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# Governing populations through the humanitarian government of refugees: Biopolitical care and racism in the European refugee crisis

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## Abstract

The notion of humanitarian government has been increasingly employed to describe the simultaneous and conflicting deployment of humanitarianism and security in the government of ‘precarious lives’ such as refugees. This article argues that humanitarian government should *also* be understood as the biopolitical government of host populations *through* the humanitarian government of refugees. In particular, it explores how the biopolitical governmentality of the UK decision to suspend search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean in 2014, and the British rejection and German welcoming of Syrian refugees primarily concern the *biological* and *emotional* care of the British and German populations. To this end, the article analyses how dynamics of inclusion/exclusion of refugees have been informed by a biopolitical racism that redraws the boundary between ‘valuable’ (to be included) and ‘not valuable’ (to be excluded) lives according to the refugees’ capacity to enhance the biological and emotional well-being of host populations. This discussion aims to contribute to three interrelated fields of research – namely, humanitarian government, biopolitical governmentality, and responses to the European refugee crisis – by exploring how biopolitics has shaped the British and German responses to the crisis and how it encompasses more meanings and rationalities than currently recognised by existing scholarship on humanitarian government.

## Keywords

Humanitarian Government; Biopolitical Governmentality; Emotional Care; European Refugee Crisis; United Kingdom and Germany

## Introduction

To date, one of the most powerful images of the European refugee crisis is the picture of three-year-old Alan Kurdi (initially named as Aylan Kurdi), a Syrian boy of Kurdish ethnic background, who drowned off the coast of the Turkish town of Bodrum on 2 September 2015 together with his brother and mother during his family’s attempt to reach Europe. The picture of his lifeless body lying on the shore sparked a large outcry all over the world on the tragedy of Syrian refugees. It triggered a strong emotional response from media and public opinion, particularly in Europe, resulting in calls for more open borders and welcoming immigration policies. Shortly after Alan’s death, then UK Prime Minister David Cameron vowed that his country would ‘fulfil’ its ‘moral responsibilities’ by

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taking in 20,000 Syrian refugees over a period of five years directly from camps in Syria's neighbouring countries.<sup>1</sup> Cameron explained that the refugees would be selected on the basis of need: 'We will take the most vulnerable: ... disabled children, ... women who have been raped, ... men who have suffered torture'.<sup>2</sup> This resolution was welcomed, but also criticised for comparing poorly with other European countries. Germany, in particular, had taken in 18,000 Syrian refugees in the single weekend prior to Cameron's pledge, and, following Alan's death, pledged to take up to 800,000 refugees a year for several years.

While the UK's and Germany's responses to the plight of Syrian refugees may be partially accounted for as governments bowing to public pressures, they also raise questions on their underlying governmental rationalities. In particular, why did the UK commit to taking only a small number of refugees and, most of all, only sick children, women who had been raped and men who had suffered torture, whereas Germany pledged to open its borders to millions of Syrians, irrespective of their gender, age, or physical condition? Are the British and the German cases expressions of different governmentalities or is it possible to discern in their contending responses similar governmental rationalities? Can these rationalities be considered an instantiation of what has recently been labelled 'humanitarian government', namely the simultaneous deployment of logics of 'securitization and humanitarianism'<sup>3</sup> in the government of disenfranchised subjects such as refugees and undocumented or 'irregular' migrants?<sup>4</sup> This article will strive to address these questions.

The notion of humanitarian government has been the object of growing scholarly attention. For Didier Fassin, this concept designates a mode of governing 'precarious lives' – such as 'the lives of the unemployed and the asylum seekers, ... of sick immigrants and people with Aids, ... of disaster victims and victims of conflict'<sup>5</sup> – which does not exhaust itself in practices of care. Humanitarian government encompasses dynamics of *depoliticisation*, as the language of compassion and emotions turns 'domination' into 'misfortune', 'injustice' into 'suffering', and 'violence' into 'trauma';<sup>6</sup> practices of *subjectification*, with the construction of a 'new humanity' made of individuals who are legitimate as long as they are recognised as 'suffering bodies';<sup>7</sup> logics of *securitisation* of space, bodies, and populations, which have turned border

<sup>1</sup> Cited in 'David Cameron urges EU countries to follow UK's lead on refugees', *BBC News* (14 September 2015), available at: {<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34242346>} accessed 24 January 2016.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Adrian Little and Nick Vaughan-Williams, 'Stopping boats, saving lives, securing subjects: Humanitarian borders in Europe and Australia', *European Journal of International Relations*, 10 August (2016), doi: 10.1177/1354066116661227, pp. 1–24.

<sup>4</sup> In this article I will use the term 'migrants', 'undocumented migrants', 'irregular migrants', and 'refugees' interchangeably. The element of *voluntariness* that traditionally distinguishes migrants (whether 'regular', 'irregular', or 'undocumented') from refugees has become the object of growing criticism as it may be extremely difficult to ascertain on the ground, with the effect that these categories are extremely blurred and often untenable (see Jørgen Carling, 'Refugees are also migrants. And all migrants matter', *Border Criminologies*, available at: {<http://bordercriminologies.law.ox.ac.uk/refugees-are-also-migrants>} accessed 16 February 2016). By using these terms interchangeably (and with inverted commas as in relation to 'irregular migrants') my goal is to 'denaturalise' what are ultimately 'contingent subject position' dependent upon dominant power/knowledge regimes (see Little and Vaughan-Williams, 'Stopping boats', p. 20, fn. 1).

<sup>5</sup> Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Miriam Ticktin, *Casualties of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 5.

crossing 'into a matter of life and death';<sup>8</sup> forms of *autoimmunisation*, namely targeting what is ostensibly being protected, as in the case of the 'stop the boats' policy in Australia, which claims to save lives by *not saving lives* in order to discourage 'irregular' migrants from undertaking dangerous sea voyages;<sup>9</sup> and practices of *(re)bordering*, resulting in new rationalities of inclusion/exclusion and in the progressive hardening of borders for 'able-bodied migrants'.<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, humanitarian government entails an expansion and penetration of power as it 'extends the reach of the state to govern more bodies (e.g., the sick and injured) and more spaces (e.g., hospitals)'.<sup>11</sup>

Some of these dynamics may contribute to explaining British responses to the refugee crisis: caring for a small number of 'sick bodies' while hardening the borders for those 'able-bodied migrants' who take matters into their own hands by attempting to cross the Mediterranean. Similarly, the simultaneous deployment of logics of 'securitization and humanitarianism' could be observed in the UK decision to withdraw its support for search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean in October 2014. Turning the UK commitment from saving lives to border patrolling was presented as a strategy to discourage 'irregular' migrants from undertaking the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean and thus as a way of saving lives. Nonetheless, the concept of humanitarian government does not seem capable to account for the German openness, where the humanitarian logic may seem to have transcended the security component. Hence, should the British case be considered one of humanitarian government and the German case one of humanitarianism *tout court*? Or is it possible to advance a different interpretation of the British and German policies towards the refugee crisis *beyond* existing accounts of humanitarianism and humanitarian government?

This article embraces this latter perspective. It contends that the British and German different responses to Syrian refugees can be conceptualised as the expression of the same governmental rationality the focus of which has not been just the 'precarious lives' of undocumented migrants, but the lives of host populations. Accordingly, my argument is that humanitarian government does not solely entail the government and care of disenfranchised collectivities such as refugees, but also *the government and care of host populations through the humanitarian government of refugees*. From this perspective, I will argue that the British pledge to take in 20,000 Syrian refugees should be accounted for as a way of promoting a self-understanding of Britain as just, moral and compassionate, and therefore, as a biopolitical way of promoting and enhancing the emotional life of its population. For Germany, considerations of justice and compassion have contributed to reproduce a self-understanding of Germany as caring and committed, and have been accompanied by an appreciation of Syrian refugees as an overall young and skilled workforce that can support the German welfare system. Accordingly, the dissolution of German borders for hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees should be understood as a form of biopolitical care of both the emotional *and* material well-being of the German population.

This article aims to contribute to three interrelated fields of research: namely, humanitarian government, biopolitical governmentality, and responses to the European refugee crisis. In particular, it aims to broaden the meaning and scope of the notion of humanitarian government by theorising it as a

<sup>8</sup> William Walters, 'Foucault and frontiers: Notes on the birth of the humanitarian border', in Ulrich Bröckling, Susanne Krasmann, and Thomas Lemke (eds), *Governmentality: Current Issues and Future Challenges* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 138–64 (p. 138).

<sup>9</sup> Little and Vaughan-Williams, 'Stopping boats'.

<sup>10</sup> Ticktin, *Casualties of Care*; see also Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*.

<sup>11</sup> Jill M. Williams, 'From humanitarian exceptionalism to contingent care: Care and enforcement at the humanitarian border', *Political Geography*, 47 (2015), pp. 11–20 (p. 12).

Foucauldian biopolitical governmentality that has as its object host populations. With the term ‘biopolitical governmentality’, I understand a rationality of government that aims to biopolitically enhance the lives of the population under power’s control both in *biological* and *emotional* terms. Hence, my primary interest in this article is not in governmentality as the ‘conduct of conduct’<sup>12</sup> and the promotion of forms of self-government, but in governmentality as the power that ‘teaches the subjects in its care about what counts as real, and what they themselves really are, *in order to* better govern them by letting them govern themselves’.<sup>13</sup> My interest, in other words, is in governmentality as the promotion of positive forms of self-understanding and self-appreciation – through biological and emotional biopolitical rationalities of care – which are the condition of possibility for forms of self-government.<sup>14</sup> Humanitarian government makes the decision of which refugees need to be welcomed and which ones need to be rejected a function of the biopolitical care of the populations of the countries that accept them. This biopolitical governmentality, I will show, rests on a ‘differentialist’ understanding of racism that draws on, but partially transcends, traditional accounts of racism based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, colour, gender, and alleged intractable cultural differences. This *biopolitical* racism redraws the boundary between ‘valuable’ (to be included) and ‘not valuable’ lives (to be excluded) according to the refugees’ capacity to enhance the *biological* and *emotional* well-being of host populations.

This argument also aims to contribute to existing debates on biopolitics in international relations. Most of these debates have focused on ‘the emergence and governance of life in its biological existence’,<sup>15</sup> and on how biopolitics has contributed to bring ‘biological life (zoē) into the modalities of state power (bios)’.<sup>16</sup> While this focus on ‘biological being’,<sup>17</sup> ‘biological processes’,<sup>18</sup> and on ‘biological, corporeal, or even carnal regimes of power, rule, and force’<sup>19</sup> is certainly essential,

<sup>12</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘Le sujet et le pouvoir’, *Dits et écrits 4* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), pp. 222–43; see also Colin Gordon, ‘Governmental rationality: an introduction’, in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 1–52 (p. 2).

<sup>13</sup> Talal Asad, ‘Trying to understand French secularism’, in Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan (eds), *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press), pp. 494–526 (pp. 521–2), emphasis added.

<sup>14</sup> My perspective differs in two main respects from those approaches that draw a sharp distinction ‘between what counts as governmentality and what is better described as disciplinary power or as biopolitics’ (Jonathan Joseph, ‘The limits of governmentality: Social theory and the international’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 16:2 (2010), pp. 223–46 (p. 225)). First, I consider that biopolitics cannot be reduced to disciplinary power but encompasses a fundamental rationality of care, as I will discuss later in this article. Second, while acknowledging that governmentality and biopolitics are analytically distinct, I am primarily interested in the way they sustain and mutually reinforce each other in the *dispositif* of biopolitical governmentality. This perspective, to be sure, does not claim to be more authentic or ‘in line’ with Foucault’s thought. Following Joseph, I consider Foucault’s work as rich as ‘deliberately evasive, elusive and provocative’ to allow for the possibility of multiple and not necessarily mutually exclusive interpretations, depending on the object being studied. See Jonathan Joseph, ‘Resilience as embedded neoliberalism: a governmentality approach’, *Resilience*, 1:1 (2013), pp. 38–52 (p. 41).

<sup>15</sup> Jef Huysmans, ‘The jargon of exception – on Schmitt, Agamben and the absence of political society’, *International Political Sociology*, 2:2 (2008), pp. 165–83 (p. 177).

<sup>16</sup> Little and Vaughan-Williams, ‘Stopping boats’, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Dillon and Julian Reid, *The Liberal Way of War: Killing to Make Life Live* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> Scott Hamilton, ‘The measure of all things? The Anthropocene as a global biopolitics of carbon’, *European Journal of International Relations* (2016), doi: 1354066116683831, pp. 1–25 (p. 8).

<sup>19</sup> François Debrix, ‘Katechontic sovereignty: Security politics and the overcoming of time’, *International Political Sociology*, 9:2 (2015), pp. 143–57 (p. 151).

it overlooks how emotional concerns have been an equally important dimension of biopolitical governmentalities. Hence, the approach advanced in this article maintains that existing responses to the European refugee crisis should not be explored solely as manifestations of humanitarian government of refugees,<sup>20</sup> ‘biological’ forms of biopolitics,<sup>21</sup> thanatopolitics (governing undocumented migrants through violence and death),<sup>22</sup> politics of indifference,<sup>23</sup> crisis of European migration policies,<sup>24</sup> crisis of liberal values in Europe,<sup>25</sup> crisis of solidarity,<sup>26</sup> and fear of Islam and terrorism,<sup>27</sup> but also as a product of biopolitical governmental rationalities of biological and emotional care of host populations enacted through the humanitarian government of refugees.

The article is organised in three sections. First, I consider how the existing literature has largely neglected the possibility that the humanitarian government of refugees and undocumented/‘irregular’ migrants may also be a way of governing host populations, and has generally deemed that biopolitics has partial or limited capacity to account for the phenomenon of humanitarian government. Second, I explore how the humanitarian government of refugees and undocumented/‘irregular’ migrants is a manifestation of a biopolitical governmentality that aims to maximise the biological and emotional life of the host population. To this end, I explore two largely neglected dimensions of biopolitics, namely, its underlying ‘differentialist’ understanding of race, and its concern with the emotional well-being of the population. Third, I discuss how this conceptual framework can advance our understanding of the European refugee crisis by analysing two key events: the UK decision to suspend search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean in 2014, and the different British and German responses to the plight of Syrian refugees following the death of Alan Kurdi.

## I. Humanitarian government as the government of refugees

In this section, I highlight three main arguments of existing accounts of humanitarian government (which I will challenge in the next two sessions). First, humanitarian government concerns the government of disenfranchised subjects, such as refugees and undocumented/‘irregular’ migrants, through the simultaneous deployment of rationalities/practices of care and security; second, humanitarian government cannot be reduced to biopolitical governmentality and Michel Foucault’s notion of biopower only partially captures this phenomenon; third, humanitarian government entails a

<sup>20</sup> Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Europe’s Border Crisis: Biopolitical Security and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Martina Tazzioli, ‘Border displacements: Challenging the politics of rescue between Mare Nostrum and Triton’, *Migration Studies*, 4:1 (2016), pp. 1–19.

<sup>21</sup> Kim Rygiel, ‘Dying to live: Migrant deaths and citizenship politics along European borders: Transgressions, disruptions, and mobilizations’, *Citizenship Studies*, 20:5 (2016), pp. 545–60.

<sup>22</sup> Vicki Squire, ‘Governing migration through death in Europe and the US: Identification, burial and the crisis of modern humanism’, *European Journal of International Relations* (16 September 2016), doi: 10.1177/1354066116668662, pp. 1–20.

<sup>23</sup> Tugba Basaran, ‘The saved and the drowned: Governing indifference in the name of security’, *Security Dialogue*, 46:3 (2015), pp. 205–20.

<sup>24</sup> Manuela Bojadzijev and Sandro Mezzadra, ‘“Refugee crisis” or crisis of European migration policies?’, *FocaalBlog* (12 November 2016), available at: {[www.focaalblog.com/2015/11/12/manuela-bojadzijev-and-sandro-mezzadra-refugee-crisis-or-crisis-of-european-migration-policies](http://www.focaalblog.com/2015/11/12/manuela-bojadzijev-and-sandro-mezzadra-refugee-crisis-or-crisis-of-european-migration-policies)}.

<sup>25</sup> Alexander Betts, ‘The elephant in the room: Islam and the crisis of liberal values in Europe’, *Foreign Affairs*, 2 (2016), available at: {<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2016-02-02/elephant-room>}.

<sup>26</sup> Luca Mavelli and Erin K. Wilson (eds), *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*; see also Betts, ‘The elephant in the room’.

process of depoliticisation that obliterates the causes of suffering. Didier Fassin, whose research on humanitarianism has shaped current debates, defines humanitarian government ‘as the administration of human collectivities in the name of a higher moral principle which sees the preservation of life and the alleviation of suffering as the highest value of action’.<sup>28</sup> This seemingly benign principle encompasses a powerful depoliticising move. The grammar of emotions, suffering and trauma, while revealing and making visible the plight of the marginalised and disenfranchised, also establishes a new ‘language of compassion’ that conceals the causes of inequality, domination, and violence.<sup>29</sup> Humanitarian government encourages a focus on the ‘humanitarian present’<sup>30</sup> that privileges responding to the emotional emergency of suffering rather than targeting its root causes.

For this reason, Miriam Ticktin contends, humanitarian government is simultaneously a politics and an *antipolitics*.<sup>31</sup> In discussing the French ‘illness clause’, a humanitarian principle that grants residence to those already in the country who suffer from a life-threatening condition that would not be properly treated in their home country, she emphasises how humanitarian government politicises migration by establishing what constitutes legitimate suffering, and thus by turning the ‘suffering body’ into a ‘means to papers’.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, humanitarian government also depoliticises migration by constructing suffering bodies as ‘victim[s] without a perpetrator’, and individuals as objects of care and compassion rather than equal citizens.<sup>33</sup> This makes their condition all the more precarious, as the humanitarian exception that gave them protection may quickly revert to practices of security (should the ‘sick body’ no longer meet the criteria of what counts as legitimate suffering) turning the ‘endangered’ into the ‘dangerous’ and the ‘innocent’ into the ‘delinquent’.<sup>34</sup>

This argument brings to the fore the centrality of the politics of life and the body to humanitarian government, thus suggesting an important conceptual affinity with the phenomenon famously described by Foucault as biopolitics. According to Foucault, biopolitics denotes a modern condition in which the life of individuals (their bodies) and the life of the population as a whole become the object of political strategies and interventions. At the heart of this condition is a transformation in the technology of power: from the sovereign power to take life to the biopolitical power to make live.<sup>35</sup> Unlike traditional forms of sovereign power which manifest themselves through mechanisms of deduction of wealth, labour, services, and ‘ultimately life itself’, biopower – which encompasses the discipline of the body (‘anatomy-politics’) and the regulation of the population (‘bio-politics’) – is primarily a power of care aimed at strengthening and enhancing life.<sup>36</sup>

However, according to Fassin, although biopolitics and humanitarian government share an underlying politics of care and although humanitarian action employs biopolitical ‘techniques of management of populations’ – such as ‘setting up refugee camps, establishing protected aid corridors ... conducting

<sup>28</sup> Didier Fassin, ‘Humanitarianism: a nongovernmental government’, in Michel Feher (ed.), *Nongovernmental Politics* (New York: Zone Books), pp. 149–60 (p. 151).

<sup>29</sup> Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*.

<sup>30</sup> Eyal Weizman, *The Least of all Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza* (London: Verso Books, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Ticktin, *Casualties of Care*.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 4.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 138.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136–9.

epidemiological studies of infectious diseases’ – they also have different goals.<sup>37</sup> Biopolitics is primarily concerned with caring for and maximising the life of the population *as a whole*. Humanitarian government, on the other hand, is a *politics of individual life*.<sup>38</sup> As such, it requires ‘selecting those that have priority for being saved (for example, when drug supplies are insufficient),’<sup>39</sup> or in the case of the Mediterranean refugee crisis, deciding which ‘worthy lives’ must be saved (even risking other lives to this end) in the name of the humanitarian imperative, and which ‘unworthy lives’ can be left to drown in the name of security.<sup>40</sup> Hence, humanitarian government rests on the concurrent deployment of logics of ‘securitization and humanitarianism’ that highlight a ‘symbiotic relationship’ between ‘care and control’, that is, between ‘the humanitarian world (the hand that cares) and the police and military (the hand that strikes)’.<sup>41</sup>

William Walters’ seminal reflections on the humanitarian border (the deployment of humanitarian government rationalities at borders, or, as he puts it, ‘the reinvention of the border as a space of humanitarian government’)<sup>42</sup> echo Fassin’s remarks. For Walters, humanitarian government represents a ‘minimalist’ or ‘significantly attenuated biopolitics’<sup>43</sup> whose task is, as Jill M. Williams explains, not to ‘optimize and foster life’, but ‘simply hold off death’, with the effect that ‘the life that is preserved is structurally marginalized and only maintained, not fostered’.<sup>44</sup> The encroachment of humanitarianism and security turns humanitarian government into ‘a site of ambivalence and undecideability’ characterised by acts of compassion and the deliberate infliction of suffering, neoliberal disciplining, practices of resistance, forms of counter-conduct, and the constant, mutual cooptation of humanitarianism by security and vice versa.<sup>45</sup> This complex field of interactions transcends mere processes of ‘biopolitical reproduction’, Walters contends, and calls for supplementing ‘Foucault’s toolbox’ with new concepts.<sup>46</sup>

Taking up this challenge, Adrian Little and Nick Vaughan-Williams argue that, in order to grasp the ambivalence at the heart of humanitarian government, it is necessary to consider Roberto Esposito’s concept of (auto)immunity. This is the idea that the protection of life requires the incorporation (in small doses) of that which represents a threat to life in order to develop immunity against it.<sup>47</sup> For them, Foucauldian biopolitics primarily concerns the ‘positive’ goals of optimisation and maximisation of life, whereas humanitarian government as deployed in practices of ‘compassionate borderwork’ is neither a ‘straightforwardly “positive”’ nor simply a “negative” or thanatopolitical’ ‘biopolitical technology of power’.<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, biopolitics is unable to account for the capacity of humanitarian government ‘to lead to “irregular” migrants’ and refugees’ dehumanisation and

<sup>37</sup> Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, p. 226.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Basaran, ‘The saved and the drowned’.

<sup>41</sup> Polly Pallister-Wilkins, ‘The humanitarian politics of European border policing: Frontex and border police in Evros’, *International Political Sociology*, 9:1 (2015), pp. 53–69 (p. 59), discussing the argument of Michel Agier, *Managing the Undesirables: Refugee Camps and Humanitarian Government* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Walters, ‘Foucault and frontiers’, p. 138.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>44</sup> Williams, ‘From humanitarian exceptionalism to contingent care’, p. 17.

<sup>45</sup> Walters, ‘Foucault and frontiers’, p. 144.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144, 158.

<sup>47</sup> Little and Vaughan-Williams, ‘Stopping boats’.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.



death'.<sup>49</sup> Conversely, Esposito's concept of (auto)immunity explains how protection of life through the inoculation of threatening agents in excessive doses may result in 'an autoimmune crisis'.<sup>50</sup> From this perspective, humanitarian government is informed by 'an (auto)immunitary logic: the very lives that are identified as in need of protecting and saving can also become targeted by lethal apparatuses of security'.<sup>51</sup> This ambiguity is particularly evident in the Australian 'stop the boats' policy that claims, at once, to protect the migrants by abandoning them.<sup>52</sup>

The partial or limited capacity of biopolitics to account for the phenomenon of humanitarian government can also be observed, more understatedly, in Ticktin's account, when she discusses how humanitarianism produces a process of 'biological involution'.<sup>53</sup> This is the production of disabled subjects who are ultimately more valued and mobile than their 'able bodied' counterparts because they can be made the object of a politics of compassion. In this regard, Ticktin recounts the story of several HIV+ patients who stopped taking their medication once they received their residence papers, fearful that an improvement in their condition could undermine their right to reside in the country.<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, although Ticktin argues that the 'apolitical suffering body' of humanitarianism lies 'at the intersection of biopolitical modernity and global capital',<sup>55</sup> she hardly analyses the relationship between humanitarianism and biopolitics, let alone explores how the process of 'biological involution' may be reconciled with biopolitics. From the perspective of Little and Vaughan-Williams' argument, Ticktin's neglect of biopolitics may be considered an indication of the 'diagnostic limits'<sup>56</sup> of biopolitics vis-à-vis the phenomenon of humanitarian government.

For Little and Vaughan-Williams, these limits concern not just the incapacity of biopolitics to fully explain the simultaneous deployment of rationalities of care and security, but also its inability to account for what they regard as the 'third dimension' of humanitarian government, namely a process of displacement of responsibility for migrant deaths (such as those in the Mediterranean or on Australian coasts) 'from both migrants and refugees and restrictive border security and migration management' to human traffickers and smugglers.<sup>57</sup> This argument further reinforces Fassin's and Ticktin's views that humanitarian government depoliticises the suffering of vulnerable subjects by suggesting that depoliticisation takes place through a process of displacement of responsibility to criminal networks. Yet, as Jill Williams – drawing on Roxanne Lynn Doty<sup>58</sup> – suggests, not just individuals and groups, but also natural environments, such as the harsh landscape that surrounds the US-Mexico border, can become the target of strategies of displacement of responsibility. Doty talks of 'spaces of moral alibi' where 'the state abdicates responsibility for migrant deaths by pointing to the harsh terrain (and individual migrant decisions) as the cause of deaths'.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ticktin, *Casualties of Care*, p. 215.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>56</sup> Little and Vaughan-Williams, 'Stopping boats', p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Roxanne Lynn Doty, 'Bare life: Border-crossing deaths and spaces of moral alibi', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29:4 (2011), pp. 599–612.

<sup>59</sup> Williams, 'From humanitarian exceptionalism to contingent care', p. 13.

This brief overview suggests that: (1) humanitarian government concerns the government of disenfranchised subjects, such as refugees and undocumented/‘irregular’ migrants through the simultaneous deployment of rationalities/practices of care and security; (2) these rationalities/practices are only partially captured by a biopolitical lens; and (3) the deployment of humanitarian government entails a process of depoliticisation and displacement of the causes of suffering. In the remainder of this article I want to challenge the first two arguments (Section II) and explore in greater depth the third one (Section III). The first two arguments, I will argue, while very insightful, suffer from a fundamental ‘diagnostic limit’ (to borrow Little and Vaughan-Williams’ expression) they consider that the referent object of humanitarian government is disenfranchised ‘others’. My contention is that humanitarian government is also a biopolitical governmentality targeting host populations, whose aim is to maximise their biological and emotional well-being through the selective inclusion/exclusion of refugees. In order to advance this argument, in the next section I will explore how this process of inclusion/exclusion rests on a ‘differentialist’ understanding of racism and how biopower targets not just biological, but emotional life. These arguments will be instrumental to explore, in the third section, how caring for the emotional well-being of populations requires not just depoliticising the suffering of migrants, but blaming them for their own suffering.

## II. Humanitarian government as the biopolitical government of host populations

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The perspectives discussed in the previous section tend to reduce biopolitics to a politics of care and maximisation of life, and overlook how the biopolitical ‘power to make live’ is not an unqualified attempt to promote all forms of life, but only the life of the race/population cared for. For Foucault, the key dimensions of biopolitics (‘love and care’)<sup>60</sup> encompass and indeed are advanced through the ‘negative’ biopolitical power to ‘let die’ and the traditional sovereign ‘right to take life’.<sup>61</sup> As Foucault explains, with the emergence of biopolitical governmentality ‘the problem of sovereignty is not eliminated; on the contrary it is made more acute than ever’.<sup>62</sup> The reason is that the power ‘to kill’, ‘take life’, or ‘let die’ is essential to make life live by marginalising, segregating, or eliminating those internal deviant elements and external threatening ‘others’ which may put at risk the survival, flourishing, and well-being of the population. Particularly with respect to the latter, biopolitical governmentality requires the active deployment of what Foucault describes as *state* or *biopolitical racism* in order to discriminate between ‘threatening’ and ‘non-threatening’ others.

For Foucault, biopolitical racism ‘is an expression of a schism within society that is provoked by the idea of an ongoing and always incomplete cleansing of the social body’,<sup>63</sup> which acts as a governmental rationality insofar as it breaks the biological continuum of life by dividing it into ‘superior/good’ and ‘inferior/bad races’, and establishes a relationship whereby the ‘the death of the bad race,

<sup>60</sup> Mika Ojakangas, ‘Impossible dialogue on bio-power: Agamben and Foucault’, *Foucault Studies*, 2:4 (2005), pp. 5–28 (p. 20).

<sup>61</sup> Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76* (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 241.

<sup>62</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security Territory Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–78* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), p. 105.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), pp. 43–4.

of the inferior race ... is something that will make life in general healthier'.<sup>64</sup> It follows that modern biopolitical racism is not exclusively and primarily 'an irrational prejudice, a form of socio-political discrimination, or an ideological motive in a political doctrine; rather, it is a form of government that is designed to manage a population'<sup>65</sup> by raising the problem of 'foreigners' and 'deviants'. Following Foucault, racism can be understood as a way to measure, assess, rank, intervene on, and distribute individuals in the domain of the living according to their endowment or absence of those biological qualities that can contribute to the well-being and flourishing of the population. Modern biopolitical racism is an essential component of biopower. It is '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'.<sup>66</sup>

According to Foucault, biopolitical racism, while shaped by traditional forms of racism based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, colour, and gender, also partially transcends them. As Roxanne Doty has perceptively observed, Foucault's approach to racism rests on a 'differentialist' perspective.<sup>67</sup> The latter deems 'race' a mobile category and a product of the underlying governmental rationality – racism – that constructs the category of race and endows it with meaning according to shifting and evolving (bio)political circumstances.<sup>68</sup> It follows that, from the perspective of biopolitical racism, *the boundary that separates 'superior' and 'inferior races' is a tool of the biopolitical governmentality targeting the population rather than what delimitates its space of action.* This means that the boundary between 'superior' and 'inferior races' – that is, the boundary between the population under power's control and external 'others' – can be redrawn *beyond traditional forms of racism* (based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, colour, and gender) if members of the 'inferior races' are deemed instrumental to enhance the material and emotional life of the population. This suggests that practices of humanitarian government resulting in the acceptance of refugees may not have as their exclusive (or even primary) goal the care of 'disenfranchised subjects', but the care and well-being of host populations. Humanitarian government, in other words, may be a biopolitical governmentality targeting host populations aimed at enhancing their emotional and material well-being.

In order to better understand this argument, it is necessary to consider how European anxieties about refugees have been exacerbated by the predominantly Muslim identity of those seeking refuge. The widespread European perception of Islam as a backward, irrational, violent-prone religion that promotes terrorism and gender inequality, unable to distinguish between facts and beliefs, and unwilling to accept the separation between religion and politics<sup>69</sup> has fuelled traditional manifestations of racism mostly in the form of anti-Muslimism or Islamophobia.<sup>70</sup> These manifestations have ranged from several European countries (including Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Cyprus) refusing to take in Muslim refugees or expressing strong preferences towards Christian refugees in order to preserve their Christian identity,<sup>71</sup> to media representations of Muslim refugees as 'patriarchal, homophobic, violent threats to personal, national and international security' as well

<sup>64</sup> Foucault, 'Society Must Be Defended', p. 254.

<sup>65</sup> Kim Su Rasmussen, 'Foucault's genealogy of racism', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 28:5 (2011), pp. 34–51 (p. 34).

<sup>66</sup> Foucault, 'Society Must Be Defended', p. 254.

<sup>67</sup> Doty, 'Bare life', p. 603.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Luca Mavelli, *Europe's Encounter with Islam: The Secular and the Postsecular* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>70</sup> Fred Halliday, "'Islamophobia' reconsidered', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22:5 (1999), pp. 892–902. See also Betts, 'The elephant in the room'.

<sup>71</sup> Erin K. Wilson and Luca Mavelli, 'The refugee crisis and religion: Beyond conceptual and physical boundaries', in Mavelli and Wilson (eds), *The Refugee Crisis and Religion*, pp. 3, 7.

as “rapefugees” and innate sexual predators [as in the infamous *Charlie Hebdo* cartoon depicting a grown-up Alan Kurdi molesting women] following the attacks on European women in Cologne on New Years’ Eve’.<sup>72</sup> However, despite these traditional manifestations of racism grounded in a deep-seated mistrust and suspicion of Islam, a number of Muslim refugees have been portrayed as ‘good refugees’ who should be welcomed.

As Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh explains, Syrian refugees as a whole have been initially framed as ‘good refugees’, that is, as ‘both legitimate and priority “candidates” for international protection’ to the effect that they have been ‘fast-tracked’ and given precedence over Iraqis and Afghans, who have been treated as ‘second-tier refugees’.<sup>73</sup> However, with the intensification of the crisis, the binary clichéd representation of ‘good/deserving/real refugees’ versus ‘bad/undeserving/bogus refugees’ has also begun to apply to Syrian asylum seekers. In particular, the figure of the ‘good/deserving/real refugee’ has been employed to describe ‘women, children and male victims of violence who patiently wait in refugee camps to be rescued by British/European/Western saviours’.<sup>74</sup> Conversely, bad refugees are those who exercise agency by taking matters in their own hands and initiate the dangerous journey across sub-Saharan Africa and the Mediterranean to seek refuge in Europe. They ‘challenge the script “refugee = victim” thus becoming a “swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean”’<sup>75</sup> (as UK Prime Minister David Cameron infamously stated), “queue jumpers” and “bogus asylum seekers” who are jeopardising the protection claims made by ‘real’ (that is, ‘good’) refugees,<sup>76</sup> economic migrants and potential terrorists who put at risk the survival of the nation. The ‘good refugee’, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh remarks, is epitomised by the hybrid figure of the weakened and dependent ‘womanandchild’, as per Cynthia Enloe’s definition.<sup>77</sup> This figure of defenceless, apolitical and innocent victimhood, highly valued in ‘the global meritocracy of suffering’,<sup>78</sup> has more recently also been extended to vulnerable male figures, such as Laith Majid, a Syrian refugee who was pictured ‘weeping in relief as he reaches the island of Kos holding his 7-year-old daughter in his arms and hugging his 9-year-old son’ and was subsequently dubbed by the BBC as one of the ‘faces of the migration crisis’.<sup>79</sup>

Undoubtedly, the ‘good refugee’ discourse draws on a series of racial and gender stereotypes: the defenceless Muslim woman (doubly victim of Islamic patriarchy and war), the innocent child (not yet corrupted by the ideology of Islam), and the desexualised and even feminised, and for this very reason, non-threatening Muslim man (the negation of the hypersexualised, violent, and fanatic Muslim). Similarly, the figure of the ‘good refugee’ rests on a paternalistic racism that reinforces notions of racial superiority, magnanimity, and moral righteousness. This paternalistic racism crystallises the inequality and power imbalance between ‘white’ and ‘brown’ lives and, as Mahmood Mamdani observes, constructs Muslims as ‘petrified into a lifeless custom ... incapable of transforming their culture’ with the effect that their ‘salvation lies, as always, in philanthropy, in being

<sup>72</sup> Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, ‘The faith-gender-asylum nexus: an intersectionalist analysis of representations of the “refugee crisis”’, in in Mavelli and Wilson (eds), *The Refugee Crisis and Religion*.

<sup>73</sup> Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, ‘Representations of displacement from the Middle East and North Africa’, *Public Culture*, 28:3 (2016), pp. 457–73 (p. 459).

<sup>74</sup> Wilson and Mavelli, ‘The refugee crisis and religion’, p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, ‘The faith-gender-asylum nexus’, p. 210.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>78</sup> Clifford Bob, cited in Miriam Ticktin, ‘Where ethics and politics meet: the violence of humanitarianism in France’, *American Ethnologist*, 33:1 (2006), pp. 33–49 (p. 34).

<sup>79</sup> Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, ‘The faith-gender-asylum nexus’, p. 212.

saved from the outside'.<sup>80</sup> However, I want to argue, the identification of certain Muslim groups as 'good refugees' who deserve protection and inclusion also signals a very partial suspension and re-elaboration of racist prejudices about Islam. What makes this possible?

Humanitarian government scholars would argue that it is the representation and construction of certain Muslims as 'womenandchildren' or 'menandchildren' in need that prompts the humanitarian response *and* an equally important exacerbation of racial prejudices and securitisation towards those Muslims – male, single, healthy, and young who have already crossed or attempt to cross the Mediterranean – who escape the status of victims to be rescued and are perceived as economic migrants, sexual predators, and potential terrorists. While agreeing with this argument, the biopolitical perspective advanced in this article emphasises that the deflation of racism towards 'womenandchildren' and 'menandchildren' Muslim refugees and its exasperation towards other Muslim refugees represents an instantiation of biopolitical racism that redraws the line between 'superior' and 'inferior races'. As it was suggested, biopolitical racism may re-elaborate traditional forms of racism if some members of the 'inferior races' are deemed instrumental to enhance the life of the host population. Accordingly, the humanitarian government of a few Syrian refugees victims of violence and abuse and/or whose suffering has been caught on camera and 'gone viral' may be primarily a biopolitical governmentality that has the host population as its object. This biopolitical outlook, however, raises a series of questions: What makes these 'sick' and 'feminised' refugees 'valuable' from a biopolitical perspective? How can they maximise the life of the populations hosting them?

Numerous scholars have argued that, from the perspective of biopolitical governmentality, 'valuable lives' may be considered those that can be inscribed into neoliberal logics of entrepreneurship and resilience, responsibility and self-governance, security and risk, competition and inequality, consumption and accumulation, circulation and dispossession.<sup>81</sup> This view finds resonance in Foucault's understanding of biopower as an 'indispensable element' in the development of neoliberal capitalism, which would not have been possible 'without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production', 'the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes', and the development of 'methods of power capable of optimizing forces, aptitudes, and life in general'.<sup>82</sup> This argument rests on a widespread 'biological' understanding of biopolitics, what Vivienne Jabri has perceptively described as 'the biologization of power',<sup>83</sup> namely, the fact that, with biopolitics, 'the basic biological features of the human species' become 'the object of political strategisation'.<sup>84</sup> Life understood in its material, biological, and molecular dimensions becomes the object of a

<sup>80</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, 'Good Muslim, bad Muslim: a political perspective on culture and terrorism'. *American Anthropologist*, 104:3 (2002), pp. 766–75 (p. 767).

<sup>81</sup> See, among others, Michael Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerrero, 'Biopolitics of security in the 21st century: an introduction', *Review of International Studies*, 34:2 (2008), pp. 265–92; Michael Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerrero, 'The biopolitical imaginary of species-being', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26:1 (2009), pp. 1–23; Dillon and Reid, *The Liberal Way of War; Majia Holmer Nadesan, Governmentality, Biopower, and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2010); Melinda Cooper, *Life as Surplus: Biotechnology and Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2011); Tom Lundborg and Nick Vaughan-Williams, 'Resilience, critical infrastructure, and molecular security: the excess of "life" in biopolitics', *International Political Sociology*, 5:4 (2011), pp. 367–83; Brad Evans and Julian Reid, *Resilient Life: The Art of Living Dangerously* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014); David Chandler and Julian Reid, *The Neoliberal Subject: Resilience, Adaptation and Vulnerability* (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2016).

<sup>82</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 141.

<sup>83</sup> Vivienne Jabri, 'Michel Foucault's analytics of war: the social, the international, and the racial', *International Political Sociology*, 1:1 (2007), pp. 67–81 (p. 73).

<sup>84</sup> Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero, 'Biopolitics of security in the 21st century', p. 273.

complex assemblage of biopolitical interventions aimed at its regulation, evaluation, hierarchisation, entrepreneurialisation, commodification, securitisation and, overall, neoliberal subjectification for the purpose of enhancing its strength, value, productive, and reproductive capacity. From this perspective, ‘valuable lives’ in biopolitical terms are those that can be transformed ‘into value, in the form of commodity and capital’,<sup>85</sup> and can *adapt* and *contribute* to the reproduction of the neoliberal biopolitical order, thus generating *surplus life* that may strengthen the life of the population.<sup>86</sup>

From this perspective, sick ‘womenandchildren’ refugees – such as those that the UK has pledged to take in directly from camps in Syria’s neighbouring countries – can hardly be considered ‘valuable’ in biopolitical terms. The decision to care for a small number of ‘sick bodies’ that would be a burden for the welfare state, could not generate biological surplus-life, could not be integrated into neoliberal mechanisms of economic control, and would not contribute to strengthening and maximising the biological life of the British population, would indeed appear to be a case of humanitarian government. It entails: focusing on a small number of individual lives rather than a population as a whole, as Fassin would suggest; providing a ‘temporary and ad hoc intervention’, as Walters would remark;<sup>87</sup> concentrating on the ‘politics of compassion’ of the ‘humanitarian present’ at the expense of long term solutions, as Weizman would argue; welcoming refugees as objects of care and compassion rather than equal citizens, as Ticktin would observe; and hardening the borders for those ‘able-bodied migrants’ who would attempt to find refuge in Europe, thus deploying humanitarianism as part of an autoimmune securitising logic, as Little and Vaughan-Williams would emphasise.

However, if a strictly biological reading of biopolitics is abandoned, it is possible to consider how sick ‘womenandchildren’ refugees may be ‘valuable’ from a biopolitical perspective, that is, capable of enhancing and maximising the life of the populations hosting them. Ted Rutland, for instance, has argued that an exclusive biological outlook displays ‘an unduly narrow conception of biopolitics’.<sup>88</sup> It neglects how biopolitics transcends ‘the most basic biological or medical dimensions of existence’ such as ‘the health of the population; its longevity, growth, and decline; and its physical security’ and encompasses a specific concern with the affective and emotional life of the population,<sup>89</sup> which is not merely derivative of biological interventions.<sup>90</sup> Biopolitics, in other words, would not just focus on the material dispositions of the population in order to promote and advance its biological well-being, neither could it be reduced to the cultivation of feelings of uncertainty, fear, anxiety, and insecurity in order to fashion resilient subjects capable of withstanding and adapting to the shocks of the neoliberal economic order,<sup>91</sup> and in order to justify its power to kill or let die those members of the subspecies that represent a threat. Crucially, biopolitics would also entail caring for and, therefore, intervening on, the emotional life of the population. In order to appreciate this argument it is necessary to further excavate Foucault’s biopolitical account beyond its manifest concern with the

<sup>85</sup> Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero, ‘The biopolitical imaginary of species-being’, p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> Miguel Vatter, ‘Biopolitics: From surplus value to surplus life’, *Theory & Event*, 12:2 (2009), pp. 1–12.

<sup>87</sup> Walters, ‘Foucault and frontiers’, p. 159.

<sup>88</sup> Ted Rutland, ‘Enjoyable life: Planning, amenity and the contested terrain of urban biopolitics’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 33:5 (2015), pp. 850–68 (p. 853).

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Although there is a growing literature on the ‘cultural politics of emotion’ and ‘emotions and world politics’, this scholarship has largely neglected the relationship between emotions and biopolitics and emotions as a constitutive dimension of biopolitics. See, for example, Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003) and Roland Bleiker and Emma Hutchison, ‘Fear no more: Emotions and world politics’, *Review of International Studies*, 34:1 (2008), pp. 115–35.

<sup>91</sup> Mitchell Dean, ‘Rethinking neoliberalism’, *Journal of Sociology*, 50:2 (2014), pp. 150–63 (p. 161).

biological and consider the role that *pastoral power* and the *police* have in the genealogy of biopolitics. The relevance of these two technologies of government in relation to the biopolitical pre-occupation for the emotional well-being of the population has often been paid limited attention to or been neglected in international relations scholarship on biopolitics.<sup>92</sup>

For Foucault, pastoral power and the police represent crucial dimensions in the genealogy of modern biopolitics.<sup>93</sup> While a full exploration of this genealogy would be beyond the scope of this article, for the purpose of my argument it is important to consider that pastoral power, with the metaphor of God as a shepherd, involved a fundamental focus on the ‘care of souls’.<sup>94</sup> It was exercised by the shepherd over a flock, and endowed the shepherd with the task ‘to provide continuous material and spiritual welfare for each and every member of the flock’.<sup>95</sup> Pastoral power was thus ‘a beneficent power’, a ‘power of care’,<sup>96</sup> concerned with ‘constantly ensur[ing], sustain[ing], and improve[ing] the lives of each and every one’,<sup>97</sup> and with providing ‘spiritual direction’.<sup>98</sup> Its ultimate task was the spiritual ‘salvation of the flock’ and of every single sheep in the flock, with the effect that pastoral power was both an individualising and massifying power.<sup>99</sup> According to Foucault, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw a fundamental transformation in the logics and reach of the pastorate that ceased to be an exclusively religious phenomenon. It migrated to the political sphere and crucially shaped the first governmental rationality of the modern state, namely *raison d'État* (reason of state). The latter had as its goal the strengthening of the state through a technology of power focused on the unlimited regulation of its subjects, from their economic activity to their social behaviours through the ‘unlimited objectives’ of the ‘police’.<sup>100</sup>

With this term, Foucault does not understand ‘exclusively the institution of police in the modern sense’, but also, and possibly more importantly, a regulatory type of power concerned with ‘the art of managing life and the well-being of populations’.<sup>101</sup> Police thus stands for policy or ‘science of policy’ and has as its main goals attending to the basic necessity of life of the population, providing its members with an education and an occupation, making possible their orderly circulation, and ensuring the growth of their wealth and the preservation of their health. All these goals are, of course, instrumental for augmenting and enhancing the state’s strength. However, Foucault continues, in order to achieve this task, the police cannot just attend to the biological well-being of the population, but must also focus on ‘individual felicity’, on the ‘well-being [of the population] beyond [mere biological] being’, by ‘procuring the happiness of its subjects’.<sup>102</sup> As Mika Ojakangas explains,

<sup>92</sup> For a non-exhaustive overview of this scholarship, see fns 15–19 and 81 (with the exception of Nadesan, *Governmentality, Biopower, and Everyday Life*).

<sup>93</sup> See Mika Ojakangas, *On the Greek Origins of Biopolitics: A Reinterpretation of the History of Biopower* (London: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>94</sup> Colin Gordon, ‘Governmental rationality: an introduction’, in Burchell, Gordon, and Miller (eds), *The Foucault Effect*, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> Ojakangas, *On the Greek Origins of Biopolitics*, p. 78.

<sup>96</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, pp. 124–5.

<sup>97</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘*Omnes et Singulatim*: Toward a critique of political reason’, in James D. Faubion (ed.), *Power: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984, Volume III* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), pp. 298–323 (p. 307).

<sup>98</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 121.

<sup>99</sup> Foucault, ‘*Omnes et Singulatim*’.

<sup>100</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–79* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 6.

<sup>101</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 306.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

even though the new rationality of government that underscores the biopolitical project relinquishes the goal of total control of *raison d'État* by introducing the principle of self-limitation of governmental reason, the concern with happiness and care for the emotional well-being of the population retains a central presence in the biopolitical episteme (with the effect that the 'ideology of the police' should be considered a crucial precursor of modern biopolitics).<sup>103</sup>

Recent research in human geography and cultural studies has emphasised how 'the affective life of individuals and collectives is an "object-target of" and "condition for" contemporary forms of biopower'.<sup>104</sup> Two main dynamics can be identified. First, 'capital extracts value from affect – around consumer confidence, political fears, etc., such that the difference between commodification and labor, production and reproduction, are collapsed in the modulation of the capacity to circulate affect'.<sup>105</sup> Second, capital does not just extract value from affect. As part of the neoliberal process of economisation of society,<sup>106</sup> affect becomes itself a form of capital that is instrumental for governing the population. Promoting enjoyment, positive feelings, fulfilling emotions, and rewarding passions – in other words – caring for the emotional well-being of the population through the accumulation of constructive sentiments becomes a central biopolitical rationality of government.

This perspective raises a crucial question on the British policy towards Syrian refugees. Could it be understood as a case not just of humanitarian government of refugees, but also of biopolitical government of the British population *through* the humanitarian government of Syrian refugees? Could the Syrian sick children, women who had been raped and men who had suffered torture to whom the government promised sanctuary be considered biopolitically 'valuable lives' because instrumental to enticing positive feelings of compassion and moral righteousness in the British population? Could this be a case in which the 'differentialist' rationality of biopolitical racism redraws the line between who must live and who must die because the inclusion of Syrian 'sick' and 'womenandchildren' bodies in the population contributes to enhance and maximise the latter's emotional well-being? In the next section, I will explore this argument by analysing the UK decision to suspend search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean in 2014, and by comparing the British and German different responses to the plight of Syrian refugees following the death of Alan Kurdi. My argument will be that these responses have been informed by both *emotional* and *biological* biopolitical rationalities of care of the British and German populations.

### III. Blame and emotional-biological care in the British and German responses to the refugee crisis

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An important argument that emerged in the first section of this article is that humanitarian government entails a process of depoliticisation of suffering. The emotional language that frames this phenomenon obscures the causes of domination, injustice, and violence by replacing them with a grammar of solidarity and compassion. To reprise a previous quote by Ticktin, humanitarian

<sup>103</sup> Ojakangas, *On the Greek Origins of Biopolitics*, p. 31.

<sup>104</sup> See, for instance, Rutland, 'Enjoyable life'; Ben Anderson, 'Affect and biopower: Towards a politics of life', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 37:1 (2011), pp. 28–43; Patricia T. Clough, 'The affective turn: Political economy, biomedica and bodies', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 25:1 (2008), pp. 1–22.

<sup>105</sup> Clough, 'The affective turn', p. 16.

<sup>106</sup> Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*. See also Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015).



government constructs suffering bodies as ‘victim[s] without a perpetrator’, and when it occasionally acknowledges the presence of a perpetrator, it eschews political responsibility by blaming ‘third parties’, such as criminal networks (as discussed by Little and Vaughan-Williams), or natural environments (as discussed by Williams and by Doty). However, from the perspective I advanced in the previous section – the humanitarian government of refugees as a biopolitical governmentality of the population aimed at enhancing its biological and emotional well-being – depoliticisation may not be a tenable rationality of government in the long run. How is it possible to care for the emotional well-being of the population when humanitarian practices towards a minority entail the securitisation of the majority of refugees, with the effect of letting many of them die, as in the 2014 British decision to stop search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean? If the death of undocumented migrants can be justified through biopolitical racism as a biological necessity in order to preserve the culture, wealth, and health of the population, how can the killing or letting die of refugees not result in feelings of guilt, sadness, remorse that run counter to the biopolitical goal of enhancing the emotional welfare of the population? My argument is that humanitarian government entails not just the depoliticisation of suffering – the construction of ‘victims without a perpetrator’ – but the identification of a perpetrator in the migrants themselves. It entails *blaming refugees for their own suffering*.<sup>107</sup> The UK decision to suspend search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean provides a remarkable illustration of this case.

In October 2014, the UK Government announced that it would no longer support search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean on the grounds that such operations are ‘an unintended “pull factor”, encouraging more migrants to attempt the dangerous sea crossing and thereby leading to more tragic and unnecessary deaths’ (then UK Foreign Office Minister Lady Anelay).<sup>108</sup> While this argument concealed the political causes of suffering – ‘push factors’ such as extreme poverty, persecution, war, famines, genocide, and European political responsibilities – it did not simply promote a process of depoliticisation, but one of blaming undocumented migrants for their own suffering. Undocumented migrants were portrayed – in a rather paternalistic and racist fashion – as fundamentally irresponsible, since they would choose to embark on a journey that has resulted in over 20,000 deaths over the last twenty years and 3,000 deaths between January and September 2015 (and over 5,000 deaths in 2016).<sup>109</sup> Hence, this biopolitics of blame enabled the UK to portray itself as a responsible ‘fatherly’ actor – whose responsibility would consist in letting the irresponsible migrants drown to prevent ‘unnecessary deaths’. This argument has acquired a prominent place in current public debates on migration. Looking at readers’ comments to online articles documenting recent tragedies in the Mediterranean, one easily encounters the following: ‘These People leave their countries at their own risk and peril and if they are so crazy to brave danger they should face the Music [*sic*] and if they at last find death, it is only their fault if they come to a bad end’; ‘If you feel that it’s your fault I and others certainly do not feel that it is ours. These irresponsible ILLEGAL immigrants know what dangers they will face so let them face the consequences’; ‘Honestly these

<sup>107</sup> Williams (drawing on Doty) and more recently Squire briefly consider this argument as part of a strategy of deflection of official responsibilities. However, neither of these perspectives discusses the blaming of migrants as a biopolitical governmentality instrumental to preserving and promoting the emotional well-being of the population. See Williams, ‘From humanitarian exceptionalism to contingent care’; Doty, ‘Bare life’; and Squire, ‘Governing migration through death’.

<sup>108</sup> Cited in Alan Travis, ‘UK axes support for Mediterranean migrant rescue operation’, *The Guardian* (28 October 2015), available at: {<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/oct/27/uk-mediterranean-migrant-rescue-plan>} accessed 5 March 2016.

<sup>109</sup> Missing Migrants Project, *International Organization for Migration*, available at: {<http://missingmigrants.iom.int/>}.

people flee their own mess, their wars were to get rid of their dictatorship ... sorry but it is NOT our fault.<sup>110</sup>

Blaming irregular migrants for their tragic destiny should be considered a form of biopolitical care for the emotional well-being of the British population: a way of exempting it from responsibility for the recurrent tragedies in the Mediterranean. This biopolitics of care has been supported by the deployment of biopolitical racism that has contributed to construct refugees as the embodiment of an ‘inferior race’ that threatens the British population. The nature of biopolitical racism in the British context needs to be understood with reference to the sociopolitical anxiety about Islam discussed in the previous section, and to long-standing fears about Britain being ‘swamped by people with a different culture’, as Margaret Thatcher infamously declared in 1978, stating that it was necessary to ‘allay people’s fear on numbers’.<sup>111</sup> These concerns have shaped a refugee policy that, across different Conservative and Labour prime ministers, has shown a central preoccupation with ‘bogus’ and ‘undeserving’ asylum seekers threatening the identity, culture, wealth, and health of the British population and undermining the protection that should be offered to ‘genuine refugees’.<sup>112</sup> It is revealing that a 2003 poll for *The Times* indicated the number of asylum seekers as ‘the most serious problem in Britain at present’, whereas a study published a year later by the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) highlighted how some of the key terms and expressions used by the popular press to describe asylum seekers and refugees included ‘scrounger, sponger, fraudster, robbing the system’, ‘burden/strain on resources’, ‘illegal working, cheap labour’, ‘criminal, violent’, ‘mob, horde, riot, rampage, disorder’, and ‘a threat, a worry, to be feared’.<sup>113</sup>

Back to the current crisis, the construction of refugees as potentially ‘bogus’, expression of an ‘inferior race’ (in Foucauldian biopolitical terms) and ultimately responsible for their destiny was not substantially undermined by the 19 April 2015 shipwreck, when a migrants’ boat capsized off the coast of Libya, killing an estimated 700 people in what Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat described as the ‘biggest human tragedy of the last few years’.<sup>114</sup> Following mounting public pressure, the UK government backtracked from its opposition to search-and-rescue operations. It admitted that the idea that they would be a ‘pull’ factor was based on ‘anecdotal’ evidence and that halting these operations had failed. While this prompted the British government to send a Royal Navy ship to the Mediterranean to resume search-and-rescue operations, thus implicitly acknowledging that there were legitimate ‘push’ factors behind the migrants’ decision to cross the Mediterranean, it continued to uphold that the ultimate responsibility for the migrants’ destiny lay with the migrants themselves. Accordingly, the public representation of refugees as an ‘inferior race’ that threatened the British way of life continued unabated. In July 2015, David Cameron spoke of ‘a swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean, seeking a better life, wanting to come to Britain because Britain has got jobs, it’s got a growing economy, it’s an incredible

<sup>110</sup> See, for example {<http://www.debatingeurope.eu/2014/10/30/migrants-mediterranean/#.VP10m0uQeSI>} accessed 14 February 2016.

<sup>111</sup> Cited in Evan Smith, “Managing migration”: Discourses on immigration and “race relations” from Thatcherism to New Labour, in Lori Maguire (ed.), *Domestic Policy Discourse in the US and the UK in the New World Order* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2010), pp. 256–62 (p. 253).

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>114</sup> Cited in ‘Hundreds “locked in hold” of boat capsized off Libya’, *Al Jazeera* (20 April 2015), available at: {<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/04/hundreds-locked-hold-boat-capsized-libya-150419233436689.html>} accessed 19 February 2016.

place to live'.<sup>115</sup> A month later, he reinforced the classic refrain of economic migrants disguised as refugees coming to the UK to steal jobs and depress wages by portraying them as burglars trying to 'break into Britain without permission'.<sup>116</sup>

A more forceful challenge to the British refugee policy eventually came a few months later, in September 2015, with the death of three-year-old Alan Kurdi on the coast of the Turkish holiday resort of Bodrum. The picture of his dead body washed ashore prompted a strong sense of identification, with thousands of emotional comments inundating the media, such as: 'My god, that could be my child, who has the same colour hair, the same chubby legs.'<sup>117</sup> The reason for this was that Alan represented the 'ideal refugee': a child, an innocent apolitical victim who would have deserved to be helped. Cameron was quick to embrace the emotional wave – 'Anyone who saw those pictures overnight could not help but be moved and, as a father, I felt deeply moved by the sight of that young boy on a beach in Turkey', he declared<sup>118</sup> – and, following mounting public pressure for more open and welcoming immigration policies, vowed that the UK would 'fulfil' its 'moral responsibilities' towards Syrian refugees by taking 20,000 of them directly from camps neighbouring Syria over a period of five years. From a humanitarian government perspective, the decision to take only sick children, women who had been raped, and men who had suffered torture would be considered an instantiation of the simultaneous deployment of logics of care for a small group of 'sick bodies' that would be welcomed as objects of compassion, rather than equal citizens, and logics of security for the majority of refugees, for whom the borders would be further hardened; it would be considered a case of temporary and ad hoc intervention which privileges an immediate compassionate response that focuses on few individual lives and fails to address the underlying root causes of the problem, and which ultimately underscores autoimmune tendencies that negate the very lives that are claimed to be saved.

Yet, from the complementary perspective that I have articulated in this article, it can be argued that this initiative was not just – and not primarily – aimed at governing Syrian refugees, but the emotional well-being of the British population. The flurry of calls urging the government to act, in fact, also raised a series of questions about British identity, the crisis of British value, and the extent to which Britain was failing the test of compassion. Harshly criticising 'the UK's dismal record on refugees', well below that of comparable nations in the European Union, the *Financial Times* wrote that 'there is a compassionate and humane streak in the British people that ought not to be underestimated. As Europe's refugee crisis develops, it is not the defensive crouch of Mr Cameron that Britons may come to admire but the courage and principle of Ms Merkel'.<sup>119</sup> 'British people are compassionate people who will want to play their part' wrote two Labour MPs (Stephen Timms and Lyn Brown),<sup>120</sup> echoed by several Tory

<sup>115</sup> Cited in 'David Cameron: "Swarm" of migrants crossing Mediterranean', *BBC News* (30 July 2015), available at: {<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-33714282>} accessed 31 March 2016.

<sup>116</sup> Cited in 'Cameron says migrants trying to "break in" to UK illegally', *The Guardian* (15 August 2015), available at: {<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/aug/15/david-cameron-says-migrants-trying-to-break-in-to-uk-illegally>} accessed 24 June 2016

<sup>117</sup> Joel Gunter, 'Alan Kurdi: Why one picture cut through', *BBC News* (4 September 2015), available at: {<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34150419>} accessed 8 March 2016.

<sup>118</sup> Cited in 'UK may accept "several thousand" more refugees', *Sky News* (3 September 2015), available at: {<http://news.sky.com/story/1545615/uk-may-accept-several-thousand-more-refugees>} accessed 3 March 2016.

<sup>119</sup> *Financial Times*, 'David Cameron Has Misjudged Europe's Refugee Crisis' (2 September 2015), available at {<https://www.ft.com/content/fb41c922-5171-11e5-8642-453585f2cfd>} accessed 12 February 2017.

<sup>120</sup> *Newham Recorder*, 'Migrant Crisis: Newham MPs Call for Britain to do More' (2 September 2015), available at: {[http://www.newhamrecorder.co.uk/news/migrant\\_crisis\\_newham\\_mps\\_call\\_for\\_britain\\_to\\_do\\_more\\_1\\_4219797](http://www.newhamrecorder.co.uk/news/migrant_crisis_newham_mps_call_for_britain_to_do_more_1_4219797)} accessed 12 February 2017.

MPs who tweeted: ‘We r nothing without compassion. Pic should make us all ashamed. We have failed in Syria. I am sorry little angel, RIP’ (Nadhim Zahawi); ‘The UK I know has always shouldered its burden in the world. DfID is doing life-saving work abroad but we can – & must – do more at home’ (Ruth Davidson); ‘We cannot be the generation that fails this test of humanity. We must do all we can’ (Nicola Blackwood).<sup>121</sup> Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron labelled the government policy on refugee as ‘morally wrong’, while Scotland’s First Minister Nicola Sturgeon urged to ‘do more’.<sup>122</sup> On traditional and social media the idea that ‘British values demand that we aid Syria refugees’<sup>123</sup> gained a remarkable momentum.

Undoubtedly, Cameron’s pledge to take in 20,000 Syrian refugees was a way of quelling public and political pressures, including from his own party. The focus on ‘womenandchildren’ refugees taken directly from Syrian camps drew on racial and gender stereotypes and displayed a paternalist racism that reproduced the refugees as helpless victims who should be rewarded for patiently waiting in camp, thus further condemning those who would decide to exercise agency by seeking refuge in Europe. Yet, Cameron’s pledge was also instrumental to re-establish the social imaginary of Britain ‘as a moral nation ... fulfil[ling] ... [its] moral responsibilities’,<sup>124</sup> hence instrumental to govern the emotional welfare of the British population, whose consciousness was no longer pacified by the ‘bogus’ refugee narrative and the idea that *all* undocumented migrants were victims of their own actions. Biopolitical rationalities and racism partially redrew the line between who must live and who should die by constructing Syrian sick children, women who had been raped, and men who had suffered torture as ‘valuable’ refugees who could enhance and maximise the emotional life of the country by restoring a self-understanding of Britain as compassionate, moral, and caring. Cameron’s humanitarian government of a tiny fraction of Syrian refugees was thus of a way of governing the emotional well-being of the British population and enhancing its sense of self-appreciation and self-worthiness. Yet, as I shall discuss in the remainder of this section, this limited act of humanitarianism also responded to biological governmental rationalities of care. In order to explore this argument, it is useful to compare the British response to Alan’s death to the German one.

Shortly after Alan’s tragic drowning, Germany decided to immediately allow in tens of thousands of Syrian refugees and vowed to welcome up to 800,000 refugees a year. Numerous explanations have been advanced for this landmark historical decision, including: Germans’ own experience as refugees in the aftermath of the Second World War, when 12 million German citizens and people of German ancestry were expelled from Eastern European countries; historical guilt for the devastations of Nazism and the Holocaust; a reaction against mounting xenophobia; Germany’s ‘controversial role in the Greek debt crisis’, and the desire of Chancellor Angela Merkel to display a humanity that had been perceived as missing in the German imposition of draconian austerity measures on Southern Europe and particularly Greece; Germany’s commitment to save Europe by preventing a humanitarian catastrophe that would most likely destabilise the countries along the Balkan refugee route; Merkel’s own experience of growing up in East Germany as captured by her rebuttal to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s hope that more fences be built across Europe: ‘I lived behind a fence for too long for me to now wish for those times to return’; and Merkel’s own vision of Christian justice, the result of her upbringing as the daughter

<sup>121</sup> *Channel 4 News*, ‘Aylan Kurdi: Images That Changed UK Views on Refugees?’ (3 September 2015), available at: {<https://www.channel4.com/news/aylan-kurdi-refugee-crisis-dead-beach-uk-crisis-syrian>} accessed 8 February 2017.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> Qari Asim, ‘British Values Demand That We Aid Syria Refugees’, available at: {<http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/opinion/qari-asim-british-values-demand-that-we-aid-syria-refugees-1-7448558>} accessed 8 February 2017.

<sup>124</sup> Cameron cited in ‘David Cameron urges EU countries to follow UK’s lead on refugees’, *BBC News*.

of a socialist pastor, which requires caring for those in need of help and the strangers ‘standing in the rain before your door’, and summarised by her statement: ‘We hold speeches on Sundays and we talk about values. I am the chair of a Christian political party. And then people come to us from 2,000 kilometers away and ... you can’t show a friendly face here anymore?’.<sup>125</sup>

German openness to Syrian refugees should also be understood as part of a particularly welcoming refugee policy that, until 1992, was embedded in the constitution.<sup>126</sup> The subsequent restriction of this ‘previously unqualified right’,<sup>127</sup> did not prevent Germany from hosting ‘more than 2 million refugees from conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, as well Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia’.<sup>128</sup> The ‘compassionate pragmatism’ of German ‘Willkommenskultur’ (culture of welcome), also motivated by the desire to oppose the still glimmering embers of racism and xenophobia,<sup>129</sup> has contributed to establish a self-understanding of Germany as a moral leader, capable of expressing solidarity towards distant strangers in need and, in the words of German President Joachim Gauck, committed to ‘do more ... better ... in respect of ... the rights we have and are committed to ... [and] together [with other European countries], as Europeans’.<sup>130</sup> The Syrian refugee crisis has thus resulted in the emergence of a growing ‘emotional experience’ and ‘the formation of an affective block between refugees and large parts of the German population’.<sup>131</sup> This suggests that the dissolution of the German border for hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees may also be considered a form of biopolitical governmentality that has had as its target not only – and possibly not primarily – Syrian refugees, but the German population, its identity and self-understanding through the care of its emotional well-being.

This biopolitical care of emotions, however, would not be sufficient, alone, to explain the German ‘open-arms’ policy. Biopolitical questions concerning the *biological* well-being of the German population have been equally central. They encompass the idea, championed by Angela Merkel in her 2016 new year address, that ‘countries have always benefited from successful immigration, both economically and socially’,<sup>132</sup> and the view of the CEO of Daimler, a major German automotive

<sup>125</sup> Oliver Schmidtke, ‘Why Germany is taking in so many refugees – the benefits and risks?’, *CBC News* (14 September 2015), available at: {<http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/why-germany-is-taking-in-so-many-refugees-the-benefits-and-risks-1.3226962>} accessed 15 April 2016; Marcus Feldenkirchen and Rene Pfister, ‘The isolated chancellor: What is driving Angela Merkel?’, *Spiegel* (25 January 2016), available at: {<http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/why-has-angela-merkel-staked-her-legacy-on-the-refugees-a-1073705.html>} accessed 24 May 2016.

<sup>126</sup> Seth M. Holmes and Heide Castaneda, ‘Representing the “European refugee crisis” in Germany and beyond: Deservingness and difference, life and death’, *American Ethnologist*, 43:1 (2016), pp. 12–24 (p. 15).

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>128</sup> Dan Vinton, ‘The new, same as the old: History, refugees and Germany’, *Foreign Affairs Review* (29 November 2016), available at {<http://foreignaffairsreview.co.uk/2016/11/the-new-same-as-the-old-history-refugees-and-germany/>} accessed 14 January 2017.

<sup>129</sup> Holmes and Castaneda, ‘Representing the “European refugee crisis” in Germany’.

<sup>130</sup> Cited in Christoph H. Schwarz, ‘German refugee policy in the wake of the Syrian refugee crisis’, *Guests and Aliens: Re-Configuring New Mobilities in the Eastern Mediterranean After 2011 – With a Special Focus on Syrian Refugees* (Istanbul: Institut Français d’Études Anatoliennes, 2016), available at: {<http://books.openedition.org/ifeagd/1878>}.

<sup>131</sup> Serhat Karakayali, ‘Rights or philanthropy: Emotions of solidarity with refugees’, *Compas* (1 March 2016), available at: {<https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2016/rights-or-philanthropy-emotions-of-solidarity-with-refugees/>} accessed 14 April 2016.

<sup>132</sup> ‘Merkel urges Germans to see refugee arrivals as “an opportunity” in New Year address’, *The Guardian* (31 December 2015), available at: {<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/31/merkel-urges-germans-to-see-refugee-arrivals-as-an-opportunity-in-new-year-address>} accessed 17 November 2016.

corporation, that: ‘Most refugees are young, well-educated, and highly motivated – just the sort of people we are looking for’ (a view shared by numerous other large German companies).<sup>133</sup> These perspectives are the expression of a central biopolitical technology of government: managing and regulating the demographic trends of the population in order to ensure a constant homeostasis ‘between resources and inhabitants’.<sup>134</sup> From this perspective, it is essential to consider that Germany’s population is declining and ageing. Whereas the population of the UK is rising steeply (expected to rise from 64.1 to 80.1 million by 2060), Germany’s is falling (expected to shrink from 81.3 to 70.8 in 2060).<sup>135</sup> As a result, ‘the dependency ratio (the proportion of expensive older people in the population relative to able-bodied, tax-generating workers) is rising much quicker in Germany than in the UK’.<sup>136</sup>

Hence, according to a report published by the Centre for European Economic Research, for Germany to be able to continue to provide support for non-working older people, it will need to have an annual net immigration of more than 200,000 skilled or semi-skilled people.<sup>137</sup> This is expected to result in a significant economic gain considering that, in 2012, the 6.6 million foreign residents living in Germany generated a surplus (more taxes paid than social transfers received) of 22 billion euros, which is expected to reach 147.9 billion euros over their remaining life cycle.<sup>138</sup> As German economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel stated, ‘If we manage to quickly train those that come to us and to get them into work, then we will solve one of our biggest problems for the economic future of our country’ and, German labour minister Andrea Nahles remarked, ‘We will profit from this, too.’<sup>139</sup> This argument has been explicitly couched in biological terms by finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble, who warned that ‘[s]ealing ourselves off [from migrants] is what would ruin us, leaving us to degenerate through inbreeding’,<sup>140</sup> thus framing migration as an opportunity to strengthen the German ‘race’ (in biopolitical terms).

This biopolitical concern with the material well-being of the German population clearly illustrates the connections between neoliberal accumulation and biological reproduction – the inscription of bodies ‘into systems of efficient and economic controls’ described by Foucault – and how they are employed as a means to govern an ageing population and ensure its biological flourishing and well-being. This argument does not suggest that the biopolitical governmentality of emotions previously discussed is merely derivative of biological preoccupations, but rather that *emotional* and *biological* concerns should be considered mutually supporting and reinforcing forces at the heart of the biopolitical governmentality of populations. This does not mean that the result is a seamless

<sup>133</sup> ‘What business leaders are doing about the refugee crisis’, *The Washington Post* (8 September 2015), available at: {<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2015/09/08/what-business-leaders-are-doing-about-the-refugee-crisis/>} accessed 17 November 2016.

<sup>134</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 140.

<sup>135</sup> Robert Peston, ‘Why Germany needs migrants more than UK’, *BBC News* (7 September 2015), available at: {<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-34172729>} accessed 14 April 2016.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> ZEW, ‘The Fiscal Effects of Foreigners and Immigration in Germany’ (2014), available at {<http://www.zew.de/en/news/2817/the-fiscal-effects-of-foreigners-and-immigration-in-germany>} accessed 11 January 2016.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Cited in ‘In aging Germany, refugees seen as tomorrow’s skilled workers’, *Reuters* (10 September 2015), available at: {<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/09/10/us-europe-migrants-germany-training-analysis/idUSKCN0RA1E920150910>} accessed 14 March 2016.

<sup>140</sup> Wolfgang Schäuble, ‘Afrika wird unser problem sein’, *Zeit Online* (8 June 2016), available at: {<http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-06/wolfgang-schaeuble-aussenpolitik-wandel-afrika-arabische-welt>} accessed 28 June 2016.

biopolitical regime of government that eschews contradictions. Indeed, Merkel has been the object of growing internal criticism from multiple sectors of society which see the significant influx of refugees as a threat to German national identity, cohesion and well-being – that is, to use Foucault’s terminology, as a threat to the German ‘race’ – with the effect that support for the ‘open door’ policy has partially declined. Equally, some European countries have accused Germany’s open door policy of exacerbating the crisis by providing migrants with a further incentive to relocate to Europe, thus further endangering the European ‘race’. These tensions, however, have not undermined the biological and emotional rationalities of care at the heart of the humanitarian government of Syrian refugees. These rationalities have prompted the dissolution of borders for hundreds of thousands of them, and their reclassification from ‘undocumented migrants’ to ‘valuable’ members of society who will contribute to furthering Germany’s moral, emotional, and material well-being.

In the case of the UK, the humanitarian government of Syrian refugees has resulted in a much more limited reappraisal of the meaning and boundaries of biopolitical race. Their evaluation as valuable members of society who could positively contribute to the emotional well-being of the British population has been counterbalanced by their disqualification as valuable from a biological perspective in view of Britain’s different demographic trends. Accordingly, the combined emotional and biological biopolitical apparatus has redrawn the racial divide between who must live and who must die by excluding able-bodied migrants (deemed unnecessary to support the British economy and its welfare provisions), and by including a small number of extremely vulnerable subjects who look like Alan Kurdi and who could satisfy the British population’s emotional need of understanding itself as compassionate, capable of empathising with distant strangers, and capable of fulfilling its ‘moral responsibilities’, as David Cameron put it. As in the case of Germany, this biopolitical governmentality has not eschewed criticism. A vast array of internal and external voices has accused the UK of not fulfilling its moral obligations given its economic and political strength, which would enable it to accommodate a more substantial number of refugees. At the same time, the UK approach has also garnered appreciation for ‘disciplining’ refugees, by teaching them that they should patiently wait in camps to be rescued, and for seemingly discouraging migrants to come to Europe/the UK by eliminating supposedly ‘pull factors’.<sup>141</sup> This implicit validation of biopolitical racism, which enthrones the UK with the power to decide who must live and who must die, ultimately has had as its referent object the goal of enhancing the emotional and material well-being of the British population.

## Conclusion

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According to Foucault, pastoral power is both a massifying and an individualising power concerned with the well-being of the whole flock and of every individual sheep in the flock. The shepherd has to insure the material and spiritual well-being of the flock in order to guide every single one of them to salvation. This task, though, may require, ‘accepting the sacrifice of a sheep that could compromise the whole. The sheep that is a cause of scandal, or whose corruption is in danger of corrupting the whole flock, must be abandoned, possibly excluded, chased away, and so forth’.<sup>142</sup> The modern rendering of this rationality of government, biopower, suggests that biopolitics is not just concerned with the population as a whole – as Fassin argues – but also with individual lives. The UK decision to

<sup>141</sup> This biopolitical governmentality has crucially informed the British reluctance to take unaccompanied minors (who have not received the same media attention as Alan Kurdi) following the dismantling of Calais refugee camp in October 2016.

<sup>142</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 169.

take in a small number of children, women who had been raped, and men who suffered tortured directly from Syrian camps displays a concern with individual lives and also suggests, beyond existing accounts of humanitarian government, that the primary target of this biopolitics of care has not been Syrian refugees, but the British population and its emotional well-being following the death of Alan Kurdi.

The complementary dimension of this biopolitical governmentality of care is biopolitical racism. The latter has been instrumental to account for the overwhelming majority of undocumented migrants not cared for or left to die as ‘bogus’ asylum seekers – true suffering refugees should patiently wait in camps to be rescued – and therefore as the embodiment of an ‘inferior race’ coming to Britain to steal jobs and undermine the social and cultural cohesion of the population, and as responsible for their own destiny. As in Foucault’s description of the logics of pastoral power, the unwanted migrants threaten to corrupt ‘the whole flock, [and therefore] must be abandoned, possibly excluded, [and] chased away’. Conversely, in the case of Germany, a different demographic trend combined with different historical circumstances has contributed to a biopolitical evaluation of Syrian refugees as ‘valuable lives’ that could contribute to the emotional and material well-being of the German population. In this case, caring for large numbers of migrants has emerged as instrumental to promote and maximize the life of the population as whole, both in biological and emotional terms.

Crucial for the development of these arguments has been a ‘differentialist’ understanding of biopolitical racism, which highlighted how the ‘border’ that separates ‘superior’ and ‘inferior races’ is a tool of the biopolitical governmentality of population, rather than what delimitates its space of action. This border can be redrawn to include ‘valuable’ lives, that is, lives deemed instrumental to promote and enhance the biological and emotional life of the population. Accordingly, this article has argued that humanitarian government should be understood not just as the government and care of disenfranchised collectivities such as refugees, but also, and possibly more importantly, as the biopolitical governmentality and care of host populations through the humanitarian government of refugees.

This argument suggests a number of possible avenues for future research. In particular, it calls for a deeper understanding of the complexities and multiple significations that characterise the concept of biopolitics, and for a deeper understanding of the role that the ‘care of souls’ and the mobilisation and government of emotions play in the biopolitical governmentality of populations. This perspective, in turn, invites us to reconsider the emphasis placed by existing scholarship on feelings of uncertainty, fear, contingency, anxiety, and insecurity. While the latter play a key role in the biopolitical (in)securitisation of life<sup>143</sup> and in the related construction of neoliberal subjects,<sup>144</sup> the promotion of enjoyment, of positive feelings, and of morally rewarding emotions aimed at enhancing the self-appreciation of the population is an equally central focus of the biopolitical governmentality of populations.

This approach raises new questions on the biopolitical governmentality of the European refugee crisis and on who is actually being saved. There is no doubt that the goal of humanitarian government is saving the lives of refugees and undocumented migrants and that, as existing scholarship has highlighted, this politics of life is riddled with tensions, contradictions, paradoxes, and

<sup>143</sup> See Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero, ‘Biopolitics of security in the 21st century’; ‘The biopolitical imaginary of species-being’.

<sup>144</sup> See Evans and Reid, *Resilient Life*; Chandler and Reid, *The Neoliberal Subject*.



autoimmune tendencies which ultimately reveal the limits of the humanitarian ethos and the thrust of securitising rationalities at the heart of existing policies. However, as I have argued in this article, the humanitarian government of refugees may not just be about saving some of them while securitising the rest, but also about ‘saving’ host populations; it may be a self-referential, self-centred – and, in different degrees, a self-absolutory – act of care. From this perspective, the tensions between care and security highlighted by existing scholarship should not be considered solely as the expression of a paradox or as the limit of the humanitarian ethos, but as the rational deployment of a technology of government that frames the life of disenfranchised refugees as valuable only to the extent that it can contribute to the emotional and biological life of the host population.

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