

Racism, Nationalism and Biopolitics: Foucault's *Society Must Be Defended*, 2003

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2003 saw the appearance in English of Michel Foucault's 1976 lectures from the Collège de France. *Society Must Be Defended* contains much to excite Foucault scholars, but this article concentrates solely on the final lecture of the series, which takes quite a different tack from the rest, concerned primarily with the history of the understanding of society and politics on the model of warfare, and brings this history into the present, with a consideration of where this mode of understanding has led in the twentieth century. Central is the consideration of the phenomenon of 'State racism'.¹ While this lecture was first published in French as far back as 1991 in *Les Temps Modernes*, it has clearly been largely overlooked, especially the potential momentousness of the use of the concept of racism developed in it.² The only serious consideration of it in English (or at all for that matter) I am aware of is in Laura Ann Stoler's *Race and the Education of Desire*.³ Stoler herself notes that "no one took up" this theme of biopolitical racism from the 1976 lectures.⁴

The first part of this paper comprises an exegesis of Foucault's concept of state racism. Foucault's analysis is in itself tentative, experimental, describing his working suppositions, not something complete, and therefore not yet a schema to be applied to understanding politics. Nevertheless, the second part of this paper is precisely the experimental application of the final lecture of Foucault's 1976 Collège de France lecture series to the contemporary geopolitical situation. Within the basic framework of Foucault's account of the biopolitical society and state racism, I argue, with reference to the case of Australia, that today we are seeing a move away from an ethnic state racism towards a nationalism which is premised simply on the interests of the nation as an economic, demographic entity. I then argue, using the case of the United States of America and its recent foreign policy, that the 'War on Terror' is a biopolitical war and that it operates according to the logic of a biopolitical drive to defend the national population, justified by a stripped-down state racism in which one is either with America (good) or against America (evil).

State Killing and Biopolitics

In the 1976 course, Foucault traces the history of an alternative way of doing history which grew up at the end of the Middle Ages. Previously, history had essentially been written from the point of view of the ruler, serving to stress continuity of succession. This new history challenged the status quo by positing a basic struggle in society between ruler and some or other group of ruled. This struggle was always racial, broadly speaking. In England it took the form of bourgeois and petit bourgeois elements describing themselves as the successors to the Saxon inhabitants of England as opposed to the monarchy, which represented the successors of Norman invaders (this is only one example of the kind of ways in which English society was interpreted in the light of the dichotomy of Norman and Saxon). In France, the aristocracy complained that their rights as Frankish conquerors had been eroded by the monarchy in league with Gallo-Roman descended elements. These discourses took on any number of forms in different hands, and fairly quickly came to be colonized by state power, which took to using them to bolster its own claims.

The success of these discourses of race struggle was such that they became ubiquitous as a way of thinking about society. In the eighteenth century, the state itself started to colonize these discourses, to use them to its own ends, to justify the status quo. Ultimately, the subversive discourse of race struggle, which Foucault ‘praises’,⁵ mutates utterly from the idea that there is a struggle between opposing forces which is basic to society to the idea that society itself is the agent caught in a struggle with its enemies both within and without—from the discourse of race struggle to that of state racism.⁶ This involves the idea of the nation as race, of a people as which is racially homogenous, for which internal and external racial others are dangers. We can see two lineages emerging in the nineteenth century: state racism, which denies the conflict inherent in and basic to society in favour of a conflict between society and its enemies, and another, coming down to Foucault through Nietzsche, which affirms the primacy of struggle as the internal dynamic of every society.

This co-option of the discourse of race struggle as the discourse of state racism is intimately connected with the emergence of biopolitics, one of the two great technologies⁷ of power in the modern epoch identified by Foucault (the other being discipline).⁸ These two are distinguished by the levels at which they operate, and by their age (discipline is older), even though they “dovetail into” one another, which is to say, they are deeply compatible and complementary.⁹ Discipline is a technology which is concerned with individuals, the control of individual bodies; biopolitics is newer and correspondingly more sophisticated: it deals with populations at the level of the multiplicity.¹⁰ Where discipline is the technology deployed to make individuals behave, to be efficient and productive workers, biopolitics is deployed to manage population; for example, to ensure a healthy workforce. The different levels at which these technologies operate is what makes them so easily compatible.

Biopolitics is also contrasted by Foucault (in both *The Will To Knowledge*¹¹ and *Society*

Must Be Defended) with the previously existing means of controlling populations: the right of the sovereign to kill his subjects. Biopolitics is the ability to control people by maintaining them in life, not just by using the right to kill but by actually controlling life itself.¹² It essentially involves the instruments of control of demography (control of the birth rate, and of epidemics, etc), and of environmental health (through town planning, draining swamps, etc).¹³ Now, this new technology does not *replace* the sovereign right to kill, nor has it ever. Biopolitics has always coexisted with the right to kill, both within the state, with the state reserving a notorious monopoly right to use (lethal) force, and outside, with the right of the state to wage war, defensively and typically also offensively.

However, there is a tension or contradiction in the coexistence of biopolitics and the right to kill.¹⁴ The right to kill is problematized in the movement that founds biopolitics, in that the government which uses biopolitics adopts the aim of keeping its people alive. This comes to be conceived as the proper end of all government. Foucault refers to the emergence of contractarian theories of government, in which the sovereign gains legitimacy precisely by being necessary to protect the lives and well-being of the people—hence, the state cannot legitimately harm them, since that would violate the contract.¹⁵ Moreover, the biopolitical society is premised on internal homeostasis—violence can serve to shatter this stability if it is itself unregulated. Certainly, the use of violent control by despots followed a pattern of insurrection and repression. Yet the coexistence of biopolitics and the sovereign right to kill is a fact. Hence there needs to be a way in which this killing can be squared with biopolitics. This is where state racism comes in. Our society is identified as a race which is threatened by racial enemies without and within; the population with which biopolitics is concerned is demarcated from the enemies of the population, with whom the sovereign power to kill is concerned. “What in fact is racism? It is primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power’s control: the break between what must live and what must die.”¹⁶ State racism allows for the identification of enemies as being outside of the population, whether they are to be found inside or outside the boundaries of the state, and thus licenses the killing of these people, or simply letting them die, since part of the biopolitical technology, at least in its more developed form, is trying to keep people alive. Foucault refers to this as “indirect murder,” in which, for instance, some people are exposed to greater risks to which the body of the population would not normally be exposed.¹⁷

Race and Nation

When Foucault claims that: “the modern state can scarcely function without becoming involved with racism at some point, within certain lines and subject to certain conditions...,”¹⁸ he is not talking about “ordinary racism,” which is to say, the simple hatred of other races,¹⁹ but rather, *state* racism, *biological* racism. The kind of racism

that emerges in the nineteenth century is for the first time based on new paradigms from biology, on ideas of evolutionary competition and the health of the species.²⁰

The challenge of this analysis is its application to the contemporary context. Every state does still need to make a distinction between those it keeps alive (and every state does have a welfare system and health service which work towards these ends) and those it kills (foreign enemies in war, executed criminals), together with those it merely allows to be exposed to greater risk of death (the victims of Third World famines, its own poor and elderly citizens). More than in 1976, however, anti-racism is now the prevailing orthodoxy. Racist discourse has become taboo—to identify speech as racist is to deny its validity. The kind of biological discourse which talks about the health of our race has gone by the board. If state racism was the mechanism by which the distinction between the biopolitical population and its outside was made, is it still so today?

Foucault takes his genealogy of the discourse of state racism as far as Nazism, which is fairly obviously the apogee of the discourse of biological racism: the German people are united by common blood, ethnicity, and have an inherent racial superiority compared to other peoples. But there is another turn taken by the discourse of state racism at around the same time as the emergence of Nazism—*socialist* state racism. There was plenty of ‘ordinary racism’ in the Soviet Union. There was anti-semitism, and the policy of ‘Russification’ of the minority nations of the union. But the kind of state racism that Foucault is referring to is racism in the broader sense—the way in which the Soviet population was perceived as a pure biological entity, threatened from within by sabotage and deviationism and by remnants of the class enemy, and from without by a world that was full of threats, the conquest of which served to make the Soviet Union stronger. A state with biopolitical aims—the aim of improving the material well-being of the population—but which also in the name of this project eliminates vast numbers of its own people, needs a “social-racism.”²¹

In the context of Foucault’s final lecture of 1976 then, we can define state racism as whatever “justifies the death-function in the economy of biopower by appealing to the principle that the death of others makes one biologically stronger insofar as one is a member of a race or population.”²² The word ‘biological’ in this definition is (I think) used rather loosely, such that there is no implication that the discourse of the strength of the population needs to be couched in explicitly biological terms to be biologically racist—there simply needs to be an understanding of the population as something that is threatened by internal and external agents, and which can grow stronger by the elimination of those threats.

This definition does not describe an ideological use of racism, but a state racism which is implicit in biopolitical societies.²³ The use of the particular kinds of racist discourse which we understand by the word ‘racism’ today is, however, contingent to particular kinds of state racism. Racism has a longer history, and one which never entirely coincides with state racism even during its heyday. While what is conventionally understood to be ‘racism’ in the contemporary socio-political context undoubtedly still functions at the level of biopolitical exclusions and vilification, it is not the same thing: the biopolitical

exclusion of criminals needs only the idea that they are harmful to society, not that they are racially dangerous at a genetic level. Hence, if, as Etienne Balibar has suggested, we have seen a transition from biological racism to a 'neo-racism' in which culture has replaced ethnicity as the "stigma of otherness,"²⁴ this new racism still plays the same functional role of excluding its victims from society.

Given the current connotation of the word 'racist', however, how it has been harnessed to a pejorative use directed at certain beliefs which became popular in association with European colonialism and ultimately with Nazism, its use in the phrase 'state racism' serves to distract from the import of Foucault's analysis. Foucault's understanding of 'race' is grounded in centuries of discourse where race had little to do with physical appearance. Race has never been a concept which has been simply about physical appearance. Foucault alludes to how in the Middle Ages the predominant form of racism was a religious racism in which European Christians saw Muslims as the racial other.²⁵ The words 'nation' and 'race' were once used interchangeably, and it is in this broad sense of 'race' that the principle of division between the population/nation/race and its enemies is called 'state racism'.

Australia and Bio-nationalism

With the original rise of biopolitics and the emergence of the population as the object of government, the territory covered by the nation lost its status as the supreme principle of the state's purview. Today, the people that make up the nation, the ethnic and linguistic composition of the population, are subject to wide-ranging continuous variation. It is now the population *as such* that is to be kept alive and defended, not merely that part of it, or that part of the human race, that corresponds to a particular racial profile. Though ethnic racism is still very important in all societies currently existing, its importance is being deliberately degraded.

What this represents is the victory of the notion of the organic interests of the nation over short-sighted, irrational conceptions of race that ultimately failed to serve the interests of the nation as such. Australia moved from the White Australia policy not just because of the ideologically unacceptable character of ethnic racism, but because allowing in skilled and wealthy migrants regardless of skin colour or national origin meant strengthening the nation as such. Immigration is understood not to strengthen the Australian race at the level of the genetic, but rather, at the level of the *economic*. It is not an attempt to strengthen the existing population *qua* the particular individuals who constitute it, but rather to strengthen the population *as a whole*, by incorporating new elements that improve it. Australia *qua* population is trying to strengthen itself as a *nation*. Obviously the implication is that this is beneficial to individual Australians, since they are members of a stronger collectivity.

These remarks are heavily influenced by my reading of a speech given by Philip Ruddock, the former Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs in the Australian government (and a member of the right-wing Liberal Party), entitled “Australian Immigration: Grasping the New Reality” on 23rd November, 2000.²⁶ In this speech, Ruddock justifies immigration policy by reference to the national interest. This kind of discourse has long been heard in America, and is increasingly heard in Europe. The extraordinary thing about justifying immigration policy by reference to the national interest is that it means advocating a change to the composition of the nation on the basis of the interests of that same nation. For Ruddock, “The way in which Australia selects its migrants is so much more important than the sheer numerical size of our programs.”²⁷ Policies are explicitly pursued on the basis of an *overall* demographic outcome, on the basis that they will mean a younger *population*. This population is partially determined by the policy itself however, he justifies migration by reference to the well-being of the population *including migrants*. Bringing in members of elites of other countries, the young, talented and rich, improve the economic and demographic profile of the Australian nation.²⁸

If Australia were racist in the ‘ordinary’ sense, why would it go into hysterics over the arrival of a few thousand refugees on boats when it already encourages the massive-scale immigration of ethnically and culturally diverse skilled and wealthy immigrants? To the Australian ‘ordinary’ racist, the officially-sanctioned immigration is scarcely more acceptable, and indeed might even be regarded as a greater threat, since skilled and wealthy immigrants are likely to take up positions of power in Australian society. However, from the biopolitical viewpoint (which is the viewpoint of the regulation of the population, a viewpoint diffused across society, not necessarily the viewpoint of any particular elite or group), the difference is clear. Regulated skilled migration is a positive influence on the population. The arrival of refugees by boat is biopolitically offensive: it is uncontrolled and thus introduces an unaccountable factor, forcing the system to deal with tens of thousands of new bodies, including people who might be undesirable from the point of view of stability (those who might have mental or physical incapacities, or be political agitators).

There are plenty of indications that ‘ordinary’ racism is alive and well, as indicated by the new far right which has emerged in so many first world countries demanding the restriction of immigration. However, any demands it makes which are of a specifically racial order are marginal, even to its own discourse; generally, even the far right deploys the language of national interest. This still adheres to an older idea of the nation, still uses the word ‘nation’ to refer to something culturally and ethnically defined.²⁹ The question of what constitutes the nation has long been in contention, but it is a contention between state racisms, a question of where to draw the line. The orthodox racist position has thankfully lost favour, albeit largely due, one suspects, to its obvious practical, particularly economic, failings. We must not forget that changing the makeup of the population for economic reasons serves the interests of the existing, entrenched elite.

We are seeing the emergence of a *bio*-nationalism, which is not (yet) non-racist or non-

nationalist, since it does still make large-scale use of these racial and national prejudices and divide people along national and racial lines which are long-standing. However, the importance of these is apparently diminishing with the apparent hegemony of anti-racism, which is opposed to traditional racist nationalism, and the rise of a nationalism which is precisely the prejudice in favour of the nation *qua* population, *qua* biopolitical entity.

Biopolitics and September 11

What form of state racism accompanies bio-nationalism? The biological, evolutionary model of race as sub-species has declined, and even cultural ethnocentrism is increasingly marginalized. We are left with a bare concept of nation and national interest, which is today more economic than in the past. In this section I explore how September 11 acts as a *casus belli* for a biopolitical society. In the next section I explore the form of state racism which is operative in allowing the state to deploy lethal as a response.

The United States seems ready to tolerate higher levels of casualties in the War on Terror than in other recent conflicts. One explanation for this could make reference to a retreat of biopolitical values in the US. There have been fluctuations in the penetration of biopolitics in relation to the old sovereign power to kill: the so-called War on Terror is perhaps indicative of a retreat. A notable recent regain for the right to kill has been the re-extension of capital punishment in the US. It would seem plausible to couple this with the Republican administration in the US and the move to wage new wars and deduce a limited revival of the old model of sovereign power residing in the right to kill.

However, it seems that there is also a shying away from the kinds of attacks on enemy populations seen in previous wars. While large numbers of civilians do die, there is an undeniable squeamishness about this now. There is no more (official) talk of bombing people back into the Stone Age. Napalm is used under a different name, precisely because its use is contentious. Here there seem to have been general gains for the biopolitical over the right to kill since the Vietnam War. However, there is an undeniable willingness to wage wars that were not acceptable before September 11.

One might argue that with September 11 there has been some kind of breach of the biopolitical compact in the United States, or in the West generally, which allows the public to tolerate the loss of American lives, with the large numbers killed in New York being something biopolitically sheltered Americans are simply not used to. But this would be wrong, because it is precisely because of biopolitics that this attack appears as such an unspeakable atrocity—otherwise it might seem like a rational act of war, rather than an unspeakable act of evil outside of the realm of comprehensible, valid human conduct. For biopower, September 11 is unacceptable.³⁰ Biopolitics is about the regularity and stability of a population. Of course, biopower comes into its own in wartime, as in the Second World War in Britain, though it breaks down when put under too much pressure

(as in Germany towards the end of the same war). Biopower is capable of thriving under the threat now imposed, but it demands the imposition of massive measures for the protection of the population as such, even if they appear paranoid from the perspective of what is strictly necessary for protection.

To understand this, we must look to the operation of biopolitics at the level of individuals. Differences in individuals' values and perceptions are utterly necessary for the operation of biopower: it is both a condition of the possibility of biopolitical technology, and a necessary part of its functioning. Biopower is a technology, and can only be deployed if it is understood and desired. It demands cooperation from a population, demands that they adopt practices of hygiene and medical self-monitoring, of breeding, that they comply with the measurement of population. It demands a cessation of random violence and an end to killing. Part of a biopolitical society is the horror of and taboo of death. Foucault in *Society Must Be Defended* argues that this taboo is essentially due to the fact that power no longer cares about death: rather than death being its stock-in-trade, death becomes utterly private.³¹ In any case, for whatever reason, death is seen as the ultimate evil. What Foucault describes is the political, or rather the biopolitical, dimension of this. The need to defend America from attack at the level of the population has its corollary at the individual level in the horror of dying in such an unpredictable and violent way as having a plane tear into your office while you are sifting through your spam e-mail. There is a psychology which is bound up with contemporary economics, which is notoriously fragile, as indicated in the index of 'consumer confidence', for example. This is the individual demand for a regularized lifestyle, without the possibility of death, certainly not violent or 'premature' death (which is to say, *irregular* death), which essentially corresponds to the same demand made biopolitically at the level of the population.³² It is an intrinsic element of the technology of biopolitics that people not be concerned about dying. When they feel under even a small threat of extraordinary death in terrorist atrocities they will demand the utmost measures of their government to eptirpate this, and disruption to the economy will occur far beyond the direct destruction caused by any terrorist act.

The result of September 11, then, has been for biopolitical society to go on the offensive. This is nothing particularly new—biopolitical societies have waged offensives ever since they have existed. September 11, however, constituted a new impetus for a biopolitical society to expand, to attack to defend, to launch a war which is not primarily about the biopolitical colonisation of new populations but rather simply about the interests of the existing population—in the first instance meaning the United States population. This necessitates a division along state racist lines between 'us' and 'those who threaten us'.

This in no way precludes the existence of other motives behind US expansionism, such as economic profit. Though September 11 generated biopolitical concern about security, the invasion of Iraq would seem to have more to do with economic motives than the biopolitics, since it does not seem that Iraq posed any immediate threat to the US population, nor was it implicated in September 11. However, if the invasion of Iraq has to do

with securing a regular oil supply, then this ostensibly economic interest is simultaneously extremely important to ensuring the stability and predictability of American society — hence the economic and biopolitical are not separate, but rather generally complementary. Similarly, ensuring the biopolitical stability of the homeland is obviously something which has an economic benefit. While we can expect any imperialist enterprise to encompass both economic and biopolitical motivations (since there is no radical cleavage between the two), it is important to recognize the fundamental irreducibility of biopolitics to economics. Biopolitical motivations for imperialist adventures are one thing that makes them exceed what might be regarded as strictly necessary from an economic standpoint: the latest invasion of Iraq was not a purely biopolitical war, but it would not have been possible without the impetus provided by the threat to the biopolitical stability of the United States posed by September 11, which at the very least licensed the administration to pursue an offensive against perceived enemies for whatever reasons they might have, whether driven by oil interests or whatever.

State Racism and the War on Iraq

What then is the principle for dividing the domain of the biopolitical from that of the right to kill and to expose others to the risk of death in the so-called ‘War on Terror’? How is state racism manifested in this war? Of course, we are told that this war is not racist. We are told, in fact, that this war is fought for the benefit of everyone. The operation of state racism can, however, be seen through these justifications for the war on Iraq, which are also the justifications for the losses of American lives.³³ The better, subtler of these justifications are utilitarian, referring to the suffering of the Iraqi people. Aside from the factual speciousness of these arguments, there is obviously something else going on, namely that utilitarian arguments of this kind are not considered valid justifications for the killing of any — not one — individual civilian in normal circumstances in Western societies. As any student of ethics knows, such arguments are not hard to construct. There are all manner of utilitarian policies which might be proposed in which American lives might be taken to help greater numbers of people. But it is acceptable to kill thousands of Iraqis for the benefit of other Iraqis. It is also acceptable to allow Americans to die in combat so that greater numbers of Americans be saved, but not in medical experiments. Within the population, utilitarian calculations can be made only with reference to the well-being of the population as a whole, not according to the simple principle of the greatest good for the greatest number. If the population needs to turn its power against internal enemies, such as criminals, it declares them enemies of the population. But in rooting out these enemies, it can also place its own loyal servants in the firing line, such as the police. It is not that the United States’ losses in the war on Iraq were justified by the idea that it made the American population stronger — the kind of highly biological formula that was

deployed in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly by the Nazis.³⁴ Rather, these losses today are justified by the threat that is apparently posed to the population and to biopolitical homeostasis, such that losses were ultimately required on a utilitarian basis. Of course, this threat might have been illusory, but it was necessary to *say* that it existed to justify the deaths of troops and, more marginally perhaps, of Iraqis. In *The Will To Knowledge*, Foucault ascribes the costliness of wars in the twentieth century precisely to biopolitics, which means that wars “are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone.”³⁵

This particularism in the deployment of utilitarianism implies a racism, in that a different principle applied to us and to them. Of course, there is also the justification of the war by reference to values. Democracy and human rights must be extended to areas of the world where despotic murderous power still occurs—the present war is also presented in the language of ‘freedom’. I don’t doubt that many do genuinely want an extension of democracy to these areas, this being a large element of the NGO agenda,³⁶ and the agenda of liberals engaged in the War on Terror project, such as Tony Blair. But this desire is a desire to extend the biopolitical technology, and must be understood as part of a strategic project, which includes international security and trade liberalization. It is often argued that despotic regimes ‘give rise’ to terrorism, since, unlike democracies, there is no legitimate channel for the airing of grievances, and also the sheer violence of despotic rule by the judicious application of the right to kill and torture sets a bad precedent and breeds more violence. This is not to say that this desire to spread biopolitical, democratic modes is simply insidious, but that those who wish to carry it out are at the same time following through the agenda of their own biopolity.

More common now than for intervention in the nineties as a justification for war, moreover, is the direct appeal to America’s right to defend itself, its right to security—transparent biopolitical self-interest. That this is more common is directly linked to the greater willingness of Americans for blood sacrifice. Then there is Bush’s rhetoric of good versus evil. This of course is moral rhetoric, not the rhetoric of race. It is however the rhetoric of a clear binary division between us and them, and not only between us and them, but between those who are our friends and those who are enemies—the rhetoric of being either with America or against America. Here biological state racism can easily be understood to apply: it cuts across national boundaries according to the logic of biological interest; there is an enemy within and an enemy without. Not everything outside is an enemy: there are friends outside too. We depend on the help of our friends, we can coexist with them. We can join with them in creating an international order which is to our mutual benefit. All biopolitical societies are generally interested in deterring terror to the same degree the Americans are, in shutting down unpredictable floating agents outside of the biopolitical circuits. Of course, while all biopolitical societies share these interests, many are at least as threatened by American hegemony.

It seems that in this period biopolitical state racism comes into its own *as such*, becoming nothing more than the prejudice of those within the population against those outside who threaten it. This is the corollary to a nationalism which is the chauvinism

of the population as such. There is racism towards Arabs *qua* Arabs, and Moslems *qua* Moslems active in the current conflict, but such distinctions are becoming tendentious, since we now have a simultaneous attempt to incorporate Islam within the American population. But while the old forms are still active, while people do still talk of a crusade, the overriding official tendency is towards a state racism that says it is acceptable to kill foreigners precisely because they are not Americans, as long as it is in defence of America. Of course, this baldness of self-interest is veiled under altruistic rhetoric, but this rhetoric is a thin veil which fails to convince those who are not already crucially biased in favour of the principle of American security; which is one reason perhaps that the war lacked popular support outside of the United States.

Ever since the development of biopower, state racism has essentially comprised an antagonism between a population and its outside. The only essential of state racism is the vilification of the other, not the specific form it takes. Unless a biopolitical system can be invented where the state never needs to claim the right either to kill or to let die, then biopolitics seems to need sovereign power and so requires state racism in the broad sense. State racism neither underpins the state, nor is it a mere device for allowing the state to wage war, but is rather caught in a relationship of profound necessity with the biopolitical state, yet largely divorced from the everyday life of its people, which is the domain of biopolitics itself, not of the sovereign right to kill and let die. Given that our society supposedly values human life *per se*, and given the existence of legal declarations to this effect, even in spite of the clear qualification in these declarations that massive economic inequalities are to be licensed, it seems to me that state racism in Foucault's sense is an important, extremely simple, yet utterly necessary concept for understanding the gross inconsistencies in the valuation of human life by our society, whether it be in Iraq, in Woomera, or even in our own prison system. This is not to be confused with the claim that racism in the narrow sense is necessary to biopolitical societies – it is certainly possible that our states can eliminate narrow racial prejudices and still maintain their right to kill (although it is equally important to note that they have not done this). There needs only to be a chauvinism of the *population* as such, that takes as its *a priori* the slogan, “*Society must be defended!*”

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Notes

1. Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, trans. David Macey (London: Penguin, 2003) 239.

2. Michel Foucault, "Faire vivre et laisser mourir: la naissance du racisme," *Les Temps Modernes* 48 (535) (February 1991): 37-61. On the obscurity of this text see Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995) 57-8.
3. See Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire* 55-94. However, as Stoler was writing about material not in the public domain, most of what she says recapitulates and synopsis this material for her readership. This is also the case of two extensive articles on the lectures—John Marks, "Foucault, Franks, Gauls," *Theory, Culture & Society* 17 (2000): 127-147 and Stuart Elden, "The War of Races and the Constitution of the State: Foucault's «Il faut défendre la société» and the Politics of Calculation," *boundary 2* 29:1 (2002)—which mostly consist in providing synopses of the lecture series, already published in French, for an English-speaking audience. It is to be hoped then that the widespread availability of *Society Must Be Defended* will allow the emergence of a fuller secondary literature about it.
4. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire* 88.
5. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 65.
6. See Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 239.
7. A 'technology' here is a raft of techniques. Biopolitics is much like any other technology in most respects. It can be turned to a variety of uses and opens up a variety of possibilities for action. Though it requires individuals acting at the level of the deployment of any technique, and though there is a direction to the overall deployment, it does not come from any single individual or even any single group, not the president, not the government, not the bureaucracy, not the professional associations or academics or managers, but from all of these and often in competing directions.
8. Of course, this is in 1976, but it does not seem to me that anything substantial has changed in this respect—indeed, according to Foucault the broad strokes of what he was talking about had not varied much for two hundred years.
9. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 242.
10. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 242.
11. By which I mean the book originally published in Britain as Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1, An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1979), and reprinted as *The Will to Knowledge* (1998). This book was originally published in French later in the same year in which the lectures in *Society Must Be Defended* were given. The book has been the major source for Foucault's concept of biopower until now, though *Society Must Be Defended* contains discussion which is at least as extensive, if largely overlapping.
12. See Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 241.
13. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 244-245.
14. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 254.
15. See Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 241.
16. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 254.
17. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 256.
18. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 254.
19. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 258.
20. See Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 255.
21. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 261-262.
22. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 258.
23. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 258.
24. See Etienne Balibar, "Is There a 'Neo-Racism'?" Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation Class: Ambiguous Identities*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1991).
25. See Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 87.
26. Philip Ruddock, "Australian Immigration: Grasping the New Reality," 6 Dec. 2000 <www.law.usyd.edu.au/nationskilling/papers/Ruddock.doc>. This speech was given at "NationSkilling: An International Symposium on Immigration, Labour and the Law."
27. Ruddock, "Australian Immigration: Grasping the New Reality" 1.
28. Of course, national continuity has always implied a total, generational change of personnel. In this case, however, the concept of national interest can be premised upon the continuity of families. Now, however, it is the nation as such that is appealed to.
29. Clearly it is fed by fears of those who perceive themselves as being sidelined in their prominence within the nation as a result of immigration. To an extent these fears might have some grounding—with the decline of the racial concept of the nation, people who used to be privileged

on the basis of ethnicity alone might well lose privileges at some point in the future, so they are keen to ensure that the ethnic bias of society is maintained in their favour.

30. This does not exclude the possibility that some conspiracy theory about September 11 might be correct: if some state agency engineered this outrage, its strategic efficacy derives precisely from its creating the perception of a threat to biopolitical stability.

31. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 247-248.

32. Of course, it is not that prior to biopolitics, 'naturally', people are not bothered by the threat of violent death. My argument is rather that the prospect of a violent, random death now instils a sheer horror that is peculiar to a particular value system.

33. Perhaps it is unfair to single out the Americans among the 'coalition of the willing'. I am focusing on them because they are the prime movers of the War on Terror, and because it was the attack on their biopolis that sparked it.

34. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 257.

35. Foucault, *The Will To Knowledge* 136.

36. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000).

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