The main issues here are the role of state power and the institutional authority of the UN. The primary focus of IR contributions has been on reform of the UN Security Council. In realist-leaning views, ‘much of the reform debate, at its basest level, is a struggle over political turf, over who is perceived to gain or lose influence within the Organization’ (Luck, 2003: 5). The UN, and the Security Council in particular, it is said, should ‘better reflect the contemporary distribution of power in the world’ rather than that of 1945 (Luck, 2005a: 5; cf. 2005b; Glennon, 2005).²⁰ The relatively meager outcome of the reform effort appears as a result of ‘soft balancing’ against US priorities for UN reform (Stedman, 2007). To liberals, Security Council reform (i.e. enlargement) rather poses dilemmas between the legitimacy (or representativeness) and efficiency (or effectiveness) of UN institutional authority (Weiss, 2003; Imber, 2006; Müller, 2006: 3–95).

²⁰ Contrary to the usual call for greater non-western representation in the Security Council, Luck (2005a) argues that ‘realistically’ (i.e. based on military and economic capacity), this would mean further strengthening US and European influence; curbing US influence through UN reform would portend an ‘unstable’ multipolar world.

Focusing on Annan's 'In Larger Freedom' and the 2005 World Summit Outcome, this section shows that global governance involves forms of power and authority that transcend the rather narrow confines of realist and liberal accounts. Realists reduce the operation of power to the resources and influence of states; liberals assume that the authority of the UN is necessarily a function of UN legitimacy or performance. Both miss more varied, decentralized, and technical mechanisms of power not inherently tied to either resources possessed by states or the perceived legitimacy or efficiency of the UN, and whose dynamics reach well beyond the UN Security Council. As a pervasive feature of social life, power cannot be possessed, contained within an institution, pinpointed as domination, or suspended through accountability (Foucault, 1980: 78–108). In UN reform discourse, power operates through neoliberal governmental technologies, including contractualism, benchmarking, and networks. These governmentalities 'displace' UN authority by highlighting that the latter is not inherently a function of state power or institutional legitimacy, but also follows a self-validating and self-propagating technical logic. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will serve as the main example to elucidate this.

(Neo)liberal biopolitics

If collective security was the organizing theme of the HLP report, freedom is that of Annan's reform agenda. While debates surrounding the 'war on terror' have underscored the conflict between security and freedom, in UN reform discourse we can (apparently) have *A More Secure World ... 'In Larger Freedom'*. This peaceful coexistence and continuity of freedom and security is not a coincidence. In the (broadly) liberal governmentality reflected in contemporary UN reform, security has practices of freedom as a necessary counterpart. While selective restrictions of freedom in the name of security are possible (e.g. quarantines during epidemics; United Nations, 2004: 30), in general, security here is a function of freedom rather than a limit to it. The rationale of security is at once biopolitical (concerned with the preservation of life), liberal (concerned with economy and freedom), and police-oriented (concerned with order and stability). Accordingly, Annan warns of 'the costs of missing this [reform] opportunity: millions of lives that could have been saved will be lost; many freedoms that could have been secured will be denied; and we shall inhabit are [sic] more dangerous and unstable world' (United Nations, 2005a: 23).

The framework for freedom in Annan's report is a variation on Roosevelt's 'four freedoms' that originally inspired the UN Charter. 'In Larger

Freedom’ reduces the four freedoms into three: the ‘freedom from want’, the ‘freedom from fear’, and the ‘freedom to live in dignity’ (or development, security, and human rights). Since important aspects of the second and third of these have been addressed above, the main focus here is on the freedom from want/development. Far from signaling welfare internationalism, the freedom from want is problematized in peculiarly neoliberal ways in UN reform discourse. The basis for ‘advancing a vision of larger freedom’ is a logic of accountability. According to Annan,

[w]e ... need new mechanisms to ensure accountability – the accountability of states to their citizens, of States to each other, of international institutions to their members and of the present generation to future generations. Where there is accountability we will progress. (United Nations, 2005a: 7)

Problematizing freedom in terms of accountability presupposes a neoliberal suspicion of government: government cannot be trusted; it has to be held accountable.²¹ Ironically, this does not mean the end of government, but rather its reinvention on new terms. Upgrading liberalism’s reliance on ‘natural’ liberty and ‘natural’ social processes, neoliberal governmentality actively cultivates freedom (understood as the exercise of choice) and mobilizes societal self-regulation. This occurs ‘through the invention and proliferation of new quasi-economic models of action’, that is, technologies of agency and performance that foster entrepreneurial and competitive conduct (Burchell, 1996: 27; cf. Dean, 1999: 155–159, 167–170). In UN reform plans, this is particularly evident in connection with the MDGs, which, since their introduction at the Millennium Summit, have become the cornerstone of ‘operationalizing’ the freedom from want. As explained below, this operationalization (and ‘accountabilization’) occurs through neoliberal technologies of contractualism (or partnership) and benchmarking.

While the HLP largely sees development as a preventative strategy in the service of collective security, Annan and the 2005 World Summit (United Nations, 2005b: 2) put greater emphasis on development as an imperative in its own right: ‘[global] society must be developed’, we might paraphrase Foucault (2003). Development is to occur ‘in the lives of individual men and women’ who ‘must ... have the *freedom to choose* the kind of lives they would like to live’ (United Nations, 2005a: 5, 6; my

²¹ Of course, the call for accountability reflects a long-standing liberal concern about legitimate state power. However, neoliberalism extends it beyond the formal executive and legislative processes to more informal regulatory and managerial activities of states and other collectivities.

emphasis). Rather than a matter of centralized global redistribution (as, for example, in the New International Economic Order initiative of 1970s), development is conceived as the result of the decentralized efforts of various ‘stakeholders’. First among these are individual states, each bearing the ‘primary responsibility for its own development’ (United Nations, 2005a: 12; cf. 2005b: 4), and called to provide the political and economic environment ‘in which individuals can prosper and society develop’. However, ‘[s]tates ... cannot do the job alone’, but depend on ‘an active civil society’, ‘a dynamic private sector’, and international institutions to succeed (United Nations, 2005a: 6, 7; cf. 2005b: 4). While individuals are the ultimate targets and intended beneficiaries of development, they will be reached by mobilizing the biopolitical agency of states and other ‘stakeholders’. The MDGs are the chief ‘social and political mobilization tool’ for this.²²

The MDGs are biopolitics par excellence. They target the world population with an interest in (regulating) rates of poverty, nutrition, education, mortality, and morbidity, and with a view to its productivity. Rather than the legal regulation, disciplining, or uplifting of individual poor, hungry, or diseased bodies, they are concerned with the biopolitical management of statistical proportions that indicate productivity in the world population.²³ The Millennium Project’s (2006b: 216–218) report ‘Investing in Development’²⁴ notes,

For the billion-plus people still living in extreme poverty, the MDGs are a life-and-death issue. ... The Goals are ends in themselves, but for these households [in extreme poverty] they are also capital inputs – the means to a productive life, to economic growth, and to further development. A healthier worker is a more productive worker. A better educated worker is a more productive worker.

While the MDGs are, of course, not original to the UN reform projects under discussion here, by 2005 (and increasingly since then), they had moved from being merely idealistic or ideological aspirations to embodying neoliberal governmentality in practical and technical ways. As previously

²² John Ruggie, chief author of the MDGs as special adviser to Annan, cited in Traub (2006: 149).

²³ The eight MDGs are further disaggregated into 18 time-bound ‘targets’ and 48 quantified ‘indicators’ to measure progress. MDG targets include the halving of extreme poverty and hunger, the two-thirds reduction of infant and three-quarters reduction of maternal mortality, and the halving of the proportion of people lacking safe drinking water and basic sanitation. See United Nations (2005a: 8–10) and Millennium Project (2006a).

²⁴ This report was the main document informing ‘In Larger Freedom’ along with the HLP report.

noted, the implementation of the MDGs relies on sovereign states (and other ‘stakeholders’). However, corresponding to their biopolitical rationality, the MDGs’ means of implementation are not only sovereign but also biopolitical; rather than through sovereign or international law, the global population is to be governed through biopolitical norms (rates, averages, proportions, etc.). Sovereign states themselves thus become invested with a biopolitical logic. Specifically, the MDGs involve them in ‘a global partnership [or compact] for development’²⁵ and commit them to ‘globally accepted benchmarks’ (United Nations, 2005a: 10, 12; cf. 2005b: 3). Let us consider these in turn.

Contractualism and benchmarking

Contractualism refers to a recent ‘extra’- or ‘quasi-juridical proliferation’ of the form of the contract in a variety of settings (from warfare to virginity pledges). It typically manifests itself in the ‘contracting-out’ of formerly public services to private actors (Dean, 1999: 167). The parties to the contract envisioned by the current UN reform are developed and developing countries. Each party accepts certain responsibilities: developing countries for ‘good governance’ and private-sector development; developed countries for increased development assistance, fairer trade relations, and debt relief (United Nations, 2005a: 12; 2005b: 3–9). Although the UN was perhaps never intended to provide development as a public service, the contractualism manifest in the MDGs is a relatively recent (post-Cold War) development in UN development discourse.²⁶ Through the MDGs, the UN ‘contracts-out’ the responsibility for development to individual states and other ‘stakeholders’. The MDGs thus allow the UN to govern development ‘at a distance’ (cf. Rose and Miller, 1992: 180, 181, 184), that is, through the self-government of autonomous ‘stakeholders’.

Contractualism implies particular subjectivities. For instance, in the global partnership for development, developing states are addressed (and thereby ‘constructed’) as rational choosers and strategic actors much like businesses: since ‘national economic policy ... is now often framed by international disciplines, commitments, and global market considerations’, the World Summit Outcome notes, ‘[i]t is for each Government to evaluate the trade-off between the benefits of accepting international rules ... and the constraints posed by the loss of policy space’ (United Nations, 2005b: 4). In other words, each government ought to calculate the costs and benefits of participating

²⁵ The development of this ‘partnership’ is the eighth MDG. On partnerships as forms of neoliberal governmentality, see Abrahamsen (2004).

²⁶ The UN Global Compact is another major example.

(or not) in the development compact. Developing countries are also urged to formulate ‘goal-oriented policy frameworks’ aimed at ‘scaling up investments’, and to adopt, implement, and ‘take ownership’ of ‘ambitious national development’ or ‘poverty reduction strategies’²⁷ to meet the MDGs within the contract period (by 2015; United Nations, 2005a: 12; 2005b: 3, 4; Millennium Project, 2006b: 208).

Apart from their contractual logic, the MDGs are a paradigmatic example of governing through benchmarking. Originating as a relatively narrow technical tool to ensure product quality in corporate practice in the late 1980s, benchmarking has evolved into a management theory and full-fledged neoliberal governmental strategy based on sectoral and cross-national performance comparisons of public and private organizations (Larner and Le Heron, 2004: 215–219). Benchmarking involves ‘the identification of peers ... which exemplify the best practice in some activity’ and thereby ‘represent reference points’ against which performance can be measured (Cherchye and Kuosmanen, 2006: 139). It ‘fabricates new fields of competition made up of best-practice peers that other individuals and organizations seek to emulate’ (Larner and Le Heron, 2004: 215).

The MDGs apply the logic of benchmarking to global biopolitical management issues, such as worldwide rates of extreme poverty and hunger, primary school attendance, and infant and maternal mortality. At the heart of the logic of benchmarking are comparisons, in the case of the MDGs, comparisons of biopolitical performance levels of nation–states. As global benchmarks, the MDGs are said to ‘have galvanized unprecedented efforts’ toward poverty eradication (United Nations, 2005a: 10; cf. 2005b: 3). The MDGs thus construct a global space of reference in which nation–states are mobilized to ‘compete’ for the achievement of biopolitical goals. Several implications of this should be noted.

First, worthy as the MDGs may be, there is nothing natural about conceiving development with reference to a global (or any) peer group and global, statistically determined performance targets, rather than, say, domestically (perhaps democratically) formulated aspirations. Second, the MDGs naturalize an updated version of the development model of modernization theory (ultimately inherited from the European Enlightenment), according to which a society’s development is a self-contained (rather than an internationally contingent) process that necessitates certain ‘variables’ or institutions (see Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004: Ch. 3). The updating of the model consists in its biopolitical rather than political–institutional, sociocultural, or (strictly) economic targets. Third and

²⁷ On ‘strategy’ as a governmental technology, see Walters and Haahr (2005: 126, 128).

consistent with biopolitics, benchmarking allows for the differentiation and ‘grading’ of countries (or whole continents), and the identification of corresponding interventions or recommendations. For instance, countries lagging in MDG implementation can be eligible for ‘quick-impact initiatives’ (e.g. free mosquito nets; United Nations, 2005b: 9), whereas upwardly mobile countries ‘where the Goals are already within reach’ may be well advised to upgrade to ‘a “Millennium Development Goal-plus” strategy, with more ambitious targets’ (United Nations, 2005a: 12). Functional or geographical categories of countries (e.g. the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries) or an entire continent (Africa) can be seen as having ‘special needs’, and therefore deserving special international attention and support (United Nations, 2005a: 18–20; cf. 2005a: 23, 24). Overall, benchmarks thus restructure the global development arena as a space of performance and enterprise, and (only) if necessary, therapeutic remedial interventions (e.g. financial aid or debt relief).

According to Annan’s report, the MDGs ‘must no longer be floating targets, referred to now and then to measure progress. They must inform, on a daily basis, national strategies and international assistance alike’ (United Nations, 2005a: 22). Typically, technical devices and visualization play a role in such everyday neoliberal governmentality (Walters and Haahr, 2005: 119, 125, 126). Benchmarking presupposes the measurability and visibility of targets of government. The MDGs have spurred a variety of attempts to accomplish this. Social scientists have suggested ‘measures of the good life’, fuzzy-set theory, a ‘synthetic meta-index approach’, or spatial microsimulation to operationalize human well-being with explicit reference to the MDGs (McGillivray and Clarke, 2006: xix; Chs 4, 6, 7, 12). Tables accompanying the Millennium Project’s report on MDG implementation seek to govern behaviors of states or regions with respect to given MDG targets through performance indicators (e.g. ‘on track’, ‘progress but lagging’) and risk indices (e.g. ‘agricultural risk’, ‘malaria risk’), which may identify candidates for ‘MDG fast-tracking’ (Millennium Project, 2006b: 213–215, 233, 265). Finally, the ‘MDG Monitor’ (www.mdgmonitor.org), a fascinating benchmarking technology launched by the UN (UNDP) in cooperation with Cisco and Google in 2007, tracks (and seeks to govern) progress toward the MDGs, for instance, through color-coded world maps showing countries’ differential achievements with respect to MDG targets.

In the ambivalent manner characteristic of (neo)liberal governmentalities, the UN development ‘compact’ combines freedom and domination. The ‘subjectification’ of developing states as capable, rational, and responsible agents of their own development goes hand in hand with their subjection to standards and performance indicators. A state that takes charge of its own

development accepts subjection to increased scrutiny. This will certify it as a responsible development agent and make it eligible for assistance, accommodations, and relief, further enabling it to activate its potential for development. Subjectification and subjection, freedom and domination operate as conditions of each other (cf. Dean, 1999: 165).

The mobilization of global society through the MDGs is not innocent, but correlated with neoliberal technologies of power, such as contracts and benchmarks, which seek to govern conduct through freedom. While the disparity of resources and influence between North and South has certainly played a part in shaping the UN reform agenda (see Traub, 2006: 392, 393; South Centre, 2005) and the emergence of these technologies, it alone cannot capture the complexity and more microphysical character of the power mechanisms at play. Whatever their ultimate source, once instituted, contractualism and benchmarking tend to become self-validating. They narrow the scope for criticism to the possibility of amendments that leave the logic of these technologies unquestioned (Larner and Le Heron, 2004: 219; Walters and Haahr, 2005: 123). A brief look at the 2005 World Summit Outcome will further illustrate the complexity of power and authority in contemporary global governance.

Networks

Anticipated as the most significant reform in UN history (United Nations, 2005a: 3), the 2005 World Summit seemed anti-climactic (e.g. Evans, 2005; MacAskill, 2005). It appeared to roll back the more radical innovations envisioned by the HLP and Annan. Instead of an ambitious reformulation of collective security or a visionary enlargement of freedom, the World Summit's Outcome Document dutifully rehearses the trinity of development, peace and security, and human rights that has defined UN activity for some time. In a nod to the HLP and Annan, it acknowledges that these tasks are 'interlinked and mutually reinforcing', and provide the 'foundations for collective security'. It also subscribes to the contractual vision of development as a 'global partnership' (United Nations, 2005b: 2, 3, cf. 20, 21). However, these concessions to neoliberal governmentality are counteracted by a generally more traditional understanding of collective security that pointedly omits some of the new biopolitical threats (poverty, infectious disease, etc.), and a more 'conservative' (or Charter liberal) insistence on the conformity of all reforms with the UN Charter and international law (United Nations, 2005b: 1, 2; see also 20–23, 25–34, 37). Prima facie then, the 2005 World Summit Outcome seems to embody a more cautious approach to UN reform than the two reports that preceded it. However, a closer look reveals a different and more nuanced picture.

The most striking aspect of the Outcome Document is the plethora of conventions, organizations, mechanisms, instruments, funds, conferences, declarations, and commissions referenced in the text. References to various UN bodies, funds and programs, specialized agencies, the private sector, and civil society might be expected. However, the Outcome Document connects UN reform with a vast array of past and present (and sometimes quite obscure)

- global, regional, or functional fora and conferences (e.g. G-8, Second South Summit, and World Education Forum 2000);
- international public and public–private ‘partnerships’ (e.g. New Partnership for Africa’s Development, New Asian-African Strategic Partnership, and Global Compact);
- international committees (e.g. UN High Level Committee on South–South Cooperation and Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination);
- regional or functional international organizations (e.g. EU and OPEC);
- international conventions, declarations, and agreements (e.g. Convention Against Corruption, Monterrey Consensus, and Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness);
- multilateral programs of action and implementation (e.g. Brussels Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for 2001–10 and Mauritius Strategy for Small Island Developing States);
- international policy and awareness raising initiatives (e.g. Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and International Decade for Action ‘Water for Life’);
- international financial institutions and facilities (e.g. African Development Bank and Global Environment Facility);
- global, regional, and functional funds (e.g. World Solidarity Fund, African Development Fund, and Digital Solidarity Fund).

While the HLP and Annan may have envisioned UN reform as a singular historical event inducing ‘far-reaching change’ (United Nations, 2005a: 5), a second San Francisco moment of sorts, the 2005 World Summit Outcome constructs a rather different reality.²⁸ Rather than standing out against the everyday ebb and flow of global politics, UN reform here is firmly embedded within its infrastructure. Connected through a network of actors, procedures, texts, organizations, resources, etc. to myriad ongoing processes of global governance (reaching back into the recent past and forward into the immediate future), UN reform is unspectacular – a mere snapshot holding ‘still’ a continuous flow of parallel and overlapping strategies and operations

²⁸ Different in this regard, although, as we will see, not in terms of the general argument about the biopolitical reprogramming and governmentalization of the UN.

of regulation and coordination. While the HLP's and Annan's reform proposals represented quasi-amendments to the UN Charter (although biopolitical ones), updating notions of collective security and freedom, the UN reform of the World Summit is simply a node in the multiplicity of networks that make up the infrastructure of contemporary global governance/governmentality. Just like globalization or other 'big' phenomena, UN reform in the Outcome Document appears as a mere 'piling on top of one another of hundreds of specific (international) networks' (Kendall, 2004: 67).

As seen above, the networks overlaying UN reform and undergirding contemporary global governance do not consist of elements and relations of a single type. They involve states, international organizations, and businesses; committees, mechanisms, and partnerships; declarations, plans, and legal texts; facilities, funds, and resources. All of these do not constitute mere branches or extensions of the UN organization, let alone a centrally coordinated process of UN reform. Instead, following Gavin Kendall (2004: 63, 65, 66), who borrows the metaphor from Deleuze and Guattari, the networks governing and being governed by UN reform can be thought of as 'rhizomes', that is, non-hierarchical and decentralized structures that contain and proliferate multiple interconnections, intertextualities, and avenues for action.

The rhizomic quality of the World Summit's reform project leads to both lethargy and flexibility. Rhizomic networks instantly contain anything that is genuinely new (say, the 'responsibility to protect' or institutionalized peacebuilding) within the existing web of networks, while simultaneously allowing alternative reroutings and reformulations for frustrated reform ambitions. From this perspective, UN reform can never happen and yet is always already happening at the same time.²⁹ Despite the apparent marginalization of the HLP's and Annan's collective security agenda, the network governmentality manifest in the World Summit Outcome incorporates it (and its associated governmentalities) in the ongoing practices of everyday global governance.³⁰ Despite its more 'conservative' appearance, the Outcome Document arguably reveals the most thoroughly governmentalizing vision of global governance, in which the UN (similarly to 'the state') only becomes intelligible as an 'episode' or 'effect' (Foucault, 2007: 248; 2008: 77) of a biopolitical regime of multiple (and sometimes conflicting) global governmentalities (of freedom, police, partnerships, benchmarks, etc.), rather than as an instrument of which states (or other actors) avail themselves, or an intervening or autonomous institution explaining or constraining their behavior.

²⁹ Or, as US ambassador Bolton stated in disappointment over the missed opportunity for a 'cultural revolution' at the UN and in characteristically refined diplomatic language, 'Reform is not a one-night stand. Reform is forever' (Hoge, 2005).

³⁰ See the examples at the end of the previous section.

Conclusion

Challenging international legal and political theorists who see the status of juridical sovereignty as pivotal to UN-relayed global governance, I have argued that recent UN reform efforts indicate that sovereignty itself has become infused with a biopolitical program. Contemporary sovereignty and global governance have the promotion of secure and productive lives as their political finality. In UN reform projects, human and collective security not only implicate legal aspects of sovereignty; they also mobilize a panoply of biopolitical rationalities and techniques, including statistical calculation, social differentiation, economy, normalization, risk, responsabilization, and policing aimed at managing and regulating the world population. Some elements of the biopolitical reprogramming of global governance are relatively new (e.g. risk applied to collective security), while others have been in operation for some time (e.g. the human securitization of human rights), with some going back to the founding of the UN itself (e.g. statistics; see Jaeger, 2008). Just like constitutions made biopower acceptable within states (Foucault, 1990: 144), the UN Charter has done and continues to do this internationally.

Biopolitical global governance is by no means a completed project,³¹ and one should not assume its automatic unfolding or intrinsic effectiveness. Its rationalities and techniques are constantly re-evaluated and adapted in response to changing constellations of power/knowledge and resistance. Biopolitical global governance is not inherently oppressive or harmful, but often well intended, indeed seeking to thwart overt oppression by fostering freedom and accountability. However, by implicating typical modern remedies against power in its own game, it dissimulates how its own powers may blunt legal recourse or political opposition. While the biopolitical articulations of human and collective security may be considered beneficial (e.g. by neoliberalism in international law), they also reconstitute neocolonial power relations. To the extent that they are considered harmful (e.g. by Charter liberalism), legal–institutional remedies (e.g. intervention criteria) draw on the very biopolitical logic that made them problematic in the first place. The biopolitical analytic then complicates an assessment of global governance by moving it beyond moral binaries, providing ‘tactical pointers’, and indicating ‘some lines of force’, or at least another layer of reflexivity, for those (activists, policymakers, etc.) struggling ‘within a field of real forces’(Foucault, 2007: 3).

³¹ For instance, Barbara Crossette (2007) recently noted with alarm that globally 40% of births and two-thirds of deaths go unregistered every year.

Challenging much IR scholarship and arguing by analogy to Foucault's approach to the state, my analysis of UN reform has displaced or decentered the UN as an institution. The realist and liberal focus on Security Council reform detracts from the ways in which (even a truncated) UN reform mobilizes biopolitical security mechanisms and (neo-)liberal technologies of agency, performance, and networks that transcend both state and UN institutional authority (and which effectively 'cut off the head of the king' in this context; cf. Foucault, 1990: 88, 89). The UN is neither a mere vector for state power, institutional dynamics, or global capitalism; nor would it be adequately understood as an autonomous actor deriving its authority from bureaucratic expertise and liberal values (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). Rather, the UN appears as (an effect of) a regime of plural governmentality that assembles and diffuses multiple forms of (bio)power and (technical) authority. Contrary to structural (hegemonic, institutional, or normative) conceptions of global governance, this poststructural displacement of the UN highlights that governance is (also) a calculating, normalizing, rationalizing, and securitizing activity, and that this – far from being merely technical – is integral to the political (agonistic, redistributive, etc.) character of global governance.

Of course, the analogy between the state and the UN is imperfect, not least due to the absence of a compelling discourse of global sovereignty (Hardt and Negri's *Empire* notwithstanding). However, the very non-existence of global sovereignty arguably makes the UN such a persistent target of global (especially neoliberal) governmentality. Similarly to Foucault's (2008: 80–87) argument about post-World War II German neoliberalism, one might surmise that, apart from their more immediate concerns, biopolitics and neoliberal governmentality are aimed at producing legitimacy for a political sovereignty that does not yet and, in the case of the UN, may never exist. Faced by a dual legitimacy crisis of irrelevance (from the US invasion of Iraq) and corruption (from the oil-for-food scandal), the implicit stake of the UN reform efforts of 2004–05 was to establish the legitimacy of a global political sovereignty to come by (re)inserting the UN into the multifarious biopolitical circuits of neoliberal global governance/governmentality, which are likely to outlast neoliberalism's (temporary?) demise in economic policy.

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